



2020-2021 Recruitment Event Toolkit

Please use the following resources and guidelines to execute the **2020 Fall Recruitment Campaign: You're Invited!**

If you have any questions, please contact your Recruitment Specialist or reach out to us at info@girlscoutshs.org or call 800-624-4185

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A LETTER TO ALL RECRUITERS

Dear Girl Scout Recruiter,

Thank you so much for taking the Girl Scout story out into our communities. As our brand ambassadors, you are our greatest asset. You are the one who will bring more girls into our Movement so we can achieve our mission of building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

The 2020 recruitment season comes after months of unprecedented change and challenges for our country. To address this new environment, as well as previous ongoing barriers to our traditional methods, we have developed a new approach to recruitment. This approach is grounded in two customer-centered design studies that interviewed mothers and girls with no prior participation in Girl Scouts and limited understanding of who we are and what we do.

As you know, building relationships is key to successful recruitment, especially in new communities. In our traditional recruitment model, we usually jumped very quickly to asking families to join Girl Scouts – before giving girls and their parents/caregivers an opportunity to get to know us. In this new recruitment model, we will focus on building relationships by placing the need of our customers (families who are new to Girl Scouts) at the center and curating their overall customer experience, from the moment they are first introduced to Girl Scouts until they are ready to join.

Along with the girl-focused parties, we have designed a model to engage, educate, reassure, recruit, and retain new parents/caregivers. This model is called a **Plática**, which simply means “a talk,” in Spanish and was developed by the 2020 Latinx pilot councils. In addition to the Guide to Conducting a Plática provided in this toolkit, here are a few things to keep in mind during this recruitment season:

1. **Focus Your Efforts.** The You're Invited campaign and Plática model is not intended to be conducted *in addition to* other recruitment events, but to *replace* previous recruitment tactics that were no longer attracting families. This is not intended as something extra on your plate, but rather as a new way to engage families who have not participated in Girl Scouts before.
2. **Prioritize Family Engagement.** While Girl Scouts is a girl-only space, there is always a role for the family. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, families found it more difficult to spend time together. Sharing how Girl Scouts is a journey the family takes with their girls sets expectations and leads to a more satisfying experience.
3. **White Glove Treatment.** You are likely the first representative from Girl Scouts who families will meet. Treating families with white glove treatment means caring for

them like guests in your home. This starts from the moment they walk in the door to a recruitment event. Greet families at the door, guide them into the event, and make sure they have what they need – refreshments, instructions, or answers.

4. **Talk with Families, Not at Them.** One aspect that makes this model different is that we are not relying on offering a presentation about Girl Scouts and then answering questions. Instead, we are going to ask questions and listen first to the goals and aspirations families have for their girls. Once we understand the goals and needs of the families, we can draw connections to what Girl Scouts offers.
5. **Bring Girl Scouts to Life.** Remember, this is a conversation, so be natural and be prepared to share your own Girl Scout story. Storytelling is the most impactful way to engage potential members. Be prepared to share stories of what girls are doing in your council that show the impact of our mission and how Girl Scouts are making the world a better place.
6. **Model Girl Scouts to Create Inclusivity.** In Girl Scouts, there is a long tradition of gathering in circle, whether it is a Brownie circle, a friendship circle, or a circle around the campfire. Circles promote a culture of listening, respect, and openness to others. Avoid using Girl Scouts terminology or jargon and instead explain the symbolism of traditions, like the circle, with new families.
7. **The Plática Can Stand Alone.** The Plática model is designed to work by itself or alongside a girl-focused activity like the You're Invited parties. Pláticas can be especially impactful when getting to know a new community for the first time.
8. **Have Fun!** There's no party like a Girl Scout party. Enjoy yourself, wear your favorite Girl Scout gear, and share your passion for our Movement. When your belief in the mission shines through, it makes a huge difference for new families!

We cannot wait to see what this year holds for you, your service unit, troop and all the new girls and families who will join our Movement! We are here to support you throughout the year. Please reach out to the GSHS team if you have any questions or feedback.

