

# Guiding Units

A "How to" Guide  
For Multibranch Units



An Old Idea That's New Again!

From Your  
Alberta Membership Team  
March 2009

## Many thanks:

To the Unit Guiders who shared their comments, concerns and frustrations about starting up and running a Guiding Unit.

To the Manitoba program committee for sharing their Program Guide.

To the Alberta public relations committee for some new ideas in “Traditional Guiding in a Not Traditional Way”

And to all the Guiders who re-read, proof read and generally helped to get it ready.

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## “How to” understand what a Guiding Unit is:

- **An old idea is new again**

First, a bit of history, when Girl Guides was just beginning in Canada, the little sisters of the Guides saw how much fun their older sisters were having and started to tag along to meetings, probably becoming a nuisance. Some Guide Companies formed “Rosebud Patrols” (a name caregivers loved and the girls hated) for these girls, essentially becoming our first Guiding units. By 1919, the name was officially changed to Embers and they became our first branch and began to form their own Packs. Then their little sisters started to tag along to their meetings...and you know how this story goes! Which shows that, from the very beginning, having more than one branch in a unit was a great way to expand and grow.

- **The definition of a Guiding unit**

*Guiding Essentials* tells us “Units are generally based on branch-specific programs (i.e., Sparks, Embers, Guides, etc). However, units can also be made up of girls from several branches”. A Guiding unit is made up of girls from two or more branches who meet together.

- **Traditional Guiding in a non traditional way**

Not every unit is the same, and if you are looking for innovative ways and places to open units in your community, there are some great “thinking outside of the box” ideas in Appendix #1 – “Traditional Guiding in a Non - Traditional Way”.

- **Why open a Guiding unit**

- In a small community there might not be enough girls to start individual units for each branch.
- Start a Guiding unit to get Guiding established in a community then break out the larger groups into branch specific units.
- Caregivers were in Guiding as girls and want this experience for their children.
- Driving to larger communities who have Guiding can be time consuming and difficult. Caregivers have to deal with commuting to the meetings, waiting for their children while at the meetings, poor winter weather and so on. Having a unit that meets in your local school or community centre is good for the girls, the community and the caregivers!

## “How to” find girls:

- **Membership resources**

**Your area membership adviser** is your first resource. She knows about your area, what is available to help you, and so much more. Talk to her, send an e-mail or “buttonhole” her at the next meeting or training you attend.

**Member Zone**, the national Members only website just for us has resources, forms, links to provincial websites and lots more! If you don’t know how to access Member Zone, ask your area membership adviser, District Commissioner or e-mail [membership@albertagirlguides.com](mailto:membership@albertagirlguides.com).

### **Resource kits and where to find them:**

- ✓ *Building Guiding Kit: Section 1 – Girls:* (Member Zone) ideas on how to find, and recruit, girls in your community.
  - ✓ *Building Guiding: Registration Event Kit:* (Member Zone) all the steps to follow to hold an amazing, and successful, registration event.
  - ✓ *Spark/Ember School Recruitment Campaign (BC):* (Your area membership adviser) describes how to approach schools, prepare materials and recruit new girls from the schools in your communities.
  - ✓ *A Taste of Guiding:* (AB Website) if you have Guiding in your community, and want to introduce more girls to Guiding, this is a fun-filled way to do it! Found on the Alberta website, [www.albertagirlguides.ca](http://www.albertagirlguides.ca), on the membership committee page and with the challenges.
  - ✓ *Bring a Friend Kit* (Member Zone) all you need to know to hold a “Bring a Friend” event and, once those friends see how much fun they can have, they will be your new Members.
- **PR Materials and how to find them:** Find your area public relations adviser and talk to her. She has posters, pamphlets and bookmarks that you can use for your recruitment campaigns and the know-how to help you in many other ways. You can also find materials and information on Member Zone that you can print off and use. Have a look at Appendix #2 - “Using Your Resources Wisely” for some hints and tips about how best to use the pr materials.

### **“How to” find leaders:**

- **Membership resources**

**Caregivers** are a good place to start, but not where to end. Many caregivers want this experience for their children but cannot commit to being leaders for work or personal reasons. Be sure to ask them, sometimes that’s all it takes, but look wider as well.’

**Junior Leaders:** if you have a Ranger unit in your community or nearby, talk to the Guider about having them come to your unit. They have been through the programs and are an amazing resource.

