



Spark Guider Handbook



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For additional support or questions about this handbook, please contact
training@girlguides.ca



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Welcome!

Dear Guiders,

“We should never underestimate the benefit to a child of having a place to belong – even one – where they can take off their armor. It can and often does change the trajectory of their life.” – Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead*

Guiding gives you the opportunity to enjoy a unique partnership with girls and other women while developing your own skills as a leader. As a Sparks Guider, you play a key role in shaping your unit’s experience. The mission of Girl Guides of Canada (GGC) is “to be a catalyst for girls empowering girls” and you’re that catalyst! There are lots of tools throughout this Handbook to help you to feel confident in your role and bring GGC’s vision of “a better world, by girls” to life.

If you’re ever stuck and can’t find an answer email info@girlguides.ca and the Customer Care Centre will connect you with the right team.

We hope you have a wonderful Guiding year.

Yours in Guiding,

The Learning & Engagement Team

Look for these callouts throughout the handbook for tips, tricks, and links! The most important links are listed at the end of the handbook in the useful links section so they’re easy for you to find later!



I. Get started in Guiding

Overview of Guiding

Guiding is an opportunity for girls to have fun, connect with other girls their age, and feel like they belong.

Girls meet in groups called units. Units are organized into different age groups, called branches.

Branch	Ages
Sparks	5-6
Embers	7-8
Guides	9-11
Pathfinders	12-14
Rangers	15-17

A unit of girls and Guiders get together on a regular basis. Often on the same day every week, but sometimes less often. We call these regular times together meetings.

Meeting length tends to increase as the girls get older. Here's the typical meeting length:

- Sparks: 1 hour
- Embers: 1-1.5 hours
- Guides and Pathfinders: 1-1.5 hours
- Rangers (weekly or biweekly): 1.5-2 hours weekly or biweekly

Outside of the typical units in branches, girls can also participate in Trex or Lones.

- [Trex](#) is for girls 12-17 and focuses on camping and the outdoors. Girls can be in Pathfinders or Rangers and be in a Trex unit, or they can just be in Trex.
- [Lones](#) is for girls of any age who can't attend regular meetings, so they work by email and mail with a Guider.

Girls and Guiders sign up for one Guiding year at a time. The Guiding year generally follows the school year, usually starting in September and finishing in June.

Your role as a Unit Guider

Your unit is a place where you can create extraordinary moments for girls in your community. As a Guider, you'll inspire girls and be their mentor as they explore new challenges, develop ready-for-anything skills, and empower each other along the way.

Using the girl-driven approach, you will work with your whole unit, both girls and Guiders, to plan and deliver regular unit meetings (and maybe a couple special experiences) for your unit. You'll learn more about the girl-driven approach below.

As a team of co-Guiders, you have additional responsibilities, such as:

- Fostering relationships with girls and with each other
- Following and modelling the [Code of Conduct](#)
- Communicating with caregivers in a timely manner
- Completing necessary risk assessment and Safe Guide paperwork for camps and other special experiences
- Ordering and selling cookies
- Keeping track of expenses

Some of these responsibilities require formal roles within the unit, outlined below.

Working with your Guiding team

You've just joined a sisterhood of Guiders that will work together to run the unit! Here are some unit roles:

- **Contact Guider:** contact person for the unit.
- **Treasurer:** responsible for the finances and manages unit's bank account.
 - If you're interested in this role, you'll need to read the [Treasurer Handbook](#), complete the [Treasurer Training](#) and fill in [banking forms](#).
- **Cookie Receiver:** distributes cookies to units. They receive the delivery and organize the pick-up of cookies from a centralized location.

Working with Junior Leaders

Junior Leaders are girl members who assist Guiders. They volunteer in units at least two branches below them. They're a huge asset to a unit – if you have one, count yourself lucky to have their enthusiasm and experience! Check out [Working with Junior Leaders](#) for more information.

Support from other Guiding members

There are many volunteers in the Guiding community who can lend a hand when you need support.



- **Trainers and Training Advisers:** Across the country, there are volunteer Trainers who run sessions throughout the Guiding year. You can find out more from your provincial council or [Provincial Training Adviser](#).
- **District Commissioners (DCs), Administrative Community Leaders (ACLs), and Community Guiders (CGs):** The DC, ACL, or CG (ACL and CG in Ontario only) provides leadership, support, and management for a district or community. They not only ensure that the district or community operates in a responsible manner, but also have considerable knowledge about Guiding to share with you. Find your ACL/DC/CG's contact info in the [District/Admin. Community Directory](#).
- **Provincial Advisers and specialists:** In addition to Training support, there are volunteers to support with programming, Safe Guide, awards, DEI, public relations (PR), membership, camping, international travel, and more!

For more about how your province is structured, you can check out [Section 2 of Guiding Essentials](#)

Tips to reduce your load

Becoming a unit Guider can seem like a huge task. Here are some ideas to help you share responsibilities and make running a unit easier.

Share the load

Share leadership to reduce stress in Guiding. At the beginning of each Guiding year, connect with the other Guiders and Junior Leaders in your unit to discuss what you'd like to offer and how you can divide responsibilities throughout the year. When girls want to do something that you'd like help with, you can bring in an expert from the community!

Ask for help from caregivers

Encourage caregivers to volunteer by becoming Members or non-Member volunteers. You can do this before your unit starts or at any time during the year. Keep a list of volunteers who are willing to assist with program activities, provide expertise or specialized skills, or accompany the unit on off-site adventures. Be sure to check out Safe Guide to find out which adults might need to have a police records check (PRC).

Engage the community

Ask community members for a visit or a guest speaker. Inviting women guest speakers is a great way to enrich the girl experience. Plan trips to local organizations to learn more about your community.