You're Invited Party Guidelines

In-person Event Set Up

If possible, the event space should be set up in four general areas:

1. REGISTRATION

- Supplies: Tables and chairs; laptop, tablet, or registration sheets; name tags; pens; tablecloths
 - Girl Scout council branded signage with a focus on images that are diverse and inclusive
 - Display simple, powerful collateral: What/Why Girl Scouts one-pager; council information cards; calendar of upcoming council events
 - Include table nearby for light refreshments, preferably with no nuts or other allergens
 - Make sure you can direct families to restrooms and identify whether there are changing tables available
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2. GIRL SPACE

- Decorate for a party! Consider the theme (Animal Dance Party or Robot Building Party) but generally focus on bright and fun decorations
 - Play age-appropriate music at a lower volume as families arrive
 - Configure tables and chairs in a circle (with dance floor in the middle for Animal Dance Party)
 - Greet families as they arrive and pair girls with a buddy
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3. ADULT SPACE

- Arrange chairs and/or tables in a circle with council staff/volunteers as participants, not at the "head" of the group
 - Keep the girl and childcare space in view of adults, especially if this is an unfamiliar space for families
 - Include signage with the Promise & Law, diverse photos of Girl Scouts in action, and inspiring quotes by girls
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4. CHILDCARE

- Set up a space for younger siblings to play under the supervision of volunteers or older Girl Scouts
 - Make sure the space is in view of the adult space, but encourage parents/caregivers to let their little ones play so they can focus on the conversation
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In-person Detailed Event Schedule: 75 minutes

WELCOME 15 minutes

- Greet every family, ask them to sign in, fill out a name tag, collect collateral and pick up some refreshments before settling in a chair or at a table
 - If you collected RSVPs, consider printing simple information (name, email) and just ask families to initial by their name or fill in missing information
 - Make sure you have enough staff/volunteers to keep the line moving and ensure families know what to expect by periodically telling families when you will be starting
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PARTY + PLÁTICA 45 minutes

- Welcome families and introduce all staff/volunteers
- Thank families for coming and explain the flow of the party before asking parents/caregivers to separate from girls and younger children.

See detailed instructions below:

- Girls: Animal Dance Party or Robot Building Party
 - Parents/Caregivers: Plática
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CLOSING 15 minutes

- Bring parents/caregivers together with girls for one final activity. Distribute patches and any other product giveaways.
 - Make sure to thank families for coming and ensure staff/volunteers are available to answer questions or help families register after the party ends.
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Virtual Event Schedule: 45 minutes

5 minutes

Welcome families as they log on and share the flow of activities for the party

20 minutes

Girls: Animal Dance Party or Robot Building Party

20 minutes

Parents/Caregivers: Plática

Animal Dance Party

Adapted from the Brownie Outdoor Art Creator badge

Materials:

- Index cards for in-person; blank paper for virtual
- Crayons, markers and/or pencils
- Use your imagination to bring the animal theme to life!

IN-PERSON ACTIVATION

Introduce the party game to girls and parents/caregivers.

Animals communicate through movements, like dancing, and so do humans—ballet, tap and hip-hop dancing are all ways that humans share their emotions and even tell stories! Today, we are going to dance like animals to express ourselves.

Explain to girls that while they learn how to dance like animals, the grownups are going to talk in another area. It is especially important for younger girls to know where their parents/caregivers are going and when they will be back.

Girls draw animals.

1. Hand out one index card to each girl.
2. Ask girls to think of one animal. *How does that animal move when it's happy?*
3. If girls are stuck, prompt: *Think how a snake slithers with no arms or legs, or how a deer leaps in the air, or how a bird flies from tree to tree.*
4. Ask girls to write the name of the animal and draw a picture of the animal moving when it is happy on their card.
5. When the girls are done, ask the girls to join you by sitting in a circle. Explain why Girl Scouts sit in circles (see Girl Scout Circle).

