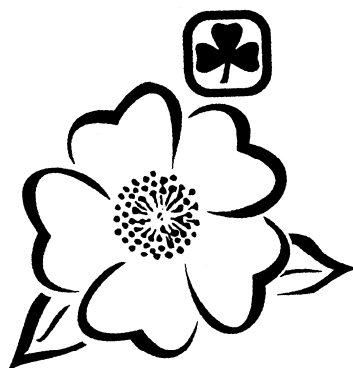




Girl Guides
of Canada

Guides
du Canada

Alberta Council



Start a Unit Kit

Developed by the
Alberta Provincial
Membership Committee
In 1997

2011

(revised)

Welcome to the *Start a Unit Kit!*

This Kit is designed to give you the ideas and assistance you need to open new Units in your District. It is broken down into four steps and if you follow them, in order, you will have new Units, happy Guiders and all the girls in your District enrolled in Guiding instead of losing interest as they sit on waiting lists.

The four steps are as follows:

- Step 1: Find meeting space
- Step 2: Recruiting Leaders
- Step 3: Find the girls to fill the Units
- Step 4: What happens next.....

The added benefit to this process is that your District will start out the year learning to work together towards a common goal. They will become better acquainted with each other and find out that if everyone takes a share of the work that needs to be done a great deal can be accomplished by a few willing volunteers! This will “spill over” into everything your District does for the rest of the year.

So, let's get busy opening those Units and filling them with girls and Guiders.

Good luck and good Guiding!

Let us live up to our slogan

All Girls and All Women are Welcome!

Before you begin, you need to know where you are right now. Sit down with your Council and assess the needs of your District:

- Are there Units with waiting lists?
- Is there a town or community that does not have Guiding?
- Have girls wanted to bring friends, but you can't accommodate them?
- Is there a big group of girls moving to the next branch of Guiding?
- What other needs do we have?

Step 1: Finding meeting space:

a. Where to look for meeting space:

- Meeting places are more likely to be a problem in newer communities. It may be necessary to be innovative and imaginative.
- Be Flexible! Consider sharing a meeting place. For example, three Units can share two rooms with the Units taking turns being away from the meeting place. Two could go on a field trip, have an outdoor meeting, meet in small groups in girls' homes to do baking or crafts etc., while the third uses the room.
- Businesses that are closed in the evening may have a staff member who would be willing to open up and allow you to use the space. You may even gain another leader when she sees how much fun you are all having!
- Nursing homes and seniors residences have a social room that you can ask to use during residents' supper hour. Tell them you will organize and clean-up your space. Older people love to see children, even just for an occasional friendly wave.
- Once you have had a good look around your community, make a list of possible meeting places and assign a member to contact the proper authorities for permission to use them.
- There are additional suggestions and strategies in Attachment #2 – ABC's of Meeting Places.
- Go to "Building Guiding: Meeting Space" for more ideas. It can be found at www.girlguides.ca under Membership Resources.

Step 2: Recruiting Leaders:

a. How to recruit Leaders:

- The most effective way to recruit new members is personally. Talk to friends, neighbours, work colleagues, social contacts, women new to the community and women who may not know about Girl Guides. Many women are just waiting to be asked—even if they don't know it yet!
- Always be positive when you talk about Guiding, whether you are in uniform or not. Talk about how you are enjoying Guiding and encourage them to give it a try. Be sure to tell them there is training available for all Branches.
- Ask to give a short talk to a women's group. Be enthusiastic about the opportunities and talk as you would to a friend.
- Contact your Area Public Relations Adviser and ask about the latest promotional materials produced by National. She can even customize some materials to suit your community.
- Put posters on every bulletin board you can find. They will have the most effect in places where there are many women; for example laundromats, hospital staff areas, and employment centers for those who need experience working with children. Be sure to add a name and local contact phone number. (Keep a list of where the bulletin boards are located for future campaigns)
- Your P.R. Adviser has customizable write ups that you can use in newspapers, school, community and work-related newsletters etc.
- Bookmarks and pamphlets can be used as handouts in libraries, stores, real estate offices and at displays.