Girl safety

As a Guider, your most important responsibility is to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the girls in your unit.

Safe Guide planning

[Safe Guide](#) is GGC's comprehensive risk management program, providing you with a systematic process for planning and implementing activities. All activities are classified within one of three colour-coded risk assessment levels (Green, Yellow or Red).

Girl protection and self-harm

If you are concerned about a girl in your unit, we are here to support you! Each council has a Girl Protection Adviser who can provide advice; contact your provincial office to get connected to yours. In all cases of suspected abuse or neglect, you will need to complete an [Incident and Girl Protection Report](#).

From time to time, you may become aware of mental health issues affecting a girl in your unit. If you are concerned, contact her caregivers. If necessary, you also need to complete an incident report. Then, assume that caregivers will take the correct and appropriate action. Read more in the [Girl Protection and Self-Harm](#) document.

Find all the forms and support you'll need in [Guider Resources \(look for Safe Guide\)](#) on Member Zone

Code of Conduct

Everyone in Guiding is responsible for upholding the [GGC Code of Conduct](#), including the girls in your unit! You can find activities to explore the Code of Conduct with them on the program platform.

Creating safer spaces

When in a safe space, girls:

- feel supported, respected, and able to be themselves.
- can be silly and have fun without feeling self-conscious.
- explore their values and perspectives knowing they will be taken seriously.
- share personal stories and emotional experiences without feeling judged.
- are willing to try new things, make mistakes and take risks.



Check out the [Safe and Inclusive Space e-course](#) for practical tips and strategies in the New Guider Learning Path found on the [Training tab](#) of Member Zone.

Guiders in the GGC community have offered these suggestions to help you build safe spaces with your unit:

Establish expectations

- Co-create group guidelines or expectations at the beginning of the Guiding year.
 - Use positive phrasing and “do’s” (e.g., “do be kind”, instead of, “don’t be mean”).
 - Revisit your guidelines throughout the year.
- Find out what girls need to feel comfortable during meetings.

Provide engagement options

- Allow girls to participate in ways that work for them (e.g., standing, moving, sitting).
- Create a separate space where anyone can go when they need quiet time. Have quiet activities available (e.g. colouring, books)
- Make participation voluntary both in activities and in discussions. Never force someone to participate.
 - You can ask twice. If a girl passes once, ask her again later, “what about now?” so she has the chance to change her mind.
- When talking about tough topics, it can be helpful to have some low-key activities happening in the background, like colouring or making bracelets. This way, girls can choose how much to engage with one another during the conversation.

Encourage connection

- Divide the unit into smaller groups for conversations and activities.
- Create groups thoughtfully. Consider:
 - Combining or separating different strengths and interests.
 - Gathering girls who don’t already know each other.
 - Changing groups frequently to allow for different mixes of girls.
- Create opportunities to seek understanding, learn from one another and show mutual respect (girl-girl, girl-leader, and leader-leader).

Validate positive and negative feelings

- Say it’s okay to feel sad, angry, upset, or uncomfortable.
- Let girls know they can talk to you about anything.

- Listen to girls when they're sharing with you and ask what kind of support they're looking for (e.g., a hug, just to listen, how to solve it).
- Encourage leaders to show their own vulnerability appropriately.
- Incorporate “highs & lows” into meetings where girls share a high moment (something positive) and a low moment (a challenge).

Focus on positive behaviours

- Reframe conversations. Try, “have you considered?” instead of saying, “you shouldn’t.”
- Involve caregivers when necessary and appropriate. They can provide insights on girl behavior.

Address conflict and problem-solving head-on

- Step in whenever inappropriate remarks and behaviours occur.
- Start with the assumption that people’s intentions are good.
- Know the difference between questioning and challenging. Allow space for healthy disagreement.
- Encourage girls to solve their own problems and support them when they need help.
- Encourage girls to reflect on their actions by asking, “How do you think that makes them feel?”

Model a growth mindset

- Allow for feedback and discuss mistakes openly.
- Demonstrate that there’s no one right way to complete a task.

If your community is affected by a death or tragic event, your unit may be a safe space for girls to share what they’re experiencing. You can find support in [Guiding Through Grief](#) on the [Program Resources](#) page of the [For Girls/Families](#) section on the program platform.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

GGC welcomes girls and women - cisgender and transgender - as well as non-binary people who are comfortable in spaces that focus on and are driven by the experience of girls. GGC is committed to creating an inclusive environment that reflects the diverse identities, communities and lived experiences in Canada. Every member in Guiding should be able to say:



- “I belong.”
- “I have a place to go where I’m accepted.”
- “I am open to listening to and considering other people’s ideas and perspectives that are different than my own.”

As a Guider, your role is to ensure that every member can participate according to her interests, needs and abilities. Creating an inclusive environment means considering the language and examples you use, the subjects you talk about and those you don’t, and how you present the program. You can learn more about GGC’s DEI commitments in the first module of GGC’s DEI sessions: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and the five Pillars of the Girl Driven Experience.

There are three more in-person Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion sessions to help build your skills and knowledge. For more information on these four modules and our other DEI learning opportunities, check out the DEI tab on the [Adult Training page](#) on Member Zone.

Secularism

GGC is a secular organization that welcomes girls and women from all and no religious affiliations. Moving away from religious practices that effectively exclude many girls allows us to remain true to our values and work towards serving all girls. Making sure that everyone feels included in your unit means that you won’t be celebrating religious holidays or singing songs that refer to “God.” However, it’s important to recognize that some of your girls or Guiders may need to practice aspects of their religion during their meeting time, and you should be accommodating to them. For instance, if you have someone who is fasting, having snacks available during your meeting time for all but them is not inclusive.

