



Girl Scouts

For All

girl scouts
of maine



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***This document is not intended to replace or supersede any doctor's instructions, nor should it in any way be taken as medical advice or directions. This resource is a suggestion for GSME volunteers to use while welcoming girls to their troops with special needs and is for informational and educational purposes only. Please follow a parent/caregiver's instructions in the medical care of their child and make sure you always have the appropriate medical and troop permission forms completed and available for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel.

Girl Scouts For All

Girl Scouts For All (GSFA) provides support, resources, and advocacy for girls with differing abilities, their troop leaders, and families. No matter what challenges a Girl Scout may face, they are welcome to join the Girl Scouts of Maine (GSME)!

GSME provides resources for leaders so they can properly welcome members into their troops as well as teach their Girl Scouts about persons with disabilities.

Email customer care@gsmaine.org for more information on the different ways you can provide support.

**Please note that while parents/caregivers may choose to share about their child's disabilities, some may not, and others may not be diagnosed, so it is important that in an effort to make Girl Scouts for all, we make an effort to be more accommodating to ALL abilities, regardless of whether any have been shared.

What do you call people with disabilities?

Person-first, or people-first language, can help to emphasize the person before their disabilities and can help avoid things like stereotyping. Identity-First language is used to acknowledge that a person's disability(s) may be considered part of their identity, or who they are as a person.

It's important to note that terminology is ever-changing. If you are unsure whether to use person-first language or identity-first language, the best thing to do is ask the person. Preferences vary from community to community and person to person, but regardless of their decision, it is their choice.

Appropriate Terminology

- People with disabilities
- People without disabilities
- Person who has...
- Person with a physical disability
- Person with a mental health condition
- Accessible parking, bathrooms, etc.

Outdated/Inappropriate Terminology

- The handicapped, the disabled
- Normal, healthy, whole, or typical people
- Person with a birth defect
- Person afflicted with, suffers from
- Downs person
- The autistic
- A cripple
- A dwarf, a midget
- A freak
- The blind
- Crazy, insane, psycho, mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, demented
- Learning disabled, special ed student, special education student, stupid
- Mentally retarded, retarded, slow
- Confined to a wheelchair; wheelchair-bound
- Handicapped parking, bathrooms, etc.

Differing Abilities Handbook

Physical disabilities and differing abilities may limit their activities, but not their hopes and achievements. The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is flexible enough to bring out the best in everyone.

What is a disability?

A disability is something that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as walking, talking, reading, writing, eating, dressing, or bathing yourself, along with any of the everyday things people do for themselves and others. A disability may affect only a small part of your life, or it may affect every part of your life.

Some disabilities are obvious: a person uses a wheelchair or walker, has a guide dog or white cane, or communicates using American Sign Language; or perhaps a person has an artificial limb or their speech is hard to understand. Other disabilities are “invisible”; you can’t tell just by looking that a person has a seizure disorder, life-threatening food allergies, a learning disability, or asthma.

Juliette Gordon Low showed us the way

Juliette, the Founder of Girl Scouts of the USA, was deaf for most of her adult life. She sometimes used “ear trumpets,” the forerunner of today’s hearing aids, but she also tried to hide her deafness by being charming, talking a lot, and moving quickly from one person to the next. Her deafness was a great inconvenience for her, but it didn’t stop her from starting the Girl Scout Movement.

Juliette Low’s disability didn’t stop her from following her dream, and a disability should not stop someone from becoming a Girl Scout or an adult from becoming a leader.

Who can be a Girl Scout?

Membership as a Girl Scout is granted to any child who:

1. Has paid annual membership dues
2. Meets applicable membership standards (in grades K-12)
3. Identifies as female, non-binary, gender nonconforming, or transgender.

Girls with developmental delays may be registered into the Girl Scout level that most closely matches their chronological age. They may keep their girl membership until age 21, then move into the adult category. That’s it!

There are no requirements on how far you can walk or run, how well you can read, or how quickly you can think. Girls are placed regardless of whether they have differing abilities or not.



But what will I DO with a Girl Scout who has differing abilities?

The same thing you “do” with someone who doesn’t: help them grow in character so they can make the world a better place. You’ll model the Girl Scout Promise and Law, but you’ll also help them choose the activities they want to do at Girl Scouts, just like you do with the others. Show them how to stay safe and healthy, help them make friends, teach them how to live outdoors, and share “fun” Girl Scout traditions! They may be bullied at school or unable to participate in other groups, so make your Girl Scout troop a safe haven and show the rest of your troop how to be inclusive.

A Girl Scout with a disability is interested in joining my troop.

Great! Welcome them with open arms. If you're feeling a little nervous, that's okay! Your dedication to Girl Scouts will help along the way, but we're here to reassure you that you are perfectly equipped to teach anyone what it means to be a Girl Scout.

It's a little scary...I'm not a teacher or therapist, and I don't know what to do or where to start.

Nobody arrives with an instruction manual, and it takes time to get comfortable with new situations. We're not asking you to become an expert or nurse or therapist, just a Girl Scout volunteer. Your responsibility for a child with differing abilities is the same as it is for the others in your troop.

What if I can't handle the thought of working with someone different?

Start by seeing the girl first. She has her own strengths and ways of doing things, and like every child, she has feelings, big dreams, and a desire to make friends, learn new things, go new places, and have fun. She may sometimes need extra support or for you to adapt an activity—and that's okay. Everyone benefits from a little extra help and understanding sometimes. It's natural to feel nervous when you're trying something new. As a leader, your troop tries new things all the time; this is one of yours. Give yourself time to get to know her and understand her abilities and interests before you decide, "No, I can't do this."



You mean I have to take a Girl Scout with a disability whether I want to or not?

No, however, as a Girl Scout volunteer, you're expected to welcome every girl who meets the grade-level requirements, pays her national membership dues, and makes the Girl Scout Promise and accepts the Girl Scout Law. Instead of asking, "Do I have to?" try asking, "What support do I need to feel comfortable welcoming a girl with a disability into the troop?"

You are not alone. These resources were created to help you. Start by learning about her abilities. Talk with her parents/caregivers: "I want Girl Scouting to be a great experience for your girl, and I'm still learning. It would help if you could tell me about her strengths, abilities, and what supports her best." Most parents/caregivers will welcome questions like, "Can she do this? Does she need help with that? How do you handle _____?" Then, ask the girl herself.

Girls are often the best experts on when they need (or don't need!) help and what kind of help works. YOU CAN DO IT—and there are lots of resources to support you, starting with Girl Scouts for all.

It's natural to feel hesitant about including a child with a medical condition, disability, or other difference. You may worry about saying the wrong thing, adapting activities, or how others in the troop may feel. When you focus on ability—what she can do rather than what she can't—you ease some of those fears: "It's true she can't do X, but she can do Y, so we can still take part in Z together."

Girl Scouts of the USA's Safety Activity Checkpoints contain resources for working with Girl Scouts with special needs.

Sometimes it helps to invite parents/caregivers to a meeting before their girl joins the troop to explain her abilities and answer questions. Some leaders also feel more comfortable if a parent/caregiver attends the first meeting with the new Girl Scout. These are all things to talk over with parents/caregivers.

Advice from a “Girl with a Disability”

1. Please don't worry about me. I'm a lot tougher than you think.
2. Most of my needs are just like those of other girls, even though my physical or mental development is different.
3. Give me what you naturally give to all the other girls: your love, your praise, your acceptance, and your faith in me.
4. Help me to have a successful experience in your troop (or group or camp unit). If you help us plan a variety of activities, I will always find at least one thing I can do well!
5. Encourage me to do things for myself, even if it takes me a long time.
6. If the troop has a regular meeting-time routine, I will know what to expect.
7. Like other kids, I remember instructions best if they are short and clear.
8. Give me opportunities to help others.



Welcoming Girls with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) into Your Troop

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobehavioral disorder. ADHD is usually diagnosed in childhood, and the condition can continue into the adult years. Many individuals with ADHD are undiagnosed until adulthood, and research shows girls are most under-diagnosed because their symptoms often present differently than boys. The common characteristics of ADHD are impulsivity, inattention, and/or over-activity. Three subtypes can be diagnosed depending on primary symptoms.

