Background and concepts of the Promise and Law for Trainers
Introduction

Girlguiding provides a framework to support the development of personal values. This framework is set out in the Guide Promise and the Guide Law. The Promise has evolved over the years in order to recognise the involvement of members of all faiths and none in guiding. We understand that for young people, as for adults at different times in their life, beliefs take different forms, which are not always about organised religion. No member is required to follow any particular faith. Instead, guiding encourages its members to develop positive personal values and the self-awareness, self-respect and self-confidence to make their own decisions.

Members also Promise to ‘serve the Queen and my community’. At the very minimum, this means they are pledging to obey the laws of the land. However, it means much more than that. It is more than just a Promise not to be a bad citizen - it is a Promise to try to be a good and active citizen.

In 1908 Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting and Guiding, had strong beliefs and convictions including a strong sense of stewardship of the earth and all living things and the value of small groups working and playing together. Out of Baden-Powell’s convictions grew the Scout Promise and Law from which the Girl Guide Promise was slightly modified.

The Promise and the Law gives a purpose and a new meaning to life. It provides members with a set of values such as honesty, responsibility, integrity, loyalty, respect, tolerance, self-awareness and a moral framework.

The guiding Promise has changed 12 times since the organisation was founded. With each change the Promise has remained true to the principles on which guiding was founded over 100 years ago.

What is a Promise?

‘A promise is a commitment by someone to do or not do something. As a noun promise means a declaration assuring that one will or will not do something. As a verb it means to commit oneself by a promise to do or give. It can also mean a capacity for good, similar to a value that is to be realised in the near future’ Wikipedia 2013.

The Promise is guiding’s beating heart - it’s the core expression of values and the common standard that brings everyone in guiding together. It allows girls to explore and develop their own values and beliefs - and this can be a very personal journey.

A Leaders’ role is to help girls and young women understand what the Promise and Law means to them so that they can make it when they are ready. Regular activities specifically focusing on the Promise and Law will help to do this. It is also important to show girls, young women and those new to guiding and making the Promise for the first time that the Promise is something we live every day. This can be done through linking back activities undertaken to the values and concepts that are contained within the Promise and Law.

Girls, young women, and those new to guiding and making the Promise for the first time, should be encouraged to make the Promise when they are ready. There are some awards and qualifications, such as the Baden-Powell Challenge, Queen’s Guide Award and the Leadership Qualification for which a member must have made the Promise.
The Promise

The Promise (for Brownies, Guides, members of The Senior Section and adults) is:

I promise that I will do my best:
To be true to myself and develop my beliefs,
To serve the Queen and my community,
To help other people
and
To keep the (Brownie) Guide Law.

The Promise for Rainbows is:

I promise that I will do my best to think about my beliefs and to be kind and helpful.

In June 2013 the new wording of the Promise was revealed following an extensive consultation process (see Background to the Promise changes in 2013 page 14). The new wording came into effect on 1 September 2013.

What is a Law?

A law is ‘a binding custom or practice of a community; a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority’ Merriam-Webster online dictionary 2013

When writing Scouting for Boys, Baden-Powell drew inspiration from the work of Ernest Thompson Seton, who founded the Woodcraft Indians in 1902 and later became instrumental in spreading Scouting throughout North America. Baden-Powell also drew inspiration for the Scout Law from the Bushido code of the Japanese Samurai, laws of honor of the American Indians, the code of chivalry of European knights, and the Zulu fighters he had fought against. Like Seton, Baden-Powell chose to use a set of affirmative laws, in contrast to prohibitions.

When Guides, members of The Senior Section and adults make the Promise they make a commitment to keep the Guide Law. Brownies commit to a simpler law suitable to their age.

The essence of the Law, as defined by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), is duty to others, self-discipline and respects for all living things. The Law helps members to live by a moral code and the Laws are at the heart of guiding.

The Law

The Guide Law (for Guides, members of The Senior Section and adults) is;

1. A Guide is honest, reliable and can be trusted.
2. A Guide is helpful and uses her time and abilities wisely.
4. A Guide is a good friend and a sister to all Guides.
5. A Guide is polite and considerate.
6. A Guide respects all living things and takes care of the world around her.