For more tools to help make your meetings inclusive, check out [Guiding is for Everyone](#) and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion pages on Member Zone. You can also reach out to inclusivity@girlguides.ca for more support.

The girl-driven approach

At GGC we know that there's no better expert on girls than girls themselves. The girl-driven approach is the “how” of the Guiding program. It puts girls in the driver’s seat, allowing them to choose what they get out of Guiding and provides opportunities for leadership and decision-making within the unit, the wider organization, and the community.

Seeking girl input when designing your meetings is just the start. As a Guider, when you use a girl-driven approach, you’ll be supporting girls’ choice, voice, and action by...

- finding ways to help girls pursue their interests.
- listening to their issues and concerns and taking them seriously.
- supporting girls as they advocate for their interests in GGC and engage meaningfully in the wider community.

There are five pillars at the core of the girl-driven approach in Guiding, and they are key to girls having a positive and meaningful experience in your unit:



Safe Space

A safe space involves making all girls feel welcome, listened to and respected, and enables girls to participate in ways that make them feel comfortable.



Growth Mindset

The goal of growth mindset is focusing on the process of learning rather than just achievements. In Guiding, girls can step out of their comfort zones, learn, and challenge themselves in new ways.



Positive Identity

Guiding helps girls explore who they are, challenge stereotypes and discover new abilities and passions, helping them feel proud of who they are.



Shared Leadership

Girls and Guiders work in partnership, sharing responsibility for creating a fun, meaningful Guiding experience.



Engage Community

Through Guiding, girls have opportunities to engage with societal issues they care about as well as opportunities to meaningfully engage with the organization and their wider communities.

The girl-driven approach in different branches

Keep in mind that the girl-driven approach doesn't mean that you give a Spark the keys to the car and wish her luck! You'll have to teach her about cars and the rules of the road. Once she's a Guide, you might sit beside her in the passenger's seat, so you can grab the wheel if things go sideways. By the time she's a Ranger, you can sit in the back seat and enjoy the ride, offering directions when asked.



Girls have different needs and abilities, which is why girl-driven Guiding looks different for each branch and unit. Program activities encourage girls to take the lead in age-appropriate ways.

Sparks and Embers

Our youngest members may not lead meetings or plan the annual unit calendar on their own, but they can still share their interests and choices in lots of ways. Girls can create an “about me” picture and update it over the Guiding year. Younger girls can share their choices through tangible and visual representations of activity options (try the program Discovery Sheets on the program platform).

Guides

Girls can share their interests’ using games, dotmocracies (dot-voting) and surveys, and check in regularly, as girls’ interests change. Guide-age girls can exercise lots of leadership ability. Invite them to contribute their unique skills and knowledge by leading a simple activity in their patrols. Support positive identity by offering a variety of activities to help awaken new interests – include some that are new for girls.

Pathfinders and Rangers

Ask yourself: “Am I leading girls in a way that increases their independence?” Older girls can share how they want Guiders to support them. They can explore the program platform to “like” and “favourite” activities and can pretty much plan their own meetings. Invite girls to identify their strengths and the skills they want to practise – engage them as “experts” in their areas of strength.

Check out the Girl-Driven checklist on the [For Spark Guiders](#) page on the platform to make your Spark meetings more girl-driven!

Engaging Sparks

Sparks can participate in shaping their Guiding journey. As their Guider, get to know your Sparks so you can adjust and plan in ways that match the girls’ interests. Girl-driven planning is flexible and responsive to the girls in your unit. Here are some simple strategies to help you listen to the voices and incorporate the choices of your Sparks:

Be encouraging

Never push a girl to participate. Encourage her gently and entice her with something she especially enjoys, such as painting a picture or playing a game. Be aware of physical

conditions or other personal limitations. For example, if a girl isn't feeling well, encourage her to take some quiet time instead of playing that game this time. Choose or adapt activities so that all girls can participate.

Provide extra challenges for older girls

Girls mature a great deal between the ages of five and seven. There might be times when it makes sense to divide girls according to age to enable older girls to take on more challenging activities. Also, some girls might want to do more than others – add something extra to keep these girls interested and engaged.

Give directions one step at a time

Use different ways of explaining directions: through role-play, lecture and demonstration. Use short sentences and give directions one step at a time.

Be a caring role model

The girls will mirror your mood and tone. Be positive, happy and enthusiastic. Demonstrate activities and join in! Be a role model for the behaviour you would like to see by the girls.

Use Spark helpers

Sparks love to help. Being a special helper means a lot to the girls and enables them to develop a sense of responsibility. It also gives them a sense of belonging and ownership in unit activities. Designate a different girl each week to be your helper and give her a special name, such as "Sparkle." Put all the girls' names into a basket and draw one name each week until everyone has a turn.

Plan programs that use lots of energy

Spark-age girls are bursting with energy. Organized physical activity channels this energy in positive ways. Play active games for approximately 20 minutes at each meeting. Try a variety of activities and mix up quiet time with active time – be prepared to keep them busy!

Be sensitive to conflicts

Girls at this age tend to be inwardly focused and need adult guidance. Remind them of the results of their actions and provide frequent reassurance and praise.



Encourage the girls to help each other

Your Spark unit is a great place for girls to develop sensitivity towards others. Look for ways each girl can help someone else.

Promote participation

Watch for girls who hold back from games and activities. Try to explore the reason and help them feel comfortable. Consider pairing two girls as “special buddies” so that no one feels alone.

Guider resources

Member Zone

Once you finish screening, watch for an email with your access to Member Zone. Here, you'll find:

- your [member profile](#) iMIS number and contact information.
- [your roster](#), listing all the members in your unit.
- safety supports, including [Safe Guide](#) and [forms](#).
- [unit communication templates](#).
- [training](#).
- [cookie information](#).

