



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

The programme

Guidance notes for all leaders

This document gives all leaders a comprehensive overview of the Girlguiding programme and how to use it in your unit.

It is designed for use alongside the range of learning and development opportunities and the section changeover guidance. Any questions not covered by these support materials should be directed to ourjourney@girlguiding.org.uk

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Welcome to the Girlguiding programme

The programme is all the activities, experiences and opportunities on offer to our young members through Girlguiding. It's designed to challenge, inspire and empower our girls and young women, and is continually changing and evolving to meet their needs.

Each girl's experience of the programme is unique. It is shaped by her, her peer group and her unit leadership team. The unit leaders will provide her with opportunities to engage in group activities and experiences with her whole unit, or in a small group with her peers, and she will independently explore and pursue her individual interests.

Core programme activities are intended to take up around two-thirds of the unit meeting time. That leaves plenty of time for local activities, which give each unit its own special identity. These might include locally-inspired social action opportunities, events and joint activities with other units or trips that all contribute to achieving a balanced and varied programme

Every activity in our core programme has been tested with girls and volunteers. Over 40,000 Girlguiding members were involved in their development and more than 80% of the resources were improved following member feedback. This means you can feel confident that they will work with your girls in your unit.

This resource outlines the essential elements of the programme and how you can implement it in your unit.





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Programme overview

Our programme is based around six themes, which are the same in all sections. All activities, badges and awards in the core programme fit into one of these themes. This provides consistency and supports girls when they move from one section to the next, while making it easier for those leaders who volunteer with more than one section.



Know myself: Girls getting to know who they are, what they want to achieve and their role in Girlguiding and the wider world.

For example: guiding traditions, local history, family tree



Express myself: Girls expressing themselves through verbal and non-verbal communication, visual arts, crafts and design, performance and innovation.

For example: storytelling, semaphore, inventions



Be well: Helping girls look after their own and others' physical and mental wellbeing.

For example: resilience, first aid, fitness



Have adventures: Girls exploring the outdoors and nature, having opportunities to visit unfamiliar places and to leave their comfort zone.

For example: survival skills, camping, space



Take action: Empowering girls to make a difference and use their voice to help their local community and the wider world.

For example: fundraising, campaigning, volunteering



Skills for my future: Providing the building blocks for girls to become independent and successful in life.

For example: DIY, money skills, entrepreneurship

The building blocks of the programme are three core elements:

- Unit meeting activities
- Skills builder badges
- Interest badges



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By working on all three of these elements girls will have the opportunity to be recognised with awards for each of the six themes in each section. Plus, an overall award for their section called the section Gold award.

By offering a similar number of activities in the unit from each of the themes, a leader can be confident she has the basis of a balanced and varied programme which will interest and challenge every girl.

The commitment and value demonstrated through each girl's continued membership of Girlguiding is formally recognised through the awarding of an anniversary badge each year.

Each section has its own section handbook which every girl should have when she joins a new section. The section handbook will help her understand what to expect from her programme, tell her a bit about Girlguiding and its history, our Promise and Law, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), and where she fits into it all. It will be of use throughout her time in the section and has lots of helpful information about moving onto the next section, too. The section handbooks give a really good overview of what to expect and enable girls and their families to build their understanding of the section they are joining

Alongside the section handbook, each girl will need her own badge or record book. The badge and record books have been designed to inspire, excite and support girls through their Girlguiding journey. We recommend that each girl has her own badge or record book to enable her to fully explore the opportunities on offer to her, to allow her to choose and pursue the badges she wants to try without having to go with the group consensus, and to help keep her safe when she's doing them.

For Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, the badge book will list the challenges for all the interest badges she can pursue along with key safety information specific to each interest badge and provide somewhere to record progress alongside more detailed information about the rest of the badges and awards available to her in her section.

For Rangers, who unlike Rainbows, Brownies and Guides overwhelmingly have independent access to the internet and are often personally responsible for buying any materials they use for guiding, the interest badge content and safety information will be available online. This is supported by a slimmer record book to enable them to track and reflect on their progress offline.

Programme elements

Anniversary badges



An anniversary badge recognises the continued commitment and value demonstrated through ongoing membership of Girlguiding. They do not require the completion of any specific challenges but are awarded each year on the anniversary of a girl's membership to celebrate and reward her commitment to guiding.