6. Group girls into pairs – preferably with a girl who was not sitting next to them while drawing. Explain how Girl Scouts use the buddy system.
7. Ask girls to introduce themselves to their new friend.
8. Tell girls to keep their animal card secret and take turns showing their friend how their animal moves. Can their new friend guess their animal?

Note: *If social distancing, let the girls keep their crayons and mark the floor with tape to show how far apart girls need to stay from each other.*

Girls dance like animals.

1. After both girls have shared their animals, ask them to join you again in the circle. Explain the rules of the dance party:
 - Tell the girls that when the music starts, they can start dancing like their animals.
 - Every now and then, the music will fade, and the leader will point to a girl and say her name. The girl should say a new animal, and everyone can dance like the new animal.
 - If a girl does not want to say an animal, they can say “FREE!” and all the girls can dance however they want until the next animal is called.
2. Practice with the girls by giving 1-3 directions before starting the dance party.
3. If the girls get stuck, shout out the name of an animal they are familiar with, such as a monkey, giraffe, elephant, kangaroo, puppy, kitty, dolphin, duck, fish, bunny, snake, seagull, cow, etc.
4. After a round of animals – either when all the girls have had a chance to lead or when the song ends – ask girls to sit back in a circle to catch their breath.
5. Ask the girls to share how they felt when they were dancing. Were they happy, excited, nervous?
6. Ask the girls to think about if they would dance differently if they felt differently. Would they dance differently if they felt tired, hungry, sad, or happy?
7. Start the dancing again but this time, call out an animal with an emotion – a tired elephant, an angry fish, an excited seagull, a silly kangaroo.
8. Continue the rounds as long as needed, taking a break between songs for girls to catch their breath and share how they felt – Did they dance differently? Did the song change the way they danced, or did the emotion make the difference?

Closing with parents/caregivers.

1. Ask parents to join their girls in the circle. Ask one of the girls to explain why Girl Scouts sit in a circle.
2. Ask the girls to take their parents/caregivers and introduce them to the friend they paired up with at the start of the dance.

3. Ask the girls to share their animal cards with their parents/caregivers and ask the adults to demonstrate how they would dance like the animal.
4. When they are finished, ask everyone to join you back in a Friendship Circle.

VIRTUAL ACTIVATION

A virtual Animal Dance Party will follow many of the same instructions, but in a different sequence and for a shorter period of time. Before starting the virtual party, make sure that the participants can hear the music through your online platform.

Introduce the party game to girls and parents/caregivers.

First explain that we are going to spend about 20 minutes in the animal dance party with the girls and parents/caregivers are welcome to dance, too! After about 20 minutes, the girls will do an activity on their own away from the video while the adults talk together. When the adults are done talking, the girls will share their work with everyone, and we will do one last dance together.

Girls dance like animals.

In the virtual party, start with the dance party. Share the same introduction as the in-person party: *Animals communicate through movements, like dancing, and so do humans—ballet, tap and hip-hop dancing are all ways that humans share their emotions and even tell stories! Today, we are going to dance like animals to express ourselves.*

Follow the same instructions, except for pairing the girls with buddies.

Girls draw animals.

After about 20 minutes, ask the girls to think about their favorite animal. Tell girls that while their parents/caregivers are talking, they should draw their animals dancing in as many different moves as possible. Think about how your animal would dance to fast music or slow music. How would your animal dance to your favorite song?

During this time, the parents/caregivers engage in the Plática.

Closing with parents/caregivers.

After parents/caregivers have conducted the Plática, ask girls to join the video again and go around the virtual circle to share their drawings. Play one more song and ask all the girls to dance like their favorite animals with their parents/caregivers.

Robot Building Party

Adapted from the Daisy Robotics 1: What Robots Do badge and Brownie Robotics 1: Programming Robots badge

Materials:

- Pictures of different types of robots (printed for in-person)
- Index cards for in-person or blank paper for virtual
- Supplies to build robots – whatever you have available: shoeboxes, toilet paper rolls, pipe cleaners, construction paper, scissors, glue, tape, markers, crayons, yarn, googly eyes, stickers, pom-poms, etc.
- Use your imagination to bring the robot theme to life!