***An iMIS number is the personal identifier for all members in Guiding.
You'll need this number often, so record it in a safe place.***

Training

GGC is dedicated to helping you develop your skills and competencies. Find training as in-person, e-course, and virtual formats. Keep an eye on the [National Training Calendar](#) and your [Provincial Council events calendar](#) for opportunities.

The New Guider Learning Path

The New Guider Learning Path is made up of five courses that ensure you feel confident and prepared to lead your unit. We recommend completing these five courses within the first six months of joining a unit. (Note that it is mandatory for all new Guiders to complete Safe Guide training.)

1. **The Girl Program** – Discover what girls do in Guiding, including how they can earn badges and awards, and get to know our exciting program platform! [Take The Girl Program as an e-module](#).
2. **Building Unit Guider Skills** – Learn how to empower girls using the girl-driven approach and work with them to build fun, engaging unit meetings. [Take Building Unit Guider Skills as an e-module](#).
3. **Safe and Inclusive Space (e-module only)** – Reflect on strategies for creating welcoming, accessible experiences for all girls in Guiding. [Take Safe and Inclusive Space as an e-module](#).
4. **Safe Guide** – Master the activity planning and risk management guidelines to deliver a safe Guiding program. [Take Safe Guide as an e-module](#).
5. **All About the Branch** – Explore Guiding traditions and the unique abilities of girls in every branch. Take the All About the Branch e-module for: [Sparks](#) | [Embers](#) | [Guides](#) | [Pathfinders](#) | [Rangers](#).

You can find the online version of these courses as well as other helpful resources on the [Training page](#) on Member Zone.

[The program platform](#)

On the program platform, you can find activities like games, field trips, experiments, and crafts. You can also create meetings, track badge progress, and view the activities that girls may have tried before.

You'll need to set up your account before you can sign in. Select "Register" at the top of the landing page of experience.girlguides.ca.

Below, in parts two and three of this handbook, you'll learn more about how the program and the platform work.

Learn more about the program platform with the [Platform Support Tools](#).

[The Girl Guide Store](#)

To order badges and other supplies, visit thegirlguidestore.ca. You'll find:

- uniform
- badges and insignia (like pins)
- fun swag like t-shirts, hats, and mementos



Guidepost

Guidepost is a weekly email with announcements about new programming, special opportunities, events, and news from your province. Be sure to read it each week so you're up-to-date on what's happening in Guiding!

II. The Guiding program for Sparks

Guiding with Sparks

This section will introduce you to some of the most important things you need to know as you get started with Sparks. It will also give you a quick overview of the Spark program and all the badges available for Sparks to earn.

If this is your first time working with Spark-aged girls or you'd like a refresher, check out the [All About the Branch: Sparks e-course](#) on the [Training page](#) on Member Zone.

The Spark Sign

The Spark Sign is made with the first two fingers of the right hand to represent the two parts of the Sparks Promise.

The sign is always used when the Promise is repeated.



The Spark Promise

All girls in Guiding make a promise to uphold the values that connect the Guiding sisterhood. Sparks have their own special promise that they recite while making the Spark Sign:

I promise to share and be a friend.

Many units make the sign and say the Spark Promise together as part of their opening. See more suggestions on how to open your meetings below!

The program structure

If the girl-driven approach is the “how” of Girl Guides, the program is the “what.” Each branch in Guiding, from Sparks to Rangers, is built around the same eight program areas, each with three themes. Although the program areas remain the same across the branches, the activities themselves grow in complexity to meet the needs of specific age groups.

Unit meetings are generally organized around a set of activities chosen from one or more themes. As girls complete activities, they can earn theme badges. You'll find hundreds of activities for each branch on the program platform at experience.girlguides.ca.



You can find badge earning guidelines in the “Spark Badges” section.

Program areas and themes

Here are the program areas and themes you and your Sparks can explore:

Guide Together Program Area



Explore what it means to be part of Guiding in Canada and the global Guiding Movement. In this program area, you'll learn about Guiding history, enjoy tons of fun and games, and find out what it's like to be a Girl Guide at various ages here in Canada and around the world. Welcome to the Sisterhood!

Guide Together Themes



Our Story

Discover your place in Girl Guides and connect through stories and traditions. Explore the Guiding Promise and Law, experience Guiding ceremonies, and taste (and sell!) cookies. Plan your meetings and build your Guiding experience, at every branch level!



Spirit of Guiding

Come together and embrace the sisterhood within your unit. In this theme you might run a meeting to celebrate a special day, plan a campfire singalong or just be silly while enjoying Guiding games, crafts and fun challenges.



Global Guiding

Take a trip around the Guiding world without leaving your meeting space! Learn about the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and celebrate Guiding with girls across the globe.

Into the Outdoors Program Area



Explore the nature all around you – from the bird on your windowsill to the wildlife in Canada’s national parks! In this program area, you can discover new things in nature, experience camping and go on adventures as a unit, and find new ways to stand up for our one and only Earth. It’s your world – step outside and do some exploring!

Into the Outdoors Themes



Nature Discoveries

Connect with the wilderness wherever you are – from the heart of the city to a back-country trail and anywhere in between. Head outside and get to know the plants and animals who share your neighbourhood, or investigate how nature works from the comfort of your meeting space.



Camping Skills and Adventures

Build your camping skills and outdoor survival know-how so you can be prepared for anything. Whether you love to sleep outside under the stars or snug in a comfy cabin, this is your chance to make the world your playground!



Our Shared Planet

Investigate how humans fit into Earth’s environment and find ways to be a good neighbour to all living things. Learn about how people in the past and present have cared for the planet as you brainstorm what you can do to build the Earth a better future.



