



Girl Guides
of Canada
Guides
du Canada

ADVOCACY GUIDELINES 2017



WHY WE HAVE ADVOCACY GUIDELINES

Girls making a difference in their communities is a big part of what Guiding is all about. Every experience a girl has in learning more about important issues, speaking up and taking action allows her to develop skills that will have a positive impact not only on her own life, but also on her community and the greater world. One way girls can make a difference in the world is through advocacy.

As a registered charity in Canada, Girl Guides of Canada–Guides du Canada (GGC) must follow government regulations on advocacy. There are many advocacy activities in which GGC members can participate, as long as we all follow the regulations by which the organization is legally bound. In accordance with GGC’s Advocacy Policy, this document will assist Rangers and Unit Guiders in working with girls to determine which advocacy activities are appropriate as part of Guiding – enabling girls to use their Guiding voices in the most effective way possible.

Contact: advocacy@girlguides.ca

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Within Guiding, advocacy is the act or process of influencing decision makers to take actions or make decisions that promote the health, development and wellbeing of girls and young women

Essentially, advocacy involves influencing or persuading decision makers to improve or change something, or to support a solution to a problem.

- **Influencing decision makers** involves supporting or opposing a cause by recommending a specific solution to an issue based on factual information from reputable sources.
- **Decision makers** are individuals or institutions that are in a position to take actions or make decisions on issues impacting society. Decision makers include the general public, businesses, organizations, public institutions and government (including politicians).

Advocacy initiatives can influence these decision makers as follows:

General Public	Business or Organization	Government
Members of the general public are in a position to make decisions and choices in their lives	Business or community leaders have the power to change their company’s or organization’s policies or practices	Elected officials of any level of government have the power to change laws and policies
<u>Example:</u> Persuading people (friends, family, community) to use reusable water bottles	<u>Example:</u> Persuading Facebook to end gender-based hate speech on its site	<u>Example:</u> Persuading the federal government to increase funding for violence prevention programs

How is advocacy different from community service?

Advocacy isn't the same thing as community service. Community service is usually an immediate, short-term response to a problem; advocacy looks at the root cause of an issue and presenting long-term solutions. For example:

Community Service	Advocacy
Donating to a food bank to address hunger and poverty	Convincing the provincial or territorial government to increase the minimum wage to help reduce hunger and poverty
Planting trees to improve air quality	Influencing local government to provide funding for tree planting to improve air quality

ADVOCACY GUIDELINES AT A GLANCE

KEY PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES IN GUIDING

- All programs and activities must be non-partisan or multi-partisan
- Advocacy activities must be based on factual information from reputable sources that demonstrate a well-reasoned position
- Always allow girls to form the own opinions and make their own choices
- Girls in Guiding can directly influence government decision-makers themselves but cannot encourage others to do the same

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN GUIDING

- Girls learning about the political and democratic process
- Girls learning about issues that promote the development, health and wellbeing of girls and young women
- Girls advocating by influencing decisions and decision makers on issues that promote the development, health and wellbeing of girls and young women

Guiding activities should focus on enabling girls to learn about issues from all perspectives and to form their own opinions.



KEY PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES IN GUIDING

First and foremost, Guiding is about educating girls. Whenever GGC members, volunteers and staff are working directly with girls, it's critical that we're objective and don't influence them through our personal opinions or behaviours. Our role is to enable girls to learn about the issues from all perspectives, form their own opinions and make their own choices.

The words and actions of adult members, volunteers and staff may impact girls at any time. Regardless of your role in Guiding, whenever you're directly or indirectly working with girls, it's important to be mindful of your position of influence or authority – by virtue of being an adult.