IN-PERSON ACTIVATION

Introduce the party activity.

Robots are very helpful in understanding information and helping humans do things, especially things we cannot do ourselves. Who builds robots? How do robots know what to do? Think about what you would like your robot to do if you had one. What would your robot look like? How would your robot help you or make your life easier? Today, we are going to learn about robots and build our own!

Review these definitions.

Share with the girls that sometimes when we learn new things, we also learn new words that help us better understand. Ask the girls to repeat the word back to you and make sure they understand the meaning.

Here are three words we will use today:

1. **ROBOTS** are machines that can do many complicated actions automatically, especially a machine programmed by a computer.
2. **ENGINEERS** are people who solve problems. Engineers are creative and use their imaginations to build lots of things, like bridges, buildings, planes, and roads. Engineers are also practical and invent real things that can help people in the real world, like computers, TVs, and phones. There are different kinds of engineers. Engineers who work on computers are sometimes called **programmers**.

3. An **ALGORITHM** is a list of steps that you can follow to finish a task. A recipe is a type of algorithm; it tells you how to cook a dish by following step-by-step instructions. Robots learn how to do things by following an algorithm.

***Note:** If social distancing, let the girls keep their crayons and mark the floor with tape to show how far apart girls need to stay from each other.*

Learn about robots.

1. Ask the girls to join you by sitting in a circle. Explain why Girl Scouts sit in circles (see Girl Scout Circle).
2. Ask girls: What is a robot?
 - If they are stuck, show girls different types of robots. Ask them to guess what each type of robot does. Note how each robot is different and ask girls why robots might look different if they do different things.
3. After they all have a chance to answer, share that a robot can be a simple machine, made of different parts that work together to make a robot that can move and do things.
4. Ask girls: What makes a robot different from other machines?
5. After they all have a chance to answer, share that a robot knows how to follow instructions automatically, meaning there does not have to be a person telling it what to do or even turn it on every time. Does anyone remember what we call the people who create robots? (Answer: Engineers!)
6. Explain: Computer engineers are called **programmers**. They create the special instructions for robots to follow. Robots follow sets of step-by-step instructions, called **algorithms**, that tell them what to do. When an algorithm is coded (or written) into something that can be run by a robot, it is called a **program**.

Play Programmer Says.

Introduce yourself as the Programmer and ask girls to pretend they are Robots.

- The Programmer will choose something for the Robots to draw. Choose something familiar to the girls: a house, a sandwich, a dog, etc.
- The Programmer will give instructions to the Robots for each part of the drawing.
- The Robot(s) will only draw what the Programmer tells them to, one step at a time.
- After 5-10 steps, ask the girls to share their pictures. Do they all look the same? Did the girls notice a step that was missing? What other steps did the Robots need to make a complete picture?

- You can introduce this as **debugging**, or when programmers fix problems in their code.

Build a robot!

1. Give each girl an index card. Ask them to write down the name for their robot and what they robot will do on one side. On the other side, ask them to write out an algorithm with at least five steps for their robot.
2. Let the girls pick their supplies and start building their robots!
3. Encourage girls to think about what their robot needs to do the algorithm. Are there any supplies not available that would help? How can they problem solve by using a different type of supply right now?

Closing with parents/caregivers.

1. Ask parents to join their girls in the circle. Ask one of the girls to explain why Girl Scouts sit in a circle.
2. Ask the girls to show their parents/caregivers the robot they made and explain their algorithm.
3. If time allows, ask girls and parents/caregivers to get into small groups of 3-4 families and play Programmer Says.

VIRTUAL ACTIVATION

A virtual Robot Building Party can follow many of the same instructions. Make sure adults know that girls will need some supplies to build their robots, referring to the examples under Materials, but anything around the house will do!

Introduce the party game to girls and parents/caregivers.