Suggestions and strategies for preparing for and including girls with ADHD in your troop

1. Provide clear expectations and structure in troop meetings (this can be done using a picture chart or written schedule, as well as utilizing a communal “troop rules” agreement that’s visible to all).
2. For large projects or activities with longer time commitments, break down the tasks/times into smaller parts.
3. Give verbal reminders during the troop meetings or activities of the structure and schedule as needed to stay on-task.
4. An outline of each meeting or activity, if it will involve a long time or attention commitment, helps set expectations.
5. When possible, start each meeting/activity with a summary of the events to come and conclude each meeting/activity with a summary of what the key points were.
6. Vary the schedule or routine as applicable to keep attention, but make sure to discuss changes beforehand.
7. Try to keep meetings or activities open to many physical outlets or options (ex. eating snack during story time or working on a craft while learning about something in the community).
8. Be sensitive to the attention span and physical positioning limits—do not expect the children to hold the same position (ex. sitting in a circle) for too long while focusing on any one activity.
9. Fidgets (something to hold in their hand and fidget with) can be provided while needing to remain relatively still and listening for a longer period of time during an activity; the whole troop can each have their own, so no one feels singled out.
10. Respect the child and their parent/caregiver preference for confidentiality while also ensuring the child knows the troop is a safe place for them to share if they would like to. For more information on how to talk about differences, please visit [The Kids Mental Health Foundation](http://TheKidsMentalHealthFoundation.org).
11. Always consult with the parent/caregiver beforehand to ensure you’re providing for the child's needs to the best of your ability. They will know the best methods and strategies to help their child.



For more help and information, please visit the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at aacap.org

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Welcoming Girl Scouts with Asthma into Your Troop

Asthma is a respiratory condition marked by spasms in the bronchial tubes of the lungs, causing difficulty in breathing. It usually results from an allergic reaction or other forms of hypersensitivity. It is one of the most common long-term diseases of children. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 8% of children in the United States have it, and the number is increasing.

An “asthma attack” is a sudden worsening of symptoms caused by the tightening of muscles around the airways. During an asthma attack, the lining of the airways also becomes swollen or inflamed, and more mucus than usual is produced, which inhibits typical breathing patterns and oxygen intake. Asthma attacks can be frightening for an asthmatic person and the people around them. The important thing is to remember to stay calm and keep others calm while taking steps to first treat the symptoms of the attack, and secondly, eliminate the triggers that caused the attack if possible. Symptoms of an asthma attack or general lack of oxygen can include:

- Wheezing
- Coughing
- Tightness in the chest
- Inability to take deep breaths
- Breathlessness
- Blue tint to the lips or finger/toenails

Asthma is regulated and treated in many ways. People with asthma may regulate their symptoms with oral allergy or asthma medications, regulatory inhaled medications, nebulizers (small machines that provide inhaled medication treatments), and/or with “rescue inhalers,” which are hand-held inhalers used in the event of an asthma emergency. If they have a food or environmental allergy that can result in a sudden and dangerous asthma attack, they may carry an EpiPen (epinephrine auto-injector) to treat symptoms.

Suggestions and strategies for preparing for and including girls with asthma in your troop

1. Consult with the child’s parent/caregiver beforehand about any medication or medical equipment that maybe present during meetings. Be clear in how and when to administer the medication or treatment, and be sure it’s being stored in a safe location away from general accessibility of the girls (they may have an “Asthma Action Plan” to consult).
2. Consult with the child’s parent/caregiver about potential asthmatic triggers and how to avoid them.
3. Respect the child and their parent/caregiver preference for confidentiality while also ensuring the child knows the troop is a safe place for them to share if they would like to. For more information on how to talk about differences, please visit [The Kids Mental Health Foundation](https://www.kidsmentalhealth.org/).
4. Always consult with the parent/caregiver beforehand to be sure you’re providing for the child’s needs to the best of your ability-they will know the best methods and strategies to help their child.

For more help and information, visit American Lung Association at [lung.org/asthma](https://www.lung.org/asthma) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention at [cdc.gov/asthma](https://www.cdc.gov/asthma).

8 For more help and information regarding food allergies and asthma, visit Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America at [aafa.org](https://www.aafa.org) and the Food Allergy and Research and Education at [foodallergy.org](https://www.foodallergy.org).



Welcoming Girl Scouts with Autism into Your Troop

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that affects social interaction, communication, and behavior, which may appear unusual or repetitive. The spectrum includes autism, Asperger syndrome (sometimes referred to as “high-functioning autism”), and pervasive developmental disorder. People with ASD may have difficulty understanding others’ thoughts, feelings, and motivations and using that understanding to guide their own behavior. Because ASD is diverse and complex, not every characteristic will be visible in a girl with ASD, especially over a short period of time. Behaviors that may seem atypical, unusual, or even rude are often unintentional expressions of ASD. With understanding, flexibility, and support, girls with ASD can fully participate in Girl Scouts and pursue their interests and ambitions.



Suggestions and strategies for including girls with ASD in your troop:

1. Provide clear expectations and structure at troop meetings using picture charts or written schedules. Display visible “troop rules” or “troop agreements” with clear, simple directives.
2. Address disruptive behavior privately and proactively. If a girl’s behavior is disrupting the troop, meet separately with the girl and her parent/caregiver to explain what behavior is disruptive, why it is challenging for the troop, and to create a clear plan to avoid this type of behavior moving forward.
3. Avoid absolute language such as “always” or “never” unless that is exactly what you mean.
4. Supplement oral instructions with written or visual instructions as needed for activities.
5. Set clear limits on participation when needed. For example, allow one helper per activity on a rotating basis, or limit each girl to one question or story per activity.
6. Limit the use of metaphors as they are often misunderstood.
7. Review rules, boundaries, and safety expectations (such as emergency procedures) before each activity, and refer back to posted troop rules or agreements as visual reminders.
8. Be aware that girls with ASD might be distracted by others or unintentionally disruptive and may need gentle redirection or reminders.
9. Use visual supports whenever possible. Many individuals with ASD are visual learners and benefit from pictures or visual substitutes/reminders.
10. State expectations clearly and briefly for troop meetings and activities.
11. Offer fidgets when extended listening or stillness is required. Providing them to the entire troop helps ensure no one feels singled out.
12. Respect confidentiality preferences expressed by the child and their parent/caregiver, while reinforcing that the troop is a safe place to share if they choose to do so. For guidance on discussing differences, visit The Kids Mental Health Foundation. [The Kids Mental Health Foundation](https://www.kidsmentalhealth.org/).
13. Always consult with the parent/caregiver in advance to better understand and support the child’s individual needs.



For more help and information, please visit Autism Society Maine www.asmonline.org/

Welcoming Blind or Visually Impaired Girl Scouts into Your Troop

There are two main categories of visual impairment: low vision and blindness. Individuals with low vision are typically print users but require specialized equipment or materials. Legal blindness encompasses a wide range of visual impairments, and there is no “typical” visually impaired child due to the many factors that shape each individual’s experience. In troop meetings, one of the greatest challenges for visually impaired children is navigating the large amount of visual information presented.



Suggestions and strategies for including blind and visually impaired girls in your troop:

1. Verbally address the group when entering and leaving the meeting location.
2. Use names when speaking so everyone knows who is being addressed.
3. Use specific directional language such as “straight ahead,” “to your left,” or “behind you,” instead of vague terms like “here,” “there,” or “over there.”
4. Describe important visual details of activities, demonstrations, or surroundings.
5. Give verbal notice before changing locations or moving to a new activity.
6. Offer to read written information out loud when appropriate.
7. Identify yourself by name when speaking; do not assume someone will recognize your voice.
8. Offer guidance when traveling or moving through unfamiliar spaces during meetings. Offer your arm and clearly describe steps, door locations, obstacles, or changes in elevation.
9. Educate the troop about guide dogs. Do not pet, feed, or distract a guide dog, as it is a working animal and it can be dangerous for the visually impaired or blind person if the dog is distracted.
10. Explain where materials are located before each activity, and allow the girl to touch and explore objects when appropriate.
11. Do not move objects or locations without a verbal notice to the troop.
12. Keep doors fully open or fully closed—never ajar.
13. Ask before offering help and respect the girl’s independence.
14. Respect confidentiality preferences expressed by the girl and her parent/caregiver, while reinforcing that the troop is a safe place to share if she chooses. For guidance on discussing differences, visit [The Kids Mental Health Foundation](https://www.kidsmentalhealth.org/).
15. Always consult with the parent/caregiver in advance to ensure you are meeting the girl’s needs effectively—they know the strategies that work best for their child.



For more help and information, please visit National Federation of the Blind-Maine at nfb-me.org/

Welcoming Deaf or Hearing-Impaired Girls into Your Troop



Deafness is defined as the lack or severe impairment of the ability to hear. Hearing impairment can affect the ability to hear sound intensity, pitch, or both. Hearing loss of approximately 90 decibels or greater is typically considered deafness. Hearing loss varies widely in type and severity, and there is no “typical” experience. It is important to treat each Girl Scout as an individual while meeting her specific needs.

Girls who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may learn and communicate differently. Some may have speech difficulties or may not communicate verbally at all. You may work with an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter during meetings. Do not assume a deaf or hard-of-hearing person can read lips or rely on written instructions. For individuals who use ASL as their primary language, written English is often a second language and may be difficult to interpret or understand.