They demonstrate that we value girls continuing to choose Girlguiding in an increasingly crowded landscape of ways to spend their free time and incentivise continued membership.

There are 15 badges available to cover the possible membership of Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers from the fourth birthday in Ulster through to the 19th birthday anywhere in the UK.

They are not section specific.

The first year of membership should always be recognised with the '1' badge irrespective of how old a girl is when she joins.

Unit meeting activities



Unit meeting activities are the mainstay of the programme. They vary in length from 10 to 60 minutes and cover topics as diverse as personal safety, survival skills, DIY, exploring nature, storytelling, guiding traditions, fair play and 3D craft and design.

They are supplied as A4 laminated cards and can be purchased in packs of 12, each containing two activities in each theme.

Each pack is specific to a section and is designed to be a unit resource. Leaders may photocopy the cards for the sole purpose of enabling the facilitation of the activities within their own unit. They may not distribute photocopies to other units.

New packs of activity cards on different topics are released each year.

They are designed to be 'pick up and go' - which means the card contains all the information a leader needs to organise the activity successfully within the unit.



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Using the unit meeting activities to arrange girl-led guiding



The card format promotes girl-led guiding by enabling leaders to show girls a wide range of options for activities they could undertake, many of which they may not have thought of independently. In this way, girls are given the opportunity to choose and direct their programme but are not bounded by their current knowledge or experience. There are a few ideas for how to use the cards in this way in the [programme planning section](#) of this document.

The cards provide instruction to the girls, enabling them to take the lead in completing the different activities.

The language used is appropriate to the age group, but some girls may need peer or leader assistance to read and understand the content.

How to deliver unit meeting activities

As a leader, you will need to:

- Read through the cards chosen by the girls
- Consider any adaptation that might be needed to suit your unit circumstances and individual members
- Gather together the equipment required to do the activity with your unit
- Conduct a risk assessment to ensure the activity can be completed safely

Every card contains the following:

- **Theme indicator** - In the top right-hand corner there is the symbol and colour corresponding to one of the six programme themes.
- **Topic** - The topic that the activity covers is shown beneath the theme indicator.
- **Time** - Every card has a time indicator, to let you know how much time you should allow in your programme planning. The times have been based on feedback from our testers. But remember - every group is different, so some activities may take more or less time than indicated.



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- **Challenge indicator** - This indicates how challenging the activity is expected to be, based on feedback from members who tested them.
- **Title** - Every activity has a unique title, which will be listed in the digital programme recording tool.
- **Aim of activity** - Outlines the purpose of doing the activity.
- **What you'll get out of it** - Lists the outcomes for the girls who take part in the activity.
- **What you'll need** - The list of equipment and materials needed.
- **What to do** - Step-by-step instructions to complete the activity.
- **Notes to leader, Before you start, Try it this way and Top tips** - These boxes provide additional information to help you prepare, run and adapt the activities.
- **Stay safe** - Highlights the key safety information for the girls to remember when participating in the activity.
- **Take it further** - Includes ideas for extending the activity.

Over time, a unit will build up a library of activity cards covering a wide range of topics.

Using the unit meeting activity cards, a leader will be supported to deliver a dynamic and varied programme each year and avoid repetition, which can cause girls in their second or third years in a section to disengage from guiding.

Leaders will also be able to try new things themselves, be supported to offer activities to girls on topics about which they might have limited knowledge or experience, and continually refresh their own experiences as a leader.

Suggestions for programme planning using the unit meeting activity cards are covered in the [programme planning section](#).



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Skills builders



Skills builders are progressive, staged badges that support the development of core skills that girls and young women need, both inside and outside guiding. They are designed to stretch and challenge girls of all abilities and include small group and independent activities, all of which take place within a unit meeting setting.

Each skills builder is divided into six stages, and each stage contains five activities.

Skills builder activities are supplied as A4 laminated activity cards and can be purchased in stage sets.

There are five activities per stage, each with its own card and its own unique title which is listed in the badge or record book.

The format of the cards, and the information contained on them, is like the unit meeting activity cards.

