

Best practices for girl programming

A handy checklist to keep track of your Guiding year!

As you partner with the girls and Guiders to plan your year and complete fun, engaging and safe activities, this checklist can be used to help you keep track of some of the best practices for girl programming.



Unit program planning

- Plan a wide variety of activities that have a clear purpose and are girl-centered, creative, fun and age-appropriate – and that girls want to do.
- Use the Guider handbook and/or the girl program book to help you plan your weekly meetings.
- Use Safe Guide as a planning tool to help you plan program and other activities that are safe, fun and adventurous.
- Make short term and long term plans to help you with meetings and outings happening in the current month and those happening over the course of the year.
- Build in opportunities to recognize girls' achievements through ceremonies and badge presentations.
- Find creative ways to build physical activity into every meeting.
- Connect with community members so that you can use external resource people to build excitement and expertise into programming.
- Ensure all meetings and events respect cultural, spiritual, physical or ethnic diversity.

Girl leadership development

- Ensure the meeting space is a safe space for all girls to learn, grow and try new things.
- Provide girls with the opportunity to be involved in decision-making and planning as much as possible.

Mission, Vision, Values, Promise and Law

- Ensure that weekly meetings reflect the Values of Girl Guides of Canada.
- Ensure that the Promise and Law are integral parts of regular meetings.
- Build traditional opening and closing songs and ceremonies into events and meetings.
- Celebrate Thinking Day during the week of February 22, community or cultural celebrations, birthdays and seasonal events.

Community service

- Participate in at least two community service projects during the Guiding year.

Environmental awareness

- Participate in at least one environmental awareness activity during the Guiding year.



Camping and the outdoors

- Participate in two outdoor meetings that enhance an understanding of the natural environment.
- Participate in camping activities relevant to the branch.

Worldwide Guiding

- Provide opportunities to learn about WAGGGS, our Guiding and Scouting sister organizations and the World Centres.
- Build international program challenges from WAGGGS and GGC into regular programming.
- Provide Pathfinders, Rangers and Extra Ops with information regarding international and national travel opportunities.

Girl Guide Cookies

- Participate in the Cookies Rising Badge program.
- Provide tools and resources for girls to help them reach their goals for Cookie All Stars.

Bridging: getting together with other branches

- Participate in at least one activity with other branches.
- Participate in one activity with girls in the next branch of Guiding (i.e., Guides with Pathfinders)

Guiding in the community

- Provide at least one activity that involves the girls connecting with their community.
- Participate in both annual cookie campaigns.

Membership and retention

- Provide at least one activity to increase membership (e.g., participating in the One More Girl Wonderful challenge).
- Ensure all girls feel accepted in the Unit and in Girl Guides of Canada.

Administration

- Maintain girls' progress records.
- Keep your personal and Unit iMIS profiles up-to-date.

Family involvement

- Provide opportunities for family involvement.
- Ensure regular communication with family.

Guider training

- Take training including Orientation to Guiding and Safe Guide in first six months (mandatory), current first aid training, and at least one Guider Stream or Outdoor Activity leadership.
- Make positive use of resource people when a topic is beyond your expertise or the training available from Girl Guides of Canada.
- Make positive use of resource materials (books, manuals, videos, GGC website).



Best practices for girl programming

How to run great Guiding programs that girls will love!



Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada (GGC) is committed to delivering high quality programs for our girl Members, and we're here to support you and your unit as you work together to create a great year of Guiding!

Girl Guides of Canada helps girls to be confident, resourceful and courageous and to make a difference in the world through programs that challenge them and help them learn essential life skills. The great programming you will offer in your Unit this year will make a positive difference in the lives of girls in your community.

Unit program planning

Working with the girls and Guiders in your Unit, you should plan programming opportunities that allow girls to discover, explore and be adventurous.

GGC branch specific trainings and Guider manuals have tips and examples of how to plan for the year, but here are some things that might also help the Unit plan a year of programming:

- Use or make a calendar highlighting the date of each meeting that needs to be planned. This could be a small one for each Guider and/or girl or a large one posted at your meeting place.
- Think about the different periods of Guiding – either using the seasons to help you plan or the school calendar.
- Don't forget about all the other Guiders who have done this before! Check in with Guiders who have worked at your branch level for a couple of years to see what tips they have for you.
- Make sure you use shared leadership – involve all the Guiders, Junior Leaders and girls in the brainstorming, planning and running of meetings and events.
- Safe Guide is a wonderful planning tool that will help you to ensure that all your Unit's adventures are safe ones. Make sure to follow its guidelines as you plan your year.

