

Guiding Conversations

A warm welcome



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding



Before you have your Guiding Conversation, read this text for ideas and discussion points. You can forward it to everyone in your District/Division before the meeting if you wish, or alternatively give the ideas that are in the text at the meeting.

Think back to when you first joined guiding. Were you a nervous child? Were you an enthusiastic adult? Whether you are a young or an adult member, the welcome you receive will often set the tone for what you think about guiding in general. First impressions really do count!

Volunteers

How does it feel for a new volunteer to join a team where there are already existing friendships and ways of working? This is a question we should all think about when a volunteer joins our unit, whether it's as a Leader, Young Leader, Unit Helper or occasional helper. The answer can give you somewhere to start when making a new volunteer feel included in your team.

Welcoming volunteers in the right way will make them want to stay and be part of guiding. Often it is the most simple of actions that can be the most effective.

'When I first helped at Rainbows, I was introduced to all the girls who told me their names during their Rainbow Chat. It was a fun meeting, but my best moment was when one of the Rainbows came up to me at the end and asked with a big smile "will you be coming back next week?" and of course I did! I'm sure the other Leaders had put her up to it, but it was a great way to make me feel included and welcomed by the girls. It must have worked as I'm now a qualified Rainbow Leader. And I still encourage girls to ask the same question of any new helpers we have!'

Jenny, Rainbow Leader

What can you do as a District/Division to welcome new volunteers?

It is important that everyone in the District/Division takes responsibility for welcoming volunteers. Here are some tips to help you ensure that new volunteers feel welcomed and happy.

- Invite new volunteers to District/Division meetings and introduce them to other members of guiding in the area. Why not arrange for them to travel with another Leader to the meeting so they don't have to walk in alone?

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- Include new volunteers in discussions and decision-making. Ask for their opinions and consider the fresh ideas that they bring to the discussion.
- Try not to use jargon and remember to explain any terms that may be confusing for a new person.
- Organise a social event in your District/Division.
- Think about developing their skills and offer them a chance to take part in activities they will find inspiring.

For further information, download *Welcoming New Volunteers* from the Members' area > Resource library > Growing guiding resources > Supporting new volunteers.

'When I went to uni, the Leaders in my new District really made me feel included. I was invited to Senior Section events and asked to share my ideas at District meetings. At Guides I was asked to take responsibility for some evenings from the very beginning. I was taken to various events and meetings, and really had the opportunity to take an active part in local guiding. I felt very valued and I'm glad I carried on guiding while doing my degree.'

Vicky, Guide Leader

Girls

In 2011, Girlguiding membership grew by one girl every hour. We are still growing today! How can you make sure that the welcome you give to girls will inspire them to keep coming back?

As with welcoming volunteers, you don't have to do anything extraordinary. It's about showing the girls what being in guiding is all about and how much fun they will have.

The next time someone new joins your unit, why not ask the girls or young women how they think they could welcome her? The best way to show girls what it's like to be a young member is through the other girls!

'I can still remember my first evening at Brownies. I joined a very small unit with five other girls. Both the Leaders and the Brownies made me feel really welcome. The older Brownies in the unit told us a bit about some of the things we could do in Brownies during a Pow-wow and we sang some of their favourite songs. I remember that the Leader showed me around the meeting place and we talked about what the rules were at Brownies. We also played really fun games that night. Eight years on and I'm part of a Ranger unit. We welcomed the latest new person in our group by having a water balloon fight, which was really fun!'

Charlotte, Senior Section member

The autumn 2012 edition of *guiding* magazine contains welcome activities. You'll also find some icebreaker activities on the Girlguiding website that can help the girls get to know each other (or see page 3 for the link).

Once you start talking to other Leaders in your District/Division you'll find there are hundreds of ways of welcoming new members to your unit or local area. However you choose to welcome your new members, ensuring that they feel included and valued from the very beginning will go a long way towards keeping them in guiding.

Stimulate the discussion at your District/Division meeting with the following questions.

1. What were the experiences of those at the meeting of being a new volunteer or a new girl in a unit?
2. How do we welcome girls and adult volunteers to our units at the moment? Will anyone at the meeting share any techniques that work for them?
3. As a District/Division, how will we ensure that the welcome we give to new girls and adult volunteers is warm?

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The following links contain further information on welcoming girls and volunteers to guiding

- Welcome to Guiding activities from autumn 2012 *guiding* magazine:
Members' area > Resource library > Girlguiding publications > *guiding* magazine > Activities
- Icebreaker activities: Members' area > Activities > Icebreakers
- *Welcoming new volunteers*: Members' area > Resource library > Growing guiding resources
- *Growing Guiding Toolkit*: Members' area > Resource library > Growing guiding resources
- Recruitment materials: Members' area > Resource library > Growing guiding resources

District action plan

Title A warm welcome for everyone

Action	Date	Person/Group
We will organise a social activity after the next District meeting and invite all of the Leaders to join us.	December 2012	Leaders of 1st Anytown Brownies