Completion of all five activities in a stage is rewarded with a badge.

Which stages are for girls in each section?

Feedback from our testers indicates that the most commonly appropriate stages in each section are:

Rainbows - stages 1 and 2

Brownies - stages 2 and 3

Guides - stages 3, 4 and 5

Rangers - stages 5 and 6

These are the stages included in each section's badge or record book.

There is no minimum stage a girl can work on in each section and each stage is self-contained, so girls do not have to start at stage 1. The best match for a girl's prior experience and ability should be established through discussion with her leader. This should focus on her being able to build new skills, rather than further rewarding skills she may already have gained in another context. Girls who are new to guiding, those with additional needs, and those who have simply not had the opportunity to develop some skills in the past, may need to start at a lower stage than is anticipated. You should take each girl's individual situation into account.



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To encourage development of a wide range of skills and ensure there are still new stages to discover for girls as they progress through the sections, there is an upper cap to the stage of a skills builder a girl can achieve in each section.

Rainbows	Brownies	Guides	Rangers
Up to stage 2	Up to stage 3	Up to stage 5	Up to stage 6

There are 12 skills builders in total - two for each theme:



Know Myself

Reflect - beliefs, values, morals, cultures and identity

Network - teamwork, goal-setting and building healthy relationships



Express Myself

Innovate - science, engineering, design, and creativity

Communicate - public speaking, questioning, non-verbal techniques and different audiences



Be Well

Feel good - physical and mental health

First aid - kits, coping in an emergency, incident response and casualty care



Have Adventures

Camp - tents, fires, outdoor cooking and site management

Explore - planning routes, navigating, travelling and staying healthy while exploring



Take Action

Make change - identifying issues, fundraising and community action

Influence - campaigning, debating, lobbying and persuading



Skills For My Future

Lead - vision, direction, inspiration and negotiation

Live smart - life skills, cooking, DIY, money and careers

How to deliver skills builder activities



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In contrast to unit meeting activities, skills builders are to be done in small groups because in each unit there will be girls of different ages and abilities who will need to complete different stages.

As a leader, you should discuss with the girls in your unit which skills builders they are interested in, and together decide what stage suits each girl. Once you know what stages you'll be offering, read through the relevant activities, consider any adaptation that might be needed to suit your unit circumstances and individual members, gather together the equipment required to do the activity, and conduct a risk assessment to ensure the activity can be completed safely.

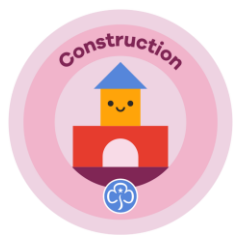
Awarding the skills builder stage badges

Once a girl has completed the five challenges for a stage of a skills builder, the leader signs the girl's badge or record book to confirm the challenges are complete and arranges for her to be awarded her badge. There is no set way to award the badge, but it is a symbol of the effort and commitment a girl has shown. So, a badge presentation would make her feel this is valued and celebrated by her guiding family.

Suggestions for programme planning using the skills builder cards are covered in the [programme planning section](#).

Interest badges

Interest badges introduce girls to new things, broaden their horizons, express their individuality and develop their identity. They support girls to personalise their guiding experience by offering a range of individual choices for activities which are fun, active and challenging alongside the experiences girls have in their unit.



Each badge consists of three compulsory challenges and is designed to be completed by girls outside of the unit meeting.

To make them accessible to all girls, the challenges require a minimal amount of support and resources to complete.

The challenges have been written using language appropriate to the girl - but some girls may need assistance to read and understand the content.

It is important to note that not every girl will want to complete interest badges, and it is not the role of the leader to compel her to. The core benefits of interest badges arise from their



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voluntary pursuit and completion. Choosing not to do interest badges does not prevent a girl from being a full and active member of Girlguiding.

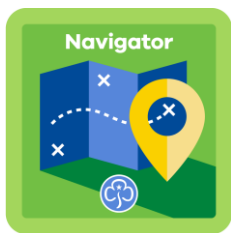
How girls can work towards interest badges



By organising themselves to complete the challenges, girls are developing confidence and demonstrating their independence. Girls may not complete interest badges in the unit meeting, or as part of the programme at a camp, holiday or visit as this undermines their intended purpose.

