BAN BØSSY

Leadership Tips for Troop Leaders

Brought to you by LeanIn.Org & Girl Scouts of the USA

When it comes to girls and ambition, the pattern is clear: girls are discouraged from leading. When a little boy asserts himself, he's called a "leader." Yet when a little girl does the same, she risks being branded "bossy"—a precursor to words like "aggressive," "angry," and "too ambitious" that plague strong female leaders. Calling girls bossy is one of many things we do to discourage them from leading. It's no wonder that by middle school, girls are less interested in leadership roles than boys, a trend that continues into adulthood.

LeanIn.Org and Girl Scouts of the USA are kicking off Ban Bossy, a public service campaign to encourage leadership and achievement in girls. With the help of Girls Leadership Institute co-founder Rachel Simmons and the Girl Scout Research Institute, we've developed practical tips to help all young women flex their leadership muscles, in ways big and small.

The girl with the courage to raise her hand becomes the woman with the confidence to assert herself at work. As troop leaders, there are small changes each of us can make that will have a big impact on girls' confidence and ambitions.

The time to start building female leaders is now.We hope you'll join us to Ban Bossy—and encourage girls to lead.

By middle school, girls are 25% less likely than boys to say they like taking the lead.

Source: Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development, 1992—1997 [1]

JOIN US TO BAN BOSSY

Post **"I will #banbossy"** to your social media channels and visit **banbossy.com** to take the pledge and learn more.

BAN BØSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

"Far too many girls are backing away from leadership opportunities, and many who do want to lead don't believe they have what it takes. Fortunately, through Girl Scouting, girls hone their leadership skills every day. They're able to work to achieve their goals surrounded by people who want to see them succeed.

When I meet with girls, it's clear they're watching the women in their lives to learn who they themselves can become. Girl Scout troop leaders are some of girls' earliest role models. Through your guidance and role modeling, you play a special—and at times a daunting—part in helping girls become strong, capable leaders.

Research suggests that all-girl environments like Girl Scouts can be beneficial for girls' self-esteem and performance at home, school, and beyond. In all-girl spaces, girls are free to learn and thrive in an environment where they feel safe to speak freely, take healthy risks, take on challenges, and be themselves[2].

Together, we can make Girl Scouts the place where girls experience trust with one another, the fun of teaming up to try something new, and the freedom to speak directly and confidently to their peers. And when girls can speak up and lean in without the fear of being called bossy, they practice leadership skills that will serve them throughout their lives."

—Andrea Bastiani Archibald, Ph.D.
  Chief Girl Expert, GSUSA

Girl Scout troop leaders are some of girls' earliest role models.

For more ideas for supporting the girls in your life, we recommend you read our Leadership Tips for Girls at **banbossy.com/girls-tips.**

BAN
BOSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

92%

Ninety-two percent of girls believe they can learn the skills required to lead—yet only twenty-one percent believe they already possess them.

21%

Source: Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008 [3]

1. Develop Relationships with Your Girls

THE SITUATION >

Relationships empower girls. When they feel connected to the adults in their life, they are more resilient and courageous[4]. Younger girls in particular are likely to look up to their Girl Scout leaders, so make your interactions with them count![5]

THE SOLUTION >

Build personal connections with the girls in your troop. Ask them how school is going or what they're listening to, reading, or watching. Use girls' names when acknowledging their ideas. When girls feel comfortable and connected in a group, they are more likely to take healthy risks and try new things.
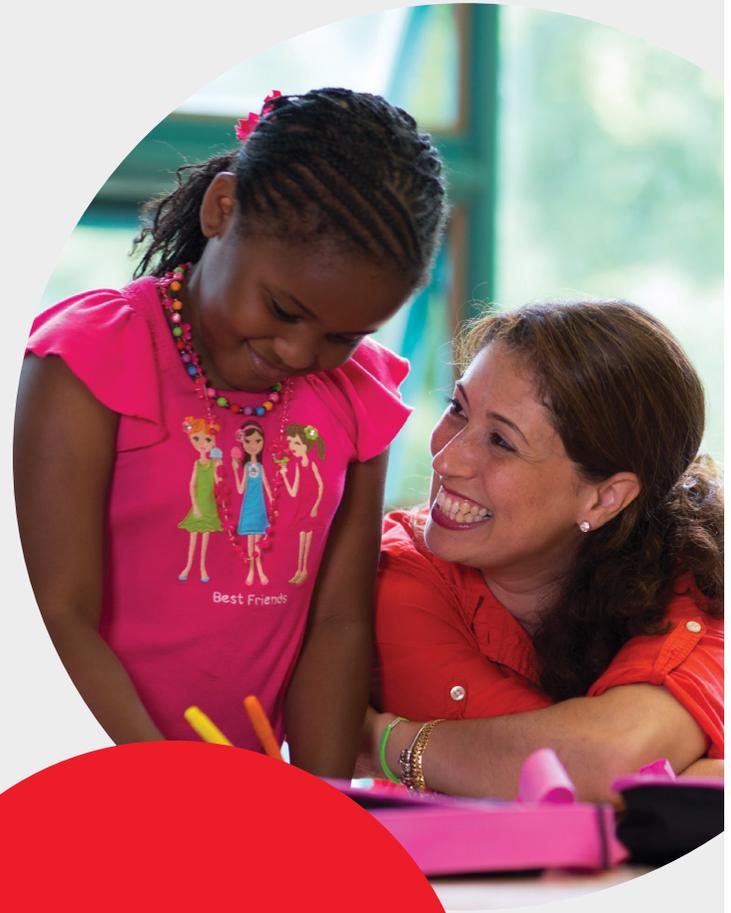
DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly two-thirds of elementary school girls say they want an adult to help them learn to be a better leader.

