

Step Up, Stand Up, and Get Involved!



For more than 100 years, Girl Scouts like you have been at the forefront of social and political change. When you get involved with changes in your community—whether it’s the community of your school, your town, your state, or your country—that’s civic engagement. From voting rights for women to the civil rights movement, big changes can happen when people stand up for their beliefs.

If you’re interested in civic engagement, the Citizen badges are a great place to start! These badges will help you connect with your communities and find out how to be an actively engaged citizen who works to affect change.

Once you’ve earned the Citizen badge for your Girl Scout level, you’re ready to take the next step. What are you passionate about? Maybe you’ve been passionate about a cause for as long as you can remember—in that case, you’re halfway there! If you need a little boost toward finding your inner activist, follow the news for inspiration. Get into the habit of checking a variety of established news sources on a daily basis. What kind of stories do you find the most interesting and important? They may be front-page stories covered by news outlets all over the world, or smaller ones that don’t receive a lot of attention. Inspiration can strike anywhere.



Behind the Ballot badge



Public Policy badge

What Gets You Fired Up?

Passion is personal—everyone needs to find the causes that matter to *them*—but if you need a little push, see if these ideas spark something for you!

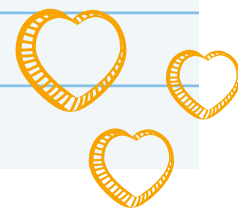
- The ocean is polluted with plastic and other garbage.*
- Many of the teens I know are unhappy with the way they look.*
- Kids are being bullied at my school.*
- People in the United States are politically divided and struggling to find common ground.*
- The lunches at my school are high in sugar and don’t include fresh produce.*
- The homeless shelters in my city are overcrowded.*
- Music and art programs are being cut from schools in my district.*
- Rates of depression and anxiety are increasing in my state.*

HOW TO GET STARTED

Have you ever heard the slogan “*Think globally, act locally?*” It means that the solutions to global issues can start at home. You may not be able to change environmental laws in another country, for example, but you *can* help implement environmentally friendly programs at your school.

If you’d like to broaden your scope, the sky’s the limit! Think about problems you’d like to tackle at the state, national, or global level.

Need a little help finding your passion? See a list of suggestions in the box on this page.





GET INFORMED

Knowledge is power! Informed citizens know the ins and outs of issues that affect their everyday lives—and how they can work to make changes when they're needed. The first step in becoming a change maker is to find the issue that is your passion.

- ★ **Get to know your neighborhood.** When you see a place every day, you can get so used to it that you don't really see it. For a few days, imagine you're a visitor to your neighborhood, town, or school. Try to notice new details and see if you can find things that need improvement, whether it's kids being bullied at school or parts of your city with no access to fresh fruits and vegetables.
- ★ **Learn about your state** and find out about some of the problems (drought, homelessness, domestic violence . . .) it's facing.
- ★ **Find out what groups** or organizations in your community or state are dealing with the problems you see and find out what you can do to help.
- ★ **Research your local government officials** and find out what kind of problems they're trying to solve. Team up with a trusted adult and attend a meeting or rally when a local government official comes to your town.
- ★ **Take a tour** of your local government offices and the courthouse; meet your state legislators in Congress so you know who to write to or call.
- ★ **Dive in to global issues**—from the health of the world's oceans to barriers to education for girls in developing nations.

INSPIRING WOMEN

There are many fearless women who found causes that mattered to them and worked to make a difference. See one of their stories below.

ALICE PAUL was born and raised in New Jersey, where she was introduced to the fight for women's rights at an early age—her mother was a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. In 1907, Alice went to London to study social work. There, she became involved in the suffrage movement herself, and was even sent to jail several times. She returned to the United States in 1910 and began lobbying Congress for a Constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote. She organized parades and marches, and picketed the White House alongside other activists. More arrests followed, but she did not give up.