Build Skills Program Area



Explore the life skills you have now – and the skills you want to build. In this program area, you'll learn how to fix things and make things, and how to plan and budget. You'll also look into your future and explore jobs and careers. Get out your toolbox and make space on your dream board – let's get going!

Build Skills Program Area



Money Sense

Build the skills you need to make choices about your money. Activities in this theme will help you learn about budgeting, saving and spending, and how money is used around the world.



Life Stuff

Develop the skills you need to thrive in your life. Learn how to lead, develop your communication skills, navigate your way through time management, explore different jobs and careers, and test out setting and achieving personal goals.



How To

Build the hands-on skills you need to take on projects and do it yourself. Busted bike? Flat tire? Hungry for homemade cookies? Want to be first aid savvy? Start with the basics, then take your know-how to the next level.

Explore Identities Program Area



Explore what makes you unique and appreciate difference in other people. In this program area, you'll spend time getting to know your true self and discover the value in how we're all so unique. Tap into the power of being YOU!

Explore Identities Themes



Being You

Explore your personal identity, values and beliefs, and develop your confidence and self-esteem. Learn how to block out peer pressure, media messages and negativity on your way to nurturing your true self.



Different Together

Explore diversity in your unit and community, and discover the importance of being inclusive. Create more meaningful connections within your community by embracing and celebrating the difference in everyone.



Gender Power

Explore girl empowerment and feminism, and discover the power in being who you are. Learn about the barriers girls and women face, whether at school, work or in your community and build the skills you need to tear them down!



Experiment and Create Program Area



Explore how the world works and put your stamp on it! In this program area, you'll do hands-on experiments in science, tech, engineering, and math. You'll also have fun and express yourself with art. This is your space to use your creativity to make new things and find solutions. Grab your lab coat – it's about to get creative in here!

Experiment and Create Themes



Science Lab

Explore the sciences – from chemistry and physics to forensics and astronomy! Ask questions, try something new, design experiments, test hypotheses and get a little messy as you discover how the world works.



Design Space

Innovate and create! Develop the skills you need to tinker with machines, build robots, code programs and more as you push the limits of your imagination.



Art Studio

Discover art for art's sake and experiment with your own creative vision. Whether you're a budding artist or just having fun, discover your self-expression through visual arts, drama, movement, music and more.

Be Well Program Area



Explore what keeps you feeling good physically and mentally, and how they work together in your life. In this program area, you'll learn how to support your mighty mind, find balance for your body, and support others in feeling strong and confident. Take a deep breath and find your focus – your journey starts here.

Be Well Themes



My Mighty Mind

Build positive mental health skills you can use in your daily life, and explore how to support others in feeling strong and confident. Develop an awareness of and fight against mental health stigma while learning more about your own emotions and feelings.



My Physical Self

Develop an understanding of how your body works best, and learn to listen to the cues your body gives you about what it needs. Experiment with the many choices you have for keeping your body working and feeling good, and discover which ones work best for you



My Healthy Relationships

Develop skills to help you strengthen the many different relationships in your life. Try turning conflicts into learning experiences and practice standing up for yourself while supporting others.



Connect and Question Program Area



Explore your connections with others in each of the communities you're a part of – from your unit to your global neighbourhood. In this program area, you'll discover more about your local communities, learn about Canada as a nation and dig into big-picture issues that impact the world. Spin the globe and check out the world – it's about to get a whole lot bigger!

Connect and Question Themes



Local Communities

Connect with the people, places and things that surround you. Discover how your communities work, and find your own place and space within them.



Canadian Connections

Discover what connects our diverse Canadian mosaic from coast to coast to coast. Explore Canadian heritage and discover amazing women from Canada who have made and continue to make history. Find out what connects us from community to community, and explore what citizenship means in Canada.



World Stage

Become a citizen of the world! Connect to your global community by exploring big-picture issues and celebrating the things that bring people together from all over the world.

Take Action Program Area



Explore how to turn your thoughts and passion into action! In this program area, you'll find the tools and encouragement you need to help you make your mark and push for the changes you want to see in your world. Grab some friends, get planning, and make a difference!

**The guidelines for this program area are a little different from the other ones. Check out the Spark Badges section for more.*

Take Action Themes



Your Choice

Taking action and getting involved in service and volunteering is at the core of Guiding, but what are you most passionate about? Have your interests changed over time? Explore local, community and global issues and discover the ones you care about most.



Your Voice

Are you an advocate? Do you want to take action? Connect to the causes you're passionate about, and discover your individual and collective power to make change. It's your voice – learn how you want to use it!



Your Action

Be the change! Get involved in your community, take on a service activity or project, or tackle an issue head-on. As you explore new ideas in other program areas, use the tools and activities in this theme to take action on the issues you care about! It's your choice and your voice, so choose your action!

You can find a link to an easy-to-print badge index on the Useful Links page!



Types of program content

As you and the girls explore the program, you'll notice that content on the platform is organized into four categories to help your unit plan unit meetings: activities, instant meetings, challenges, and Badge-in-a-Box activity sets.

Activities

Everything in the program is made up of activities. They range from 15-minute games to service projects that can take multiple meetings to complete. The way you mix and match these activities will depend on your Sparks and how you and your unit would like their Guiding year to unfold.

Instant Meetings

Instant meetings are pre-packaged sets of activities that explore a specific topic. For instance, if your unit is interested in engineering, you could check out an instant meeting for a collection of activities all related to engineering. You can complete an instant meeting in one meeting or stretch your explorations out over two or three weeks.