Suggestions and strategies for including girls with deafness or hearing impairment in your troop:

1. Talk with the girl and her parent/caregiver in advance. She may hear better in one ear; if so, position speakers on that side.
2. If an interpreter is present, speak directly to the girl, not the interpreter, and familiarize yourself with appropriate Sign Language etiquette.
3. Be mindful of how noise can affect them. This is a good opportunity to teach the troop what “quiet” really means.
4. Supplement with visual instructions as needed for activities.
5. Use a buddy system and double-check that everyone understands directions clearly.
6. Review safety procedures in advance. For example, in a museum, a girl may not hear a fire alarm, so establish a clear emergency signal or gesture (she may already use one).
7. Be aware of special hearing aids that interact with headsets; the speaker should wear the headset.
8. Be patient with communication. Ask ahead of time how the girl prefers to communicate (interpreter, written, visual, or other methods).
9. Encourage learning and inclusion. If a girl uses sign language, invite the troop, including adults, to learn some signs. Have fun and learn together!
10. Respect confidentiality preferences expressed by the girl and her parent/caregiver, while reinforcing that the troop is a safe place to share if she chooses. For guidance on discussing differences, visit [The Kids Mental Health Foundation](https://www.kidsmentalhealth.org/).
11. Always consult with the parent/caregiver beforehand to ensure you are providing appropriate support—they know the strategies that work best for their child.



For more information, visit the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at <https://www.mecdhh.org/>, the National Association for the Deaf at [nad.org](https://www.nad.org/), or the Hearing Loss Association of America at [hearingloss.org](https://www.hearingloss.org/).

Welcoming Girls with Diabetes into Your Troop



Diabetes is a metabolic disease in which the body's inability to produce any or enough insulin causes elevated levels of glucose (sugar) in the blood. There are two kinds of diabetes: Type 1 and Type 2. Some children develop Type 1 Diabetes at an early age. Type 2 Diabetes is usually developed later in life, but it is increasing in children. In Type 1 Diabetes the body's immune system destroys the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. Without insulin, the body cannot properly process sugar from a diet. Diabetes can affect anyone, and is not an indicator of poor diet.

Diabetes can cause instances of lowered blood sugar levels or elevated blood sugar levels even when properly maintained with diet, exercise, and medication. This can be dangerous and should be regulated. Symptoms of a blood sugar imbalance can include thirst, frequent urination, moodiness, tiredness, nausea, and vomiting. Girls are more likely than boys to have diabetes. Due to the increase in diabetes in the United States, the odds are that most of your girls know someone with diabetes.

They may have medication to regulate these symptoms in the form of an orally taken pill, an insulin pump, or through insulin injections. They may also have a blood sugar monitor which helps them to monitor the levels of blood sugar present in their body (is it too elevated, too low, or just right?) They also may have special dietary restrictions or needs. Glucose tablets and protein bars are common supplements that can be held on hand in the event of a sudden blood sugar dip or elevation.

Suggestions and strategies for preparing and including girls with diabetes in your troop:

1. Consult with the child's parent/caregiver beforehand about any medication or medical equipment that maybe present with the child or adult during meetings. Be clear in how and when to administer the medication or treatment and be sure it's being stored in a safe location away from general accessibility.
2. Ask the parent/caregiver to provide you with ideas and instructions about what food to serve and when to serve it (frequency). Following their special dietary needs is very important to avoid instances of lowered or elevated blood sugar levels.
3. Respect the child and their parent/caregiver preference for confidentiality while also ensuring the child knows the troop is a safe place for them to share if they would like to. For more information on how to talk about differences, please visit [The Kids Mental Health Foundation](https://www.kidsmentalhealth.org/).
4. Always consult with the parent/caregiver beforehand to be sure you're providing for the child's needs to the best of your ability—they will know the best methods and strategies to help their child.



For more help and information, please visit American Diabetes Association at diabetes.org

Welcoming Girl Scouts with Food Allergies into Your Troop



A food allergy is an unusual response to a food caused by the body's immune system. Allergic reactions to food can sometimes cause serious illness and even death. Tree nuts and peanuts are the leading causes of dangerous allergic reactions called anaphylaxis. This is an acute allergic reaction to an antigen (bee sting, eating an allergen such as a peanut product, etc.) to which the body has become hypersensitive. However, there are many foods which people can be allergic to and every person is different in what their allergies are and how sensitive they are to certain products. For example, one person may be allergic to strawberries and eating them causes a rash on their face that will go away without medical attention after a short period of time. Another person allergic to strawberries may break out in itchy hives all over their body and require medical attention to resolve this reaction. Every person is unique in what they are allergic to and their reactions to their allergens. This includes environmental allergies as well as food allergies.

When someone with a food allergy eats a product they are allergic to, their immune system launches an attack by releasing histamine and other powerful substances which cause symptoms that become an "allergic reaction." Symptoms of an allergic reaction can be:

- Rashes or hives
- Cramps
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Lightheadedness
- Increased heart rate
- Difficulty breathing or asthmatic inflammation
- Excess mucus production
- Sneezing, coughing, or congestion in the nasal or airway passages
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, or throat
- Watery eyes

People with food allergies may manage their allergies in different ways. There is medication they may take orally or via injection. They may simply avoid foods that cause an allergic reaction. If they have an anaphylaxis allergic reaction to something, they may carry an EpiPen with them. If their food allergies cause asthmatic reactions, they may also have asthma medication, a rescue inhaler, or regulatory inhaler as well.



Suggestions and strategies for preparing for and including girls with food allergies in your troop:

1. Consult with the child's parent/caregiver beforehand about any medication or medical equipment that may be present with the child or adult during meetings. Be clear in how and when to administer the medication or treatment and be sure it's being stored in a safe location away from general accessibility of others. (They may have an "Asthma Action Plan" or "Allergy" x Action Plan" to consult.)
2. If they have a rescue inhaler or EpiPen, make sure that it is kept safely away from the others, but also is easily accessible by the responsible adult in the event of an asthma attack or anaphylaxis allergic reaction. The rescue inhaler and/or EpiPen should be with the responsible adult and present with the asthmatic and/or allergic person at all times.
3. Ask the parent/caregiver to provide you with ideas and instructions about what food to serve and how to prepare it—some allergies are more sensitive than others and may require extremely cautious food handling or even separate meal/snack times.
4. If there is a severe, anaphylaxis allergy present, ask the parent/caregiver if it is okay to share with all of the other parents/caregivers and children in the troop so that they may avoid bringing the allergen into contact with them (ex: peanuts).
5. Remind the other girls in the troop to not share food with their food-allergic friend.
6. Everyone should wash their hands with soap and water before and after eating to help prevent traces of an allergen from being passed. Hand sanitizer does not eliminate allergens.
7. No one should utilize shared materials, like markers or pencils, while eating, as allergens can live on surfaces.
8. If there is any symptom of an allergic reaction, address the situation:
 - a. Consult/ask for help and directions from the parent/caregiver.
 - b. Administer medication if appropriate and permission has been given.
 - c. Remove the allergen from the situation
 - d. Call for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) / 911 if necessary.
9. Respect the child and their parent/caregiver preference for confidentiality while also ensuring the child knows the troop is a safe place for them to share if they would like to. For more information on how to talk about differences, please visit [The Kids Mental Health Foundation](#).
10. Always consult with the parent/caregiver beforehand to be sure you're providing for the child's needs to the best of your ability—they will know the best methods and strategies to help their child.

Food preparation suggestions for common allergies

There are many ways to prepare safe snacks for those with food allergies. When preparing foods, properly sanitize the preparation area to be sure it is free of allergens. Did you know many allergens such as wheat or lactose can be replaced when cooking? Do research to see what quantities you need before you start preparing food.

- For milk-free (lactose-free) baking substitute: water, fruit juices, rice milk, or soy milk.
- For egg-free baking, substitute: baking powder, liquid, vinegar.
- For wheat-free baking/thickening, substitute: cornstarch, rice flour, potato starch, quick cooking tapioca, arrowroot starch, sweet rice flour.
- Use sunflower seed butter in place of peanut butter or almond butter.
- Use soy, almond, coconut, or lactose-free milks.
- Gluten-free substitutes are commonly available in most stores and restaurants now.

If you would like to learn more about recognizing and responding to anaphylaxis, visit <https://www.foodallergy.org/resources/anaphylaxis>

Welcoming Girls with Learning Disabilities into Your Troop



Learning disabilities are neurologically-based processing problems. These processing problems can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing, and/or math. They can also interfere with higher level skills such as organization, time planning, abstract reasoning, long- or short-term memory and attention. It is important to recognize that learning disabilities can affect a child's life beyond academics and can impact their relationships in all area of life including troop involvement.

“Learning Disabilities” is an overarching term used to describe many other more specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, ADHD, and language processing disorders.