### **Resource Kits and where to find them:**

- ✓ *Building Guiding Kit: Section 2 – Women* (Member Zone): how to find and retain Guiders in your community.
  - ✓ *FAQ’s About Women and Volunteering with GGC* (Member Zone): frequently asked questions many women have, a handy tool to hand out at community events and to send home from school.
- **Mentors**  
**Other Guiders** can be a wonderful source of information and hints to help you start up and run a unit. Talk to them at district meetings and training sessions, get phone and/or e-mail addresses from them and don’t be afraid to ask lots of questions. Remember, the only dumb question is one that was never asked!

**You can also request a mentor.** This is a Guider who has completed the mentor training and is willing to be available to help a new Guider. Talk to your area training adviser if you are interested in having a mentor.

## "How to" find caregiver helpers:

- **Where to look:** The first place to look is at the caregivers of the girls' in your unit, of course. But don't stop with them, there are aunts, grandparents, older sisters and many other relatives and friends who might be thrilled to spend some time with the girls, if only they were asked. You could also look at high school girls who need to complete a certain number of hours of community service as part of their courses and at local community colleges that have programs for teachers and child care workers who require a number of hours working with children as part of the courses.

- **Police Record Check Policy**

Caregiver helpers are always welcome. However, effective September 2007, clear Police Record Checks (PRC's) are required for:

1. non-members who volunteer as unit assistants
2. non-members who volunteer as caregiver helpers on a regular or ongoing basis
3. non-members who volunteer in camps or camp-like settings
4. treasurers

Non-member volunteers must be supervised by Guiders. Non-member volunteers without a PRC can only supervise a group of girls and must never be one-on-one with a girl who is not their child. Unit leaders and event organizers are responsible for ensuring that caregivers are aware when unscreened adults are participating in any way in a program. Non-member volunteers are recorded in iMIS along with their PRC information.

- **Non-Member Volunteer Form:** All men and women who want to help in a unit must fill out the *A.7 Non-Member Form* which is then, with their PRC attached, submitted to the area iMIS home. It can be found under "Forms" in Member Zone. A Home Contact Person must also fill out the A.7 form but does not require a PRC.

## "How to" find places to meet

- **Membership resources**

- a) You can meet in the leaders' homes but you must follow *Safe Guide*
- b) *Building Guiding Kit: Section 5-Meeting Space:* (Member Zone) lots of information to get you thinking.
- c) Appendix #5 – "ABC's of Meeting Places": ideas for where to look for meeting space in your community.

## "How to" open a unit

- **Bank accounts**

- a) **One account for all the branches in your Guiding unit**

Many Guiding units keep one bank account for the unit. It can be the simplest way to do it, since they do all their fundraising together; most of their activities together and they only need one Guider or caregiver to be the treasurer

- b) **Each branch in your Guiding unit has their own account**

This would be best if you are using a Guiding unit to start Guiding in your community and plan to break out the different branches into their own units once you have enough girls and leaders to do so.

- **Funding:**

**District, division and area:** Your district, division and area may have funds set aside to help you purchase the materials you require to start a new unit. Always ask the council closest to you first and, if necessary, go to the next one if they don't have funds or can only give a small amount. Councils sometimes have matching funds, so if you get a certain amount from your district, then the division or area will match it. Each one can be different, so ask your commissioner to help you.

**New Unit Assistance Fund:** Alberta Council has a "New Unit Assistance Fund" to assist new units in getting started. They will match up to \$200 of the funding you receive from your district, division and area. The application form can be found at: Appendix # 6 – "New Unit Assistance Form" and on the provincial website at [www.albertagirlguides.ca](http://www.albertagirlguides.ca).

- **Paperwork:**

**Form used to open a Guiding unit:** is the *B.1 Unit/Council Form*, which you can find in Member Zone in "Forms". The first half of the form deals with opening a new unit.

**What you need to have in place before you fill out the form:**

- ✓ A name for the unit. This is done through your district.
- ✓ A meeting place, even if it is just a leaders home
- ✓ Leaders in place with one of them being designated as the contact Guider.

## "How to" run a meeting

- **Adult /girl ratio**

There must be one fully screened and registered Guider, who has Safe Guide training, at every meeting, outing, event, sleepover or camp. In other words, whenever the girls are together doing a Guiding activity. You can have caregiver volunteers as the other adults needed, but they must have a current Police Record Check.

Depending on the activities your unit takes part in; a First Aider may be needed. Read the "Health/First Aid" section in Safe Guide to find out the requirements.

