

Building Guiding

A Tool for Membership Development & Community Building Section 1 of 6

Girls

Material in this kit may be copied by Members of Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada for use within Guiding.

As an organization for girls and women, Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada is always welcoming girls from a variety of communities to join us. Every girl should have the opportunity to experience the fun, friendship and new adventures of Guiding.

What are the benefits Guiding offers to girls?

Girl Guides is a FUN place to learn new things and to make life-long friendships in a SAFE environment.

Guiding provides:

- An organization that girls can join any time of the year
- A positive environment with activities that help build skills and develop self-confidence to help girls become valuable citizens in our communities
- An accepting and nurturing all-girl atmosphere
- Leadership development/skills
- Mentorship and role models
- Scholarships and opportunities for international travel
- Adventurous, activity-based programs where girls can challenge themselves in a safe environment
- Membership in a worldwide organization for girls and women from 144 countries with 10 million Members

Let's start by uncovering what percentage of Girls we attract in our district.

How do we do this?

- Figure out how many girls are in your district. This can be done by going to one of the Web sites listed below or by contacting the school boards of the schools directly.

BC: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schoolbook>
AB: <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca>
SK: <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca>
MB: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca>
ON: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>
PQ: <http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca>
NB: <http://www.gnb.ca/education>
NS: <http://www.ednet.ns.ca>
PEI: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/educ>
NF/LB: <http://www.gov.nf.ca/edu>
YK: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca>
NWT: <http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca>
NT: <http://www.gov.nu.ca/education>

- Compare the number of girls registered in Guiding with the total number of girls, and calculate the percentage of girls being reached. For example, if there are 1000 girls in the school system in your district and 100 are involved in Guiding, we have reached 10% of eligible girls. In other words, 90% of girls have not yet had the opportunity to experience the fun of Guiding.
- If possible, break down the numbers by age groups to calculate the percentage of Sparks-age girls, Brownie-age girls, etc., being reached.
- Now set an attainable, measurable goal to increase or maintain girl membership in your district. Think "little steps". If you increase your numbers by one girl Member per Unit that is a huge accomplishment! If you create a new Unit or open a closed Unit that is wonderful, too – you have been successful.

First things first – how do we retain the girls we have?

Educate parents about GGC and communicate the value the program has for their daughters. Take time to chat one-on-one. The parents need to know that you care about their daughters, so share their child's successes with them.

Ways to retain girl Members:

- Have girls participate in bridging activities. See Branch specific program books for more information.
- Encourage participation in Extraordinary Options (extra-ops) Units.
- Present badges to the girls in a timely manner (not all at the end of the year). Remember to make any badge presentation memorable for the individual girl – even just a few words about how she earned the badge can give a great boost to a child's self esteem.
- Recognize girls on an ongoing basis. Informal awards can make the girls feel valued and can give them a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- In August, send a postcard to each girl in your district. Include a friendly, "looking forward to seeing you" message along with the registration or first meeting info. You could also include an invitation to bring a friend (or parent) along to try Guiding out for a couple of weeks. Consult your Public Relations (PR) Adviser for help/advice here.
- Create an exciting and interactive Web page that is safe for girls to use and only available to Members.

- By way of iMIS (now that we have girls in our Membership database), follow up if a Member does not return to ensure that they have had an opportunity to register. Many people feel that if they missed the registration date they can no longer join. It is important to let the girl know that she is missed and that she is always welcome back if she changes her mind or if circumstances change.
- Hold enrollment at a time and place where the whole family can come. Make it a party time - welcoming and encouraging siblings to join in the fun! The more the family is involved, the longer the girl will stay involved in the organization.
- Hold outings and “out in the community” activities.
- Hold a “skills show” out in the community – in a mall or park. This has many advantages. It builds pride in the girls and encourages interest from the community and from other girls.
- Have girls wear uniform & “together wear”. This fosters a sense of belonging and identity. Girls of all ages need to feel that they belong.
- Involve girls in planning their own program through girl-centered programming.
http://www.girlguides.ca/media/pdfs/14-5/fall04_01.pdf

Where are the potential girl members? Who are they? How do we attract them?

- Partner with other recreational groups/youth serving organizations and businesses (for example, assist at dance recitals, soccer tournaments, etc.). When girls and Guiders assist with special projects, we promote a positive image of Guiding.
- Contact girls (personally, by mail or by phone) who have left Guiding within the past two to three years. Ask them why they left. Tell them about the new, fun, adventurous Guiding programs and ask them to return – to give it another try or to attend a special event or camp. Situations and interests change. They may just be waiting for that personal approach. You could also offer them other Units/meeting times/meeting places or even Lones. If they are older than 17, offer them Link as an option.
- Go to schools, preschools, kindergartens and moms & tots programs. Liaise with the contact people (school principals, program directors) in these locations. Ensure that age appropriate Guiding information is distributed to girls and/or parents.
- For younger age groups, hand out colouring sheets with a white space at the bottom to include a local Guiding phone number and name for those parents wanting to place their daughters in Spark or Brownie Units.
- With the permission of the school principal, hold a “taster” meeting involving girls in some fun Guiding activities during their lunch break. Send notices home in the school newsletter.
- Frequent local shopping malls, toy stores, libraries, bookstores, community centres and clothing stores. Wherever girls go in your community, ensure that Guiding is visible to them in some way. Distribute Guiding PR materials in these places.
- Hold a regular Unit meeting – for any age group – in a mall, so that the public can actually see what’s happening or host a district pancake breakfast outside the mall or shopping centre. Often, stores and businesses will support Guiding by offering to supply food and drinks.
- Ensure that all libraries and bookstores have plenty of GGC bookmarks to tuck inside every book checked out or purchased. Put up Guiding posters with local

contact information in community centres or consider printing advertisements on placemats at local restaurants or offering restaurants tent cards to place on tables. (Consult your PR Adviser for help/advice here.)