The Brownie Guide Law is;
A Brownie Guide thinks of others before herself and does a Good Turn every day.

The Rainbow section does not have a Law.
Using this resource

This resource has been produced to provide Trainers with support to develop and deliver learning opportunities for all adult members within Girlguiding on the Promise and Law.

The resource includes:

1. explanation of the key concepts with suggestions of how to assist Leaders to develop their understanding of the concepts
2. background to the consultation and new Promise of 2013
3. history of the Promise and Law
4. additional resources

Available on the Trainers webpages

5. a range of additional Promise and Law activities www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members’ area > Resource library > Trainers’ resources
6. Outline session plans Trainers can use to meet the different needs of those attending trainings

Trainers are encouraged to develop their own session plans and activities to meet the needs of the participants for each different training session and to modify many of the fantastic activities previously used in training sessions to develop Leaders' understanding of the Promise and Law.
Understanding the concepts

Promise

- Be true to myself
- Beliefs & spiritual development
- Do my best
- Queen & Community
- The Law
- Help others & Taking Action

It’s your Promise

The Law

Help others & Taking Action
Understanding the concepts - *It’s your Promise*
As a Trainer it is important to take time to reflect on the meaning of the Promise to you and the role it plays in your life before you help others to discover their own understanding of the promise.

**ACTIVITY:** based on an activity in the *guiding* magazine autumn 2013

**Ask yourself**
- When did you make your Promise?
- Did you make your first *guiding* Promise as a girl member or as an adult member? Has that Promise changed? Did the change alter the meaning for you?
- When you first made your Promise as a girl or as an adult was it your choice, did you feel ready to make the Promise?
- How do you fulfil the Promise in your everyday life?
- Are your values similar to those of Girlguiding? Do you have any that differ?
- How do you share your belief in the values of Girlguiding with others - inside and outside Guiding?

Perhaps you could reflect with others in your Trainer Support Group, your Tutor, your Mentor or a guiding friend and ask them to share with you too!

You can get other members thinking about the role of the Promise in their own lives. Any activity in the autumn 2013 *guiding* magazine aimed at girl members can be modified to use with adult members.

**ACTIVITY:** based on an activity in the *guiding* magazine autumn 2013

**It’s your Promise**

**What you need**
+ A copy of the new Promise

**What to do**
1. Ask members to think about what the Promise means to them.
2. If they have made their Promise, when did they feel ready? How do they fulfil the Promise in their everyday lives?
3. If they have not made the Promise, this would be a good time to have a chat about what they feel the words in the Promise mean. Are they struggling with understanding any particular part of the Promise? If they are what can they do?

**Additional references**
Why not modify other activities from the autumn 2013 *guiding* magazine (www.girlguiding.org.uk >News > New Girlguiding Promise activities), or other resources to encourage reflection on the Promise by adult members. You could make Promise bunting at a District or Division meeting or ask participants at a training to write a Promise postcard. For more details on these activities look in the *additional activities* resource on the ‘Trainers webpages www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members’ area > Resource library > Trainers’ resources.
Understanding the concepts - Do my best

To ‘do my best’ is to be sincere about wanting to do something and to give that something your full energy. When I promise that I will do my best I am making a commitment to do something to the best of my ability.

ACTIVITY

Role Play
Ask four members to play a character to complete the task indicated on the scenario cards. Provide a container of coloured pencils or crayons and an identical picture to each person. Each member undertakes the task indicated on scenario card, one by one, staying in character.

Person 1:
You will complete the task of colouring in a picture however you will:
- not pay attention
- scribble all over the page for only 20 seconds and say you are done
- not really care about the task

Person 2:
You will complete the task of colouring in a picture however you will:
- ask for clarification on the task
- colour carefully inside the lines
- want to complete the task

Person 3:
You will complete the task of colouring in a picture however you will:
- use only one colour
- finish colouring in as quickly as possible
- want to have done the task right

Person 4:
You will complete the task of colouring in a picture however you will:
- colour carefully outside the lines
- take your time to complete the task
- not really care about the task

Discussion
Ask the group
- Did each character do their best?
- How can ‘to do my best’ vary between individuals?
- How can adults encourage girls to do their best?