The **minimum** supervisory adult/girl ratio is as follows (please refer to Safe Guide for updates and/or variations that may be required for certain activities). You would have to go with the youngest girl's branch in your Guiding unit to determine the ratios.

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Outing</b>	<b>Overnight</b>
<b>Sparks &amp; Embers</b>	1 Guider with Safe Guide + 1 other adult 1 adult / 8 girls	1 Guider with Safe Guide + 1 other adult 1 adult / 5 girls	1 Guider with Safe Guide + 1 other adult 1 adult / 5 girls
<b>Guides &amp; Pathfinders</b>	1 Guider with Safe Guide + 1 other adult 1 adult / 15 girls	1 Guider with Safe Guide + 1 other adult 1 adult / 7 girls	1 Guider with Safe Guide + 1 other adult 1 adult / 7 girls

- **Branches**

You can have as many branches as you can comfortably handle. Two or three is usually best. One pitfall to avoid is using older girls to look after the younger ones. Unless it is a part of their program work, do not use them as baby sitters to keep the young ones occupied while you work with other girls. That's not why they are in Guiding and they won't stay.

- **Frequency of meetings**

That can vary depending on the age of the girls, availability of a meeting place and the Guiders' time. Most units meet once a week, while the older girls may only want to meet twice a month. If you can only have your meeting place once or twice a month, the other weeks can be for field trips, camps or sleepovers. You can meet at any time during the day and on any day; it's up to you.

- **Length of meetings**

This is determined by the ages of the girls in your Guiding unit, how long your meeting place is available to you, what works for the leaders and so on. If you have Sparks to Guide age girls, what seems to work best is to have the Sparks meet for an hour, while the Embers and Guides stay for an additional half hour. If your girls are Ember to Pathfinder age, you might want to meet for one and a half hours with the entire group, then with Guides and Pathfinders only for an additional half hour.

- **Incorporating the girls' programs**

The Manitoba program committee has developed a wonderful resource that they have given us permission to use. You'll find it in: Appendix #8 Program Guidelines.

- **Running a meeting**

You can do whatever works for your unit; this is just a suggested guideline.

**Opening:** You can do your opening and then split into branches.

**Program work:** A leader can be designated to work with each branch with some help from caregiver helpers. If you have Junior Leaders, they can plan program and work with a branch under the leader's supervision. Some program work may be done as a unit, depending on the ages of the girls. If a leader can't attend, absorb the girls into one of the groups and do a large group activity. Have parties, ceremonies, camps, etc. together.

**Activities:** Once the program work is done, get back together as one unit for crafts; sing songs, games and activities. There can be a guest speaker to cover part of all the programs, for example first aide. When you put the girls together for some activities, you can buddy the oldest girls with the youngest.

**Closing:** Have your closing ceremony and hand out newsletters or reminders about upcoming meetings and events as they leave.



## TRADITIONAL GUIDING IN A NON-TRADITIONAL WAY ALSO NON-TRADITIONAL GUIDING

### **Hockey Rink Unit - Guiding for sisters of players during hockey games:**

- Can be run by caregivers for the girls who are left out while boys practice hockey.
- Will give girls who have to go with their caregivers, but don't have an activity, something to do during practice and games.
- You can partner with hockey associations for a meeting room. Perhaps a meeting/lounge room, cafeteria, which are not in use during early morning practice.
- The practice times and schedules are set so you will know when the meetings will be held.
- The away games could be camps or outings for the unit.
- Find out who is interested in participating by handing out pamphlets during hockey season.

### **Day Care Unit:**

- Have a Sparks unit at the local daycare.
- This would be the ideal location for girls to be introduced to Sparks as the girls are already at the daycare.
- Another idea would be to use daycare space after hours.
- Some benefits are:
  - ✓ No transportation required
  - ✓ Lots of space at the daycare.
  - ✓ Ask daycare staff responsible for this age group to become Sparks Guiders. After all they would have lots of training and a current PRC.

### **Women's Shelter Unit:**

- Units in a shelter for women and children fleeing domestic violence would be multi age co-ed units. As the families are experiencing trauma it is important to include all children in the program.
- Activities would depend on the number of children and ages who attend. With this type of unit the numbers and dynamics change daily, women accessing an emergency shelter can stay for only 21 days.
- Due to security and confidentiality it is not possible to know where a caregiver and child(ren) will move to after leaving the shelter. It is a good idea to ask the shelter if in the package of information given to women leaving shelters if you can include Girl Guide information or an introductory letter.