Suggestions and strategies for preparing for and including Girl Scouts with learning disabilities in your troop:

1. Try not to make them the center of attention because of their disability. If they need special accommodations, support, or company then generalize it for the rest of the troop or allow them to designate what they're comfortable with around others.
2. If they are very active, then start meetings with a physical activity—even Ambassador Girl Scouts love to swing on swing sets at the park!
3. If they have difficulty reading, plan ahead and provide opportunities before the meeting to meet and go over any written lines, directions, or guides for the meeting in advance. Girl Scout materials are not solely reading based and can be adapted to fit their needs.
4. Redirection, Troop Agreements (Code of Conduct), and short activity periods with active transition times will help with high energy and low attention levels.
5. Make a point of important times to listen. If they have problems listening, then give a verbal cue such as, “I need everyone to listen for the next two minutes.”
6. Don't let the others leave them out of things—everyone has something to bring to the table. Talk about how everyone has certain gifts. You can point out that as a Girl Scout troop leader, you are better at some things than others. Maybe you aren't artsy, but you can pitch a tent in a rainstorm. Celebrate everyone's achievements and if you see a clique forming, rotate who is in which group.
7. Fidgets (something to hold in their hand and fidget with) can be provided while needing to remain relatively still and listening for a longer period of time during an activity: the whole troop can each have their own so no one feels singled out.
8. Respect the child and their parent/caregiver preference for confidentiality while also ensuring the child knows the troop is a safe place for them to share if they would like to. For more information on how to talk about differences, please visit [The Kids Mental Health Foundation](https://www.kidsmentalhealth.org/).
9. Always consult with the parent/caregiver beforehand to be sure you're providing for the child's needs to the best of your ability—they will know the best methods and strategies to help their child.



For more help and information, please visit the Center for Parent Information and Resources: parentcenterhub.org/repository/accommodations.

Welcoming Girls with Seizure Disorders into Your Troop

Seizures happen when your brain cells, which communicate through electrical signals, send out the wrong signals. Anything that interrupts the normal connections between nerve cells in the brain can cause a seizure. When a person has two or more recurrent unprovoked seizures, then they are considered to have epilepsy for which there may be no detectable cause. There are different types of seizures and seizure disorders which may be treated with medicine and other alternative treatments.

A convulsive seizure is where someone shakes or jerks during the seizure. While this can be frightening to see, this type of seizure is not usually a medical emergency.

Suggestions and strategies for preparing for and including Girl Scouts with seizure disorders in your troop:

1. Consult with the child's parent/caregiver beforehand about any medication or medical equipment that may be present with the child or adult during meetings. Be clear in how to administer the medication or treatment and be sure it's being stored in a safe location away from general accessibility of others. (They may have a "Seizure Action Plan" to consult.)
2. Ask the child's parent/caregiver to provide you with instructions about what to do if they have a seizure and any possible side effects of the medication.
3. Respect the child and their parent/caregiver preference for confidentiality while also ensuring the child knows the troop is a safe place for them to share if they would like to. For more information on how to talk about differences, please visit The Kids Mental Health Foundation.
4. Always consult with the parent/caregiver beforehand to be sure you're providing for the child's needs to the best of your ability—they will know the best methods and strategies to help their child.

For more help and information please visit Epilepsy Foundation at epilepsy.com. Some symptoms or warning signs of seizures:

- Staring
- Jerking movements of the arms or legs
- Stiffening of the body
- Loss of consciousness
- Breathing problems or breathing stops
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Falling suddenly for no apparent reason, especially when associated with loss of consciousness
- Not responding to noise or words for brief periods
- Appearing confused or in a haze
- Nodding the head rhythmically, when associated with loss of awareness or even loss of consciousness
- Periods of rapid eye blinking and staring
- Stay with them. If they don't collapse but seem blank or confused, gently guide them away from any danger. Speak quietly and calmly.
- Cushion their head with something soft if they have collapsed to the ground.
- Don't hold them down.
- Don't put anything in their mouth.
- Check the time again. If a convulsive (shaking) seizure doesn't stop after 5 minutes, call for emergency medical services.
- After the seizure has stopped, put them into the recovery position (visit epilepsy.com for more information) and check that their breathing is returning to normal. Gently check their mouth to see that nothing is blocking the airway. If their breathing sounds difficult after the seizure has stopped, call for emergency medical services.

Suggestions for what to do if someone has a convulsive seizure: **STAY CALM!**

- Look around—is the person in a dangerous place?
- If not, don't move them. Move objects like furniture away from them.
- Note the time the seizure starts.
- Stay with them until they are fully recovered.
- If they are injured or they have another seizure without recovering fully from the first seizure, call for emergency medical services.

Welcoming Girls with Wheelchairs into Your Troop

There are many disabilities and medical conditions which may cause required use of a wheelchair, whether short-term or long-term to aid in recovery and/or general mobility. People who use wheelchairs may or may not be able to walk independently without assistance. Their wheelchair may be used manually or electronically run.



Suggestions and strategies for preparing for and including girls with wheelchairs in your troop:

1. Ask before offering help with transportation (pushing the wheelchair).
2. Adapt activities as needed for those with special mobility needs.
3. Include them in all activities as much as possible so they don't feel singled out.
4. Keep their line-of-vision and reachability in mind—they have a shorter stature in the wheelchair and may not be able to see as well as those standing or be able to reach for something out of a convenient location.
5. Before traveling to a new location, be sure to check for wheelchair accessible entryways and exits as well as restrooms.
6. Respect the child and their parent/caregiver preference for confidentiality while also ensuring the child knows the troop is a safe place for them to share if they would like to. For more information on how to talk about differences, please visit The Kids Mental Health Foundation.
7. Always consult with the parent/caregiver beforehand to be sure you're providing for the child's needs to the best of your ability—they will know the best methods and strategies to help their child.



For more resources on wheelchair etiquette and safety, please visit Forward Ability Support at <https://fas.org.au/>



Activities

No Experience Need

You don't need to have prior knowledge or experience of differing abilities to teach about awareness and inclusion. All activities include easy-to-follow plans complete with material lists and discussion questions. If you do have questions or concerns, we encourage you to call council and speak with a staff representative. This is an opportunity for you to learn along with your girls.

Why Appreciation

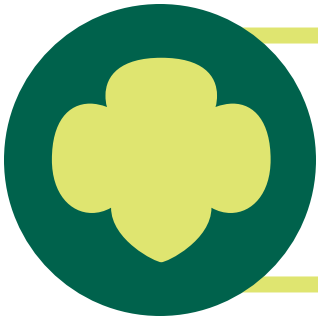
Appreciation means focusing on what somebody can do, not what they can't. Inclusion is the idea that we appreciate each other, that we see each other's gifts, and that we value being together; it's the right to belong.

Internet Usage

Some of these activities reference helpful websites. If girls will be using the internet, they should have a signed Internet Safety Pledge on file with the troop leadership volunteer(s). You can print the pledge by visiting girlscouts.org and searching "internet safety pledge". We cannot certify or endorse the content of any website.

About These Activities

This Appreciation Series is adapted from Girl Scouts of San Diego's Ability Awareness and Inclusion patch as well as Girl Scouts of Ohio's Heartland Girl Scouts for All patch program. We'd like to extend our heartfelt thanks to GSSD and GSOH for sharing their patch program and allowing us to adapt it, as well as answering our many questions along the way.



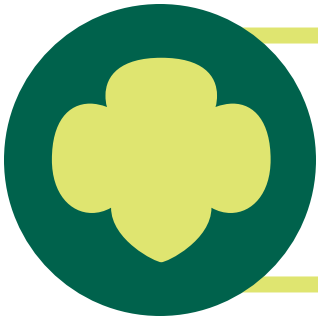
Appreciation Quiz Ability Awareness (D/B/J)

Divide your meeting space in half and designate one side as “true” and one side as “false” with the middle area as “unsure”. Read each question aloud to the group and ask the girls to move to the area of the room (true, false, unsure) that corresponds to what they think the answer is. Once they’ve chosen, ask the girls in each area why they chose that answer; once you have reasons from all sides, read the correct answer and the reason behind it. Discuss as needed.

Daisy/Brownie/Junior Level Ability Awareness Quiz

1. You can “catch” a disability from someone else.
2. People in wheelchairs cannot play sports.
3. People who talk slow or have a learning disability are not smart.
4. People who are visually impaired can read.
5. People with differing abilities don’t have the same feelings as people without disabilities.
6. People with differing abilities cannot live by themselves.
7. Everyone who uses a wheelchair is unable to walk.
8. A person with a disability can get a job.