Badge-in-a-Box

This series of ready-made activity sets are similar to instant meetings, but instead of exploring a specific topic, each Badge-in-a-Box is designed to cover one program theme, such as Art Studio or Being You. Depending on the activity options you choose, a Badge-in-a-Box will take from two to four meetings to complete, and at the end, your unit will have earned a theme badge.

Challenges

Like instant meetings, challenges are sets of activities that explore a specific topic. Challenges offer a deeper dive into a topic and take two or more meetings to complete.

The program is designed to be flexible so you can add to or adapt your favourite activities within each theme. If there is something your unit loves to do but you don't find it on the program platform, no problem! You can track your activity by adding a similar activity or the Unit's Own activity tile to your meeting plans.

How Sparks earn badges

Badges are designed to help celebrate each Spark's adventures and achievements in Guiding. Sparks can earn badges for each program area and theme with 32 Spark badges available in total. Remember, these are just guidelines! The Girl Guide program is designed to be flexible and girl-driven. The program guidelines help Guiders set up pathways to progress through the program while allowing girls to have choices at every branch level and in every year.

Sparks is a two-year program and girls may join at any time. Guiding branches follow girls' ages, so girls who join Guiding when they are in the second year will complete fewer than two years before moving up to Embers. There is no pressure for Sparks to complete the full program or earn all the badges.

- **To earn a theme badge (little diamonds):** it is recommended that Sparks complete between 6 – 8 activities in a theme.
- **To earn a program area badge (large hexagons):** Sparks must complete two theme badges under that program area. Your unit may choose to work on all three themes under a program area.
- **To earn the Take Action Program Area badge:** Sparks must complete all three theme badges. Instead of completing a certain number of activities, do the following:
 - Your Choice: complete the [Explore Your Passion Instant Meeting](#)
 - Your Voice: complete the [Driving Change Instant Meeting](#)
 - Your Action: complete 1 – 3 actions

Girls can keep their badges any way they would like to track their progress in Guiding. Many sew them onto a sash (which can be worn as part of their uniform) or put them onto a hat or blanket. The badges have been designed to fit together but there is no official or correct layout. Check out the tracking sheets on the [For Spark Guiders](#) page to help you and the girls keep track of completed activities (these are also linked on the Useful Links page at the end of the handbook).

Spark insignia

Apart from program badges, there are also other items that mark milestones and achievements in the Spark program that can be worn as part of their uniform.



The Enrolment Pin indicates a girl has made her Spark Promise and is now a member of Sparks.





Membership Pins indicate the number of years members (girls and adults) have been in Guiding. Most units present membership pins during enrolment ceremonies.



The Fun and Friendship Pin is given to girls at the end of Sparks when they move up to Embers and can be worn as part of the Embers uniform.

Optional insignia

- *The Unit Title Tape* shows the name and number of the Spark unit.
- *The Lones pin* is presented to girls participating as a member of Lones instead of in a traditional unit.

Uniforms

The uniform for girls and adults is a GGC-branded navy blue t-shirt or tunic and can be purchased from [The Girl Guide Store](#).

Uniforms are encouraged, but not mandatory. Uniform inspections are not a part of Guiding.

In addition to the t-shirt or tunic, you may choose to wear optional items:

- For girls: Branch tie, badge sash
- For adult members: Pin tab, adult scarf

Guiding names

Guiders in your unit might use nicknames, such as Sparkle, Ruby, or Chickadee. There is a longstanding tradition in Guiding where the adults and Junior Leaders are given special names. These “Guiding names” are entirely optional.

You and the girls in your unit can decide if you want to use Guiding names or if you want to use first names. If you already have a Guiding name, you can keep using it. Or ask your unit to help you choose a Guiding name. Some Spark Guiders use gemstone-inspired names, others bring names from other units or camp with them, and some invite girls to come up with suggestions to vote on. This is entirely up to you and your unit.

III. Leading a unit

Meeting structure

Sparks usually meet for about an hour every week and girls can join your unit at any time. Because Spark units meet once a week, a routine helps Sparks feel comfortable and know what to expect. One tried and tested model looks like this:

Opening	5 minutes	Welcome everyone, say the Spark Promise, sing a song or host an opening ceremony unique to your unit. <ul style="list-style-type: none">For ideas, check out the Spark Openings and Closings activity or look on the program platform for more ideas.
Circle	10 minutes	Sharing time and talking about what to expect for the meeting – also called a friendship circle. This is a quick way to check in with your unit.
Program activities	40 minutes	This is your chance to dive into program activities! Choose two or three different activities, or work on a larger project in this time slot. Some Sparks like a mix of quiet and active activities that each take around 15 minutes or less.
Closing	5 minutes	Reminders, goodbyes, and a song or two, if you'd like.

Looking for some song ideas for your opening or closing? Here are a few fun songs you can try. The music to go with these songs (and suggestions for many more songs!) is published in the [Let's Sing](#) resource page.

Opening song

The Sparks are Here

Sparks jump up when you light the fire.
Sparks jump up and give a big cheer.
Sparks jump up as flames get higher.
The Sparks! The Sparks! The Sparks are here!



Opening song

The Sparks are Here

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The Sparks! The Sparks! The Sparks are here!

Closing songs

Buddies and Pals

You and me, we're gonna be partners
You and me, we're gonna be pals
You and me, we're gonna be partners,
buddies, and pals

Make New Friends:

Make new friends but keep the old;
one is silver and the other gold.
A circle's round, it has no end,
that's how long I want to be your friend.

Friendship Song

I promise to share and be a friend
By showing we care it's love we send
Though the world is so wide
With love deep inside
It's easy to be a friend, a friend.

Spark stories

There is a collection of different stories that you can share with your Sparks throughout the year to get them excited about new topics or help them understand Guiding. You may read one to get ready for enrolment or at any other time during the year.