Whenever you're facilitating Guiding programs or activities in Guiding, particularly those that are advocacy-related, there are four overarching principles to follow:

1. All programs and activities must be non-partisan or multi-partisan
2. Advocacy activities must be based on factual information from reputable sources that demonstrate a well-reasoned position
3. Always allow girls to form their own opinions and make their own choices
4. Girls can directly influence government decision makers themselves through Guiding, but cannot encourage others to do the same

1. All programs and activities must be non-partisan or multi-partisan

As a registered charity, GGC is not permitted by law to devote any resources (including member, volunteer and staff time) to partisan political activities. This means activities that involve the direct or indirect support of any political party or candidate for political office, whether it's during an election campaign or not.

What does partisan mean?

Activities that involve the direct or indirect support of, or opposition to:

- Any political party or a candidate for political office
- Any third-party organization or individual that directly supports a specific candidate or political party (e.g., unions, lobby groups, etc.)

GGC members, volunteers and staff cannot participate in political activities as representatives of GGC or as part of Guiding (whether in uniform or not).

This includes:

- Donating money, time, resources or materials to a political party or candidate for political office
- Making public statements (oral, written, photographic, on social media) that endorse or denounce a political party or candidate for political office, either explicitly or implicitly
- Directly connecting your opinion on an issue with support for a political party or a candidate for political office

For GGC members, volunteers and staff, this means that we cannot participate in partisan political activities as representatives of GGC or as part of Guiding (whether in uniform or not).

There are still plenty of opportunities for girls to participate in non-partisan or multi-partisan activities. For example, girls can attend all-candidates debates and community events where all elected officials and election candidates have been invited (see page 9 for more information).

What does multi-partisan mean?

Activities that involve all or multiple political parties or candidates for public office

TIPS

- Interacting with elected officials is encouraged, just ensure it's focused on their work as an elected official, not as a member of their political party.
 - For situations that don't involve "party politics" (i.e. territorial politics, municipal politics), use your best judgment to ensure that government representatives are acting in their capacity as an elected official.
- If it's not clear if something is partisan or not (i.e. Liberal women's caucus vs. all-party women's caucus), just check in with national office (advocacy@girlguides.ca) and we'll help steer you in the right direction.
- There may be times when you encounter partisanship even though it's a community event – for example, if you're interacting with your Member of Parliament and they make partisan comments. In these cases, it's just a matter of having a discussion with the girls to make sure they have a balanced understanding.
- If unplanned photos are taken of GGC members during an election campaign (e.g. while your unit is at a local fair), make it clear that any photographs taken with GGC members cannot be used for partisan political purposes (e.g. the candidate posting the photo on their campaign Facebook page).
- If you encounter a politician or an election candidate while out in the community, it's fine to share that you interacted with them (e.g. Tweeting that you just sold cookies to your MP), as long as you don't express your support or opposition to them (e.g., don't Tweet that you like or dislike a political party).

2. Advocacy activities must be based on factual information from reputable sources that demonstrate a well-reasoned position

EXAMPLE

A Pathfinder unit conducts a community safety audit and identifies a lack of crosswalk as an important safety concern for children and families in the community. Based on this finding, girls conduct additional research from government and academic studies to gather statistics on pedestrian injuries and fatalities and the importance of crosswalks for road safety, which enhances their case with evidence from experts. Girls analyze this research and formulate their position on the issue and send a formal letter to their local city councillor outlining their recommendation that a crosswalk be installed as a solution to the issue of safety in their community.

Use factual information from reputable sources when presenting information to girls

It's important that the information we present to girls is credible and can be trusted as accurate and unbiased. (Please see page 12 of the Appendix for information on how to determine if a source is reliable).

What is a reliable source?

A reliable source is a source of information that can be trusted to be accurate and unbiased. The extent to which a source is considered reliable is evaluated based on its accuracy, authority, currency, objectivity, purpose and relevance.

It's critical to make sure we don't use information from sources that we know, or ought to know, is false, inaccurate or misleading. Not all information on the internet is equally valuable or reliable. The same goes for guests we invite to Guiding events. It's our responsibility to ensure that any sources we consult or speakers we invite to our organization adhere to the above principles as well.

