



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

# Participation on a Plate

A guide to facilitating girl-led guiding and decision making

September 2021

Putting girls and young women in the lead is at the heart of what we do in guiding and is one of our [Five Essentials](#). That's because making decisions allows girls to 'learn by doing' and encourages them to develop skills such as negotiation, influencing and listening.

In this guide, we've captured lots of great examples of girl-led guiding. Whether you're a leader or young leader looking for new ways to involve your girls in decision making, or you want to engage with girls and young women to seek their opinions, there are plenty of ways to do so, all here, all ready 'on a plate'.

Use and adapt these ideas to be inclusive of different needs, so every girl in the unit can take part, and share them with other adults in guiding too. We aim to give all our young members the opportunity to truly be girls in the lead - from coming up with activity ideas, to running a unit meeting activity or planning a residential event themselves.

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## Being inclusive

To give every girl the best opportunity, each activity you do should be accessible and adapted to the different needs in your unit. Before you start working through the ideas in this guide, think about activities that are inclusive and constantly encourage the girls to come up with options that are open to all. If the options aren't inclusive, invite the girls to make suggestions to change this.

As a leader or young leader, also think about the way you set up activities, for example making sure things are within easy reach of everyone. Consider the language you use - for example, swapping 'running' for 'making your way', to cater for different mobilities. For more on adapting activities, see the 'Useful resources' section on page 10.

## Making decisions

Use these decision-making ideas to help girls choose what they want to do as part of the term planning process. You can use these to help girls select skills builders and unit meeting activities (UMAs) from the Girlguiding programme resources, or other activities, games, trips and events.

For more guidance on how to plan for the term ahead and ensure unit activities are selected by the girls themselves, take our e-learning [Programme Planning](#).

### Tops or tails

**Use with:** Rainbows, Brownies

**You will need:** Nothing

**It will take:** 5 minutes

Use this method to help girls choose between two options (such as UMAs, skills builders or themes from the programme). Name one option 'tops' and the other 'tails'. Ask the girls to stand up and vote by putting their hands either on their heads (tops) or on their hips (tails). Count the votes and announce the winning choice.

#### Adapt it

- Make it a secret vote by asking everyone to close their eyes, so girls will be less influenced by their friends.
- Ask girls to clap or stamp when you read out their favourite idea. The idea with the loudest response wins.

#### Take it further

If you have space on the wall at your unit, add a poster which lists the different options that were agreed on. You can then tick these off when they're done to help show the girls that their decisions matter.

### Corners

**Use with:** Rainbows, Brownies

**You will need:** Nothing

**It will take:** 5 minutes

This is great for quick decisions when there are several options for girls to choose from - for example, trips, games, themes, skills builders or UMAs. Each corner of the room represents one option. Ask the girls to run to the corner they want to vote for. The corner with the most girls wins.

### Voting

**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** Voting tokens (counters, beads etc), containers

**It will take:** 10 minutes

Voting is a very simple method of making decisions, such as which activity to try, which charity to support as part of community action, which UMA or skills builder to work on and so on. Label containers with the available choices. Ask everyone to vote by putting their tokens into the containers. The container with the most tokens wins.

#### Take it further

Ask girls to get into groups to 'campaign' for their preference. They could produce posters, leaflets, stickers, presentations or similar, to try to persuade the rest of the unit to vote for their choice.

### Vote with your feet

**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** Pens, big sheets of paper

**It will take:** 15 minutes

Write down different options on large sheets of paper and place these around the floor. When leaders or young leaders shout 'go', the girls should run and stand on the option they choose. Remove the sheet with the fewest girls on it. Leaders and young leaders should shout 'go' again and get the girls to run and select their next option. They must have a body part on the sheet or be touching someone who does. Keep going until you have one option left. This is a great activity for encouraging the girls to select which theme, skills builder or UMA they want to do.