Additional references:
Do the Wacky relay activity in the For more details on these activities look in the additional activities resource on the Trainers webpages www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > Resource library > Trainers' resources.to further develop the concept of ‘do my best’.
Understanding the concepts - *Be true to myself*

*Be true to myself* refers to the need to be resilient and build our own internal strength, to stand up for what is right and to have the courage of our own convictions. Being true to ourselves is to listen to our own conscience and act accordingly. Along with the Guide Law, this helps to define how we, as members of Girlguiding, live our lives.

Being true to yourself means following what you believe over what people pressure you to do. This might be related to how you look, dress or act. You need to be comfortable with who you are and not be negatively influenced by others around you. This skill is learned over time but members can develop personal confidence through many of the activities we do in guiding.

**ACTIVITY:** based on an activity in the *guiding* magazine autumn 2013

*Happiness is...?*

The Promise encourages members to explore how they can be true to themselves - and a good place to start is with this activity which will help members to recognise and celebrate the things in their lives that make them feel happy! All you need is some paper and pens.

1. **Hand out a sheet of paper and a pen to each person.**
2. **Ask them to write down the five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.** (You could write the senses down for younger members or draw pictures of an eye, an ear and so on).
3. **Invite the members to think about what makes them happiest through each of these five senses.** Do the same for things that make them feel sad. They can share their thoughts with the rest of the group, to see if they have similar likes and dislikes.
4. **Ask the members, if they could only see one thing or hear only one sound and so on, what would it be? And why?**
5. **Ask the members to think about the differences between how different senses can create different feelings about the same thing - for example, the sight of balloons might make a her feel happy but the sound of them bursting might make her feel sad.**

Additional references:

- WAGGGS Exploring Spirituality in Girl Guides and Girl Scouting (Modules 1-4) [www.Waggs.org](http://www.Waggs.org)
  > Resources > Exploring spirituality
- Me in Mind resource - available from the online Girlguiding shop product code 6033.
Understanding the concepts - Beliefs & spiritual development

‘Develop my beliefs’ is a call to actively consider our beliefs on an on-going basis. It encompasses the journey of spiritual development that we make throughout our lives - and it requires us to stand up and take action. Guiding has always encouraged all members to develop their beliefs and moral framework, both inside and outside the context of a formal religion.

To develop our beliefs we must actively explore, challenge and test them. Both those within a faith community and those who are not part of a formalised faith have beliefs about life, the world and our place in it. And within guiding, those beliefs should be explored and challenged so they can be developed and strengthened.

Discussing one’s own beliefs and the beliefs of others is the key to exploring spirituality. Peer pressure or parental influence may stop girls questioning beliefs, and fear of giving offence may simply stop conversations in their tracks. If we can open up and explore these issues, the result is a richer understanding of the spiritual side of life.

**ACTIVITY**: based on an activity in the guiding magazine autumn 2013

**Spiritual development**

Spirituality can be a difficult word to define. It is not something we can touch, see, hear, smell or taste. In some societies, spirituality is linked to family and community; in others it takes a more reflective approach; and in some societies, spirituality is expressed through good deeds and moral principles.

**What it means to you...**
The Promise encourages members to develop their personal beliefs. This includes what spirituality means to them personally and to those around them.

**What you need**
- Paper
- Pens
- A copy of the new Promise for each group/individual

**What to do**
1. Split the members into small groups, Sixes or Patrols.
2. Give each group a sheet of paper, a pen and a copy of the Promise.
3. Ask the members to discuss and write down what they understand about the phrase ‘develop my beliefs’.
4. Trainers need to stress that there are no right or wrong answers and that if the members don’t want to share personal information then they can give an example of how someone they know expresses their beliefs.
5. The groups can come together and discuss their thoughts as a larger group if they feel comfortable doing so.

