



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

Participation on a Plate

Putting girls and young women in the lead is at the heart of what we do in guiding. However, sometimes this is easier said than done, and coming up with creative ways to engage with our young members can be a challenge! Whether you're a Leader looking for new ways to involve your girls in decision-making, or hold a non-unit guiding role and 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 suit your needs and those of the girls and young women you work with. Share them with other adults in guiding too to give all of our young members the opportunity to truly be girls in the lead - from coming up with activity ideas to running unit meetings or planning residential events themselves.

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Coming up with activity ideas

Use these activities to help your unit come up with ideas for the programme for the upcoming term, the next few months or even the year ahead.

Themes   

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: Rainbows, Brownies, Guides

You will need: Paper and pens

It will take: 20 minutes

Divide the girls into small groups. Give each group a piece of paper with a theme at the top. Themes 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 themes. 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 with each other to try another theme.

Rainbows may need more guidance with this activity, so plan for an adult to sit with each group.

Look at [Good guiding is...](#) for more theme ideas for this activity.

If I had a million pounds...

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: All sections

You will need: Paper and 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 moon, you could turn the meeting place into a moonscape, have a 'dehydrated space food' tasting session, make space helmets or design space crafts.

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.

What is there to do in your local area?

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: Brownies, Guides, The Senior Section

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

It will take: 30 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 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.

Look who's talking

This idea is for: Leaders

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 Rainbow Chat or Brownie Pow-wow.

Get creative

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: Brownies, Guides, The Senior Section

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 at the end of the year what the unit did - 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.

Post box

This idea is for: Leaders, Commissioners

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. 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 still 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

This idea is for: Leaders, Advisers, Commissioners

Use with: The Senior Section

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. 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, 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.

Choosing activities

Use these decision-making ideas to help girls choose what they want to do at meetings.

Tops or tails

This idea is for: Leaders
Use with: Rainbows, Brownies
You will need: Nothing
It will take: 5 minutes

Use this method to help girls choose between two options. 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 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.

Corners

This idea is for: Leaders
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 games. 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

This idea is for: Leaders
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 badge or Go For It! to work on and so on.

Label containers with the available choices. Ask everyone to vote with 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 and so on to try to persuade the rest of the unit to vote for their choice.

Stick it

This idea is for: Leaders
Use with: Brownies, Guides
You will need: Pictures or descriptions of the choices on offer displayed, stickers, badge syllabuses and Go For Its! 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 full badge syllabuses. 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 does the activity with the most stickers. If lots of activities are really popular, try to fit them all into your 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, page 7) 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

This idea is for: Leaders
Use with: Brownies, Guides, The Senior Section
You will need: Computer/tablet, internet access
It will take: 30 to 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 whatever you like. All votes are anonymous and can be viewed only by the poll creator. You could email the link to the poll or post it securely online (eg in a password-protected area of a local website or in a closed Facebook group), telling the unit when it closes.

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?

This idea is for: Leaders
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. 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.

Girls leading themselves

Use these activities to empower and teach girls to take charge.

Girls take over!

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: All sections

You will need: Activity planning template (see Appendix 1, page 7)

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 Baden-Powell Challenge planning and running an entire meeting for the rest of the unit. Use the activity planning template (see Appendix 1, page 7) 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.

Going away

This idea is for: Leaders

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

Take it further

Hold a focus group (see Appendix 2, page 8, for help) to discuss and decide on further details about the residential event: location, type of residential event, theme, food, activities and so on.

Play the game

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: Brownies, Guides

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

It will take: Will depend on game/activity chosen

This is a great activity to get your girls involved in the delivery of some of their programme.

Give each Six or Patrol simple instructions for a game or activity, along with the materials required. After spending some time working out what to do, with help from Leaders if necessary, they should nominate a role for each group member (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 rest of 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

It's important to evaluate what the unit has done - to find out what went well (and keep doing it!) and what could be improved for the next time. A lot of these ideas can also be adapted into more activities to help girls choose.

On the table

This idea is for: Leaders

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, 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

This idea is for: Leaders

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

For younger girls hand out paper faces for them to draw smiles on. They could do real smiles too.

Tell a story

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: Brownies, Guides, The Senior Section

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 gets to really contribute.

Thumbs

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: Rainbows

You will need: Nothing

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, last few months or even 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.

Traffic lights

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: Brownies

You will need: Red, orange and green stickers (or pens)

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, last few months or even 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.

Rate the week

This idea is for: Leaders

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, last few months or even 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.

iEvaluate

This idea is for: Leaders

Use with: The Senior Section

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 for 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 or Adviser to find out what the girls in your guiding area want for their programme.

Question time

This idea is for: District and Division Commissioners

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 to you.

Use their ideas to shape the events programme for your area.

Event feedback

This idea is for: Commissioners, event coordinators

Use with: Brownies, Guides, The Senior Section

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

This idea is for: County Advisers

Use with: Guides, The Senior Section

You will need: Nothing, although food always helps!

It will take: 1 hour

Hold a focus group (see Appendix 2, page 8, 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 Senior Section meeting or a Baden-Powell Adventure 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

This idea is for: District and Division Commissioners

Use with: Brownies, Guides, The Senior Section

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

It will take: Will depend 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.

For further ideas see the Participation on a Plate activities in the summer 2014 *guiding* magazine issue. Find it at www.girlguiding.org.uk using the website's search tool.

Useful resources

- *The Five Essentials* - www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual > Who we are > Guiding's distinctive Method
- *A to Z of Activities* - www.girlguiding.org.uk/guidingmanual > Activities
- *Girlguiding adventures* - www.girlguiding.org.uk > About us > Adventure
- *Survey Monkey* - www.surveymonkey.com
- *Doodle* - www.doodle.com

Search for the following resources at www.girlguiding.org.uk.

- *Good guiding is...*
- *A Safe Cyberspace*
- *guiding magazine activities*
- *Being a Leader e-learning modules*

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 repercussions.
- 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 The Senior Section 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 having their voices heard!