### Stick it

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides

**You will need:** You will need: Pictures or descriptions of the choices on offer (displayed), stickers, UMA and skills builder activity cards, as appropriate

**It will take:** 10 to 15 minutes

Give Brownies or Guides a range of choices, for example badges the unit could work towards or activities to do. Make sure they have all the information they need, for example UMA cards. Ask them to discuss the options in their Sixes or Patrols. They should then stick their stickers on the picture or description of their preferred activity. The unit will do the activity with the most stickers. If lots of activities are really popular, you could discuss with the girls how they can all be incorporated into future meetings.

#### Adapt it

- Give each Patrol or Six the opportunity to select an activity or resource that they want to do in their group. Use the activity planning template (see Appendix 1 on page 11) to help them organise it.
- Give girls 'like' and 'don't like' stickers (eg happy and unhappy faces) to stick on to the activity ideas.

### Online poll

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides, Rangers

**You will need:** Computer/tablet, internet access

**It will take:** 30-60 minutes to prepare plus time to carry out

Set up an online poll using a website such as Survey Monkey or Doodle for your unit to vote on a range of decisions, such as which charity the unit wants to raise money for or what county event girls would like to attend. All votes are anonymous and can be viewed only by the poll creator. You could post the link securely online (eg in a password-protected area of a local

website or, for girls aged 13 and above, in a closed Facebook group), telling the unit when it closes. Alternatively, if you have internet access at your meeting place, set up a computer or tablet for the unit to complete the poll during the meeting.

## Why and how?

**Use with:** All sections  
**You will need:** Paper, pens  
**It will take:** 40 minutes

Split the unit into groups and assign each group an activity idea (from a list that they have come up with) to comment on. They should write down why the idea is good and how they could make it happen. You could also ask them to think about how they would make the activity exciting, accessible and fun for everyone in the unit and their different needs. Ask the groups to share their comments afterwards then hold a unit vote for which activity to do.

### Take it further

Each group could take it in turns to run their activity, with a different group leading each meeting.

## Washing line

**Use with:** Rainbows, Brownies  
**You will need:** String, masking tape, clothes pegs, pens, paper  
**It will take:** Will vary depending on the number of activities

Find out how often girls want to do something, such as how frequently they want to have Patrol time, by running this quick activity. Hang string (the 'washing line') between two walls. At one end hang a sign that says 'every week' and at the other end 'never'. Give girls different activities to hang wherever they want along the washing line.

## Dragons' Den

**Use with:** All sections  
**You will need:** Activity ideas or skills builder or UMA cards  
**It will take:** Will vary depending on the number of activities

Invite the girls to choose activity ideas for the term by running a 'Dragons' Den' experience. Set up a panel of girls (you can rotate so everyone's voice is heard). You and your leadership team (or young leaders) can then pitch the different activity ideas to 'the dragons' and let them decide which activities win.

### Adapt it

Depending on your section, you may want to adapt this - for Rainbows and Brownies an 'X Factor' or 'Britain's Got Talent' theme may work better.

## Diamond

**Use with:** Guides, Rangers  
**You will need:** Cards, pens, sticky notes  
**It will take:** 30 minutes

If you find that you don't have agreement in the group or if you want the girls to prioritise activities, use this activity to help girls negotiate.

Get the girls to write out nine activities on cards or sticky notes. Invite them to form a diamond shape, by placing their first priority card at the top, followed by two in second place, three in third place, a further two and then the card which represents the lowest priority at the bottom. Encourage the girls to agree on the order of the cards through discussion and negotiation.

## Coming up with activity ideas

Our Girlguiding programme offers girls lots of great activities to choose from, but for help coming up with other activity or trip ideas, get inspired with these options. You can also adapt these to help girls choose programme activities, as part of your term planning.

### Categories

**Use with:** Rainbows, Brownies, Guides

**You will need:** Paper, pens

**It will take:** 20 minutes

Divide the girls into small groups. Give each group a piece of paper with a category at the top. Examples of categories could be: winter, space, when I grow up..., I like to..., food or adventure. Ask the groups to talk about what they associate with their category. They should write down any ideas, including activities they might like to do. If the groups run out of things to write they could swap papers and try another category. Rainbows may need more guidance with this activity, so plan for an adult or young leader to sit with each group.