Explain that first we are going to learn about robots with the girls (and the adults are welcome to stay, too!) After about 20 minutes, the girls will do an activity on their own away from the video while the adults talk together. When the adults are done, we will do one more activity together.

Girls learn about robots and play Programmer Says.

Follow the same instructions, calling on girls to share as needed.

Girls build robots while adult engage in Plática.

After about 20 minutes, follow the same instructions to build robots.

Closing with parents/caregivers.

After parents/caregivers have conducted the Plática, ask girls to join the video again and go around the virtual circle to share their robots.

Guide to Conducting a Plática

In Spanish-speaking communities, a plática is a warm and friendly conversation. The goal of our Plática is to create just such an environment so that the conversation between parents/caregivers and the recruiter can yield insights into their thoughts and needs. Council staff/volunteers should act as a guide, but not control the conversation. The primary objective is to **listen** and then draw connections between what the parents/caregivers say about their girls and the ways Girl Scouts can support their goals.

Consider these general guidelines for the conversation:

- Know your audience – Who are these families? What are common cultures, circumstances, or challenges facing this community?
- Avoid Girl Scout acronyms or internal language. Use vocabulary that is familiar to everyone, or make sure to clearly explain Girl Scout traditions and terms.
- Note opportunities to connect the values of Girl Scouts through our Promise and Law to the values and goals expressed by the parents/caregivers.
- Answer questions with clear next steps. Note new opportunities that were released this summer (Girl Scouts at Home/Girl Scouts en su hogar, virtual programming, and new badges) as well as upcoming milestones or council events.
- Before you close, ask if anyone is ready to join or if they would like to gather more information and participate in another Girl Scout experience.
- Note: Some families will not be ready to join after the first experience, and that is okay! Make sure all families leave understand their next step and how you will continue to communicate with them.

Opening + Icebreaker **10 minutes**

- Sit in a circle so there is no “head” of the group, like a Girl Scout meeting. Share with families why the circle is an important part of Girl Scouts.
- Introduce yourself and thank them again for coming. Assure parents/caregivers that this is a safe space to share and get to know each other.

Build connection among the adults through this icebreaker:

- Ask parents/caregivers to think of one woman they look up to. What qualities do you admire in this woman? How has she made an impact on you?
- Give participants some time to think and then ask each parent/caregiver to introduce themselves, share their girl(s) name and age, and then share the woman they look up to and why. Would you like your girl(s) to be like this woman when she grows up?

Discussion

20 minutes

Use the three conversation starters below to prompt the discussion but allow parents/caregivers to continue if they are building their own topics as they get to know each other.

Starter #1: Learn who they are, what they value and how they spend their time.

- What is important to your girl and to the family?
- What is most important to you as a family?
- How does your family support your girl?
- What do you all enjoy doing as a family?
- What things do you do only with your girl?

Starter #2: Learn what they want for their girl.

- What are your dreams for your girl?
- What is most important to you in your girl's development?
- Tell me about when you are most proud of or happy for your girl.
- What does your girl struggle with the most?
- Imagine your girl as a young adult:
 - Describe the person you hope she becomes.
 - What do you think she will do when she grows up?
 - What challenges might get in the way of her reaching these dreams?

Starter #3: Identify the types of activities they and their girl enjoy.

- What is important for your girls to learn?
- What does your girl love to do most?
- What does she get excited about? When she is happiest and most engaged?
- Outside of school, how does your girl spend most of her time?
 - Are you / is she happy about this?
 - If not, how do you / does she wish she were spending her time?
- What types of activities or experiences do you wish your girl(s) could have that she is not having now?
 - What is holding her (or your family) back from having those experiences?
 - Are there experiences or opportunities you missed out on growing up that you hope your girl(s) can have?

Girl Scout Connection

10 minutes

While this should not be the same formal Girl Scout presentation we have done in the past, families should still leave with a clear connection between Girl Scouts and their experience.

- What did you hear parents/caregivers express that uniquely connects to Girl Scouts? Do we meet a challenge in their life or support a goal for their girl(s)?
- Ask a parent to read the Girl Scout Promise and Law.
 - When complete, ask the parents what they think?
 - Does this align or differ from their values?