### **Children's Hospital Unit**

- They would have an activity room to meet in.
- Many materials and resources readily available.
- Would introduce them to Guiding so that they may join a unit in their community when they are discharged.
- May have special needs (health or otherwise) so you would need more help to run the unit.
- Leader would have to be flexible with the programming as some would only be able to attend for a short time, but longer term children could help decide activities best suited to the group.

- Keep it moving, do a variety of things, singing, crafts, etc.
- Won't be able to have outings, but you could bring in guest speakers.
- Uniform could be a scarf and sash over gowns/pj's.
- Unit could solicit for donations of uniform items.
- May need to shorten meeting time, as the children may not have the stamina for a regular length meeting.
- Hospital staff could be supportive and help with specific needs

### **Other Ideas to consider:**

- **Drop in Unit**  
At local malls, post notices around the mall, so girls can get a taste of Guiding while their caregivers shop.
- **Summertime Unit**  
Only during the summer, meetings in the daytime for four to five months, best weather, all outdoor activities, camp during in the week
- **Lunch Hour Unit**  
Could meet in the school.
- **Before/After School Unit**  
Some schools already have before and after school activities for children of working caregiver, why not make them Guiding activities!
- **Weekend Unit**  
Due to time constraints, or other considerations, meet only on weekends.
- **Culturally Based Unit**  
Girl Guides of Canada - Guides du Canada is an all-inclusive organization.  
This does not need to be a Guiding unit, but it would be a good way to get it started.
- **Housing Based Unit**  
More and more families are living in condominiums, apartments and housing units. They often have multi use rooms available to residents that could be used for meetings.

## Using Your Resources Wisely

Once you have talked to your area public relations adviser and checked out the national website, it is time to decide where to place the recruitment tools (bookmarks, pamphlets and posters) that are available for your use.

When you find a place to display/leave the promotional materials take a good look around before deciding what you will use. Do they have a public bulletin board for posters? A counter to leave pamphlets or bookmarks on? A sectioned holder attached to a wall that holds community pamphlets? Will the grocery stores put a pamphlet into each customer's bag? Will the library put a bookmark into each child's book they check out? Will the schoolteacher put it in the envelopes that go home to caregivers? The possibilities are endless and it is a good idea to try new ideas rather than doing the same old thing just because "it's always been done that way!" Don't forget to look for places that dad's go to.

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

Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

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

## Screening Process for New Guiders

The screening process must be completed within six months of the Potential Members join date (the date she signs the A.1 Membership Application form) or she will be cancelled. It consists of several steps:

**Step One - Application** a Potential Member (PMBR) starts the screening process as soon as she fills out, and gives to her District Commissioner (DC), her A.1 Membership Application Form.

**Step Two - Interview** with her DC or designate.

**Step Three - Personal Reference Checks** when a PMBR fills out her Application Form, she lists three references for the DC to contact.

**Step Four - Police Record Check (PRC)** the DC will ask the PMBR to fill out a BackCheck form, which she will then submit. As long as BackCheck is used, Alberta Council will pay for the PRC for all new members. The PRC is valid for five years, and in accordance with GGC's screening policy, must include a Vulnerable Sector Screen and a Pardoned Sexual Offender Database check.

**Step Five - Safe Guide (SG) Training** every Guider is required to take Safe Guide training as soon as possible after joining Girl Guides of Canada - Guides du Canada. All activities, even those at a regular unit meeting, including running games, crafts using scissors or solvents and field trips in local neighborhoods include an element of risk. Safe Guide training teaches about appropriate actions that need to be taken to minimize risks and manage them for safety.

Safe Guide training is offered at area and provincial training events as well as online through the national website. Your DC will be able to tell her when the next face-to-face training will take place or how to do it online.

**Step Six - Orientation to Guiding Training** should be taken as soon as possible. It will help her to understand her role as a Guider, where she fits into the larger organizational structure and what resources are available to help her.

It is offered as a face-to-face training at area and provincial events as well as online through the national website.

### Trainings that are Available

**TEAM:** Training and Enrichment for Adult Members (TEAM) is the national training program available for all Guiders. We encourage you to explore and grow by participating in trainings. TEAM has five streams. Each is specialized to meet the training needs of Members based on their position. All streams are open for all adult Members.