In 1920, the hard work of Alice Paul and the other suffragettes paid off. The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed, granting women the right to vote. Alice continued to fight for women's equality until her death in 1977.



GET MOVING



Once you have an issue—or several issues—in mind, it's time to get moving!

- ★ **Share your ideas.** Start speaking to others! It's a great way to spark fresh ideas or build on ones you already have. There may be a group of like-minded local people you can join, whether it's an online group or one who meets in person. (Talk to a parent or guardian before connecting with others, either way!)
- ★ **Run for student government:** use your ideas to form the platform of your campaign. You might also join a student group that advocates for that issue. If your school doesn't have one—start your own!
- ★ **Write a letter to your local government official** (city council, mayor, state legislator . . .) about something in your community that needs improvement, or see if you can meet with them at their office.
- ★ **Attend a neighborhood city council meeting** with an adult to hear what's happening in your community. Find out what your city council person is doing.
- ★ **Research careers in social entrepreneurship.** Could your ideas and career goals align? Are there internship opportunities that could help you explore the possibilities?
- ★ **Attend neighborhood watch meetings** and find out what safety issues are happening in your area.
- ★ **Volunteer** or do a Take Action project—maybe even your Gold Award.
- ★ **Get help from your troop:**
 - Have your Girl Scout friends help you with an email, social media, or letter-writing campaign.
 - Talk about using some money from your Girl Scout Cookie sale to support a project that will help the cause.
 - Ask them to help with a petition, poll, or food or clothing drive.

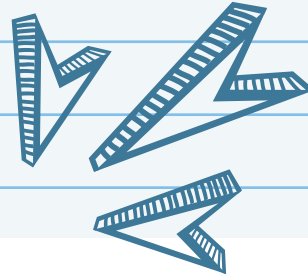


INSPIRING WOMAN

MALALA YOUSAFZAI was born in Mingora, Pakistan. In 2007, the Taliban, a radical group that commits terrorist acts and suppresses women's rights, invaded the region. The Taliban destroyed girls' schools and tried to forbid girls from receiving any education. Malala began writing an anonymous blog about what life was like for a girl under Taliban rule. Over time, she became more outspoken—she appeared on television and in documentaries, speaking about the importance of education for girls.

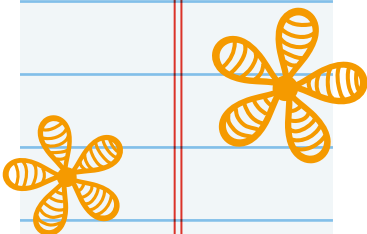
In 2012, a member of the Taliban shot Malala. She survived the attack, and continued her advocacy work. She published a book about her experience called *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*. In 2014, at the age of 17, she became the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD



One voice is great—many voices can become a movement. Amplify your voice and you may be surprised by how far it carries.

- ★ **Spread the word** about your cause by going to your local news media or chamber of commerce to let them know.
- ★ **Write a letter** to your local government officials (mayor, city council, state legislator . . .) to let them know about your work.
- ★ **Start a social media page** about your issue.
- ★ **Take part in a peaceful march or rally** with an adult.
- ★ **Set up a presentation** at a mall or community center to inspire others. Make sure to get permission first!



CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES

Visit some sites that can help spark ideas for civic engagement.

- ✓ **National Young Women of Distinction:** If you're looking for inspiration, look no further than your fellow Girl Scouts! The National Young Women of Distinction are Seniors and Ambassadors whose Gold Award projects demonstrated extraordinary leadership, had a measurable and sustainable impact, and addressed a local challenge related to a national and/or global issue. Talk about civic engagement! Find out more at <http://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/highest-awards/national-young-women-of-distinction.html>.
- ✓ **PolitiFact:** In today's heated political climate, it can be hard to know what to believe and who is telling the truth. PolitiFact is a non-partisan site that investigates claims from all sides and rates their level of accuracy. Get the latest scoop at <http://www.politifact.com>.

