



How to Have Fun with Purpose with Girls: 3 Processes for Girl Scout Volunteers

When you volunteer with girls, it's not just *what* you do — it's *how* you do it. That's what makes Girl Scouting a fun and meaningful experience for girls.

In Girl Scouting, we talk about three “hows”: Girl-Led, Learning by Doing, and Cooperative Learning. Although each has its own definition, they work together.

As adults, we're always rushing through our days, hoping we can finish our “to do” list.

Here's the good news: You get to leave all that rushing behind when you volunteer with girls. Why? Because the Girl Scout experience isn't about cramming every possible activity into a schedule. Whether you have a little time or a lot of time...whether you end up doing a few activities or a million...Girl Scouting is about helping girls come up with their own ideas, build teams, and have the joy of learning by doing.

What happens then? Girls feel involved...committed...powerful...happy! All important parts of a fun leadership development experience.

And as an adult, you want them to have those feelings! After all, that's what you're in this for -- not to check a million items off a perfect list!

So, let's take a look at how all this happens. An important part of our leadership experience is helping girls take action in their communities. Let's walk through one example to see how you can use the three processes to do that.

Girl-led means girls shape their experiences by asking questions, offering ideas and using their imaginations.

How will girls know what kind of community action project is possible? You might want to take a field trip to meet people in the community. If you're exploring the environment, you may want to meet a scientist.

Do girls have to vote on what field trip you're taking in order to make this girl-led? Not at all. Sometimes you, as the adult, make decisions for practical reasons that you can explain to girls. For example, you or someone at your council may already know a woman scientist who can talk to girls about her work.

So *how* can you make this field trip girl-led? Well, girl-led means girls shape their experiences by asking questions, offering ideas and using their imaginations.

In this example, you can help girls brainstorm questions they want to ask the scientist.





When it's time for girls to start thinking about what kind of project they want to do, you'll have another very important role to play. As an adult, you'll know which ideas are possible and age-appropriate. Sometimes you'll have to gently guide girls to understand what they can do. Suppose you're guiding girls as they brainstorm a Take Action project about saving water. One girl says...

Let's tow an iceberg from the North Pole to Florida!
When it melts, we could collect the water and save it!

Needless to say, keeping this girl-led does not mean you have to rent a boat and set off for the Arctic Circle! Instead....

You can be encouraging but realistic! You could say something like, "I love your giant vision! That may take more time and money than we have – but I hope you become a scientist so you can do that some day. Why don't we put all our ideas on two lists – things we can do now and things that will take more time."