### If I had a million pounds...

**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** Paper, pens

**It will take:** 20 minutes

Ask everyone to sit together in a circle or in small groups. Ask them what they would like to do if they had a million pounds. If their ideas seem farfetched and impossible, don't dismiss them - think instead of creative ways to adapt them. For example, if they wanted to go to the bottom of the sea, you could turn the meeting place into the ocean floor, have a seafood tasting session, make mermaid tails or design submarines.

#### Adapt it

Try other variations, such as what they would do if they were queen for the day, if they owned a zoo and so on.

### Going local

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides, Rangers

**You will need:** A simple map of the local area where your unit meets

**It will take:** 15 minutes

Divide everyone into groups and give each group a map of the local area. Ask them to look at the map and think of things the unit or district/division could do in the area. This could be a visit to a park, a trip to the fish and chip shop, a visit to the library and so on. Encourage the girls to be inclusive of different needs and think about ideas that everyone in the unit can enjoy.

## Look who's talking

**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** A ball

**It will take:** 15 minutes

This is a great way to have a fair and equal discussion about what the unit would like to do. Ask everyone to sit in a circle. While passing a ball around, ask each person to say one thing they would like to do in just one, five or ten words. Only the person holding the ball may speak. They could do it with their eyes closed or sitting facing outwards so they're not influenced by others.

#### Take it further

Use this activity in Patrols or Sixes or as part of a unit discussion.

### Get creative

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides, Rangers

**You will need:** Pens, pencils, paper, craft materials

**It will take:** A meeting

In small groups, ask everyone to create something representing what they would most like to do as a unit. When they've finished ask the groups to share their ideas and discuss together how these could become a reality. You could keep their creations to help evaluate the unit's activities at the end of the year - and if these lived up to their expectations!

#### Take it further

Ask the girls to draw a 'journey of activity ideas', for example along a road, a river or a train line.

### Charades

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides

**You will need:** Nothing

**It will take:** 20 minutes

Individually or in small groups, get the girls to think about an activity they would like to do. Ask them to mime the activity, using charade clues like 'three words'. Invite everyone to guess and capture the different ideas until every group or person has had their turn.

## Post box

**Use with:** Rainbows, Brownies, Guides

**You will need:** Pieces of card, pens or pencils, 'post box'

**It will take:** 10 minutes

Give each girl a piece of card. Ask everyone to write or draw something they would like the unit to do and to post their ideas in the box. Use the ideas to plan the unit's programme for the next few months (don't forget to look through the UMAs and see where there may be cross-over!). All the ideas should be used in some way, even if they need to be adapted, to ensure that all the girls have contributed to your unit's programme planning. Some activities, for example those dependent on weather conditions, might have to be saved for a suitable time. Any idea that cannot be used or adapted should be discussed with the girls to help them learn to make practical suggestions.

### **Adapt it**

In a Guide unit, encourage Patrol leaders to suggest how an 'impossible' idea might be adapted into a practical activity that fits into the programme.

### **Take it further**

- Use the post box method to gather feedback from girls about anything - from suggestions to evaluating something they've done. It allows girls not yet confident enough to speak up in discussions to get their voices heard.
- Have a box at your meeting place every week that girls can put comments into anonymously whenever they want. For wider-scale consultation (eg across a division), give out cards at one meeting and collect them back at the next, or place a collection box in a central location, such as the entrance hall of the meeting place.

## Social network

**Use with:** Rangers

**You will need:** Computer/tablet, internet access, membership of social networking site

**It will take:** 30-40 minutes to set up forum, then ongoing use

Set up a safe forum on a social networking site (eg a closed Facebook group) for members to join and post their suggestions. Before doing so please read carefully through the Girlguiding online safety guidelines, [A Safe Cyberspace](#). Use this method of communication to decide on the programme, to plan and prepare activities, or to get ideas for trips and holidays.

### **Take it further**

Districts, divisions and counties could use safe forums to get members' opinions and views on events and projects, to advertise ways of getting involved in planning or delivery, and to consult on a wide range of issues.

## Girls leading themselves

Facilitating girl-led decision making and self-governance isn't just about getting girls to choose their activities or next trip. It's also about empowering and supporting girls to take charge! Discover how to do this with the following activities.

