

A Take Action Guide for Volunteers

This guide includes answers to the following FAQs:

- What's the difference between community service and Take Action?
- How do Girl Scouts Take Action?
- How do girls make their project sustainable?
- How can I help girls organize a Take Action Project?
- How can girls find out what other Girl Scouts have done for their Take Action projects?

What's the difference between community service and Take Action (often called "service learning")?

Community Service makes the world better for some people "right now." For example, collecting cans of food for the local food pantry feeds people "right now." Gathering toys for a homeless family shelter makes kids happy "right now." Providing clothing and toiletries to people who have suffered a disaster helps them get through a traumatic event "right now." These acts of kindness are important ways to help some people – right now.

Service Learning encourages young people to understand the roots of a problem so they can develop a project that continues to address that problem – even after the one-time event is over.

For example, girls might want to do something about trash in a local park. If they spend a day picking up trash, they've solved the problem for that day – but there will probably be more trash on the ground a week later.

To create a sustainable solution, the girls would explore why there's so much trash. They might discover that there aren't enough trash cans in the park or that the trash cans aren't visible enough.

Once they know that, they investigate several possible solutions, get advice from experts, and then develop a plan and put it in motion. They might make a presentation to the parks department and ask them to add trash cans or reposition the ones that are there.

In Girl Scouts, when we encourage girls to **Take Action**, we're talking about Service Learning.

Some people think of it this way:

Community Service – helping others – comes from our hearts.

Service Learning – understanding and addressing the roots of a problem – comes from our hearts and our heads.

The world needs both!

How do Girl Scouts Take Action?

Girls team up to:

- Identify a problem they want to do something about
- Come up with a creative and sustainable solution
- Develop a team plan
- Put the plan into action
- Talk about what they learned – and what they can't wait to do next!

How do girls make their project sustainable?

“Sustainable” means that the project doesn't offer a one-time solution. The change that the girls want to make continues in the future.

Here are three ways girls can create a sustainable project:

- **Make the solution permanent. For example:**
 - Persuade the city council to build a new sidewalk or add a stoplight to a busy intersection.
 - Buy a swing for kids with disabilities and put it in the local park.
 - Create a ropes course at camp.
- **Educate and inspire other people so they'll help make change happen (also known as “the ripple effect”). For example:**
 - Create and perform a skit about how to save water at a school assembly.
 - Create a social media campaign about the dangers of texting and driving or post an online video about how to stop bullying.
 - Create works of art based on different people's definitions of “true beauty” and hold an art show for the public.
 - Organize a workshop for younger girls to teach them how to code.
- **Change a law or regulation. For example:**
 - Make a presentation to city council asking for the speed limit to be lowered on a dangerous road.
 - Work with the school to create “no idling” zones for parents who are dropping off or picking up their children.
 - Advocate for sign language to be accepted as a second language throughout a school district.

How can I help girls organize a Take Action Project?

Guide the girls through these steps:

1. Girls identify a problem they care about.

The girls brainstorm about places or people that might need their help.

An example of this step:

- **Girls often love animals, so they may want to help abandoned pets that need caring homes.**
- **Perhaps they saw a recent news story about people in their town who are hungry and want to know how they can give them food.**
- **Some girls may want to plant flowers to cheer up people at a senior center or hospital.**
- **Or if the girls' community is experiencing a drought, they may want to tell people how to save water.**

2. Girls choose an issue.

As a team, the girls choose one issue. (They also come up with a couple of backup ideas in case the first one doesn't work out.)

An example of this step:

- **After coming up with a dozen ideas, the girls soon realize they like three the most: helping an animal shelter, planting a garden or organizing a food drive.**
- **The girls agree that they want to do the food drive.**
- **They keep the other two ideas on the backup list in case their first idea doesn't work out.**

3. Girls learn more about the issue, then work together to come up with a plan.

They talk to people in their school, neighborhood or town who are involved in the issue.

An example of this step:

- **They've decided to do a Take Action project with a food pantry.**
- **You arrange for them to meet a pantry volunteer who will tell them about how many people in the area go hungry and what kinds of food are needed.**
- **They learn about what the pantry needs. For example, they may discover that the pantry needs food items that can be put together to create a simple meal, such as a package of dried pasta, a jar of pasta sauce, and salad dressing. They may also learn that the pantry gets lots of donations during the holiday season, but that the donations dwindle during the rest of the year.**

4. Girls do their Take Action project.

An example of this step:

- They make a list of foods that can be used to make simple meals.
- They create posters to advertise their food drive and letting people know what kind of items would be most helpful.
- They make flyers (or a video or a social media campaign) to tell people that food pantries need donations year-round. This makes the project sustainable by educating and inspiring others to continue helping the food pantry even after this one-time food drive is over.

5. Girls reflect on their project.

They take time to discuss what worked and what they would do differently next time. This is where leadership learning happens!

An example of this step:

- No need for a super-serious discussion! You can start a simple conversation while taking the girls on a nature walk or enjoying a “Yay, we did it!” campfire.
- If the girls want, you could set up a follow-up visit to the food pantry so they could hear from the people they help how they made a difference.

How can girls find out what other Girl Scouts have done for their Take Action projects?

Check out the online Map It! tool at ForGirls.GirlScouts.org/map-it-girls-changing-the-world, where girls can post their Take Action and Bronze/Silver/Gold Award projects. Use it to let Brownies know how other Girl Scouts are helping their communities and to spark ideas for their own projects.