



Girl Guides
of Canada
Guides
du Canada

DeCode Backgrounder



GGC is grateful for the support from MediaSmarts in building DeCode.



GIRLS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Phones. Tablets. Laptops. Girls from Sparks to Rangers use them all to express themselves and connect with each other. GGC’s DeCode Challenge will help them explore their digital reality – especially how girls are represented online.

Guiding has always played a role in helping girls navigate their world. These new paths may be filled with twists and turns, with an unfamiliar landscape unlike any seen before. Girls still need to be courageous, resourceful and confident in this new world. DeCode helps girls navigate the digital world they live in, while giving them the tools to establish and protect their own unique digital identity and voice.

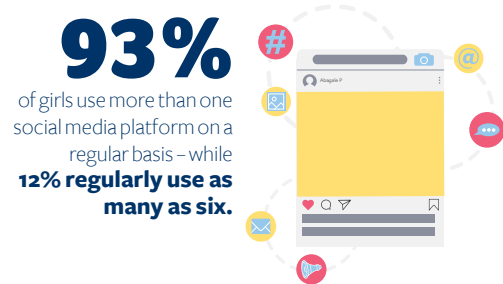
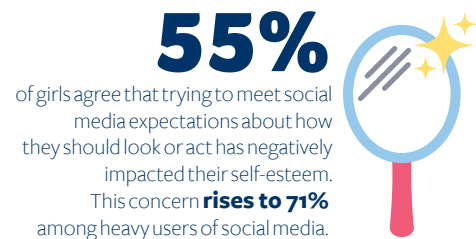
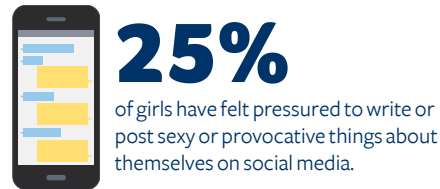
Digital Trailblazers

Girls are digital trailblazers. This is a world that they have grown up with and are making their own.

- **SPARKS AND BROWNIES:** Girls as young as five (and likely younger) have experienced the digital world in some capacity. They may be watching videos on YouTube or playing games through apps or online platforms. They love being surprised when they watch other kids “unbox” chocolate eggs or open toys. They may not be connecting online or through social media the same way as older girls, but they are carving out their own little piece of the digital world.
- **GUIDES:** Guide-aged girls are starting to blaze their digital trails. They are still playing games online like the younger girls, but some of them are beginning to use the Internet for their homework and connecting with friends through social media. They are budding content creators who are exploring self-expression through apps like Music.ly and posting videos to YouTube.
- **PATHFINDERS AND RANGERS:** These girls own the digital world. They are confident navigators who understand their tech and are immersed in social media like Instagram and Snapchat. Although they have the technology

mastered, many are building the confidence to test their voice and find their causes. Many girls, especially Rangers, may have even tried their hands at digital activism, where they stand up for their beliefs through posts and likes.

According to the [survey GGC released as part of International Day of the Girl 2017:](#)



Instagram is the most popular platform with Snapchat close behind.



Girl Guiding UK 2016 Attitudes Survey found that **47% of girls aged 11 – 21** have seen stereotypical images of men and women in the media in the past week that made them feel less confident to do what they want.¹

¹ “Girls’ Attitudes Survey.” *Girls’ Attitude Survey*, Girlguiding UK, www.girlguiding.org.uk/social-action-advocacy-and-campaigns/research/girls-attitudes-survey/.



DeCode in Action

DeCode should take you between two and four meetings to complete. Mix and match activities that you and your unit want to do. They can be led by anyone. If there are activities in other branches that your unit would like to try, go for it! Activities have been designed specifically for each branch. However activities, scenarios, discussion questions and instructions provided are only suggestions. When you are facilitating activities, you can change, modify, or add to each activity as you see fit to meet the experiences and needs of the girls in your unit. A DeCode crest is also available to celebrate all your hard work at thegirlguidestore.ca.

For all branches, girls should be included in the planning of the activities they will complete within the Challenge. Girls could also be responsible for finding additional resources or contacting guest speakers, depending on the activities. They may facilitate an actual activity with others in the unit. Guiders provide all girls, including Pathfinders and Rangers, with a neutral sounding board and play the role of a key listener in their lives.

Social Media Safety

Because girls have to be at least 13 years old to use Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the social media activities in this Challenge are intended to be used with girls who are 13 and older. Please ensure that parents and guardians are aware that their girls may be posting their experiences to social media during or after this meeting. A few things to keep in mind before sharing any images, videos, or comments:

- Make sure you have permission from everyone in the photo/video you want to use before you post it. This is included in the IR.1 forms signed for the girls if it is the Guider who is posting. Some girls may not want to be included so please respect their choice to not have something posted online.
- Things that are posted online live forever, so make sure that all posts are in keeping with the [GGC Code of Conduct](#).
- Remind the girls to turn off the location services on their devices before posting images from

meetings. Also do not share personal information of any of the girls including full name, address, email or phone numbers.

- When posting photos/videos, identify the whole unit rather than individuals (e.g. Girl Guides of Canada, 17th Vancouver Pathfinder Unit). If you do need to identify individuals, use only their first names.

Social media is a great way for girls to share their messages and find their voices. However, because social media skirts between the personal and public, give girls the choice of whether or not to post something to their accounts. Girls will have different levels of comfort about what they share with their followers and they may not be ready to put themselves “out there” with the artwork or imagery they have created. If they express any comments about being uncomfortable about posting their thoughts or raw images, use that as an opportunity to let them talk about some of the pressures they experience while cultivating their online presence. Remind girls that the meeting is a safe space to share their thoughts and experiences, thus their privacy will always be respected. For more information, MediaSmarts has published a report on teens and their posting preferences at <https://goo.gl/thioGG>.