### Skills builders and unit meeting activities



**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** Skills builder or UMA cards, materials or resources on the skills builder or UMA card

**It will take:** Will vary according to girls' choices

The skills builder and UMA cards have all been designed to give girls a wide variety of activities and empower them to lead. Once girls have selected a skills builder or UMA to focus on, encourage them to organise themselves and complete the activities.

Get the girls to work through the instructions on the card step by step so they can run the activity themselves - everything they need is on the card. Depending on the section, leaders and young leaders may need to provide some additional support.

Don't forget to make sure the girls select their skills builder or UMA first (for more help here, explore the activities at the front of this guide).

### Girls take over!



**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** Activity planning template (see Appendix 1 on page 10)

**It will take:** Will vary according to girls' choices

Give girls the chance to take over the planning and delivery of part or all of a meeting. This could mean Rainbows choosing a song, Sixes running their favourite games, or Guides working on their Guide Gold award challenge and running an entire meeting for the rest of the unit. Use the activity planning template (see Appendix 1) to help the girls think about all the things they need to include in their plans.

Ask the girls to evaluate each other's activities afterwards.

#### Take it further

Encourage your Rangers to be peer educators or request a peer educator to lead a session with your Brownies, Guides or Rangers. Peer educators are 14- to 25-year-olds who help Brownies, Guides and Rangers explore important topics. As young people, they use their own experience to bring the subject to life. This is a great opportunity to empower girls to empower their peers. Find out more about [Peer Education](#) on our website.

### Lead a unit near you



**Use with:** Guides, Rangers

**You will need:** Activity planning template (see Appendix 1 on page 11)

**It will take:** Will vary according to girls' choices

Building on the previous activity, encourage girls to lead another unit. Contact other leaders in your area and find a date when your section can attend. Invite the girls to use the activity planning template to agree how they will lead the other unit and what activities they will run.

After the session, invite girls to think about what went well and what they'd change for next time.

#### Take it further

Invite other units in your area to run sessions at your unit.

### Going away



**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** Destination cards (appropriate to the section, eg Brownie holiday house, local campsite, local museum, youth hostel etc) for each group

**It will take:** 30 minutes

In groups, ask girls to choose from the selection of destination cards they have been given. Ask them to think about what they would like to do at that destination, for example activities or a theme for the outing. The groups share their ideas with the unit and everyone votes on the idea they like the most.

#### Take it further

Hold a unit discussion to decide on further details about the residential event: location, type of residential event, theme, food, activities and so on. For more info on running a focus group, see Appendix 2 on page 12. Guides can even work on their Guide Camp permit, and Rangers on their Lead Away permit if the girls want to take their camping/guiding holiday experiences to the next level!

### Play the game



**Use with:** Brownies, Guides

**You will need:** Game or activity ideas with instructions and equipment as appropriate

**It will take:** Will vary depending on game/activity chosen

This is a great activity to get your girls involved in the delivery of some of their programme, and could offer an opportunity for them to practise leading before running their own skills builder or UMA. Give each Six or Patrol simple instructions for a game or activity, along with the materials required. After spending time deciding what to do, with help from leaders if needed, they should give each group member a role (someone to explain the instructions, act out how to play, prepare an example, set up equipment, answer questions etc) and lead the activity for the unit.

#### Adapt it

Older girls may want to make up their own game or activity (perhaps based on a theme) to share with others.

#### Take it further

Have a booklet of ideas for five-minute fillers and icebreakers. If there is a bit of free time in the meeting, girls can choose an activity from it to run themselves. If lots of the girls are keen to do this, keep a list at the front of the booklet of who has run activities, to make sure that everyone gets a turn.

## Evaluation

To provide girls with the best possible experience and to help with future planning, it's important to seek their opinions and evaluate what the unit or district/division has done. This will help you find out what went well (and keep doing it!) and what could be improved for the next time. Use these activities to evaluate everything from activities and games to events and trips.

You could also try encouraging the girls to evaluate their experience in guiding against the [Five Essentials](#) by using the [Doing our Best](#) poster and checklists. This will help them to learn more about these core principles of Girlguiding, and to play a role in longer-term planning and improvement.