Several girls with the same interest may wish to get together outside the meeting place to complete an interest badge as a peer group. Since this requires them to self-organise without being facilitated by a leader, it's a great way to develop their independence. It is allowed, but they must each ensure that they individually meet the requirements of the three challenges.

How girls can present what they have done



As a girl completes each challenge for her chosen interest badge, she will be asked to share her achievements with a relevant person (teacher, instructor, leader, other girls etc.) in a way that she chooses. Girls are asked to show what they have done in a way that works for them. This could be a video, a collage, a presentation, a journal or any other means she can think of - all are equally valid and there are lots of examples of what she might do in the badge book.

The challenges have not been designed to develop and test competence and they do not require the demonstration of a specific activity to a specific standard which is assessed. Instead, when reviewing their achievements, girls are required to demonstrate that they have done their best and tried their hardest with the challenges.

Awarding an interest badge



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Once they have presented their achievement, whether to the leadership team or another relevant person, the leader signs the girl's badge or record book to confirm the challenges are complete and arranges for her to be awarded her badge. There is no set way to award the badge, but it is a symbol of the effort and commitment a girl has shown. A badge presentation would make her feel this is valued and celebrated by her guiding family.

Activities completed as part of the school curriculum may not count towards the challenges, but extra-curricular activities girls choose to engage in can be counted (for example, activities completed as part of an out-of-school club like a sport or code club, or lunch groups).

How leaders can help girls to work on interest badges

Your role is to encourage girls to challenge themselves and to develop their interests, independence and confidence by completing interest badges.

By providing opportunities for the girls to look at the different badges and their requirements, making space in the unit meeting time to discuss badge progress with them and offer support and encouragement, and celebrating the achievement of gaining interest badges you will create an environment where girls are more likely to pursue them.

When you support a girl to take on an interest badge outside of the unit meeting environment you help her to learn vital skills which will build her capacity to face and overcome challenges in later life.

Programme awards

Girls in all sections can work towards theme awards and section Gold awards. Girls aged 13+ can also work towards the Commonwealth award; and girls aged 16+ can work towards the Queen's Guide award, which is the highest award in Girlguiding.

The syllabus and details for the [Commonwealth award](#) and the [Queen's Guide award](#) can be found on the Girlguiding website.

Theme awards



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There are six theme awards available for each section - one for each theme in the programme. They recognise the accumulated experience and skills development a girl gains by doing unit meeting activities, skills builder badges and interest badges in each theme.



To complete a theme award, a girl is required to complete the following within the theme:

	Interest badges	Skills builder	Unit meeting activities
Rainbow	1 interest badge	1 skills builder stage	3 hours of activities
Brownie	1 interest badge	1 skills builder stage	4 hours of activities
Guide	1 interest badge	1 skills builder stage	5 hours of activities
Ranger	1 interest badge	1 skills builder stage	5 hours of activities

Girls can achieve all six theme awards during their time in a section, receiving six different badges. The badges are different for each section, so a girl getting all six in every section would gain 24 different badges.

Note: a completed skills builder stage can only count towards a theme award in one section. Girls are expected to complete the skills builder stage during their time in the section where they are being awarded the theme award. For example, a Brownie may complete First Aid stage 2 and be awarded her Brownie Be Well theme award. She may go on to complete First Aid stage 3 as a Brownie but would be expected to complete First Aid stage 4 or 5, or a stage of the other Be Well skills builder, Feel Good, as a Guide to be awarded her Guide Be Well theme award.



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Awarding a theme award

Once they have fulfilled the requirements of the theme award, the leader signs the girl's badge or record book to confirm it is complete and arranges for her to be awarded her badge. There is no set way to present the award, but it is a symbol of the effort and commitment a girl has shown. A badge presentation would make her feel that this is valued and celebrated by her guiding family. A special celebration witnessed by her peers can act as inspiration to the other members of the unit.

Typically, girls would need to be in a unit for a minimum of two years to complete all the unit-based activities required to achieve all six theme awards.

See the [programme planning section](#) for more information about creating a balanced and varied programme.