You can find links to different Spark stories on the [Shaping Our Story](#) instant meeting on the platform!

Guiding year checklist

Here's a snapshot of some of the tasks you can expect over the year.

Late summer

- Check the roster every two weeks
- Send welcome message to caregivers
- Send welcome message to new Guiders

- Meet with fellow Guiders to divide responsibilities and discuss how the load will be shared

Fall

- Email caregivers with important information (first meeting date, times of meetings, names of Guiders and contact information, etc.)
- If numbers are low, consider hosting a Bring-A-Friend meeting
- Enrollment and badge distribution
- Plan one field trip
- Sell chocolatey mint cookies
- Order cookies for spring

Winter

- Celebrate [World Thinking Day](#)
- Plan a sleepover

Spring

- Sell classic cookies
- Plan a special event
- Advancement and badge distribution
- Unit Treasurer completes year-end reconciliation
- Talk about roles for next year, who is or isn't returning, plans for next year, ordering cookies for next year, etc.

Planning with the girl-driven approach

Sparks can play an active role in shaping their Guiding journey. As their Guider, get to know your Sparks so you can adjust and plan in ways that match the girls' interests.

For more, check out the [Shaping Our Story Instant Meeting for Sparks on the program platform](#) or the [Girl Driven Leadership Strategies for Sparks on the For Spark Guiders page on the program platform](#).

Here are some simple strategies to help you listen to the voices and incorporate the choices of your Sparks.

- Start the year with “get to know you” meetings. Learn about each other through icebreaker games and play.



- Use the Sparks' Program [Discovery Sheets](#) to explore the different program areas through colouring and collaboration.
- Create a collage or mural of drawings and words. Ask the girls to draw all the things they love to do and then decide which the Sparks would like to do at their meetings.
- Observe the Sparks. When are they happy? excited? focused? engaged? Go further with what's working and skip activities that aren't.
- In the first month, explore the eight program areas by setting up eight "try-it stations" that show a different part of that program area in action.
- Provide a menu of options. Girls can choose using stickers or by standing at different locations.
- Use your Sparks' favourite activity types (crafts, arts, or active games) to introduce unexplored program areas and themes (e.g., "We love art, but not camping...so let's try art outdoors").
- Be a role model. Let the girls gather around to see what makes it so much fun for you (e.g., when girls are playing in a park, start to make trail signs). Sparks are curious - they will come to watch!
- Bring in older girls to talk about what they loved to do when they were Sparks.
- Invite women guest speakers to share non-traditional roles and experiences.
- Try "Spark of the week". Encourage and give opportunities for quieter girls to choose activities.
- Check-in with girls regularly. Highlight when girls try something new and build on past successes.
- Plant seeds of the new program areas and themes girls don't yet know about. Sparks may not be aware of what they would like.

You can find Discovery Sheets on the [For Spark Guiders](#) page on the program platform and linked on the Useful Links page in this handbook.

Building a unit calendar

- Create a big, colourful calendar using chart paper. Ask the girls to draw pictures of the seasons.
- Talk about the time of year (e.g., fall, winter, spring) and plan your unit's seasonal activities (e.g., skating in winter, gardening in spring).
- Use images of favourite activities and ask the Sparks to vote on what to try first.
- Identify key dates and opportunities for girls using pictures on post-its (e.g., community campfires or provincial camps). They can be moved added to or removed from the calendar.
- Plan in small increments. Choose activities one month at a time.
- Try "Sparks Choice". Encourage each girl (with help from a caring adult) to explore the program platform and select an activity for the unit to do.

The Girl-Driven Guiding checklist for Sparks is a quick reference guide to what safe space, growth mindset, positive identity, shared leadership, and engaging community could look like in your unit. You can find it on the [For Spark Guiders](#) page on the program platform or linked at the end of the handbook.

Celebrations and special events

In the wider sisterhood of Guiding, there are different celebrations that Spark units can take part in. Here are a few suggestions to help you with your planning:

Celebrations

- ***Enrolment Ceremony:*** At the beginning of the year, this is a celebration to welcome first-year and new Sparks into the unit. This is a great opportunity for your second-year Sparks to take the lead and welcome them. You can do this as a unit or invite families to attend.
- ***Advancement Ceremony:*** At the end of the year, your second-year Sparks are moving up to the next branch. This is a chance to celebrate the year and have your first-year Sparks take the lead and say goodbye. You can invite families or other units to your ceremony, including the units that your Sparks might be moving to.

The program platform has some ideas to help you plan [Enrolment Ceremonies](#) and [Advancement Ceremonies](#). You can find printable [Enrolment and Advancement certificates](#) on the [Certificates](#) page on the platform.

Special events

- ***World Thinking Day (WTD):*** On February 22, Girl Guides and Scouts around the world celebrate the joint birthday of the Guiding and Scouting founders Lord and Lady Baden-Powell. It's a chance to celebrate Guiding around the world. Many Provincial Councils plan special activities and events to celebrate, and the [World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts \(WAGGGS\)](#) typically releases themed programming. Check out their social media feeds and [websites](#) for more.
- ***International Day of the Girl (IDG):*** Every October 11, this special day is celebrated. Each year, WAGGGS creates activities that you can try with your unit. You can track it on the platform with Unit's Own or the WAGGGS Activity: Day of the Girl placeholder. You don't have to celebrate it on the date. You can use the week or the entire month for inspiration. Check out the [WAGGGS IDG programs](#) for more.



- *International Women's Day (IWD)*: Yearly on March 8, IWD is celebrated world-wide! Check out the program platform for ways that you can celebrate the steps that women have taken towards gender equality.

Search the program platform in advance of a special day and keep an eye on Guidepost to see what plans are being made at national and provincial levels.