Girl leadership development

Many girls define a leader not only by the qualities and skills she has, but also by how she uses those skills to make a difference in the world. Each experience a girl has allows her to develop or gain skills that can help her to be a leader. Guiders can support girls' efforts to lead by mentoring them in the process.

There are many ways that you can encourage leadership development at any age:

- With the help of their Guiders, **Sparks** demonstrate leadership when they suggest activities; list the items they will need for an activity; help their peers; work well with other



Sparks; or when they ask lots of questions and make observations about the world around them.

- With the help of their Guiders, **Brownies** demonstrate leadership when they suggest activities; lead simple activities and Unit functions; assist with Brownie circle and Unit activities as Circle Leaders; listen to each others' opinions when making decisions; or describe ways to make group projects more fun.
- **Guides** demonstrate leadership when they suggest, initiate planning and lead activities; lead Unit functions; assist with patrol and Unit activities as Patrol Leaders; apply strategies for promoting cooperation within the Unit; or identify concrete steps needed to effect desired changes.
- **Pathfinders and Extra Ops** demonstrate leadership when they suggest, plan and lead activities; lead Unit functions; act as role models for younger girls; use positive communication and relationship-building skills; or begin to address deeper causes of issues in their communities.
- **Rangers and Extra Ops** demonstrate leadership when they are better able to independently suggest, plan and lead activities and Unit functions; act as role models for younger girls; act consistently with a considered and self-determined set of values; set challenging goals for the future; or are able to promote cooperation and effective team building.



Being able to give feedback, evaluate program activities and have their voice heard is an essential part of leadership development. Girls in all branches should regularly be given the opportunity to evaluate the activities done in the Unit.

- **Sparks** and **Brownies** can easily give feedback using the Two Stars and a Wish format. (You can find a description of this on page 77 of *Sparkling Ideas: Program Ideas for Spark Guiders* and on page 121 of *Let's Share Ideas: Program Ideas for Brownie Guiders*.)
- **Guides** should be introduced to reviewing activities as a learning experience, expressing their likes and dislikes, debriefing what happened and keeping ideas for the future.
- **Pathfinders, Rangers** and **Extra Ops** regularly evaluate activities as part of their activity planning cycle, assessing whether objectives were met, if things were forgotten or miscalculated and celebrating success.

Mission, Vision, Values, Promise and Law

Mission

Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada enables girls to be confident, resourceful and courageous, and to make a difference in the world.

Girl Guides of Canada is a Movement based on the shared values expressed in our Promise and Law. Through Unit activities and positive role modeling, girls are given the opportunity to



form their own beliefs and values, learn about ethical action and be committed to making the world a better place.

To accomplish this, Guiders and girls work to integrate the Promise and Law; traditional openings, closings, songs and ceremonies; and Thinking Day and other celebrations into regular meetings and special events. Remember as you plan your year that the values of Girl Guides of Canada are incorporated into the badges, challenges and other activities in the girls' program. These are not "extras" that must be added on top of everything else, but an integral part of the programming. Our values should come out through everything we do.

Community service

Community service is an excellent way to build skills and abilities in girls and give them the opportunity to speak out, take action and provide service. It also is a great way to complete programming.

Engage the girls in determining what community service project the Unit will participate in.

Environmental awareness

Environmental stewardship is a big part of the Guiding tradition. These activities can offer the opportunity to learn something new, to provide environmental service or, for older girls, to teach others.

Engage the girls in determining what environmental awareness activity you will participate in.

Camping and the outdoors



Camping is a great way to get together with your Unit. Camping provides girls with the opportunity to work together in a new environment, take on leadership roles, learn new skills and gather an appreciation for the outdoors. It's also part of what makes Guiding unique as an extra-curricular activity.

Each branch's program offers many opportunities for camping and the outdoors. As a Unit, or as part of a multi-branch camp, girls should be given the opportunity to participate in:

- **All branches** - two outdoor meetings that enhance an understanding of the natural environment
- **Sparks** – at least one overnight activity (sleepover, residential or tent camp)
- **Brownies** – at least two overnight camping activity lasting one or two nights each (residential or in tents)
- **Guides** – at least two camping activities lasting at least two consecutive nights each. At least one should be in tents
- **Pathfinders, Rangers and Extra Ops** – at least three overnight camping activities, two of which are a minimum of two consecutive nights in a tent or other similar shelter



If you are not confident in your ability to take your Unit camping, ask around – there will often be a number of other Guiders who are willing to help you learn those skills.

Worldwide Guiding

Girl Guides of Canada is part of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). Canadian Members have 10 million Guiding friends and sisters in 145 countries around the world. This provides fantastic learning opportunities for our Members.

Girls in all branches should regularly be given the opportunity to learn and participate in Thinking Day and WAGGGS related activities.