**Additional references:**
- ‘Do spirituality in the programme’ p30-31 guiding magazine autumn 2013
- Tools for the job p31 guiding magazine autumn 2013
- Exploring Spirituality in Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting WAGGGS Resource
Understanding the concepts - Serve the Queen and my Community

‘Serve the Queen and my Community’ is a commitment that a member makes to the spirit of service that is at the heart of Girlguiding. When we do something to help protect the world (including the people and animals in it), we are doing a great service to the country we live in represented in the Promise by the Queen and our community. We are all part of many communities - from our unit or the street we live on to our global community. The Promise makes us aware of our own value as individuals but also of the power our collective voices can have.

ACTIVITY: adapted from Girlguiding London Over the Border Promise Resource 2012

Community Wide
When we make our Promise we agree to ‘Serve the Queen and my Community’.
Ask members to think of ways in which they could do this.
For example: look after our environment, celebrate our culture and so on.

Give each group a sheet of paper with the word COMMUNITY written on it and a second sheet with clues written on it. They have five to ten minutes to solve the clues using the letters from the word COMMUNITY.
The clues with the answers in brackets are:
- A place for a baby to sleep (cot)
- A container that you can recycle (tin)
- I Promise that I will do ___ best (my)
- A plant you could grow in your herb garden (mint)
- Opposite of in (out)
- Add up (count)
- Not me (you)
- When we work together we show (unity)
- If you .... your finger you put a plaster on it (cut)

ACTIVITY: Based on an activity in the guiding magazine autumn 2013

Taking action
The Promise makes us aware of our own value as individuals but also of the power our collective voices can have. This activity will help members speak out about a topic they feel passionately about and discover their power as a strong voice for change in their community.
1. Ask members to get into small groups and then talk for one minute each on a topic that particularly concerns them. This could be disability rights, domestic violence, environmental awareness, internet safety, girls' access to education, early and forced marriage, and so on.
2. When each member has had an opportunity to speak, as a group they should decide which topic they wish to take action on.
3. Once they members have decided on a topic, they should write out a plan for how they will take action. This could be hosting an information evening for other leaders, other units and the local community. Or they could write a letter to a local MP informing them of their concern and suggesting an action they could take to help.
4. As well as their topic and the action they will take, they should write down how they will evaluate the impact of their action.

Additional references:
Autumn 2013 guiding magazine ‘Things to make and do for all sections’ p84
Understanding the concepts - Help others
Lending a hand has always been at the heart of guiding. The 21st World Conference of WAGGGS that took place in Toronto, Canada in 1972 stated ‘The essence of Service is the acceptance of the practice of helpfulness to others’.

The Rainbow Promise asks girls to be kind and helpful to others. And a great way to do this is to make others feel good.

Helping other people doesn’t just mean our friends and family. It also includes recognising when others need help or a kind word. Some people are often treated unfairly or disrespected because they are seen to be different. The Brownie Law asks Brownies to think of others before themselves.

Including others is an important part of what it means to be in guiding - and being aware of the abilities of others will help girls be more inclusive. The Guide Law asks Guides, members of The Senior Section and adult members to be a good friend and a sister to all Guides, and to be considerate.


Touched by Joy
We help others when we carry out a Good Turn. We are a friend to all when we help and care for everyone we meet within our own community and internationally. We are sisters to over 10 million Girl Guides/Girl Scouts world-wide when we offer friendship and service across language, culture, tradition and faith. Such service and friendship is a potential source of much joy.

The World Song highlights both the principle and spirit of service that underlies the Girl Guides/Girl Scouts Movement. It also reflects the hope and joy that springs from this.

Play a recorded version of the World Song or sing the words of the World Song and discuss the words and what as members the song words mean to each of us.

Our way is clear as we march on
And see! Our flag on high
Is never furled throughout the world
For hope shall never die!
We must unite for what is right
In friendship true and strong
Until the earth, In its rebirth
Shall sing our song! Shall sing our song!

All those who loved the true and good
Whose promises were kept
With humble mind, whose acts were kind,
whose honour never slept
These were the free! And we must be
Prepared like them to live,
To give to all, Both great and small
All we can give! All we can give!

(Music by Jean Sibelius; words by Gavin Ewart)

Additional references:
Autumn 2013 guiding magazine ‘Things to make and do for all sections’ p84
WAGGGS website - World Song
Understanding the concepts - The Law

Guides, members of The Senior Section and adult members

Guides, members of The Senior Section and adult members promise to keep the Guide Law - a set of rules for girls to try to keep all the time, not just at meetings or when they are in their guiding wear.