Special experiences

Special experiences can be anything beyond your usual unit meetings, such as field trips, sleepovers, guest speakers, or bridging events (an event with another unit). Think about your unit's interests and what's available in your community to plan something special. For example, your unit could:

- Visit a local fire station, gallery, or museum.
- Participate in an active outing that is appropriate for the ability of your unit such as [mini-golfing](#), [bowling](#), or [tobogganing](#).

Check out the [Unit Experience Compass](#) for more ideas for special experiences!

Getting girls outdoors and camping

Sparks should have several outdoor meetings throughout the year that enhance their understanding of the natural environment. Each branch's program offers many suggestions for getting outdoors through the Into the Outdoors Program Area.

Camping (day or overnight) is a great way to get together and get outdoors with your unit. It is an opportunity for Sparks to work together in a new environment, take on leadership roles, learn new skills and gain an appreciation for exploring the outdoors while building environmental awareness. It's also part of what makes Guiding unique as an extra-curricular activity.

For both sleepovers and camps, keep in mind that some of the Sparks in your unit (or their families) may not be comfortable with overnight activities. Keep this in mind and be sure to check in with Spark families before you start planning.

Want to build your outdoor skills? Learn about the OAL (Outdoor Activity Leadership) program in the [Training](#) tab of Member Zone. Find sessions in the [National Training Calendar](#) or in your provincial events calendar (see the links on the [Useful Links](#) page of this handbook).

Unit funds and expenses

Your unit Treasurer is responsible for the care and management of your unit's bank account. Depending on the province you are in, you may or may not receive a portion of the registration fees to cover your costs. You or one of your Guiders can act as your unit's Treasurer, or you can ask a caregiver to take this on (be aware that a caregiver will have to complete a police records check, but they don't have to register as a member).

Units should work with their treasurers to decide on a budget for the year and ensure everyone understands appropriate expenses for the unit.

Learn more about unit finances and access financial forms on the [Financial](#) page on Member Zone!

Cookies

Cookie sales enable Girl Guides of Canada to support every aspect of the organization. By engaging in cookie sales, girls learn responsibility, build their confidence, and gain the money mastery skills needed for any young entrepreneur! Your unit will receive a portion of each case sold to fund your activities.

Cookie sales run on a two-season campaign cycle: chocolatey mint cookies in the fall and the classic chocolate and vanilla cookies in the spring.

Find the [Unit Cookie Distribution Form](#) in the [Resource Centre](#) under the [Cookies](#) tab on Member Zone.

Be prepared and more

The Girl Guide Motto challenges everyone in Guiding to do their best to "be prepared" for the adventures ahead. We hope you remember that you are not alone on your Guiding journey with Sparks. Together with your co-Guiders and the broader Guiding community,



you're ready to take on any experience that your unit may have! You've got this and we hope you have a wonderful year with your Spark unit.

Yours in Guiding,

The Learning & Engagement Team

Useful links

- [Program platform](#)
 - [Big Ideas calendar](#) - year-at-a-glance resource filled with planning tips and activity inspiration. You'll find featured programming here and in Guidepost, with enough content for at least two meetings for each Big Idea.
 - [Sparks Unit Compass](#) - This interactive tool is packed with resources and activity ideas from the program platform to help you plan your meetings.
 - [For Spark Guiders](#)
 - Girl-driven Guiding checklist: Sparks
 - A Spark Story: Crystal's New Friend
 - Discovery sheets
 - Program index
 - Printable Sparks badges
 - Printable badge tracking sheets:
 - Individual Spark tracking sheet
 - Unit tracking sheet
 - [Certificates page](#)
 - Enrollment certificate
 - Advancement certificate
- [Member Zone](#)
 - [New Guider Learning Path](#) (outline)
 - [The Girl Program](#)
 - [Building Unit Guider Skills](#)
 - [Safe and Inclusive Space](#)
 - [Safe Guide](#) (training on what it is and how to complete it)
 - [All About the Branch: Sparks](#)
 - [Safe Guide](#) (all the forms and resources you need to complete Safe Guide forms)
 - Safe Guide forms
 - Safe Guide portal (used by members in ANY, BC, NB, NL, NS, ON and SK Councils to submit Safe Guide forms)
 - Safe Guide Pocket Planners
 - Safe Guide retention form
 - Incident and Girl Protection Submission form
 - Girl Protection and Self-Harm information
 - [unit communication templates.](#)
 - [Unit finances](#)
 - [Diversity, equity and inclusion](#)
- [The Guide Store](#)
- [Guidepost](#)



Useful contacts

All questions can be directed to info@girlguides.ca and GGC's Customer Care Team will connect you with the right information.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Do you have questions about DEI in Guiding? Reach out to inclusivity@girlguides.ca for any questions or concerns.

If you would like to learn more about DEI learning opportunities, reach out to the deifacilitatorteam@girlguides.ca or look for upcoming opportunities on the [National Training Calendar](#)!

Training and learning

For more information on training opportunities for adults, visit the [Training for Adults](#) page on Member Zone!

For upcoming trainings, check out the [National Training Calendar](#)!

For any questions or concerns about adult learning in GGC, contact the Learning and Engagement Team at training@girlguides.ca

Provincial Council events calendars

If the link goes to the provincial website, check out the Upcoming Events section on the homepage.

- [ANY Council: For Guiding in Alberta, Northwest Territories, and Yukon](#)
- [BC Council](#)
- [MB Council](#)
- [NB Council: For Guiding in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island](#)
- [NL Council](#)
- [NS Council](#)
- [ON Council: For Guiding in Ontario and Nunavut](#)
- [QC Council](#)
- [SK Council](#)