- Answers
1. False: a disability is not something that you can catch.
 2. False: Almost every sport you can think of has been adapted so that people in wheelchairs can play, from wheelchair basketball, to sled hockey, to rugby.
 3. False: Just because somebody has problems vocalizing their thoughts or processing certain kinds of information does not mean that they are not smart.
 4. True: People who are visually impaired may be able to read with a special kind of alphabet: braille.
 5. False: Everyone has feelings.
 6. False: There are many people with differing abilities who live independently. There are also many people that live by themselves but may have someone help them with more difficult tasks.
 7. False: Many people are in wheelchairs because their legs are too weak to carry them long distances. They may walk for short distances for exercise, while some people who use wheelchairs are unable to walk.
 8. True: A person with a disability can work just as hard as anyone else.

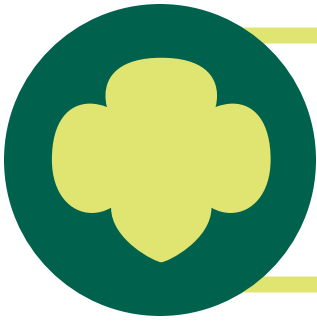


Appreciation Quiz Ability Awareness (C/S/A)

Divide your meeting space in half and designate one side as “true” and one side as “false” with the middle area as “unsure”. Read each question aloud to the group and ask the girls to move to the area of the room (true, false, unsure) that corresponds to what they think the answer is. Once they’ve chosen, ask the girls in each area why they chose that answer; once you have reasons from all sides, read the correct answer and the reason behind it. Discuss as needed.

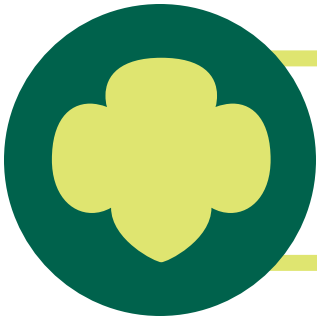
Cadette/Senior/Ambassador Ability Awareness Quiz

1. Only people who can't walk use wheelchairs.
2. You have a friend who has a speech impairment and sometimes you're not sure what they said. To make it easier, you should pretend that you understand.
3. When you meet someone who is visually impaired, you should introduce yourself to that person.
4. When communicating with people who are hearing impaired, it is necessary to speak through an interpreter.
5. It's safe to assume that people with differing abilities usually need help.
6. It's okay to gossip about people who are hearing impaired because they can't hear you anyway.
7. People who use wheelchairs can't go any place fun.
8. People with cerebral palsy usually have a cognitive disability, too.
9. People with differing abilities want to be treated just like everyone else.
10. When you meet someone with a guide or companion dog, you should make friends with the dog first so that the dog is comfortable with you being nearby.
11. Among other professions, people with differing disabilities prefer to hang out with others who have differing abilities.
12. Among other professions, people with differing abilities work as stockbrokers, lawyers, doctors and teachers.
13. Most public places such as movie theaters, restaurants and ballparks are easy for people who use wheelchairs to enjoy.
14. It's okay to ask people with disabilities about their disabilities.
15. People with differing abilities can participate in competitive sports.
16. People with differing abilities can't live on their own when they grow up.
17. Disabilities are illnesses to be treated by medical professionals in the hope of a cure.
18. People can become disabled at any point in their lives.
19. Many people with differing abilities feel their real disability involves problems with the environment rather than problems with their bodies.



Appreciation Quiz Ability Awareness (C/S/A) Answers

- 1. False:** While it is true that many people who use wheelchairs can't walk, many can. People who can walk on their own or with the aid of braces or a walker may tire easily and choose to use a wheelchair because it gives them more independence.
- 2. False:** Never pretend you understand what someone is saying if you don't. Instead, ask your friend to repeat what they said.
- 3. True:** Introductions are always appropriate when meeting new people. When you have a friend or acquaintance with vision loss, it is appropriate to simply state your name whenever you see or greet them. "Hi Michelle, its Jane Anderson."
- 4. False:** Because some people who are hearing impaired use sign language, others read lips, and others use a combination of both, you need to find out how you can best communicate with them. If they have an interpreter, it's perfectly fine to use this person, but look at and speak directly to the person who is hearing impaired, not the interpreter. The interpreter will stand beside you and interpret as necessary.
- 5. False:** Most people prefer to be independent. When offering help to someone with a disability, always ask first, wait for their response and the ask them about the best way to provide the help they need. Don't feel bad if your help is turned down.
- 6. False:** People who are hearing impaired are just as likely to know they are being talked about as other people would be. Even if they do not hear exactly what's being said, they will notice. Why be rude?
- 7. False:** People who use wheelchairs may face some architectural barriers when going out into the community, but this doesn't mean they can't go anywhere fun. Instead, it's a reason to check out the places you plan to go ahead of time to see if there are potential problems. Decisions can then be made to work around barriers or to choose another location. Knowing what to expect ahead of time will make planned activities more enjoyable for everyone.
- 8. False:** Cerebral palsy is a disability affecting movement. Although cerebral palsy affects the motor control center of the brain, it does not affect one's natural intelligence.
- 9. True:** People with differing abilities have said that this, more than anything, is what they want—to be included and treated just like everyone else.
- 10. False:** You should always meet the person before their dog. Guide and companion dogs are working and should not be disturbed. As you are getting to know the person, you can ask about the dog and ask to be introduced.
- 11. True:** People with differing abilities are involved in a full range of professions.
- 12. False:** Friendship is usually based on common interest and activities, not on whether or not a person has a disability.
- 13. False:** Although the Americans with Disabilities Act calls for public places to be accessible to people that use wheelchairs, the fact is that there are still many places that are difficult for people who use wheelchairs to navigate. When you make plans with someone with a disability, possible architectural barriers should be considered.
- 14. True:** What's important is how you ask. Don't ask, "What's wrong with you?" Instead, learning more about a person should be a part of getting to know each other. Even then, some people may be willing to answer questions, while others may choose not to. Be sensitive and respect their wishes.
- 15. True:** Competitive sports are as important to people with disabilities as they are to those without. Having a physical disability does not necessarily preclude involvement in individual or team sports. People with disabilities ski, play tennis and racquetball, race in marathons, and participate in dozens of other sports. Keep in mind that just like everyone else, some people with disabilities love sports while others just aren't interested.
- 16. False:** With adapted housing, personal assistants, accessible transportation, and available employment, most people with disabilities can and do choose to live independently.
- 17. False:** Disabilities are not the same as illnesses. People with disabilities are not sick, and most are seeking acceptance and inclusion rather than a "cure".
- 18. True:** People can be born with a disability or the disability may come after birth, the result of illness, age or an accident. Statistics show that during their lifetime, 50 percent of people will experience a disability.
- 19. True:** Architectural barriers limit participation, productivity and independence. For instance, if a person who uses a wheelchair is offered a job that they cannot accept because it is located on the second floor of the building without an elevator, the real problem and obstacle is that there is no elevator.



Discover Activities

Appropriate for all levels

1. *Read a book on inclusion*

Materials: Any age-appropriate, inclusion-themed book. Read your chosen book or short stories together as a troop and then discuss.

Discussion: What assistive technologies or equipment, if any, did people use in the book? What are some stereotypes we all may have toward people with differing abilities? What was the disability in the book, how was it talked about, and how did other people react to the person?

2. *Learn some American Sign Language*

Suggested Materials: ASL flash cards, We Sign Fun Time DVD, You Can Learn Sign Language Book, or consider asking an ASL interpreter or instructor to come to your meeting.

American Sign Language (ASL) is one of the primary forms of communication for people in the U.S. who are deaf, live with a hearing impairment, or are non-verbal. The above resources and www.lifeprint.com can be adapted for every age level to learn the basics of ASL. Have each Girl Scout learn how to sign their name, in addition to a few short phrases or songs (if using the DVD).

3. *Walt Disney*

Have them talk about their favorite Disney show, movie, or ride at Disneyland. Explain that all these exist because of Walt Disney, who lived with dyslexia, a learning disability where an individual has trouble processing written language. As a child, Walt Disney was called slow. As a young adult, he was fired from a newspaper job for not being creative enough!

Discussion: How did Disney refuse others putting limitations on him? Which other famous people do you know who live with a disability (think about musicians, presidents, actors and people on TV)? How does the media represent and/talk about them? How do they represent and talk about themselves?

4. *The Girl Scout Law: Its True Meaning*

Materials: printed copies of the Girl Scout Law for everyone to reference.

Recite the Girl Scout Law together. Talk about what inclusion means and go over each section of the Law and discuss how it applies to inclusion. Focus on the last line of the Law and talk about what it really means to be a sister to every Girl Scout.

5. *Juliette Gordon Low*

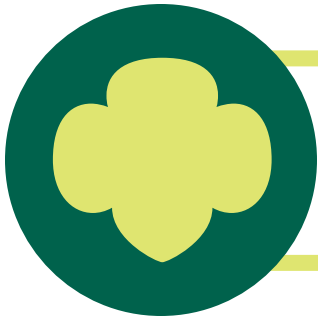
Materials: books about Juliette Gordon Low, and/or internet access.