ACTIVITY: based on an activity in the guiding magazine autumn 2013

Law - and order!
This activity will help girls think about the principles embodied in the Guide Law.

What you need
- A copy of the Guide Law for each girl/adult

What to do
1. Give each girl or adult a copy of the Guide Law.
2. Ask them to read through the Laws and put them in order of importance. Which one do they think is the most important? Ask them to think about the reasons for their choice.
3. Ask girls/adults to discuss their answers as a group, unit or a Patrol. Each girl/adult will need to justify her answers and the group can try to agree an order, using a method of voting to agree if necessary.

ACTIVITY: adapted from Girlguiding London Over the Border Promise Resource 2012

Law Game
Each girl/adult in a group brings along two or three items that represent different parts of the Guide Law. She explains to the group what they mean to her and how they represent the Guide Law. When everyone has had their turn all the objects are laid on a tray or table. They have to try to remember what was said about each article and who brought it.

The aim is to challenge the girl/adults to think about the Laws beyond the meeting place. She has to present her ideas to the rest of her group and listen carefully to what others have to say.

After all girls have made their presentation the group could discuss what other aspects of the Guide Law might be represented by the same items. If there were any Laws that weren't represented, the group could think about what items could represent the Law.
The Brownie Law
For Brownies a law is provided that is simpler and easier to understand.

A Brownie Guide thinks of others before herself and does a Good Turn every day.

ACTIVITY: based on an activity in the guiding magazine autumn 2013

Respect!
Helping other people doesn’t just mean our friends and family. It also includes recognising when others need help or a kind word. Some people are often treated unfairly or disrespected because they are seen as different. The Brownie Law asks Brownies to think of others before themselves and this activity will remind them of this.

What you need
- Paper
- Pens/colouring pencils

What to do
1. Ask the girls to sit in a circle and talk to them about what respecting others means. Mention how we can be respectful in both the small things we do (like saying please and thank you) and with bigger gestures (like treating everyone equally and including everyone in our activities).
2. Highlight the issue of bullying and discuss how they might treat a new member of their unit or school, or anyone who is perceived as different.
3. Hand out a sheet of paper and colouring pencils to each girl.
4. Ask them to write down the word respect as a heading (you may need to write this out for the younger girls) and to make two columns underneath.
5. In the first column, ask the girls to write down or draw what they think respect looks like, for example being helpful, smiling, sharing and so on.
6. In column two, ask the girls to write down or draw what they think respect sounds like, for example please, thank you and so on.
7. Ask the girls to come together and share what they have written with the group.

Additional references:
Autumn 2013 guiding magazine ‘Things to make and do for all sections’ p84
Background to the Promise changes in 2013

Girlguiding was committed to retaining a Promise that is in line with its original principles, but it is crucial that girls and young women understand and believe in the words they say. That’s why, in the 2012-14 Strategic Plan agreed by the Executive Committee, it was decided to invite all members as well as other interested parties to discuss the Promise wording.

Consultation

- The consultation ran from 4 January to 3 March 2013.
- 44,000 people gave their views.
- Girls from all sections as well as adult members and non-members participated, through both questionnaires and focus groups.
- The aspect of the Promise that was seen to be most challenging was the reference to ‘my God’ and the implications for inclusivity.
- This wording was also seen as a barrier to membership for many.
- There was a clear wish that we should retain one Promise that would work for everyone, so that we did not have a two-tier system in which some people’s Promise might be seen to be inferior.
- Many felt that ‘community’ had a greater meaning than ‘country’ to today’s girls.
- There was a strong wish to retain the reference to HM The Queen.

The Promise FAQs can be found at www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members’ area > What’s happening? > Promise FAQs
History of the Promise and Law
This isn’t the first time the Promise has changed. Since those girls first turned up at the Scout Rally in Crystal Palace Park because they wanted ‘something for the girls’, it’s been updated 11 times - and this is the 12th change. As those girls knew, sometimes change is important to ensure that everyone gets a chance to be part of something amazing.

