



Girl Guides  
of Canada  
Guides  
du Canada

# ADVOCACY TIPS FOR THE LINK PROGRAM



## Why we have advocacy tips for Link

Empowering young women to make a difference in their communities is a major theme of the Link program. Throughout the program, Link members are encouraged to speak up and take action – for example, learning about politics, researching issues that are important to them, and raising awareness about a cause. All of these types of activities are connected with advocacy.

As a registered charity in Canada, Girl Guides of Canada–Guides du Canada (GGC) must follow government regulations on advocacy. There are many advocacy activities in which Link members can participate as part of this program, as long as we all follow the regulations by which the organization is legally bound.

These tips will assist members participating in the Link program to determine which advocacy activities are appropriate as part of Guiding – enabling young women to use their Guiding voices in the most effective way possible. For more detailed information about advocacy in Guiding, and for information about supporting girls in advocacy-related activities, please see GGC’s official Advocacy Guidelines on [Member Zone](#).

Or email: [advocacy@girlguides.ca](mailto:advocacy@girlguides.ca)

## What is Advocacy?

**Within Guiding, advocacy is the act or process of influencing decision makers to take actions or make decisions that promote the health, development and wellbeing of girls and young women**

Essentially, advocacy involves influencing or persuading decision makers to improve or change something, or to support a solution to a problem.

- **Influencing decision makers** involves supporting or opposing a cause by recommending a specific solution to an issue based on factual information from reputable sources.
- **Decision makers** are individuals or institutions that are in a position to take actions or make decisions on issues impacting society. Decision makers include the general public, businesses, organizations, public institutions and government (including politicians).

## KEY PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES IN THE LINK PROGRAM

Whenever you're participating in the Link program or other activities in Guiding, particularly those that are advocacy-related, there are four overarching principles to follow:

- 1) All programs and activities must be non-partisan or multi-partisan
- 2) Advocacy activities must be based on factual information from reputable sources that demonstrate a well-reasoned position
- 3) Remember that you are allowed to form your own opinions and make your own choices
- 4) Young women can directly influence government decision makers themselves through Guiding, but cannot encourage others to do the same

### 1) All programs and activities must be non-partisan or multi-partisan

As a registered charity, GGC is not permitted by law to devote any resources (including member, volunteer and staff time) to partisan political activities. This means activities that involve the direct or indirect support of any political party or candidate for political office, whether it's during an election campaign or not.

Partisan activities involve the direct or indirect support of, or opposition to:

- Any political party or a candidate for political office
- Any third-party organization or individual that directly supports a specific candidate or political party (e.g., unions, lobby groups, etc.)

Link members **cannot** participate in partisan political activities as representatives of GGC or as part of Guiding (whether in uniform or not).

This includes:

- Donating money, time, resources or materials to a political party or candidate for political office
- Making public statements (oral, written, photographic, on social media) that endorse or denounce a political party or candidate for political office, either explicitly or implicitly
- Directly connecting your opinion on an issue with support for a political party or a candidate for political office

There are still plenty of opportunities for Link members to participate in non-partisan or multi-partisan activities. For example, a Link unit can attend all-candidates debates and community events where all elected officials and election candidates have been invited.

## TIPS:

- Interacting with elected officials is encouraged, just **ensure it's focused on their work as an elected official, not as a member of their political party.**
  - o For situations that don't involve "party politics" (i.e. territorial politics, municipal politics), use your best judgment to ensure that government representatives are acting in their capacity as an elected official.
- If it's not clear if something is partisan or not (i.e. Liberal women's caucus vs. all-party women's caucus), just **check in with national office** ([advocacy@girlguides.ca](mailto:advocacy@girlguides.ca)) and we'll help steer you in the right direction.
- There may be times when you encounter partisanship even though it's a community event – for example, if you're interacting with your Member of Parliament and they make partisan comments. In these cases, it's just a matter of remembering that **you and other Link members present have the right to form your own opinions and make your own choices.**
- If unplanned photos are taken of GGC members during an election campaign (e.g. while your unit is at a local fair), **make it clear that any photographs taken with GGC members cannot be used for partisan political purposes** (e.g. the candidate posting the photo on their campaign Facebook page).
- If you encounter a politician or an election candidate while out in the community, it's fine to share that you interacted with them (e.g. Tweeting that you just sold cookies to your MP), as long as you **don't express your support or opposition to them as part of Guiding.**

## 2) Advocacy activities must be based on factual information from reputable sources that demonstrate a well-reasoned position

Use factual information from reputable sources when presenting information in your Link unit

It's important that the information we present in Link program activities is credible and can be trusted as accurate and unbiased. (Please see the full GGC [Advocacy Guidelines](#) for information on how to determine if a source is reliable).