TIPS:

- Do your research – factual information is based on direct experience or research from a reliable source.
- Look for reliable sources:
 - Official government information sources are valuable, as they cover a wide range of issues affecting Canadians and Canadian society and adhere to the principles of reliable sources. Note: political parties or their websites are not considered government sources.
 - Not all information on the internet is equally valuable or reliable. In order for a website to be considered reputable, it must be accurate and unbiased. For information on how to evaluate a website for reliability and accuracy – please see page 12 of the Appendix.
 - If you're looking at an academic journal article or research paper, make sure it has been "peer-reviewed" – this means the validity of the information was verified by an independent, reputable source. Even if reputable sources have been cited, make sure that the information is not taken out of context.
- Issues should be presented to girls from multiple angles. If a discussion on an issue tends to lean in a certain direction, include arguments and relevant facts to the contrary so girls can see the whole picture.
- Never rely on incomplete information or on an appeal to emotions. While GGC programs will always adhere to these guidelines, that may not be the case if you're using a program from another organization (including WAGGGS). Be sure to review the program first or check in with GGC for assistance (advocacy@girlguides.ca).

Work with girls to help them develop a well-reasoned position

Help girls become very knowledgeable about the issue and to ensure their opinions and ideas are well thought out. In addition to looking for factual information from reliable sources, it's important to critically analyze that information in order to arrive at a sound position that will be taken seriously by decision makers.

What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking, or critical analysis, is the objective assessment and evaluation of an issue in order to form a clear and sound judgment.

Critical analysis involves breaking the issue down into its parts, so we can understand the whole picture. This helps evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the issue from all sides in order to make a recommendation (or suggest multiple solutions) to solve the issue.

TIPS:

- Break down the issue by outlining what the research says about it from multiple angles; see if you can boil the information down to find the root cause of the issue.
- Look into who's affected by the issue, both positively and negatively, and examine the respective biases
- Consider who would be advantaged or disadvantaged by all the possible solutions. Then girls can zero in on what they think is the best solution to the problem.
- Use facts, statistics and stories to frame the issue, the root cause, and your solution.
- While it can be frustrating when there isn't a clear solution to an issue, it's better to acknowledge that there isn't always a simple solution to these complex issues rather than jumping to conclusions that may be flawed. This can also be a powerful thing for girls to learn.

3. Always allow girls to form their own opinions and make their own choices

EXAMPLE

A Ranger unit learns about climate change through a GGC program. While their Guider supports a carbon tax as a solution, she doesn't promote her personal view. Instead, she ensures the issue is explored from multiple angles and encourages girls to challenge all perspectives. As a result, girls form their own opinions on how to best reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It's always important to remain impartial when facilitating girls' exploration of issues. As much as possible our stance on issues should be neutral so that we can provide girls with unbiased information so they can learn about issues from all perspectives, form their own opinions and make their own informed choices. This includes making sure that we don't project our own personal views and biases on girls. Guiding activities should focus on equipping girls with the knowledge, tools and techniques to identify issues that they feel strongly about and arrive at their own opinions.

TIPS:

- Official GGC programs are designed to present information that's objective and unbiased. If you come across a program from WAGGGS or another organization, review it to make sure that it aligns with these advocacy guidelines. WAGGGS and other Guiding organizations around the world may not have the same regulations that GGC has here in Canada. Not sure? Contact us (advocacy@girlguides.ca) and we'll assist you.
- We all have personal biases – our own political and moral perspective on issues. Remember not to project your particular point of view to girls – rather, equip them with the knowledge and tools to form their own opinions. If a girl asks you what you think about an issue, answer honestly but be careful not to project your opinion in a way that influences her to think the same way as you.

4. Girls in Guiding can directly influence government decision makers themselves, but cannot encourage others to do the same

When it comes to influencing government, girls (either individually or as a unit) can *directly* interact with decision makers to share their opinions and influence them to make a certain decision. However, they cannot as part of Guiding appeal to others (i.e. their community) to take the same actions. For example, girls can meet directly with their city councillor to advocate for the installation of a crosswalk, but they can't email their family and friends (as a member of GGC) to urge them to also meet with the city councillor. Girls can, however, encourage others to make an effort to educate themselves and learn about the issues.