Section Gold awards



The section Gold awards recognise the accumulated experiences, participation and commitment a girl has made during her time within the section. They provide an overall goal to the programme in each section. Gaining each award is a significant achievement.



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Because of the level of challenge represented by the section Gold award, and the ongoing commitment required over time to achieve it, it is not expected that every girl will gain it. Some girls find this kind of longer term goal motivating and it provides them with an overall purpose and direction to their membership of a section, which can sustain their interest and aid in their retention.



Others will not see the pursuit and achievement of badges and awards as the primary purpose of their membership. For these girls, pressure to pursue the awards might cause them to disengage from guiding. There's a place for every girl in guiding and flexibility for her to gain what she wants and needs from her experience is crucial in promoting this message to girls and their parents/carers.

To receive the section Gold award, girls are required to:

- Complete all six theme awards in the section
- Complete the three-part section Gold award challenge:
 - Part 1: make their Promise
 - Part 2: do something in, with, for or beyond their unit (dependent on section)
 - Part 3: do something relating to the next stage in their guiding journey

A girl should complete the theme awards before completing the section Gold award challenge.

The Gold award challenge for each section is unique and detailed in each section badge or record book. Each one has been designed to:

- Challenge a girl to try something new and push her own boundaries
- Build on her other experiences within Girlguiding
- Prepare her and make her and others in the unit enthusiastic for guiding in the next section or for becoming a young adult in guiding; or to encourage and enthuse younger members to move into her section.



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Each girl should choose the way she completes the section Gold award challenge, and she should be encouraged to come up with unique ways of sharing what she does with her unit.



Once a girl has fulfilled the requirements of the section Gold award, the leader signs her badge or record book to confirm it is complete and arranges for her to be presented with the award. A cloth and a metal badge is available via your county badge secretary.

There is no set way to present the award, but as the highest award available to her in the section the way it is presented should reflect the significance of the achievement. You might want to join up with other units in your area, involve a local commissioner and invite parents and carers to celebrate and showcase what she has achieved.



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Programme planning

The programme has been developed in support of the Five Essentials that are fundamental to Girlguiding:

- Working together in small groups
- Encouraging self-government and decision making
- A balanced and varied programme which is girl-led
- Caring for the individual
- Sharing a commitment to a common standard

The programme resources are accessible to girls, so they can select the activities they would like to do. Wherever possible, they're designed for girls to lead them within the unit meeting place, supported by the unit leadership team. Where it isn't appropriate or possible for girls to run the activities themselves, many activities include opportunities for girls to take the lead in some way.

There are many ways that the programme resources could be used by the girls to select the activities they would like to do, including:

- Offering them the opportunity to choose from a selection of cards and organising a vote for their preferred option(s)
- Splitting the cards between small groups and asking them to select their top 1/2/3. The girls then present back to the rest of the unit their choices, and the unit votes for its favourites.
- The unit are the 'Dragons' (like TV's Dragons' Den) and the leadership team or sixer or patrol leaders each presents an activity to the group. The Dragons then vote, based on the presentations they've heard.
- For younger girls, you could use coloured dice (the ones with a coloured dot on each face instead of numbers) to select, by chance, the theme you are going to follow for each evening. Then use one of the other techniques to choose the activity that corresponds to the chosen theme.

As a leader, you have several key roles to play in this process. Firstly, you need to ensure that the girls are introduced to the full range of activities available to them in the programme and encouraged to choose the things they'd like to try.



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Secondly, you need to ensure that all girls have an equal voice in the decision-making process. Sometimes individuals may feel they are unable to express an opinion that differs from the majority, or from an individual. So, you need to arrange mechanisms for their opinions to be considered such as blind voting, anonymous voting, and small groups with leaders facilitating. Ultimately, the programme will be based on a compromise (each side makes concessions) or consensus (general agreement), but as a leader it is important to signpost to the girls how they can personalise their experiences through the interest badges they select.

Thirdly, you need to organise a balanced and varied programme for all girls in your unit. Once the girls have selected the activities they would like to do (including any activities outside the core programme such as making pancakes, joining the Scouts on a night hike, having a visit from a local charity group, as well as badge presentations, Promise celebrations and other celebrations of achievement) they need to be brought together into a programme that is balanced and varied. The easiest way to see whether this has been achieved is to check if there is a roughly equal amount of time being spent on all of the six themes.