If social media is being used in the meeting, remember to use the **#GirlsDeCode** hashtag and the GGC Instagram or Twitter tags so the Guiding community can see what you are doing!

Twists and Turns

When navigating new spaces, some unexpected twists and turns are to be expected. This generation of girls is the first to have grown up fully immersed in technology. A few difficulties they may have encountered that may come up during this meeting include:

- Cyberbullying
- Sexting and consent
- Terms and conditions



Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is any harmful act carried out through networked technology. This includes: spreading rumours about someone, calling them names, impersonating them online, spreading intimate or embarrassing images, doxing (releasing personal information), targeting them with threats or sexist language, invading their privacy, stalking or monitoring them.

It's important to distinguish between harassment and drama. One of the key differences is that in situations involving drama, those involved have roughly the same amount of "social power." If more witnesses to the drama support one person than the other though, or something else happens to weaken one person's social status, drama can easily turn into harassment. A situation may also be harassment from the beginning, and may happen mostly in private – such as through threatening or abusive text messages – though it's rare that there are no witnesses at all.²

How can you support girls?

- Listen
- Encourage her to not fight back
- Suggest they block or mute the other person
- Take screenshots and report to social media providers
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/safety>
 - Twitter: <https://about.twitter.com/safety>
 - Instagram: <https://help.instagram.com/285881641526716/>
 - Snapchat: <https://www.snapchat.com/safety>
- Inform the police
- Check out <http://www.withoutmyconsent.org/> for other reporting tools.

Sexting and Consent

Sexting happens when sexual, nude and semi-nude images are exchanged electronically. Surveys of youth have shown that the two most common reasons for sending sexts are to get a prospective partner's

attention and to show love and trust towards an established partner. Social expectations of peers can also influence decisions on sharing, and this pressure may lead girls to send sexts when they may not want to. While young women should definitely be made aware of the risks of sexting in any context, what is most likely to end badly is when girls are coerced or pressured into sending sexts: most young women who have had negative experiences with sexting say this was the reason they'd sexted their partners. Often times when intimate pictures sent privately become public, it is often the original sender that receives negative backlash rather than the person who violated the trust of the sender by sharing or distributing the pictures.

How can you support girls?

- Don't assume that girls use the term "sexting." There are many different slang terms for sending nude or intimate photos.
- Discuss appropriate ways of showing you care for someone.
- Encourage girls to think about the difference between being liked for who they are and being popular: youth who say wanting to be popular is important to them are more likely to share intimate information about themselves.
- Remind them they shouldn't do or share anything they don't want to. No one who loves or respects someone will pressure or threaten them to send a photo (or share anything else that's private).
- Make sure they know that they can come to you as another trusted adult for help and support if things ever go wrong.
- Many young people mistakenly believe that they will be charged with a crime if sexts they sent someone come to the attention of the police. They also may not know that it is a crime to share someone else's sexts without their consent. Taken together, these may make girls less likely to turn to authorities when a sext of them is shared. It's important to reassure them that the law is made to protect them and it is important to report serious incidents to the police.

² "A Guide for Trusted Adults." *MediaSmarts*, YWCA and Project Shift with MediaSmarts, 2017, [mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/guide-trusted-adults](https://www.mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/guide-trusted-adults).



If an intimate photograph has been shared without consent, girls can report them to <https://needhelpnow.ca/app/en/> and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection can help them to have it removed. For more discussion tips, check out Kids Help Phone at <https://kidshelpphone.ca/article/what-sexting-o>. If you suspect a girl member is being abused refer to [GGC's reporting policies](#).

Terms and conditions

The terms and conditions of social media websites can be confusing and frustrating for users to figure out. Mostly because the end user licence agreement (EULA) is filled with legal jargon. The Association for Media Literacy has compiled the EULAs into user-friendly language of some of the more popular agreements including:

- Bell Media
- Snapchat
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Rogers
- Facebook

Downloadable posters can be found at <http://www.aml.ca/i-agree/>.

For more information and resources on these topics check out some of our partner subject matter experts including:

MediaSmarts

- Gender representation: <https://goo.gl/WcWidh>
- Cyberbullying: <https://goo.gl/4n4p8M>
- Sexting: <https://goo.gl/YZiuzB>
- Guide for Trusted Adults: <https://goo.gl/nbg7it>

Kids Help Phone

- Cyberbullying: <https://goo.gl/2XXoTZ> and <https://goo.gl/iuC62X>.
- Talking to a Safe Adult: <https://goo.gl/WWaUSw>

Adventure Awaits

As your unit is working through DeCode, it may feel a bit daunting. Like all uncharted territory, there are things that might make you uncomfortable. Trust in your resourcefulness to build the confidence needed to change the messages that girls are hearing from the media.

Core Program Connections

You can use this challenge to complete programming in the following areas:

Sparks:

- Being Me Keeper
- Exploring & Experimenting Keeper

Brownies:

- Key to Me - #4, 5, 6, 7
- Key to STEM - #1
- Key to STEM Information Technology is IT Interest Badge

Guides:

- You & Others Program Area – Building Skills in Communication #4,
- Beyond You – Try New Things #4, 5
- Science & Technology – Computer Skills Interest Badge
- Personal Growth – Life Skills Interest Badge #8

Pathfinders:

- Creating Your Future – We're a Team, Follow that Woman
- Girl Stuff – Focus on Friendships, Media & Images, Hot Topics for Youth
- Living Well – Let's Go and Chill Out
- My Music, My Movie, & More – Camera Crazy
- Exploring a Theme – Computer Whiz, Web Surfin'

Rangers:

- Community Connections - #29