- Does this align or differ from their perspective of Girl Scouts?
- Emphasize that Girl Scouts is not just an after-school activity. They are joining a local community, and a national Movement.
 - Note that Girl Scouts grows up with their girl, and she can continue through high school and then join our Alum Network. Providing a vision of the Girl Scout journey will help with overall retention.
- Be clear that all parents, caregivers, and adult supporters are encouraged to join this journey with their girls as volunteers. Everyone has a role and place in Girl Scouts.
 - Describe the opportunity as a supportive troop leadership or volunteer team – a group of parents/caregivers that all work together to support their girls’ troop – not the traditional burden of one parent being the troop leader.
 - Ask the parents if they have special skills or a skill they want to develop further, and then describe the different types of volunteer roles, if time permits. This may also be a good follow-up after the party.
- Give specific examples of Girl Scouts programming based on the shared interests of the parents/caregivers and how the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and Foundational Girl Scout Experience work together for successful outcomes for girls. Share that we are more than just cookies and camping by explaining the type of programming that falls within our four pillars, for example.

Questions/Considerations Specific to COVID-19 Pandemic

- How have you managed your girl(s) schooling and activities?
- Does your girl have access to Internet and a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone at home?
- Are you looking for enrichment and community for your girl(s) online?
- What would be most helpful to you during this time?
- Do you imagine you would want to continue with some virtual programming after the restrictions on in-person meetings are lifted?

Closing

5 minutes

- Ask parents/caregivers to rejoin their girls but assure them you will be available to answer questions after the last activity.
- If they are ready to join, direct them to the registration table.
- If they want to learn more, encourage them to participate in another experience (in-person or virtual) including another party, Girl Scouts at Home, or other council events.
- Tell families that you will be following up with them by phone and/or email.
- Be sure to thank every family and stay to answer questions after the official event concludes.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS

The following is a list of questions that families may ask as they get to know Girl Scouts. While you will probably not cover all of these questions at your first recruitment touchpoint, many of these questions will be asked during the registration process.

Please ensure that you are prepared to answer these questions and to provide any resources that apply.

General Questions:

- Who are Girl Scouts?
- What do Girl Scouts do? What activities do Girl Scouts do?
- Can we try it out first before we become members?
- Why should I join Girl Scouts?
- What are the Girl Scout levels?
- How much does it cost? Do we have to pay for each activity?
- How much does it cost for the vest, the badges, etc.?
- When do we get to start?
- What is the time commitment?
- Do my girls have to sell cookies?
- Is there a religious component to Girl Scouts?

Troops, Troop Leaders, and Safety:

- Is there a troop for my girl to join today?
- Is there a troop in my area?
- Who will be my girl's leader?
- Can men be leaders?
- How often do troops meet?
- When/what time does the troop meet?
- Where do we meet? Will the troop be at my girl's school?
- What if my girl does not like her troop? What if we do not like the troop leader?
- How can I trust the leader?
- It does not sound like you have a troop opening, so should I wait to register?
- Can my two girls be in the same troop?
- What if we cannot make all the troop meetings?
- What if the troop meeting does not fit my schedule?
- How do you guarantee the safety of my girl?
- Do I need to stay with my girl at the meeting or can I drop them off?

Volunteers and Adult Members:

- Why do I have to pay for an adult membership if I volunteer, after already paying for my girl?
- Can we (parents) go camping and on events with my girl?
- Do you have to be a parent to volunteer?
- What is the time commitment to volunteer with Girl Scouts?
- I was never a Girl Scout. Can I still volunteer?

Participation of/with Boys:

- Can male siblings participate also?
- Is it for boys, too? If not, why aren't Girl Scouts inclusive of both girls and boys?
- What is the relationship with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts?
- Do you have information about Boy Scouts?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

- My girl has special needs. How can you accommodate her?
- My child identifies as trans/non-binary. Can they still be a Girl Scout?
- How is Girl Scouts diverse?