Girl Scout's founder Juliette Gordon Low lived with a disability from the time she was 25. Juliette knew that she was no less capable because of her disability and worked to ensure that every girl, regardless of her abilities, was included in this movement, which is how it remains today.

Research as a group what her disability was and how it happened, using the internet or books as resources. Act out the situations that led to Juliette's disability and imagine what her responses would have been to the community, her doctors, etc. Why is it important that Girl Scouts in the 21st Century still welcomes every girl, everywhere?

As a troop, locate further information on the first Girl Scout troop just for girls living with physical disabilities

(Hint: it formed in New York). What were the obstacles that Girl Scouts living with differing abilities faced in the early 20th Century that they don't face today? What are some obstacles that Girl Scouts with differing abilities still face? How can we change that?



Connect Activities

Appropriate for Girl Scout Brownies through Ambassadors

1. *Similarities and Differences*

Depending on the size and age of your troop, randomly divide all girls and adults into groups of 3-6 people. Have each group work together to determine three-plus things they all have in common that aren't immediately obvious (hair color, grade, names, etc. don't count). If the girls have been friends for a long time, challenge them to come up with new things that they don't already know about each other or make the groups bigger. After each group finds similarities, have them share with the other groups. Then one person from each group must rotate clockwise into a new group and the same task must be completed again with an entire new set of three-plus similarities in each group. Try as many times as you want, but for the final task, everyone in the small groups must come up with one or more unique characteristics about themselves that is not a shared similarity with anyone else in the small group.

Discussion: Was it easier to find similarities or differences? How does this relate to inclusion and not judging people right away? Why do we sometimes forget that we're all people first? How are people more similar to each other than different?

2. *Famous Musicians with Disabilities*

Materials: CD/multimedia player and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or any songs by Ray Charles or Stevie Wonder. Books or visuals on each person would also help.

Play a portion of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or a song by Ray Charles or Stevie Wonder. Tell the girls that Beethoven wrote this symphony when he was deaf and Wonder and Charles play(ed) the piano without being able to see the keys.

Discussion: How does this music make you feel? Can you imagine writing this music if you couldn't hear what it would sound like or playing the music without being able to see your instrument? How do you think these musicians adapted to their circumstances to continue writing and playing music that's now famous?

3. *Work Out a Workout*

Materials: any book of children's games Is helpful but not necessary

Have girls choose an activity or game they play at recess or in physical education class and think of ways they could adapt these games with girls who may live with vision impairment, use a wheelchair, etc. They can ask an adult who's familiar with disabilities or just use their brains! It takes a little creativity and usually little to no extra equipment to adapt many games.

Discussion: How did you think of way to make adaptations to your favorite games? Why is it important to have several ways to play games? How can these ideas help your entire school and group of friends?

4. *Food Allergy Awareness*

Materials: Internet

Suggested books: Allie the Allergic Elephant, Eating Gluten Free with Emily

Foods: Soy milk, nut-free spreads, gluten-free snacks, etc. Do you know someone with food allergies? Odds are that if you don't already, you probably will someday! Check out www.foodallergy.org to learn about symptoms and treatment; you can also access FAQs, recipes and resources.

Read a children's book discussing food allergies. Discuss other food allergies the girls may know about. Set up a sampling of different nut-free spreads, gluten-free spreads, soy milk, etc. Taste everything and talk about the importance of respecting other people's diets and how you can accommodate them, especially if they are living with a life-threatening food allergy. Research which Girl Scout cookies are safe for people with food allergies—you may be surprised!

5. *Act It Out*

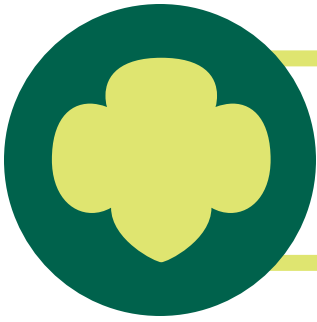
Pair up girls to act out one of the following scenarios:

- It is your first day in school with new braces on your teeth.
- Your best friend tells you that you have big ears.
- You are playing softball in gym class and you get struck out.
- The only clean pair of jeans you have to wear to school are too short

6. *Service Animals*

Materials: Internet access, books about service animals, someone who trains or uses service animals (try Canine Companions for Independence)

Do some research and discuss as a troop how service animals are trained, what they can do, and how the public should interact with them. If possible, arrange for someone who trains or uses a service dog to come speak to your troop about these topics. Ask the speaker about volunteer opportunities or even how to train a service animal yourself!



Take Action Activities

Appropriate for Girl Scout Brownies through Ambassadors

1. **Make a Schedule**

Materials: Internet access, printer, coloring supplies, construction paper, tape. Picture cards are sometimes used as a tool for children living with various learning and socio-emotional disabilities. The cards help provide structure by letting the child know which activities to expect during the day, reinforcing language skills and new vocabulary, teaching the concept of sequencing, and much more. To learn more about picture card use, visit do2learn.com/ and then click on the “picture cards” button on the top of the page and then “print cards” to create your own pictures. Have the girls use them to make up a schedule for the day or create their own simple picture card drawings.

Discussion: Why are picture cards important for some children to use? Have you ever seen them before? How could they help you?

2. **Start a Collection**

Contact a local organization or center serving people with disabilities to see if there are any supplies they need donated. Then work with your troop, family, or school to start a collection for any donated items and drop them off to the organization afterward.

Remember: Girl Scouts cannot raise money for other organizations, but there are plenty of other ways you can help! Please consult Safety Activity Checkpoints and Troop Activity Guide with any questions on working with other organizations.

3. **Volunteer**

Arrange for your troop to volunteer with an organization that works with adults and/or children with disabilities.

4. **Help Your Fellow Girl Scouts**

Make a video or write directions on how to welcome a girl with differing abilities into a troop.

OR

Make a video or write an informational guide to educate girls on different disabilities and how to help those with differing abilities feel included.

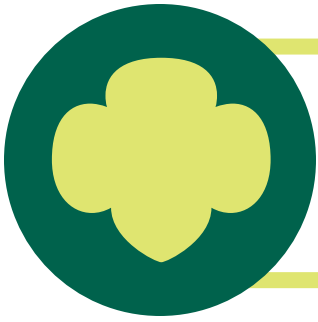
5. **Get into Technology**

Materials: Guest speaker

Interview an Assistive Technology Specialist (a person who designs, constructs, and/or modifies assistive devices for people with disabilities), volunteer at a local assistive technology exchange program, or see if you can help get one started in your community.

Reflection

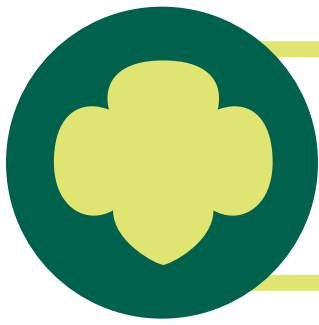
Talk with a parent/caregiver or adult family member or friend (any adult who didn't work with you on earning this patch) about what you have learned. What was your favorite activity? What knowledge will you bring with you throughout your life? If you could express one thing to others about inclusion, what would it be? Choose a way to express your reflections such as a paragraph, a poem, music, or a drawing/painting/collage, and share it with your troop.



Blind/Visually Impaired Appreciation Activities

Purpose: To increase knowledge and understanding of people who experience blindness or visual impairment. These activities are appropriate for all levels.

1. Talk to an optometrist or other expert about the different types of vision impairment and their causes. Learn about options that exist to correct and/or prevent some visual impairments.
2. Explore assistive technologies used in the workplace and at home for people who are visually impaired. Your local library or the internet may have resources available for you to research this topic, including the Braille Institute at <http://www.brailleinstitute.org>.
3. Take a field trip to a local library and explore the different ways people with vision impairment can use these facilities. Possibilities might include braille books and signs, or books on CD.
4. Discuss different adaptations your troop could make to include a girl with vision impairment. How would you arrange your space or conduct meetings and activities to ensure they would be included? How would you travel together? How would you support them? What would you do if people made fun of them?
5. Invite a person who is visually impaired to speak at a troop meeting about their lifestyle and any assistive technology they uses.
6. Learn about the braille alphabet and write a note to a friend or another Girl Scout in braille. You can look up a tutorial on YouTube or borrow a book from the library.
7. Learn about different types of mobility for people with vision impairments. Explore cane mobility and the use of dog guides. Talk with someone who is familiar with the use of a dog guide program.
8. Explore the different resources available to people who are visually impaired at a public service center. Explore public resources such as kneeling buses and braille on elevators and telephones. Find other such resources in your community.
9. Read and discuss as a group a book about a person who is/was visually impaired in order to learn about their lifestyle. Examples might include: *Knots on a Counting Rope* by Bill Martin and John Archambault (grades K-4); *Follow my Leader* by James Garfield (grades 1-6); *Seeing Lessons: The Story of Abigail Carter* by Spring Hermann (grades 4-7); *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: The Diary of Bess Brennan* by Barry Denenberg (grades 4-9), in addition to any books on Helen Keller or Louis Braille.
10. Create and complete a service project that will assist people with visual impairments in your community.