A lot of these ideas can also be adapted into more activities to help girls choose.

### On the table

**Use with:** All sections  
**You will need:** Pens, paper tablecloths (you could also use flipchart paper or plain wallpaper)  
**It will take:** 10 minutes

Give each group a tablecloth and a pen. Ask them to divide the cloth in two. On one half ask them to write down (or draw, with labels) all the things that they like about their unit meetings. They should think about all aspects, for example the activities they do, how the activities are delivered, if everything they do is inclusive of all members, how they start and end a meeting and so on. On the other half, ask them to write or draw what would make their unit meetings even better. Use the feedback for when the unit next plans its programme. Any other comments or suggestions about the meetings could be discussed in more detail by the group as a whole, and any changes voted on (eg changing the way meetings open).

### Happy faces

**Use with:** Rainbows, Brownies  
**You will need:** Pencils, paper  
**It will take:** 5 minutes

Hand out pencils and paper. Ask the girls to draw faces to show how much they enjoyed their unit meeting or a particular activity. How big a smile would they give it?

#### Adapt it

Give younger girls paper faces for them to draw smiles on. They could do real smiles too!

### Put it on the board

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides, Rangers  
**You will need:** Colouring pencils, paper, pens, pins or sticky tape, a notice board, sticky notes  
**It will take:** Try encouraging girls to feed back regularly throughout the term

Introduce a celebration noticeboard in the unit meeting place. This is a great way of celebrating what the unit has achieved over a term, as well as a way of capturing the opinions of the girls. You can invite your section to decorate this and even add photos or drawings of recent events, trips and activities. Encourage girls to leave notes, stickers or drawings about their experience and use this space as they would like.

### Tell a story

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides, Rangers  
**You will need:** Nothing  
**It will take:** 5 minutes

This activity works best with 4 to 15 people, so you may want to split your group. Everyone stands in a circle to tell a story about what they thought of the activity. One person starts off a sentence with two words. The next person adds two words and so on around the circle to try to make a full sentence about the group's experience. Make sure you go round the circle a few times so that everyone really gets to contribute.

### Thumbs

**Use with:** Rainbows  
**You will need:** Pen, paper  
**It will take:** 20 minutes

Ask the Rainbows to stand in a circle and to think about the meetings they've had over the term, the last few months or even the last year. Tell them you're going to shout out the activities they've done and you want them to show you how they rate them using their thumbs. A thumbs up means they really enjoyed it, thumbs horizontal means it was okay and thumbs down means they didn't enjoy it. You can ask a volunteer to help capture the responses to inform your future planning.

### Traffic lights

**Use with:** Brownies  
**You will need:** Red, orange and green stickers (or pens), coloured sticky notes  
**It will take:** 20 minutes

Give each Brownie red, orange and green stickers (or pens) and a list of activities that they have done over the term, the last few months or even the last year. Explain that they should sticker or mark each activity: red if they didn't like it, orange if it was okay and green if they loved it. This could also be done in Sixes rather than individually. You could also run this evaluation activity with the skills builder or UMA cards used during the term, swapping stickers and pens for coloured sticky notes so they're easily removable after the session.

## Rate the week

**Use with:** Guides

**You will need:** A summary sheet for each Guide

**It will take:** 40 minutes

Produce a sheet with a summary of the programme for the term, the last few months or even the last year. It should be a list of the activities with space to give each activity a mark out of 10 and to write comments. The Guides should fill these in individually, then in their Patrols or as a unit discuss the feedback they have given - what did and didn't work and what they might like to do again.

### **Take it further**

Do this over a period of time (eg a term) at the end of every meeting for Patrols to rate each meeting and suggest how it could have been better.

## Goodbye

**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** Nothing

**It will take:** A few minutes

When girls leave their section or unit, help to celebrate what they've achieved by asking them to think about their time in guiding. As part of their goodbye, invite girls to reflect on their experience and share their best memories with the rest of the group.