It's critical to make sure not to use information from sources that we know, or ought to know, is false, inaccurate or misleading. Not all information on the internet is equally valuable or reliable. The same goes for guests we invite to Guiding events. It's

our responsibility to ensure that any sources we consult or speakers we invite to our organization adhere to the above principles as well.

### TIPS:

- **Do your research** – factual information is based on direct experience or research from a reliable source.
- **Look for reliable sources:**
  - Official government information sources are valuable, as they cover a wide range of issues affecting Canadians and Canadian society and adhere to the principles of reliable sources. Note: political parties or their websites are not considered government sources.
  - Not all information on the internet is equally valuable or reliable. In order for a website to be considered reputable, it must be accurate and unbiased. For information on how to evaluate a website for reliability and accuracy – please see the [Advocacy Guidelines](#).
  - If you're looking at an academic journal article or research paper, make sure it has been peer-reviewed – this means the validity of the information was verified by an independent, reputable source. Even if reputable sources have been cited, make sure that the information is not taken out of context.
- If facilitating a discussion or presentation with your Link unit, **issues should be presented from multiple angles**. If a discussion on an issue tends to lean in a certain direction, include arguments and relevant facts to the contrary so everyone has an opportunity to see the whole picture.
- **Never rely on incomplete information or on an appeal to emotions**. While GGC programs will always adhere to these guidelines for factual information, that may not be the case if you're using a program from another organization (including WAGGGS). Be sure to review the program first or check in with GGC for assistance.

### Develop your own well-reasoned position

Before undertaking an advocacy-related activity, become knowledgeable about the issue and ensure your opinions and ideas are well thought out. In addition to looking for factual information from reliable sources, it's important to critically analyze that information in order to arrive at a sound position that will be taken seriously by decision makers.

Critical analysis involves breaking the issue down into its parts, so we can understand the whole picture. This helps evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the issue from all sides in order to make a recommendation (or suggest multiple solutions) to solve the issue.

### TIPS:

- **Break down the issue** by outlining what the research says about it from multiple angles; see if you can boil the information down to find the root cause of the issue.
- **Look into who's affected by the issue**, both positively and negatively, and examine the respective biases.
- **Consider who would be advantaged or disadvantaged** by all the possible solutions. Then you and other Link members can zero in on what you think is the best solution to the problem.
- **Use facts, statistics and stories to frame the issue**, the root cause, and your solution.
- While it can be frustrating when there isn't a clear solution to an issue, **it's better to acknowledge that there isn't always a simple solution** to these complex issues rather than jumping to conclusions that may be flawed.

### 3) Remember that you are allowed to form your own opinions and make your own choices

Whenever exploring issues as part of the Link program, it's important to maintain an open mind and be willing to accept differences of opinion. If you are engaging with other Link members, allow everyone the opportunity to learn about issues from all perspectives, form their own opinions and make their own informed choices. This includes making sure that we don't project our own personal views and biases on others. Link program activities should focus on equipping you with the knowledge, tools and techniques to identify issues that you feel strongly about and arrive at your own opinions.

### TIPS:

- Official GGC programs like the Link program are **designed to present information that's objective and unbiased**. If you come across a program from WAGGGS or another organization, review it to make sure that it aligns with these advocacy guidelines. WAGGGS and other Guiding organizations around the world may not have the same regulations that GGC has here in Canada. Not sure? Contact us and we'll assist you.
- We all have personal biases – our own political and moral perspective on issues. **Remember not to project your particular point of view on others.**

#### 4) Young women in Guiding can directly influence **government** decision makers themselves, but cannot encourage others to do the same

When it comes to influencing **government**, young women (either individually or as a Link unit) can directly interact with decision makers to share their opinions and influence them to make a certain decision. However, they cannot as part of Guiding appeal to others (i.e. their community) to take the same actions. For example, Link members can meet directly with their city councilor to advocate for the installation of a crosswalk, but they can't as a member of GGC email their family and friends to urge them to also meet with the city councilor. Young women can, however, encourage others to make an effort to educate themselves and learn about the issues.