Asthma Appreciation Activities (D/B/J)

Purpose: To increase knowledge and understanding of people who live with asthma. These activities are appropriate for all levels.

1. Explore Breathing

Find a picture of the respiratory system in a book or on the Internet that includes the important parts of the body involved in helping us breathe. Air comes into the nose, down into the throat, and moves down the breathing tubes to your lungs. Girls can trace the way air moves through the respiratory system. Ask the girls what they would do if someone they knew had trouble breathing. Practice an action plan: have the person sit down and stay calm; tell a grown-up. If no grown-up is available, call 911. Practice dialing 911 on a play telephone and go over what the girls should say when they call.

2. Bubble Breathing

Materials needed: bubbles, straws, paper

Ask girls to practice deep breathing by blowing bubbles or blowing paper off the end of a straw. This is easy for most girls. When someone has asthma, though, it can be hard to breathe and blow bubbles or paper off a straw. Have the girls pinch the straw and try to draw air through it. Explaining that this is how it feels when you have an asthma episode.

Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

1. Be a Detective

Materials needed: bingo markers, rubber bands
Asthma and allergy triggers in our environment can make your breathing difficult. Be a detective and look for things in your school or home or even where your troop meets that could affect how you breathe (examples: dust, furry pets, cigarette smoke, pollen, hair spray, perfume, craft supplies, pollution, mold, garbage, cleaning supplies, certain foods, chalk dust, and strong smells such as nail polish).

Talk about changes that happen in the breathing tubes when someone is having an asthma episode. To demonstrate how the breathing tubes become tight the leader can have girls wrap a rubber band around their fingers several times. Girls can use this as an example in discussing how it feels when breathing is difficult.

2. Healthy Choices

Troop leadership volunteer will discuss the following: All girls benefit from healthy choices. Cigarette smoking is an unhealthy choice. What would you do if a friend offered you a cigarette? Discuss and roleplay ways that you could handle the situation. The leader will explain that if you have asthma, cigarette smoking can make it worse.

Exercise is a healthy choice and keeps your body fit. It is important for girls with asthma to exercise, too. Stretching is an example of a warm-up exercise. Girls should warm up before exercise and cool down after exercise. Help the girls do stretching exercises: toe touches, arm circles, neck stretches, etc.

Belly breathing can help you stay calm and relaxed and is easy for most girls. When a girl has an asthma episode, it can be hard to breathe. Belly breathing can help them to relax. There are three steps:

1. First, breathe in through your nose and then blow the air slowly out of your mouth.

2. Next, place your hands on your belly. When you breathe in, your belly should get big like a balloon. When you breathe out, it should get small.
3. Then, put the two steps together. Air goes in through your nose as your belly gets bigger, bigger, bigger. Now, the air goes out through your mouth and your belly gets smaller and smaller.

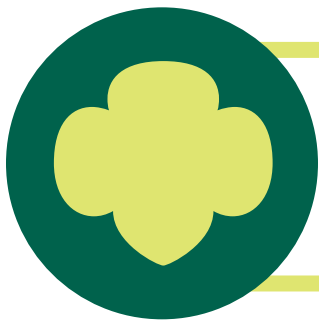
3. Be Creative

Do two of the following activities:

- Volunteer at the local Asthma Coalition or American Lung Association. You could help out at health fairs, an asthma walk, or another community event.
- Design a game for a younger troop that shows healthy choices. See www.puzzlemaker.com for ideas.
- Create a poster of ways to help people with asthma.
- Find out if any elementary schools in your area offer the American Lung Association's Open Airways for Schools®, which teaches kids about asthma. (Contact the school nurse to ask how you can help.)
- Write an article in your school newspaper or Girl Scout newsletter about making a difference.
- Make a kit for babysitting. Include a card for important phone numbers, puzzles, coloring books, health-related books and books about asthma.
- Make a children's book about asthma based on what has been learned.

4. Advocacy

Girls will discuss the effects smoking has on their lives and how they deal with family and friends who smoke. Support your local Asthma Coalition or American Lung Association by participating in one of their yearly events. This can include health fairs, an asthma walk, or help in an elementary school using the American Lung Association's Open Airways for Schools® program.



Autism Appreciation Activities

Purpose: To increase Knowledge and understanding of people who live with Autism Spectrum Disorder. These activities are appropriate for all levels.

1. *Create Sensory Bins*

A Girl Scout sensory bin is a portable bin or container that you can use to store small sensory items that can be used at service unit meetings or field trips for calming and self-regulation. Think of it as a First Aid Kit for sensory challenges.

Here are some of the items you should consider putting in a bin:

- **Noise reducing headphones:** These are to help with loud or high-pitched noises. They don't block hearing completely but reduce it. This should be the first thing that goes into the bin since this is one of most common sensory issues that occurs when on outings and at camp.
- **Ear plugs:** These are more cost effective and less noticeable than headphones, but they do have some drawbacks—they can only be used one time and some may not like the feel, causing a different sensory issue.
- **Sunglasses or eye protection:** Another very common sensory issue is light. Girl Scouts experiencing this issue may already have a pair of sunglasses or something to reduce the light. Some individuals wear tinted lenses of Irlen® lenses to help them with visual processing. Have a few inexpensive pair of sunglasses or hats on hand.
- **Surgical mask:** The best solution for olfactory (smell) issues is to move away from the smell. That isn't always possible, but bad or strong smells can bring on headaches, nausea, and lead to sensory meltdowns. When pinching one's nose and covering one's mouth isn't practical, a small surgical mask can help.
- **Fidget or stress ball:** Girl Scouts that have sensory or attention issues find these very helpful because if they have something in their hands, it helps them stay focused.
- **Swivel disc:** This can be more of an expense but can be well worth it for Girl Scouts that are doing a great deal of work seated. Swivel discs are used to strengthen the body's core while promoting balance and flexibility. They are commonly used for persons experiencing attention and dexterity challenges.
- **Visual timer clock:** Time Timer clocks are used in many elementary school classrooms so children may already be familiar with them. Use this with a picture schedule or meeting agenda to help out those on the autism spectrum and all your Girl Scouts!
- **Paper, pens, pencils, and crayons:** Drawing and coloring can be very calming. Keep spare paper on hand for producing visual social scenarios, too.
- **Books and magazines:** Get old magazines, coloring books, or books and keep them in the bin for when Girl Scouts need to take a sensory break. They can go to a place that is designated as a sensory area and read.

2. *Create a Visual Support*

A visual support refers to the use of a picture or other visual item to help communicate with a child who has difficulty understanding or using language. Example of visual supports include photographs, drawings, objects, written words, or lists. This could be useful for explaining a new activity, safety rules, and complicated processes. A free four-page Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Tool Kit can be downloaded by visiting autismspeaks.org and searching "visual support".

3. *Understand Sensory Issues 1*

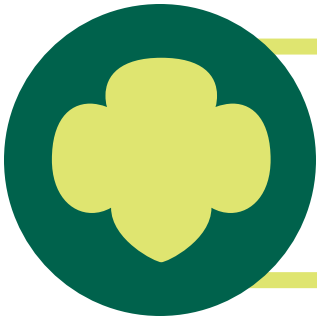
Turn on several sounds (music or other noises) very loud. Simultaneously have someone turn the lights on and off constantly. Try to accomplish a school assignment.

4. *Understand Sensory Issues 2*

Try to tie your shoelaces while wearing very heavy winter gloves.

5. *Understand Sensory Issues 3*

Imagine you are about to walk out the door to go someplace. Think about what that would be like if you were worried about all these things at once: the stairs falling in, something falling from an airplane, your neighbor yelling at you, tripping over the dog, the bus being late, and whether the person who you always sit next to on the bus will be sick. Discuss how this would make you feel and why.

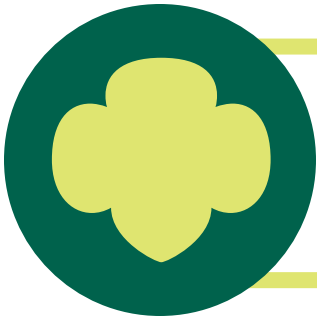


Food Allergy Appreciation Activities

Purpose: To increase knowledge and understanding of people who experience food allergies. These activities are appropriate for all levels.