Social Distancing and COVID-19:

- What type of virtual activities are available when we cannot meet in person?
- How would communication with volunteers work while virtual?
- How long will a virtual troop exist if we go back to "normal"?
- What if my girl prefers a virtual troop to an in-person troop?

THE GIRL SCOUT CIRCLE

Courtesy of Girl Scouts of Arizona Cactus-Pine Council

Ever since people first gathered to talk, sit around the fire, or hold ceremonies, they have sat in circle. In Girl Scouts, there is a long tradition of gathering in a circle, whether it is a Brownie circle, a friendship circle, or a circle around the campfire.

IN A CIRCLE:

- Everyone has equal status – there is no hierarchy, and no one is in or out. **Everyone belongs** in the unbroken circle of wholeness.
- We can all see each other's faces and we can see everyone at once. No one is hidden or invisible and **every person is important**.
- We have a dedicated enclosed space that is **safe from the outside world**. It is a space that is protected and kept by those in the circle.
- Circles promote a **culture of listening, respect, and openness** to others. They represent wholeness and inclusion.
- A circle offers the opportunity to hold or place symbols in the center that have meaning to the group or appropriately represent the theme of the circle that is being called. For example, if a troop is celebrating bridging, they might place items in the center that represent what they have done together and items that represent the next level to which the girls are moving.

CIRCLE PRACTICES

1. **Closing the Circle.** This indicates that everyone is present, and something is about to begin. It helps to indicate that a special space is being created. Closing the circle may be as simple as acknowledging the circle (saying "The circle is closed") and calling everyone to be present, or it could be a brief ceremony developed by the group.
2. **Check In.** Each person has a chance to speak so that every voice is heard at the beginning. Everyone listens respectfully as each person is given the space to speak without interruptions or comment. A question relevant to the theme of the circle can be posed at the beginning. For example, in a bridging circle, the question might be "What have we each achieved that we are proud of?" Or each person can say one word to describe how she is feeling. Anyone who wishes can pass and speak later if she chooses.
3. **Conversation/Activity.** Someone can introduce what is going to happen next, whether it is a topic for discussion, an activity, or a problem that everyone will work on together.

4. **Checkout.** As the time in the circle comes to an end, each person has a chance to be heard once again. People can speak to what has happened during the conversation/activity, how they are feeling or respond to a reflective question.
5. **Opening the Circle.** This is a signal that the circle time is complete. Opening the circle may be anything that seems appropriate to consciously bring the time to an end. It may be a song, a friendship circle or symbolically removing items that were placed in the center of the circle. For example, someone rings a bell and someone else says, “The circle is open but unbroken.”

GUIDELINES/GROUND RULES

Depending on the purpose of the circle, the age of the participants and how familiar participants are with circle practice, introduction guidelines after the check in can help people feel comfortable and let them know what to expect.

Examples of guidelines/ground rules might include:

- **Use of a talking stick.** Participants can speak only when they are holding the stick or other symbolic object.
- **Confidentiality.** Participants commit to keeping confidential anything that is spoken. Each person can share anything about herself and her experience but not what anyone else has said.
 - **Exception:** As a leader, you may be obligated by law to break confidentiality in particular situations. For example, if you become aware of abuse or other serious matters in a girl’s life. In these cases, you should consider letting the girl know what you plan to do and why.
- **A commitment to listening** with the intent to understand and not judge others.
- **Respect** for others’ needs, views, and experience.
- Each participant agrees to **say what is true** for her and take responsibility for her own views.

Leaders may need to provide a further explanation and/or clarification of the guidelines. The participants may want to establish their own group guidelines. There should be explicit agreement and commitment to the selected guidelines. Young girls may suggest something like “We should be nice to each other” while older girls might ask for “respectful listening.”

By using deliberate circle practice, leaders are able to help girls achieve some of the 5 outcomes GSUSA has identified as ways in which girls discover themselves, connect with others, and take action to make the world a better place.