TIPS:

- This applies to government decision makers only. If girls are want to persuade a corporation, community organization or the general public, they can rally support. They just can't rally support for advocacy that targets government.
- While this does limit the extent to which girls in Guiding can advocate, there is value in girls focusing on what they can do directly themselves – using their own voice rather than spending time and energy convincing their friends and family to also take action.

Note: If girls are interested in rallying their community to influence government, they can do so outside of Guiding.

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN GUIDING

This section outlines the kinds of advocacy activities girls can get involved with as part of Guiding.

Keeping in mind the four key principles outlined above, this section provides an overview of the kinds of activities that are allowable, or not, as part of Guiding. While examples are provided, they are not exhaustive. Always make sure you've done your due diligence, are on the right track, and reach out for assistance if you need to.

Appropriate	<i>You're good to go! If you have any questions, let us know.</i>
Not Appropriate	<i>Sorry...but these activities aren't allowed. Check back with the tips for making sure your activity is allowable.</i>

A) Girls learning about the political and democratic process

Girls exploring citizenship and civic engagement has long been integral to the Guiding program. These activities are an important first step before girls get involved in advocacy as it helps them learn who decision makers are and how to interact with them. GGC members, volunteers and staff can attend events such as all-candidates debates, meetings or forums where girls can learn about the democratic process, and can broadly promote democracy such as getting more people to vote, while following these basic principles:

- The event or activity does not appear to favour a particular party or candidate (please ensure that all candidates were invited and the motivation for the event is impartial).
- Be mindful that when you're in uniform and/or attending in event in a Guiding capacity, you're representing GGC and cannot be seen as favouring one candidate or party over another (e.g., no partisan signs, buttons, etc.).
- In addition to listening and observing, girls can – and should – ask objective questions of all candidates.

EXAMPLES:

APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending an open government meeting (city council debate, Question Period, etc.) so girls can learn about the democratic and political process and learn more about issues in their community • Attending an <u>all</u>-candidates debate between candidates running for MP to learn more about the political process and key issues • Posting links to all major candidates in an election campaign on a unit's Facebook group • Attending a town hall meeting during an election campaign (see Tips below) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering for one political party's campaign event • Posting links on a unit's Facebook page to one (or select) candidates during an election campaign • Taking a unit on a trip to city hall and expressing your personal like or dislike of the town's mayor

Tips for making sure your activity is in line with GGC's advocacy guidelines:

- Learn about government outside of election time – that way you can actually see how government works outside of political campaigns. While issues can seem more present during election campaigns, most of the time elected officials and government staff are working to run their municipality, province or territory.
- If you're informing girls about an election and local candidates, make sure you share information about all candidates (even the fringe parties) – that way they will get a full picture.

- If you would like your unit to have a volunteer experience during an election campaign, look at opportunities with independent, non-partisan agencies responsible for conducting elections and referendums (e.g. Elections Canada). This will ensure that the learning experience is focused on the democratic process, and not partisan politics.
- Town hall meetings are a great way for girls to see the political process and election campaigning in action, but they are usually hosted by one candidate only and are often partisan events. If you would like your unit to attend a town hall meeting to get a taste of democracy, contact the national office (advocacy@girlguides.ca) and we'll help you ensure that your activity falls within the advocacy guidelines.
- For many members, Guiding is personal, so it's difficult to separate your Guiding life from your personal life. However, it's important to not influence girls on what you think and feel, especially when it comes to politics. Remind yourself that when you're with girls in Guiding, you are an educator, therefore it's important to not promote your personal opinions or biases. If a girl asks you for your thoughts, you can be honest and communicate them in as objective a manner as possible.
 - If you're involved with partisan politics in your non-Guiding life, there may be instances when it would be wise to make it clear that you're doing so in your personal capacity and on your private time, and not as part of Guiding or as a representative of GGC.