## iEvaluate

**Use with:** Rangers

**You will need:** Computer/tablet, internet access

**It will take:** 40 minutes to set up and a meeting to discuss poll

Set up an online poll using a website such as [Survey Monkey](#) or [Doodle](#) and ask your unit to vote on the activities they participated in over a period of time (eg a term) or an event they attended. Ask them to rate each from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'not enjoyed at all' to 5 being 'very enjoyable'. Give members a date to complete the survey by (eg final meeting of the term/season/year). If you have internet access at your meeting place you could ask them to do it at the beginning of the last meeting. Share the results with everyone and talk about how the activities which were liked least could be made better and why the activities that were the most popular worked well.

### **Take it further**

Ask the unit to set up the survey themselves and to facilitate the discussion once the results are in.



## Outside the unit

Use these ideas if you are a commissioner, adviser or event coordinator to find out what the girls in your guiding area want for their programme.

### Question time

**Use with:** All sections

**You will need:** Questionnaires

**It will take:** 30 to 60 minutes to prepare plus time to carry out

Produce a questionnaire for girls in your local units to complete. You could ask what activities they would like to be included in a forthcoming event, or gather ideas for future events. Ask your local leaders to give out the questionnaire at their unit meetings and help the girls to complete them, then to return them to you. Use their ideas to shape the events programme for your area.

### Event feedback

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides, Rangers

**You will need:** Sticky notes, pens, flipchart paper

**It will take:** 20 minutes

Ask participants for their feedback on local events. Give young members some sticky notes and ask them to write down what they think was good, what they would like to see happen in the future, and how events could be even better. Stick these on to separate pieces of flipchart paper. Talk through their ideas with them to expand on what they mean.

In a small area such as a district, you could visit units in person to gather feedback. In divisions or larger areas, you could ask leaders to gather feedback from their girls for you.

Use the information gained to plan future events.

### In focus

**Use with:** Guides, Rangers

**You will need:** Nothing, although food always helps!

**It will take:** 1 hour

Hold a focus group (see Appendix 2 on page 12 for help) to gather local young members' opinions. You could invite a group to a session or visit one at their meeting place. Alternatively you could use existing opportunities - visit a Ranger meeting or a section Gold challenge event, for example.

Incorporate the group's ideas into the county activity plan for girl events. Offer girls the opportunity to be part of event planning teams as well.

## Evaluation forms

**Use with:** Brownies, Guides, Rangers

**You will need:** Evaluation sheets, pens, 'post box'

**It will take:** Will vary depending on numbers involved

For each district or division event you organise, prepare an evaluation form. Use tick boxes or longer questions to discover what the girls did or didn't enjoy and what you can improve for next time. During an event, ask participants to complete the evaluation and pop it in the 'post box' before they leave. Look through the responses and use the feedback when planning the next event.

## Useful resources

- **The Five Essentials** - learn more about these five key elements which support the development of our members: [girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/programme-and-activities/the-five-essentials/](http://girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/programme-and-activities/the-five-essentials/)
- **Doing our Best** - the Five Essentials checklists: [girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/how-were-being-our-best/doing-our-best/five-essentials-checklists/](http://girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/how-were-being-our-best/doing-our-best/five-essentials-checklists/)
- **A to Z of Activities** - discover the different activities available for your girls: [girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/our-badges-and-activities/activity-finder/](http://girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/our-badges-and-activities/activity-finder/)
- **Survey Monkey** - an online survey tool: [surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com)
- **Doodle** - an online scheduling tool: [doodle.com](http://doodle.com)
- **Peer Education** - empower girls to empower their peers: [girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/programme-and-activities/peer-education](http://girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/programme-and-activities/peer-education)
- **Including members with additional needs** - learn how to adapt activities to make these inclusive of different needs: [girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/running-your-unit/including-all/including-members-with-additional-needs/adapting-games-and-activities/](http://girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/running-your-unit/including-all/including-members-with-additional-needs/adapting-games-and-activities/)
- Search for the following resources at [girlguiding.org.uk](http://girlguiding.org.uk):
  - **Good guiding is...**
  - **A Safe Cyberspace**
  - **guiding magazine activities**
  - **Programme planning module**
  - **Guidance notes for leaders**

## Top tips for girl-led guiding

Here's a round-up of top tips for girl-led guiding from some of our leaders.