Girl Guide cookies

Girl Guide cookies is the official fundraiser for Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada. Cookie selling not only raises funds for Guiding programs, but also provides opportunities for girls to develop skills such as: Teamwork, self-confidence, financial management, safety awareness, customer service and community involvement.

Cookie programming enables girls to better understand how cookie sales fund unit activities, allowing them to be financially resourceful. Simple activities such as having girls calculate how many cases of cookies would need to be sold to cover the cost of an activity can be done throughout the year. In addition:

- **Sparks** learn about the significance of cookie sales to the Unit, how many times a year GGC sells cookies and what kinds of cookies are sold. A strong focus is placed on the importance of being a safe cookie seller.
- **Brownies** learn about planning by brainstorming unique and fun ways to sell cookies to meet personal and Unit cookie selling goals. A strong focus is placed on building money handling skills.
- **Guides** learn about planning, goal setting (program and monetary) and team work by setting personal and Unit cookie selling goals and brainstorming fun ways to encourage each other to achieve their goals. A strong focus is placed on marketing and sales skills.
- **Pathfinders** learn about their community by connecting with at a local seniors' centre, military base or other community service organization and partnering with them for a successful cookie campaign. A strong focus is placed on skills needed for public interactions.
- **Rangers** learn entrepreneurial skills by organizing cookie selling events. With their planning, goal setting, team work, financial management and community connection



skills, they can manage all of the tasks required to organize an over-the-top event. A strong focus is placed on providing Rangers with the skills needed to run a cookie campaign.

Bridging: getting together with other branches

Bridging is a great tradition in Guiding. It brings different Units and age groups together to share in the sisterhood of Guiding. Younger girls get the joy of being with and learning from older girls, and older girls get the opportunity to practice their leadership skills with younger girls.

Guiders and girls should work together to create different opportunities during the Guiding year to share in the sisterhood of Guiding.

Membership and retention

Membership in Girl Guides of Canada offers fun, friendship and adventure in a safe, accepting environment with diverse and exciting programs and activities. It offers girls the chance to discover, explore and be adventurous with new friends. Increasing our Membership keeps GGC and each Unit vital and strong and ensures that more Canadian girls have the chance to experience Guiding.

There are many things Guiders can do to increase Membership in your own Unit and others. Make sure that all girls are accepted and feel welcomed in your Unit. If you cannot place another girl in your Unit, work with other Units in your area to find a spot for her. Ensure that the girls currently enrolled in your Unit are personally invited back to the Unit for the next year. If any girls are not returning, talk to the girls and their parents to find out why.

Administration

The smooth running of the Unit relies on Guiders who are not only mentors, but also administrators. Mentoring and administration can be blended as you give girls more responsibilities as they progress through the branches. While you may not be responsible for all of the administration of your Unit, every Guider in the Unit should know what is happening in the following areas.

Necessary Unit administration:

- Maintain girls' progress records (though these records belong to the girls and should be given to them when they leave the Unit)
- Maintain financial records that follow the Financial Reporting Manual and submit them for annual review
- Participate in both annual cookie campaigns
- Ensure Unit Guider representation at 80 per cent of District meetings
- Follow provincial guidelines for managing forms
- Keep your personal iMIS profile up-to-date, particularly keeping your email address current

Family involvement

Providing opportunities for family participation (e.g., volunteering, attending ceremonies) brings more fun, friendship and excitement to programming. While including family can help you bring



different skills and expertise to the Unit, it is more important to include them to build a sense of community and to get their support. Make sure you build in regular communication with families by starting the year off with a parents' meeting and then having regular newsletters, phone calls and/or e-mails throughout the year.

Guider training

Guiders are dedicated to helping girls and young women develop their potential, and Girl Guides of Canada is dedicated to helping you develop your skills and competencies. Guiders must complete Orientation to Guiding and Safe Guide training within the first six months of joining. These two trainings are mandatory for Unit Guiders so please talk with your DC or ACL for more information on dates and locations.

Because training teaches you new skills, energizes you for the year ahead and gives you the support you need for your volunteer position, Girl Guides of Canada also offers its own subject-specific training and recognizes training from outside organizations. It is also recommended that Guiders take current first aid training and at least one Guider Stream or Outdoor Activity leadership training from Girl Guides of Canada.

When girls want to do something beyond your expertise, share the load and bring in an expert! Find resource people when a topic is beyond your expertise or the training available from Girl Guides of Canada. Talk to people in your community and parents in your Unit to find someone suitable. If you can't find a person to come in, find and resource materials like books, manuals, videos and the GGC website, Member Zone. Talk to other Guiders in your area, check out your local library, or search for resources on the Internet. All of these great resources can help you provide the programming girls want.