- Attend activities at places of worship (temples, churches, synagogues). In consultation with religious leaders, put a notice in the bulletin or newsletter of the place of worship advising girls about the opportunities Guiding offers. Seek advice from religious leaders and women's groups attached to places of worship about the best way to reach their girls.
- Hold "Bring a Friend" activities. When holding these events, ensure that the activities truly represent Guiding so they set realistic expectations of our organization and programs.

Remember: We are Members in a huge international organization that appeals to girls and women with many different interests from all cultures and socioeconomic groups. Resources are available in a number of different languages to assist you in approaching a wide variety of people.

Best Practices: Recruiting Girls

(A best practice is a strategy that has proved successful in the past. We share these to prevent Guiders from having to 're-invent the wheel'.)

Make an information package. Stamp "Girl Guides" on the front of an envelope and enclose a Guiding fact sheet, letter to parents and one of each of the brochures in it. List all of the Units in your district, where they meet, date and time of registration and contact information for each. Take these to the local schools and see if the school can pass them out to the girls.

Hold a main district registration event. A single location makes it easy for everyone to find the event and is a terrific help for parents who are unfamiliar with Guiding and its Branches. If this is not workable, have a group registration (multi-branch) and have the DC or other District staff attend. To get the best results, think of a registration event that will register the maximum number of girls in the entire district. See information on 'National Registration Week' 2005 on the National site.

BAN WAITING LISTS! There is no real need to put limits on girl registrations in any Unit or on any registration night! If a Unit registration gets too large, take the registrations and try to rearrange the girls into another Unit or create a new one. The trick is to keep friends together. No girl should be refused registration.

Celebrate your successes! Get all of the Guiders in your district on board with a plan to meet concrete registration goals. And remember that stabilizing registration year-to-year is a success too!

Hold a "Bring a Friend" night. Try having a "Bring A Friend" night earlier in the Guiding year as opposed to late in the Guiding year.

Attend “Meet the Teacher” nights. Send a Guiding representative to attend every “Meet the Teacher/Curriculum Night” in your area. These nights are generally held at the beginning of September. See if you can get a small table and set up a small display with pocket pals and bookmarks to distribute. Have a list of meeting dates and times organized by district.

Best Practices: Retaining Girls

(A best practice is a strategy that has proved successful in the past. We share these to prevent Guiders from having to ‘re-invent the wheel’.)

Offer Online Units. These are awesome retention tools for girls who, for one reason or another, are unable to attend “regular” meetings.

Choose strategic meeting location/nights. Parents love to have their girls involved in Units that run on the same night and at the same location for different levels.

Promote Unit stability. Try not to change Unit meeting nights/locations unless absolutely necessary. Parents come to expect this as their children move to the next level and will plan around it long in advance.

Promote Guider stability. When a Guider is going to leave a Unit, try to have her think about what will come next. Ask her to recruit well in advance. The current Guider is always the best person to help find new Guiders from amongst the parents.

Remember that appearances are important. If parents think that a Guider will not be returning to a Unit next year, they may not register in the fall. Do not give parents information in advance of Guider turnover! They really do not need to know.

Use statistics. After registration, look at how your registration numbers change from year to year. You can often predict next year’s changes through close analysis of this year’s. If you have an increase in Sparks one year, for example, you might very well experience an increase next year in Brownies. This gives you some time to prepare by getting new meeting spaces and bringing more Guiders on board.

Encourage enthusiasm! Encourage girls who’ve had a great time camping or on trips to share their enthusiasm with other girls. Also, let them know about the opportunities available through Guiding to meet Members from other countries.

Make camp certificates. Consider making “certificates” or vouchers for money that has been fundraised by the girls and consider earmarking it for future camps/events. This can be a very successful tool in retaining the girls and it gets the parents onboard in assisting with fundraising as well. When a girl moves up to another branch, so do her camp fund dollars. If a girl has no funds, she can still get a certificate for a minimum amount (depending on the finances of the Unit).

Send flyers to schools. Send flyers out to schools in the spring that read, “MARK YOUR CALENDARS: fall registration will be taking place....” The flyers should also include a description of each branch of Guiding along with contact information. The districts can then send reminder notices later in the summer.

Try a survey. Consider sending out a survey (with a stamped return envelope) to new Guiders in the area to determine where more support is needed. Also consider sending a survey to Guiders who are new to the area asking them what practices or local rules differ from those of their original province, and whether they have any suggestions to improve the transition for Guiders moving within Canada.

Attend a school job fair. Many girls are looking for summer volunteer experience working with children, especially if they are furthering their education in teaching.

Advertise in school newspapers.

Use testimonial. Gather testimonials from Members who have benefited through their involvement in Guiding.

The Membership Cycle: <http://www.girlguides.ca/default.asp?id=785>