1. People who have food allergies have to avoid any trace of the food to which they are allergic. Imagine you are allergic to eggs and you know that even the smallest bite of a food that contains egg will make you really sick. Read the label of everything you eat for an entire day. How did you feel after doing it? What types of situations did you have to look out for? How would you feel if you had to avoid egg all the time?
2. What extra steps would you have to take in planning your next camping trip if one of the Girl Scouts in your troop was allergic to milk? With a group, plan menus to ensure that they would be able to eat everything. List some milk-free alternatives to traditional camping foods such as s'mores.
3. What is the difference between a general family doctor and an allergist? What do allergists do? Make an advertisement for a children's allergist.
4. Some schools have programs in place to help provide a safe environment for children with food allergies. For example, some schools assign peanut-free tables in the cafeteria; others don't allow food to be used in art and math projects. Pretend you are a school principal. What plans would you put in place to help students with food allergies avoid a problem food? How would these plans affect all the other students in the school? Create a poster listing your plan and how it will help children with food allergies. Share it with your troop and then take a survey: how would everyone feel about following your plan? How would they feel about it if they were the student with food allergies?
5. Many birthday parties involve food. Pretend that you are planning a party and you want to invite all of your friends, including one who is allergic to eggs, and another who is allergic to peanuts and tree nuts. What foods, activities, and party favors will you plan to use so that all the guest can enjoy everything?
6. If a friend is having a food-allergic reaction, actions as simple as recognizing symptoms and seeking medical treatment immediately can make a BIG difference. Make a poster listing all of the common symptoms of an allergic reaction and outlining what you should do if a friend is having an allergic reaction. Share your poster with your troop.
7. Sometimes kids with food allergies will get teased or harassed by other students. How would you feel if you were being teased just because you couldn't eat some of the same foods as everyone else? With a group, discuss ways you could help someone who is getting teased because of their food allergy.
8. Plan a "food allergy party" to share what you've learned with another Girl Scout troop. Give a presentation to educate others about food allergies. Be sure to list the symptoms of an allergic reaction and emphasize the seriousness of food allergies. Prepare and serve treats that are free of some of the most common food allergens such as milk, eggs, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, or soy. Make ingredient labels for all foods and post them next to each item. Ask people if they can taste the difference between a food that has an allergen in it and one that doesn't.
9. Sometimes recipes contain surprise ingredients. For example, did you know that peanut butter is sometimes used to thicken chili or that walnuts are sometimes added to blue cheese dressing? Read some cookbooks or recipe pages of a magazine. Did you find any ingredient surprises? Find and share an example of where milk, eggs, peanuts, or tree nuts have been used in a recipe that you would not expect.

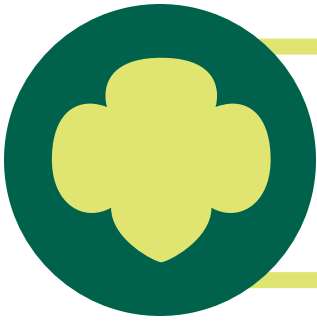
10. Put on a play. Script a situation where a friend who has food allergies is having a reaction. Act out some things that others could do to help this person. Share your play with other troops or your community. If possible, record your play and share it with others.
11. Since mild food allergic reactions can even be caused by kissing a person who recently ate the offending food, it's important for teens to explain their food allergies to their dates. Pretend that you are allergic to peanuts and roleplay how you would explain your food allergies to a new date. How would your discussion differ if they were someone you had just met or if they were a long-time friend of yours? During the course of your date, when would you discuss your allergy? Would you talk about it even if your plans did not include eating?
12. Invite a local allergist to speak to your troop. (Call 800-822-ASMA for the name of an allergist in your area.) Ask the speaker to talk about the major concerns of people with food allergies, the diagnostic process, and what advice is given to patients who have just been diagnosed with a food allergy. What other types of careers deal with food allergies? How do people get into the food allergy field? What education is necessary to become an allergist? What are the pros and cons of working in this field?
13. Develop and administer a survey to members of your school for your service unit to gauge the level of food allergy awareness in your area. Analyze and share your results by creating charts or posters. Include food allergy facts and ways to help someone with food allergies. With permission, post them in your community in places like grocery stores or libraries.
14. Many people who have food allergies, especially those with multiple food allergies, visit a dietitian to ensure that their diet is nutritionally balanced. Interview a registered dietitian to find out how a diet is analyzed. What substitutions do they suggest to people allergic to the most common food allergens?
15. The internet can be a great resource for people with food allergies since many national chains and fast food restaurants post menus and ingredient statements on their websites. Pretend that you have a peanut allergy and visit the website of your favorite fast food restaurant to see what foods you would still be able to eat. Were you surprised at any foods that contained peanuts?
16. Examine how people with food allergies are portrayed in movies, books, television shows, and other media. Determine how this portrayal affects the public perception of living with food allergies. Find at least three examples of characters with food allergies. How well do you think they were depicted? How would you revise those characters to make them more realistic?
17. Many food labels list "artificial flavors" or "natural flavors" on the ingredient statement, yet these flavors can contain food proteins to which individuals are allergic. Pretend that you are allergic to soy. Find an ingredient label that lists natural or artificial flavors, and, with permission, call the food manufacturer to ask if soy protein is present in any of those flavorings. How was your experience calling the manufacturer? Would you have felt differently if the answer to your question meant the difference between having a serious reaction or continuing with your day?
18. Cooking without certain foods can sometimes be tricky. Think about how baking might be for people with an allergy to wheat. Select a recipe and adapt it to be wheat-free. You may need to try several different combinations of non-wheat flour before you find one that works. How did it taste?
19. Watch how someone prepares food at home. See if you can identify ingredients that may cause a problem for someone with a food allergy and pinpoint where cross-contact occurs. Note some things you could do to help make the kitchen safer for people with food allergies.
20. Some allergists concentrate on research in food allergies as opposed to primarily treating patients. Read about the latest food allergy research at www.foodallergy.org/ Which kind of allergist career interests you more?



Deaf/Hearing-Impaired Appreciation Activities

Purpose: To increase knowledge and understanding of people who experience deafness or hearing impairment. These activities are appropriate for all levels.

1. Talk to an audiologist or other expert about the different types of hearing impairment and their causes. Learn about options that exist to assist with and/or prevent some hearing impairments.
2. Explore assistive technologies used in the workplace and at home for people who are hearing impaired. Your local library or the internet may have resources available for you to research this topic, including the Deaf Websites page: deafwebsites.com
3. Take a field trip to a local museum and explore the different ways people with hearing impairment can use these facilities. Possibilities might include written signs, sign language interpreters, or videos with captions.
4. Discuss different adaptations your troop could make to include a Girl Scout with hearing impairment. How would you arrange your space or conduct meetings and activities to ensure they would be included? How would you travel together? How would you support them? What would you do if people made fun of them?
5. Invite a person who is deaf to speak at a troop meeting about their lifestyle and assistive technology they use.
6. Learn some American Sign Language. Make a video or in-person presentation for a friend or another Girl Scout in ASL. Check out books from the library or conduct research online at signlanguage101.com and lifeprint.com.
7. Learn about different types of social interaction options for those with hearing loss. Explore Sign Language Interpreting agencies and how they work. Discover how a deaf person may use a mobile device – what programs do they have on it to help? How does a deaf person communicate in a common social place like a grocery store if those around them do not know Sign Language?
8. Explore the different resources available to people who are deaf at a public service center. Explore public resources such as written signage, video guide with captions, and interpreter opportunities. Find other such resources in your community.
9. Read and discuss as a group a book about a person who is/was deaf in order to learn about their lifestyle.
10. Create and complete a service project that will assist deaf people in your community.



Diabetes Appreciation Activities

Purpose: To increase knowledge and understanding of people who live with diabetes. These activities are appropriate for all levels.

1. Talk to an endocrinologist or other expert about the different types of diabetes and their causes. Learn about options that exist to treat and/or prevent the different kinds of diabetes.
2. Explore assistive technologies such as insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitors as well as other treatment and maintenance options and devices for those with diabetes.
3. Develop a healthy meal plan for a day that a person with diabetes could follow. What are correct portion sizes? Why is it important to not just cut sugar out of a diet? How many snacks did you build into the day aside from main meals and why?
4. Discuss different adaptations your troop could make to include a Girl Scout with diabetes. How would you develop an inclusive snack/meal plan? How would you travel together? How would you support them? What would you do if people made fun of them?
5. Invite a person who has diabetes to speak at a troop meeting about their lifestyle and any assistive technology they use.
6. Read and discuss as a group a book about diabetes in order to learn about their lifestyle. Examples can be found here for different age groups: childrensdiabetesfoundation.org/books/
7. Explore healthy foot care for people with diabetes. Why is it important for people with diabetes to take good care of their feet? Do a spa pedicure and pamper your feet!