As part of your ongoing programme planning you will also need to review the progress girls are making towards the different awards. You'll have to identify where activities need to be included to support individual unit members in achieving theme and section Gold awards.

Things to consider

- If the unit decides to focus on one skills builder stage in a term, make sure the unit meeting activities bring in the other five themes to balance the term plan and engage every girl.
- Skills builders are designed to be flexible and you needn't just choose one skills builder and concentrate on doing all the five challenges consecutively in one term. You can mix and match the skills builders to meet the needs of your unit, particularly where girls join part way through a term or there's a wide variation in existing skill levels.
- Make sure there is time in the unit meetings for girls to share their thoughts and ideas - perhaps as part of a Rainbow chat, Brownie powwow or Guide Patrol time - not every minute of a unit meeting needs to be a planned activity.
- Support and encourage girls to take the lead in a way that is age-appropriate. For those that can, you may need to allocate planning time, so the girls have a chance to read through the cards and plan how they will set out the room and the resources. As a leader, you will need to have filler activities planned for the girls who are not involved in that process - some of the shorter unit meeting activities would be ideal.
- Set aside regular time to chat to individual girls about their progress and plans for interest badges during the unit meeting.



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- If you are not confident about organising an activity that the girls have selected, talk to other leaders and get some support. For example, maybe someone in the leadership team is more confident, maybe you could consider running it as a joint activity with another unit; arranging the activity and inviting parents to participate with the girls instead of leaders; or inviting an external person to come in and run the activity where appropriate.
- Remember to plan in time to evaluate the activities with the girls - in this way you will also identify the specific likes and dislikes of individuals and you can take that into account with future planning.

There is an example of a programme plan and a planning template available to [download on our website](#).

Risk assessments

All the activities included in the new programme have been tested in units and are suitable for the section they have been designed for. However, every unit meeting place is different, and it is important as leaders that you complete a risk assessment before doing the activities.

Girlguiding has a resource called [Being Prepared](#) that can be downloaded from the website. It will help you carry out realistic and effective risk assessments and meet the requirements set out in the Safety and Safeguarding policy.

Recording girls' progress in GO

The programme has a consistent structure, with elements that start in Rainbows and go right through to Rangers. To support leaders to keep track of what aspects of the programme girls have covered and enable them to easily pass this information on to leaders in the next section, there is a new programme recording section in GO. The section is supported by comprehensive help files and user videos to help leaders understand how to get the most out of this new tool.

You will be able to record unit meeting activities, skills builders and what interest badges girls have done in their own time. The programme recording section will keep track of their progress and you'll be able to see when girls have completed theme awards and Gold awards and make sure girls get the recognition they deserve for their guiding achievements.

We know that many of you will not be able to access GO in the unit meeting place to record programme participation in real time. So, we have developed a simple record sheet which you can use alongside your programme plan to note down the details in your meeting and use to aid your memory when you come to update GO. You can [download it from our website](#).



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This is the first time that Girlguiding has offered this kind of tool to our leaders and we're keen to hear your feedback on it. Send any suggestions to ourjourney@girlguiding.org.uk

What are the benefits of recording activity?

- It'll help you plan what activities to offer so you don't repeat what girls have already done and make sure you are offering a balanced and varied programme
- You'll be able to get an overview across all the girls in your unit of their progress in the programme
- You'll easily be able to keep track of individual girls' progress towards awards and badges
- As other leaders will be recording the girls' activity too, you'll get a great picture of how to challenge and inspire members who move up to your unit

Beyond the programme: next steps in the Girlguiding journey

Once your members have experienced all that the Girlguiding programme has to offer, we hope they will go on to take up some of the exciting opportunities available for young women aged 18-30 in guiding.

The offer for 18-30 year olds is for young women, designed by them and led by them. Each member will choose her own path through a range of themed opportunities to have fun, develop skills and enjoy amazing experiences as part of their own personal journey. Alongside this, young women will be shown how they can use their experience and passion in a whole range of flexible volunteering positions across the organisation, when they're ready.

More information on the opportunities available for young women in Girlguiding is available on [the Girlguiding website](#).