Participate in TEAM trainings to enhance or brush up on your skills! All trainings are facilitated by volunteer trainers who are skilled in helping you learn in a fun and supportive atmosphere.

As a Unit Guider you complete **Orientation to Guiding** and **Safe Guide** as a part of the Screening Process. Once you have these basics, move on to the branch specific modules appropriate for the branch(es) you will be working with.

**Branch Specific Modules** teach you about the age characteristics of the girls you will be working with, how to plan meetings, great ways to implement the program and give lots of ideas to make the Guiding experience fun for everyone.

- About the Girl
- Programming for the Girl
- Quick Start
- Putting the Pieces Together

**Outdoor Adult Leadership (OAL)** will teach you how to be comfortable in the outdoors and when taking your unit to camp. OAL training is offered at both area and provincial trainings.

**The Multifaceted Event** is offered each year in the spring by the provincial training committee. The sessions vary every year and are of interest to both new and experienced Guiders.

**Enrichment Trainings** are many and varied. Chances are that whatever you are interested in, from leave no trace hiking to crafts to being a district commissioner, there is training available for it. Talk to your area training adviser for more information.

**e-Learning** if you are unable to attend training events, you can also get many of the trainings through e-Learning at your own computer in the comfort of your home. For information about the face-to-face training sessions offered in your area, or how to access e-Learning, contact your District Commissioner or area training adviser.

## ABC's of Meeting Places

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

Schools: Elementary  
Junior High  
Senior High  
Nursery  
Day Care Centres  
Private  
Colleges  
Universities

Meeting Rooms and Classrooms:  
Places of worship  
Office Buildings  
Health Clinics

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

Empty Office Buildings or Empty offices

Cafeterias in Office Building

Empty space in Hospitals

Empty space in Malls

Community Rooms in Department Stores or  
Malls

Services Rooms in Banks or Libraries

Elks, Rotary, Lions etc. meeting Rooms

Meeting Rooms in Fire Stations

YWCA or YMCA Facilities

Private Homes (must meet Safe Guide criteria)

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

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

Be flexible about meeting times if possible.

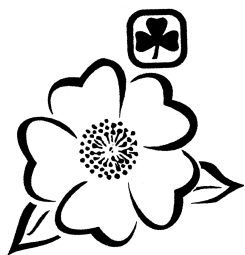
**C**reativity will enable you to discover and select meeting places that meet the following criteria:

- Safe, clean, well ventilated and well heated.
- Space for active games and for large and small groups
- Have toilets and hand washing facilities
- Have access to a telephone.
- Have storage space if possible.

In selecting a meeting place, the location in the district should be carefully considered, taking into account the following points:

- The distance the girls must travel.
- Highway and intersections that must be crossed.
- The characteristics of the area, such as the crime rate, traffic, sidewalks, lighting etc.
- The availability of transportation.

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



## ALBERTA COUNCIL NEW UNIT ASSISTANCE

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

Unit Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number	City/Town	Branch
_____		
District	Division	Area

Responsible Guider: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

City/Town

\_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Opening Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Number registered: Girls: \_\_\_\_\_ Guiders: \_\_\_\_\_

Other financial assistance received:

District: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Division: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Area: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other (specify): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Commissioner's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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For Office Use:

Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized: \_\_\_\_\_

February 2008

## Appendix # 7

<b>Suggested Resources for a new Unit</b>	Sparks	Ember	Guide	Pathfinder	Rangers
Guiding Essentials (given to new Guiders by their area)	*	*	*	*	*
Sample Meetings (included in Phase3 package from province)	*	*	*	*	
Guiders Manual (for appropriate branches)	*	*	*	*	
Record Sheets		*	*	*	
Songbooks	*	*	*	*	*
Program Books (for appropriate branches)	*	*	*	*	*
Standard Financial Reporting Package	*	*	*	*	*
Attendance and Dues Book	*	*	*	*	*
Safe Guide Manual (given to new Guiders by their area)	*	*	*	*	*

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

*Guiding Essentials* has information about GGC policies and procedures, answers to frequently asked questions and much more.

*The Safe Guide Manual* (GGC's risk assessment manual) Safe Guide training can be obtained online for a small fee or at area and provincial trainings. Talk to your area training adviser for more information about how and where to obtain training.

Other Guiders in your district and area can be your greatest resource, both for ideas and advice. Be sure to consult them, and your area advisers, whenever you have questions.



“Guiding Unit Planner” (Goes Here)  
Courtesy of the Manitoba Program Committee  
Used with permission