B) Girls learning about issues that promote the development, health and wellbeing of girls and young women

An important part of Guiding is educating girls on issues affecting girls and young women to enable them to take action for a better world. Learning about issues is the first step on the road to advocating – and for girls to discover how to make their advocacy efforts evidence-based.

APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing girls of recent GGC research on the prevalence of eating disorders among Canadian girls • Delivering GGC's <i>Say No to Violence</i> Challenge which teaches girls about violence against girls and women • Visiting a local emergency women's shelter so girls can learn about the issue of women and homelessness • Learning about climate change by tree planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting a local politician to a unit meeting solely to promote their party's position on the legalization of marijuana • Attending an event hosted by a provincial teachers' union that directly aligns itself with a political party's position on cuts to teachers' contracts • Educating girls on the issue of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) based on information from an academic journal that has <u>not</u> been peer-reviewed

Tips for making sure your activity is in line with GGC's advocacy guidelines:

- If girls want to learn about a political issue in your community, make an effort to invite representatives from all political parties and subject matter experts who represent multiple viewpoints so girls hear all perspectives and can form their own opinions. If not all parties can make it...that's okay, just make sure you make an effort to address all sides of the issue.
- Invite politicians from multiple parties and subject matter experts from multiple backgrounds (ideally, at the same event) to share their views on a topic (e.g., legalization of marijuana) so that girls can learn different perspectives.
- If you're using a program or resource from another organization (including WAGGGS) or taking your unit to an event that strongly highlights one side of a debate, have a discussion about the other side so that the material is learned in the broader context.

- There may be situations where it's not clear if a third-party organization is directly aligning itself with a political party (e.g., a union's position does logically align with that of a political party, but it doesn't explicitly say so). In those situations, check in with national office (advocacy@girlguides.ca) and we'll help steer you in the right direction.
- Check in with us! If you're not sure if an activity is appropriate, we'll work with you to make sure it meets GGC's guidelines.

C) Girls advocating for issues that promote the development, health and wellbeing of girls and young women

Advocacy is all about raising awareness about an issue and influencing decision makers to improve a situation through specific solutions. In Guiding, it should always be up to girls to decide what kinds of issues they want to raise awareness of and how they want to advocate. In some cases, there may be girls who disagree or who don't want to support certain issues, so these activities should be optional. As a facilitator, you can help girls determine what action they want to take, coach them on how to determine what level of government has jurisdiction over an issue, what the current laws or practices are, and different ways that girls can share their opinions with decision makers.

APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After completing GGC's <i>Say No to Violence</i> Challenge and exploring the needs of a local women's shelter, girls write a letter to the mayor urging her to maintain funding for the shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After completing GGC's <i>Say No to Violence</i> and exploring the needs of a local women's shelter, girls appeal to their fellow community members to write a letter to the mayor urging them to maintain funding for the shelter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending a meeting at a provincial legislature to present GGC's Guidelines on the Inclusion of Transgender members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting GGC's Guidelines on the Inclusion of Transgender members in direct alignment with a provincial political party's position on transgender rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuading a corporation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions based on a recommendations in a recent federal government report on environmental sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuading a corporation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without conducting critical research and analysis from reliable sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After learning about environmental sustainability at a GGC conference, signing a petition (as part of Guiding) asking an MP to vote in favour of a carbon tax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing a petition (as part of Guiding) asking an MP to vote in favour of a carbon tax <i>without</i> learning about the issue beforehand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After learning about climate change through a GGC program, girls discuss the issue from many perspectives and decide for themselves whether or not they support a carbon tax as a solution, and then decide if they want to write their MP to express their opinion on the issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After teaching girls about climate change through a GGC program, a Guider promotes her personal support of a carbon tax and encourages girls to write their MP to express that viewpoint
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After learning about healthy body image through GGC's <i>Be You</i> Challenge, girls write a letter to the editor of <i>Seventeen</i> magazine asking them to stop airbrushing images of models 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuading a local business to hire more female staff 	

APPENDIX

How do you know if information on a website is reliable?