- As soon as a woman shows interest, arrange for her to be contacted by the District commissioner or her delegate within 24 hours. It is important to show her that she is needed and wanted and quick action demonstrates that we are organized and ready to accommodate her.
- Go to “*Building Guiding: Women*” for more ideas. It can be found at www.girlguides.ca under Membership Resources.

b. Look at your District’s Resources and make some changes:

- What is the best allocation of experienced and new leaders to the Units?
- Would it be helpful if an experienced leader moved to a new Unit?
- Would some leaders like to change branches?
- Which are the best meeting places for each branch? If the Sparks are meeting in a school gym and the Guides are meeting in a lunch room perhaps they could switch places. Consider the type of accommodation and where the girls live
- Be flexible and erase the “Boundary Lines” on the District/Area map! If your neighbour District is desperate for a Brownie Leader, and your District has more than enough, consider asking a Leader move to where she is most needed.
- When decisions are made, inform everyone involved. Communication is paramount to maintaining a healthy working relationship within the District.

Step 3: Finding the Girls

a. Let your community know that “There is Guiding Here!”

- Go to the National Website at www.girlguides.ca for *Building: Guiding Girls*.
- Talk to your Area Public Relations Adviser about the flyers, posters, colouring sheets and public service announcements that are available for your use.
- Additional ideas for using recruitment materials are in *Attachment #4-Where to use PR Materials*.
- Have as wide a circulation as you can arrange and afford. You will be surprised how much promotion you can get for free or at small cost. Don’t be too shy to ask local newspapers, radio stations and public TV Stations if they will carry your announcements.
- If you are planning to distribute flyers through the schools be sure to get permission well ahead of time. Don’t forget to give them to boys as well as girls since they have sisters and mothers who just might be interested in Guiding. It is important to count and bundle the flyers for each classroom to make the process as easy as possible. The materials will not be sent home if it entails work for busy school staff. They would also be less willing to allow you to distribute your flyers through the schools again if you expect them to count and bundle. Don’t forget to bring them a box of cookies and a thank you card.
- Be sure to have a “Guiding Booth” at community events, mall displays, fall fairs, etc. to hand out information and answer questions. Keep those registration forms handy too!
- If the girls are going door-to-door in your community, such as for a cookie blitz campaign or bottle drive, have them put information in each mailbox as they do their routes.
- Put a local contact phone number on all promotions as well as the National 1-800 number (1-800-565-8111). The volunteer who answers the phone should be available to take the calls, have an answering machine for when she can’t be

available, be knowledgeable about Guiding in your District as well as in general and able to answer questions.

b. District Registration night

- Go to the National website at www.girlguides.ca for the *Building Guiding: Registration Event Kit*. It is full of ideas and suggestions to help you plan, advertise and hold your Registration Event.
- Be sure to make the registration event friendly, informative and fun.
- Our Public Relations budgets are usually small so its best to find out what are the most effective ways to reach the public. This way you can stop doing the things that are ineffective which waste effort and money. A good time to do this is at the Registration Event. Have two older girls, such as Pathfinders or Rangers, standing at the door and asking people how they heard about the Registration and filling in a "Tracking Form" with the answers. There is an example of a tracking form the girls can use, *Attachment #5 – Visibility Tracking Form*, which you can customize with the ways you have advertised in your community.
- Start Unit meetings as early as possible!

Step 4: What happens now...

a. Register the new Unit

- Now it's time to get the paperwork done! You need to fill out the *B.1 Unit/Property Form* to register the Unit. You can find it on the National website at www.girlguides.ca in the *Resources* section. It is also available from Provincial Office. The completed form should be sent to your iMIS home as soon as possible.

b. Financial Assistance:

- All new Units should receive financial assistance from their District/Area.
- These funds will be matched by Provincial Council by up to \$200.00. (*Attachment #1-Alberta Council New Unit Assistance Form*). Units that are re-opening must have been closed for more than two years to receive this financial assistance.