The last change to the Promise was in 1994 when ‘duty of God’ became ‘to love my God’ and ‘serve the Queen’ was supplemented with ‘and my country’. But with each change the Promise has remained true to the principles on which guiding was founded over 100 years ago.

The Original Promise and Law were developed at the beginning of the Movement’s history. Together they are what set the Movement apart from other youth organisations.

The original Promise
The original Promise in Baden-Powell’s Girl Guiding reads:
On my honour, I promise that I will do my best:
To do my duty to God and the King (or God and my country);
To help other people at all times;
To obey the Guide Law

Original Law
1. A Guide’s honour is to be trusted.
2. A Guide is loyal.
3. A Guide’s duty is to be useful and to help others.
4. A Guide is a friend to all and a sister to every other Guide.
5. A Guide is courteous.
6. A Guide is a friend to animals.
10. A Guide is pure in thought, in word and in deed

To be a Member of WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts), each national Girl Guide and Girl Scout organisation must adhere to the fundamental principles expressed within the Promise and Law.

The words of the Promise and Law are plain and direct. Young girls can understand them, especially if helped to reflect on them. Their depth of meaning, with their broad application to daily living, becomes more apparent as girls get older. The Promise and the Law gives a purpose and a new meaning to life. It provides members with a set of values such as honesty, responsibility, integrity, loyalty, respect, tolerance, self-awareness and a moral framework.

In the years since the founding of Guiding, tens of millions of girls and women have made the Promise each in her own language. Although the words and emphasis vary from nation to nation, the essential meaning is as Baden-Powell originally intended.
Resources

Guiding magazine
Autumn 2013 - Do spirituality in the programme (page 30)
Autumn 2013 - The Promise and Law activities (page 84)
Summer 2013 - Promises, promises (page 91)
Winter 2012 - The art of nature (page 85) and I promise! (page 90)
Autumn 2012 - The feel-good factor (pages 90-91)
Summer 2012 - My body is a temple (page 86).
If you can’t find your old copies, go online to access them - at www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members’ area > Resource library > Girlguiding publications > guiding magazine.

The Girlguiding website
The Promise activities in the members’ area have also been updated to support you in your units - take a look at www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members’ area > Activities > Promise activities.

Rainbow resources
All the Rainbow Roundabouts can help you explore the spiritual side of life through the ‘Love’ aspect of the programme.
- Roundabout Festivals (£5, code 6167), which covers festivals from different faiths and cultures
- Roundabout Seasons (£7.50, code 6170), which helps girls explore nature and develop a sense of wonder
- Jigsaw Pieces (£1.50, code 6165), which has been updated with revised Promise activities.

Brownies resources
Interest badges such as Culture, Discovering faith, Seasons and World cultures can help Brownies explore their beliefs, those of others and their relationship with the world around them.

Guide resources
As well as interest badges like Culture, Discovering faith and World cultures, try Go For Its! such as Globalistic and Peace.

The Senior Section resources
Young women can explore their beliefs through the Personal values octant and learn about other faiths and cultures through the International octant of Look Wider - see the new Senior Section resource (price tbc).

Resources for all sections and adults
- Senses (£7, code 6309) contains readings and reflections to help all ages take a moment to contemplate and give thanks. There are also discussion points and activities to help you bring the reflections to life either through your regular unit meetings, District meetings or Guides’ Own events.
- Let’s Hear it for Music (book £7.50, code 6568; CD £6.50, code 6570) has some beautiful songs to use in meetings or at events to bring people together. Try ‘Starburst’, ‘It’s a Beautiful Day’, ‘Circle of Friends’ and ‘Girls Together Having Fun’.
- On Your Marks (no longer available) has a section on culture.
- Right Now! Right to be me, Right to be heard, Right to learn, Right to live in peace.
- Me in Mind (£7, code 6033)

Other resources
- WAGGGS Exploring Spirituality in Girl Guides and Girl Scouting (Modules 1-4) www.Waggs.org > Resources > Exploring spirituality
• P&L resource based on WAGGGS partnerships.doc
• WAGGGS Exploring Spirituality Mod 5 The Power of the Group