Not all information on the internet is equally valuable or reliable. In order to know if a website is reputable, you need to evaluate it based on the following factors:

Accuracy

If a website is accurate, it means we can rely on the information as correct. Ask yourself:

- Can the information be verified by other sources?
- Are there footnotes, endnotes or other references to cite the facts?
- Are there spelling or grammatical errors, or typos?
- Has the information been reviewed on another website?

Authority

It's important to confirm that the person or institution that is responsible for the information has the qualifications to be an expert on the topic they write about. Ask yourself:

- Who is the author of the webpage?
- What are their credentials?
- What institution (e.g., university, company, organization) are they affiliated with?
- Is there a published email address or other contact information for the author?
- What does the domain name of the website address tell you about the source?
 - .ca – Canadian-based website
 - .gc.ca – Canadian federal government website
 - .gov – American government
 - .edu – American educational institution
 - .org – Organizations or special interest groups, usually non-profits
 - .com, .net, .biz – Companies, corporations, etc.

Currency

In order for information to be reliable, you need to know that it's frequently maintained and updated. Ask yourself:

- Is there a publication date on the website?
- Is there a date of the last time the content was updated?
- How long ago was the webpage created?
- Do the links work?
- Does the website have pages that are “under construction”? Have those pages been inactive for a long time?

Objectivity

Information is considered objective if it is free of bias, judgment and prejudice – or any legitimate bias is freely stated. Ask yourself:

- Is the information presented with an obvious bias?
- Does the information try to sway the audience?
- Is the website trying to explain and inform, or persuade or sell something?

Purpose

When looking at a website, the purpose of the site should be apparent. For example, is the purpose of the website to inform, teach, or persuade? Is the author clearly stating an opinion? Is the purpose for parody or entertainment? Ask yourself:

- What is the purpose of the site?
- Is the purpose made clear?
- Who is the intended audience for the site?
- Do other websites link to this site?
- Is the information factual?
- Is there advertising on the site? If yes, what kind of content is being advertised?
- Does the point of view appear to be impartial and balanced?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?

Relevance

A reliable website should offer a breadth of important information. Ask yourself:

- Does the website claim to be comprehensive?
- Are the topics explored in-depth?
- How does the content compare to other sites that cover the topic?
- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Is the information at an appropriate level for your needs?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is the one you will use?



GLOSSARY

Decision makers

Decision makers are individuals or institutions that are in a position to take actions or make decisions on issues impacting society. Decision makers include the general public, businesses, organizations, public institutions and government.

Factual information

Factual information is information based on facts resulting from GGC's direct experience or research from a reputable source. Research should be methodical, objective and accurate, and must not be based on information that we know, or ought to know, is false or misleading.

Multi-partisan activities

Activities that involve all or multiple political parties or candidates for public office.

Non-partisan activities

Activities that do not support or oppose (either directly or indirectly) the following:

- Any political party or a candidate for political office
- Any third-party organization or individual that directly aligns itself and its views with any political party or candidate for political office (e.g., unions, lobby groups, etc.)

Partisan activities

Activities that support or oppose (either directly or indirectly) the following:

- Any political party or a candidate for political office
- Any third-party organization or individual that directly aligns itself and its views with any political party or candidate for political office (e.g., unions, lobby groups, etc.)

Reputable source

A reputable source is any source of information including online, offline, in person, and on paper, that can be trusted to be accurate and unbiased. The extent to which a source is considered reliable is evaluated based on its accuracy, authority, currency, objectivity, purpose and relevance.

Well-reasoned position

A well-reasoned position is based on factual information from reputable sources that is critically analyzed, and should take into account opposing arguments or views. Information in a well-reasoned position should be presented in a complete and accurate manner to enable the audience to make an informed decision.