c. Hold a Guider gathering and make plans for the year

- Invite all the Guiders in the District. It would also be a good idea to invite anyone who is still undecided about committing to become a Guider since the camaraderie of the evening might just get her to decide to join.
- Warmly welcome and get to know the new Guiders
- Begin networking between Units; start to plan bridging events, field trips or camps you'd like to take together etc.
- Hand out a list of upcoming trainings, stressing the importance of receiving training and encouraging all Guiders to attend.
- Start planning District Parent/Daughter Banquets, Thinking Day Events, District Craft/Game nights, etc. It's much easier to find days when all the Units will be available if you start early!
- Ensure that new Guiders are proceeding through the Screening Process. They may need a little help and encouragement.

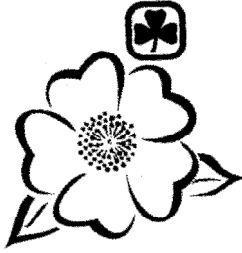
- Ensure that new Units are registered, have applied for funding from District/Area, matching funds from Province and are getting all their questions answered.
- Be sure that those unable to attend receive the information that was handed out.
- Make it FUN and USEFUL and they will come!

d. Start Unit Meetings

- Have a “Parent’s Night” as your first meeting. Ask them to come without their daughters or plan a fun activity to keep the girls busy while you talk to their parents. Use this time for parents to fill out health and permission forms, pay the membership fee and to tell them what you already have planned for the upcoming year. You can also ask for Camp Staff, Phoning Parents (to do call-outs when plans change or to remind about upcoming events), provide baking for special events etc.
- Have an outdoor adventure or a hike as an early meeting. Being visible in your community is a great way to find new members!
- Ask an experienced Guider to mentor new Units or have them start later in the year when leaders have received some training.
- Continue to recruit girls throughout the year. Personal invitation is the best way to find new members. Tell the girls they can bring a friend to a meeting anytime they would like to. Have a “Bring a Friend” night early in your year so the girls who come can join the Unit or, alternately, have one at the end of your year to get new girls interested and registered for the fall. Or both!
- Always involve visitors in the meeting activities. Have something for them to do since they come to participate, not just to watch.

e. Registration and Re-registration

- Re-register the girls who are in your Unit or are moving on to the next Branch in the spring. Pre-register new girls who want to start in September as well. This way they will have their Guiding meeting night marked on their calendars and be sure to return in the fall.
- Hold a fun Registration Event in the fall for new members that highlights activities for the girls who are already registered. A couple of examples are a “Strawberry Tea” where everyone enjoys beverages and desserts or a craft and games night that the girls can join into as they arrive to register.
- To help you plan your registration event, go to www.girlguides.ca for the “*Building Guiding: Registration Event Kit*”. It can be found in Membership Resources.



ALBERTA COUNCIL NEW UNIT ASSISTANCE

The purpose of this fund is to assist new units with start-up expenses. The amount of assistance given to the new unit by Alberta Council will match the total amount provided by the District and Area to a maximum amount of \$200.

Unit Name: _____

Number	City/Town	Branch	iMIS Number
District		Area	

Responsible Guider: _____

Address _____

City/Town _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone: (____) _____

Unit Opening Date: _____

Number registered: Girls: _____ Guiders: _____

Other financial assistance received:

District: \$ _____

Area: \$ _____

Other (specify): \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Commissioner's Signature: _____

For Office Use:

Date approved: _____

Amount approved: _____

Authorized: _____

Attachment #2

ABC's of Meeting Places

Arrange to brainstorm at a District meeting for ideas for potential meeting places. No idea is too outlandish as long as it's safe. Some sites that could be used are:

Schools

- Elementary
- Junior High
- Senior High
- Nursery
- Day Care Centres
- Private
- Colleges
- Universities

Meeting Rooms and Classrooms

- Places of worship
- Office Buildings
- Health Clinics

Recreation Rooms

- Apartment Buildings
- Town House and Condominium Complexes
- Senior Citizen's Buildings
- Recreation Centres
- Ethnic Centres

Empty Office Buildings or Empty offices

Cafeterias in Office Building

Empty space in Hospitals

Empty space in Malls

Community Rooms in Department Stores or Malls

Services Rooms in Banks or Libraries

Elks, Rotary, Lions etc. meeting Rooms

Meeting Rooms in Fire Stations

YWCA or YMCA Facilities

Private Homes (must meet Health/Safety criteria)

Be prepared when you decide on a short list of possibilities, make appointments to see the person responsible for managing or supervising the potential meeting place. When you go, dress professionally (your uniform).