- **Be persistent** - it might not always be easy (and you might not feel like you're making headway straight away) but do keep asking girls for their opinions. The journey is worth it in the end when you see empowered and confident girls and young women!
- **Try new things** - it's okay if they don't always go to plan.
- **Trust in the girls** - girls have the skills to lead and plan their own meetings so try to give them every opportunity to do this.
- **Set ground rules** - to make sure everyone's voice is heard and treated sensitively when making decisions, encourage the girls to set their own ground rules at the very beginning for how they want to run the activity, e.g. 'We won't speak over each other.'
- **Connect** - speak to other leaders and share best practice, hints and tips for encouraging girl-led guiding. There are some great examples of this out there!
- **Influence** - support the girls to think of everyone's needs to make sure that everyone can take part in the choices they make.
- **Explain** - help girls understand the reason behind girl-led guiding and decision making, by taking the time to explain that Girlguiding is for them, so we need to make sure they tell us what they want.
- **Show** - at the end of the term, show girls how you've listened to their opinions and how their decisions have shaped planning for the term. You could try by listing the options they've chosen and then ticking them off.

# Appendix 1: Activity planning template

## About the activity

Name:

How long it will take:

Activity description:

## Who is going to do what

Name	What they are doing

## Equipment

What's needed	How much	Who's bringing it

## Help

What help you will need from your leaders to run the activity.

Before:

During:

After:

## Appendix 2: Focus groups

A focus group is an organised discussion that gives a group of people the chance to share their views, opinions and experiences on a particular topic. Focus groups are a great way to consult young members on a particular subject in an interactive way. They provide the opportunity to discuss a topic in depth, not just get 'yes or no' answers, and allow girls to have their voices heard and inform decision making that affects them.

Focus groups are run by a facilitator who will ask open questions so that girls and young women can shape and direct what a certain piece of work looks like. They should be able to build on each other's ideas and learn from each other's experiences while also having their say.

Focus groups are not just useful for planning one-off events, but also helpful for developing wider guiding, such as a county's strategy.

### Top tips for running focus groups with girls and young women

- The facilitator should be someone independent who, ideally, the girls do not know. The girls will feel more able to give honest answers and to criticise if they are not worried about any consequences.
- Plan your questions carefully. A focus group is not the place for a series of 'yes or no' questions. While it is okay to ask closed questions (questions where the answer is chosen from among a few options, eg yes or no), make sure you also ask open questions and allow girls to explain why they gave a particular answer.
- Use interactive ways of gathering the girls' opinions to keep them engaged and stimulated. Tailor these to the age of the group. Sitting in a circle simply talking for an hour might be an attractive idea to Rangers but for Brownies this might be challenging. Try using some of the activity ideas in this resource to ask questions creatively, or come up with your own. Make sure that quieter members of the group feel able to contribute.
- Consider the different learning styles people in the group might have, and provide a variety of ways of recording information to allow girls with different skills and abilities to be involved.
- Bear in mind the participants' ages when planning group size - set up smaller groups for younger girls. Do not have a broad range of ages in one group, as it will be difficult to make the session accessible to everyone. A focus group should include no more than two sections (eg Rainbows and Brownies together).
- Consider when and where you will hold your focus group. Make sure that it is a comfortable environment where the girls and young women will feel relaxed.
- Will you hold the focus group as a stand-alone session, or combine it with another event? The latter could be an easier way to ensure that you get participants, but make sure that the girls and young women have the opportunity to put themselves forward to be involved in the consultation.
- Make sure that you can capture all information and thoughts. If you are going to be having discussions, do you need someone to take notes for you? If you decide to record the conversation and transcribe it later, you must get the participants' permission, and test your equipment beforehand.

- Identify the key messages that came out of the consultation to enable you to take the topic forward.
- Let the group know what will be done with the information they have provided and how it will be used. Depending on the age group, you could also update them when actions have been taken based on their consultation. If you are unable to contact them directly because of their age, you could send the information through their leaders.
- Most importantly: make sure that the girls and young women have fun and are able to enjoy making their voices heard!

Participation on a Plate

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