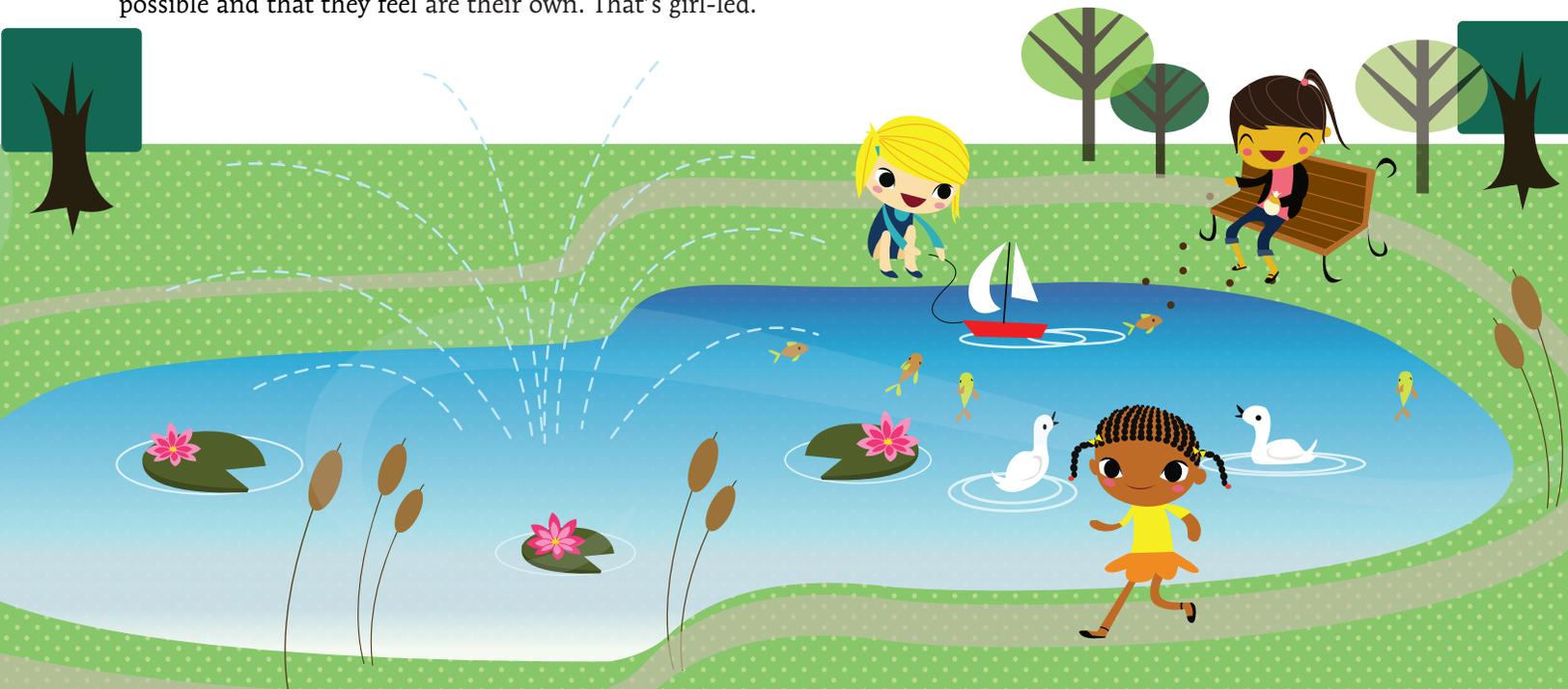
With your help, girls will come up with ideas that are possible and that they feel are their own. That's girl-led.

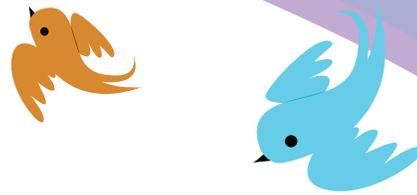
As the adult, you have another important role. You're also a coach who helps girls come to team decisions – a skill that will help them throughout their lives! When girls work together to choose an idea and develop a team plan, that's cooperative learning.

Now they're ready to put their plan into action, which involves learning by doing. In Girl Scouting, we know that even the youngest girls can do this. Remember, their project doesn't have to be perfect!

There's another key part to the Learning By Doing process – helping girls think about what they've experienced so they can apply what they've learned to other things in their lives. Sometimes we call this reflection – and it can be as easy and fun as talking about what you've just done on the car ride home!

See how all the processes work together? When you use the three processes, you'll find that volunteering is easier and more fun! Here's why!





So just remember...No need to treat a Girl Scout meeting like school! Instead, you can inspire girls to use their imaginations. No need to feel that you have to make all the decisions for girls. Instead, you can ask girls questions and help them come to their own decisions as a team. No need to earn every Girl Scout award as quickly as possible.

Instead, you can let girls explore the themes and ideas that interest them. When you step back, you just might be amazed by what girls come up with.

Being a Girl Scout volunteer is a big and important job. And we know it's not always easy! And don't worry! The three processes aren't a test you have to pass.

Just keeping them in mind is going to mean so much to girls –and together you'll have a great time seeing how well girls can lead and how far their imaginations can take them.

So remember...

Let go of "perfect."

Enjoy asking girls lots of questions.

Listen to their answers.

Guide girls to what's possible.

Celebrate their big ideas.

Most of all, relax and enjoy the process. Remember, it's the journey, not the destination that benefits girls the most.

For more help:

- Read one session of the adult guide for any Journey. Notice how the Three Processes are built into the experience of that session.
- Watch a video of Girl Scout volunteers in action on youtube. Here's one to get you started: <http://bit.ly/GSwaterbrownies>
- Talk to your council about taking Girl Scouting 101.