##### **TIPS:**

- **This applies to government decision makers only.** If a Link member wants to persuade a corporation, community organization or the general public, they can rally support. They just can't rally support for advocacy that targets government.
- While this does limit the extent to which you can advocate as part of the Link program, **consider the value of what you as an individual can do.** Individual advocacy can be just as powerful as convincing others to take action.

**Note:** If Link members are interested in rallying their community to influence government, they can do that outside of Guiding.



## EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN THE LINK PROGRAM

Keeping in mind the four key principles outlined above, this section outlines the kinds of advocacy activities young women can get involved with as part of Guiding and the Link program.

While examples are provided, they are not exhaustive. Always make sure you've done your due diligence, are on the right track, and reach out for assistance if you need to.

APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
<p><b>You're good to go!</b> If you have any questions, let us know.</p>	<p><b>Sorry... but these activities aren't allowed.</b> Check back with the "tips for making sure your activity is allowable."</p>

### A) Link members learning about the political and democratic process

Exploring citizenship and civic engagement is a key component of the Active Citizenship theme in the Link program. Link members can attend events such as all-candidates debates, meetings or forums where they can learn about the democratic process, and can broadly promote democracy such as getting more people to vote.

#### EXAMPLES:

APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attending an open government meeting (city council debate, Question Period, etc.) so girls can learn about the democratic and political process and learn more about issues in their community</li> <li>● Attending an all-candidates debate between candidates running for MP to learn more about the political process and key issues</li> <li>● Posting links to all major candidates in an election campaign on a Link unit's Facebook group</li> <li>● Attending a town hall meeting during an election campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Volunteering for one political party's campaign event</li> <li>● Posting links on a Link unit's Facebook page to one (or select) candidates during an election campaign</li> <li>● Going on a trip to city hall and expressing your personal like or dislike of the town's mayor</li> </ul>



## B) Link members **learning about issues** that promote the development, health and wellbeing of girls and young women

An important part of the Link program is learning about the issues affecting girls and young women to enable GGC members to take action for a better world. Learning about issues is the first step on the road to advocating.

APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Reading recent GGC research on the prevalence of eating disorders among Canadian girls</li><li>● Delivering GGC's Say No to Violence Challenge which teaches girls about violence against girls and women</li><li>● Visiting a local emergency women's shelter with a Link unit to learn about the issue of women and homelessness</li><li>● Learning about climate change by tree planting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Inviting a local politician to a Link unit meeting solely to promote their party's position on the legalization of marijuana</li><li>● Attending an event hosted by a provincial teachers' union that directly aligns itself with a political party's position on cuts to teachers' contracts</li><li>● Sharing information with other Link members on the issue of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) based on information from an academic journal that has not been peer-reviewed</li></ul>

## C) Link members advocating for issues that promote the development, health and wellbeing of girls and young women

Advocacy is all about raising awareness about an issue **and** influencing decision makers to improve a situation through specific solutions. It's up to each Link member what kinds of issues she wants to raise awareness of and how she wants to advocate.

APPROPRIATE	NOT APPROPRIATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending a meeting at a provincial legislature to present GGC's Guidelines on the Inclusion of Transgender members</li> <li>• Persuading a corporation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions based on a recommendations in a recent federal government report on environmental sustainability</li> <li>• After learning about environmental sustainability at a GGC conference, signing a petition (as part of Guiding) asking an MP to vote in favour of a carbon tax</li> <li>• After researching climate change through a Link program activity, discussing the issue from many perspectives and decide whether or not you support a carbon tax as a solution, and then decide if you want to write your MP to express your opinion on the issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting GGC's Guidelines on the Inclusion of Transgender members in direct alignment with a provincial political party's position on transgender rights</li> <li>• Persuading a corporation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without conducting critical research and analysis from reliable sources</li> <li>• Signing a petition (as part of Guiding) asking an MP to vote in favour of a carbon tax without learning about the issue beforehand</li> <li>• After learning about climate change through a Link program activity, promoting your personal support of a carbon tax and pressuring other Link members to do the same</li> </ul>

For more tips for ensuring that your Link program activities are in line with GGC's guidelines, see the official [Advocacy Guidelines](#). If you're organizing programming or events for girl units as part of the Link program, please also refer to the full Guidelines.