Go prepared with a list of your requirements and a list of advantages to the manager, for example, in a mall the parents will stay and shop.

Be flexible about meeting times if possible.

Creativity will enable you to discover and select meeting places that meet the following criteria:

- Safe, clean, well ventilated and well heated.
- Space for active games and for big and small groups
- Have toilets and hand washing facilities
- Have access to a telephone.
- Have storage space if possible.
- In selecting a meeting place, the location in the District should be carefully considered, taking into account the following points:
 - The distance the girls must travel.
 - Highway and intersections that must be crossed.
 - The characteristics of the area, such as the crime rate, traffic, sidewalks, lighting etc.
 - The availability of transportation.

Don't forget that flexibility of both time and place is important. A small group can rotate among private homes, subject to local bylaws. Some groups can meet at times when facilities are not in use, e.g., after business hours. Sparks could use pre-school facilities. It is important for Units to meet regularly at the same time and place, but Rangers, Link or Trefoil could meet irregularly and at different locations while still maintaining continuity.

Attachment # 3

Resources Needed for a new Unit	Spark	Brownie	Guide	Pathfinder	Rangers
Guiding Essentials	*	*	*	*	*
Instant Meetings for the Busy Guider	*	*	*		
Guiders Manual for appropriate branch	*	*	*	*	
Sing a song with Sparks & Brownies	*	*			
Songs to Sing and Sing Again and other branch appropriate songbooks	*	*	*	*	*
Campfire Activities	*	*	*	*	*
Program Book for appropriate branch	*	*	*	*	*
Standard Financial Reporting Manual	*	*	*	*	*
Guider's Planning and record book	*	*	*	*	*
Safe Guide Manual for each Guider in Unit	*	*	*	*	*

These resources, and many more can be found at the Guide Shops.

The *Safe Guide Manual* is mailed out by National to all new Guiders as soon as they are registered. Safe Guide training can be obtained online for a small fee at www.girlguides.ca or at Area and Provincial Trainings.

Where to Use P.R. Materials

Once you have talked to your Area Public Relations Adviser and checked out the National Website it is time to decide where to place the recruitment tools (bookmarks, pamphlets and posters) that are available for your use.

When you find a possible place to display/leave the promotional materials take a good look around before deciding what you will use. Do they have a public bulletin board for posters? A counter to leave pamphlets or bookmarks on? A sectioned holder attached to a wall that holds community pamphlets? Will the grocery stores put a pamphlet into each customer's bag? Will the library put a bookmark into each children's book they check out? Will the school teacher put it in the envelopes that go home to parents? The possibilities are endless and it is a good idea to try new ideas rather than doing the same old thing just because "it's always been done that way!"

Most importantly, of course, is to get permission before leaving any materials!

Here are a few suggestions to get you started---

Arenas	Grocery Stores
Art Centres	Government and media offices
After School Programs at Daycares	
Bring a Friend Night	
Bookstores	Kindergarten Classes
Bicycle Stores	
Boys and Girls Clubs	Libraries
Beauty Salons and Barber Shops	Laundromats
Birthday Parties	Lunchrooms in businesses
Bowling Alleys	
	Museums
Candy Stores	Muffler Shops
Community Children's Events	
Churches	Outdoor Adventure Retailers
Children's Theatres	
Craft Stores	Pharmacies
Coffee shops	Play Centres
Children's Clothing Stores	Parades
	Recreational Centres
Dentists and Doctors Offices	
Dry Cleaners	Service Organizations
Day Care Centres	
Family Hotels	Toy Stores
Fast-food chains	Tire Stores

