

Best Practices

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 in your Unit will make a positive difference in the lives of girls in your community.

Unit program planning

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

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. If you are unsure how to use the document, including the activity guides and forms, talk with your District Commissioner (DC) or Administrative Community Leader (ACL) to find out about Safe Guide training.

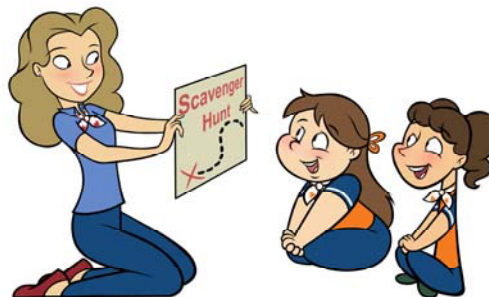
Your branch specific Guider manual has tips and examples of how to plan for your year, but here are some things that might help you plan a year of programming:

- 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.



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.

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 administrating 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

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.



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 attend Orientation to Guiding training within the first six months of membership and Safe Guide training within 12 months of joining. These two trainings are mandatory for Membership in Girl Guides of Canada, 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 even the GGC website. 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.



Girl Programs

Best Practices

A handy checklist to keep track of your Guiding year!

As you plan your year and complete fun, engaging and safe activities, check off the items in the list as you and your Unit accomplish them.



Things to think about to ensure engaging programming include:

Unit program planning

- Using Safe Guide as a planning tool to help you plan program and other activities that are safe, fun and adventurous.
- Planning 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.
- Using the Guider handbook (where appropriate) to help you plan your weekly meetings.
- Making 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.
- Building in opportunities to recognize girls' achievements through ceremonies and badge presentations.
- Finding creative ways to build physical activity into every meeting.
- Connecting with community members so that you can use external resource people to build excitement and expertise into programming.

Girl leadership development

- Involving the girls in decisions and planning as much as possible.

Mission, Vision, Values, Promise and Law

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

Community service

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

Environmental awareness

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



Camping and the outdoors

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

Bridging: getting together with other branches

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

Membership and retention

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

Administration

- Maintaining girls' progress records.
- Participating in both annual cookie campaigns.
- Keeping your personal iMIS profile up-to-date.

Worldwide Guiding

- Providing opportunities to learn about WAGGGS, our Guiding and Scouting sister organizations and the World Centres.
- Building international program challenges from WAGGGS and GGC into regular programming.
- Ensuring all meetings and events respect cultural, spiritual, physical or ethnic diversity.
- Providing Pathfinders, Rangers and Extra Ops with information regarding international and national travel opportunities.

Family involvement

- Providing opportunities for family involvement.
- Ensuring regular communication with family.

Guider training

- Taking training including Orientation to Guiding in first six months (mandatory), Safe Guide in first 12 months (mandatory), current first aid training, and at least one Guider Stream or Outdoor Activity leadership.
- Making positive use of resource people when a topic is beyond your expertise or the training available from Girl Guides of Canada.
- Making positive use of resource materials (books, manuals, videos, GGC website).