Source: Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008 [6]

BAN BOSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

2. Be Conscious of the Way You and They Talk

THE SITUATION >

Girls learn early that too much confidence can get them ostracized, and you often hear the proof in the way they communicate. Many girls start sentences with apologies ("I'm not sure this is right, but...") or turn powerful sentences into questions ("Martin Luther King was a civil rights leader?"). Some cock their heads, play with their hair, or cover their mouths while speaking, using phrases like "kind of" and "sort of" to weaken their convictions. These phrases can become habits and hinder a girl's ability to speak in a direct manner later on.

THE SOLUTION >

Notice how you communicate with your troop and avoid hedging or softening your opinions with disclaimers or apologies. Be conscious of how your girls speak as well. If you observe a girl falling into one of these communication pitfalls, privately point it out and explain how it undermines the point she's making.

DID YOU KNOW?

The confidence gap starts young: Between elementary school and high school, girls' self-esteem drops 3.5 times more than boys'.

Source: American Association of University Women, 1991 [7]

LEAN IN   girl scouts

3. Teach Girls to Respect Their Feelings

THE SITUATION >

Girls learn early on that being liked and avoiding conflict—even when they're upset—can win social status and rewards. Many girls are told to "get over" their feelings or to stop being "so sensitive." A girl's ability to recognize and respect her feelings, and to speak up about them, is a vital ingredient to developing healthy personal authority and confidence.

THE SOLUTION >

Teach your girls to respect themselves by letting them know it's okay to feel whatever it is they feel. They may not like all their feelings, but they're an important part of who they are; just as we have to take care of our bodies, we also have to take care of our feelings. Show them by example: avoid denying, second-guessing, or questioning their feelings with phrases like "It's not a big deal" or "Don't overreact." When they're ready to share with others, be realistic with them about the challenges of speaking up in a world that still expects girls to be nice above all. Sometimes we have to speak up just to show we believe we should be heard, even if the result isn't what we hoped for.

4. Teach Girls to Handle Conflict

THE SITUATION >

Girls learn from watching the ways women communicate and resolve conflict. As girls navigate challenges in the troop, they look to their leaders for cues on how to handle difficult relationships. The power of our example can be both exciting and intimidating.

THE SOLUTION >

Avoid indirect communication like gossip or texting as a way to resolve your own conflicts. Instead, model direct and honest communication with your peers and the girls. Remember, your troop is watching and learning. Explain to the girls that conflict is an inevitable part of relationships and teamwork—it's the way we handle it that matters. And remind them that Girl Scouting is about uplifting and supporting one another, not bringing others down.

✏ ACTIVITY

Learn to Be Direct

Help girls learn how to resolve conflict by teaching them to use I-Statements. See the attached troop activity for an introduction to I-Statements and step-by-step exercises for practicing them.

BAN BOSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

5. Avoid Language That Holds Girls Back

THE SITUATION >

Sometimes the words we use, even unintentionally, can make it harder for girls to take risks or try something new. For example, calling a girl "bossy"—a word we rarely use for boys—sends the message that girls should not speak up. These words can silence a girl during her most formative years.

THE SOLUTION >

Constructive criticism is a vital part of learning and growing, but the way it's delivered can make the difference between motivating and shaming a girl. Take care to avoid references to gender in any of your feedback, and avoid using words that disproportionately label or stereotype girls or other groups. Girls use language that reinforces gender stereotypes, too ("Girls aren't good at math"; "All girls care about are makeup and clothes"). When they do, steer the conversation toward a teachable moment for your group: explain what a stereotype is, how it limits us, and what evidence exists to challenge it. For example, ask your girls to give you an example of someone who defies the stereotype ("Who here knows a girl who's good at math?" "Do you know girls who care about school more than how they look?").
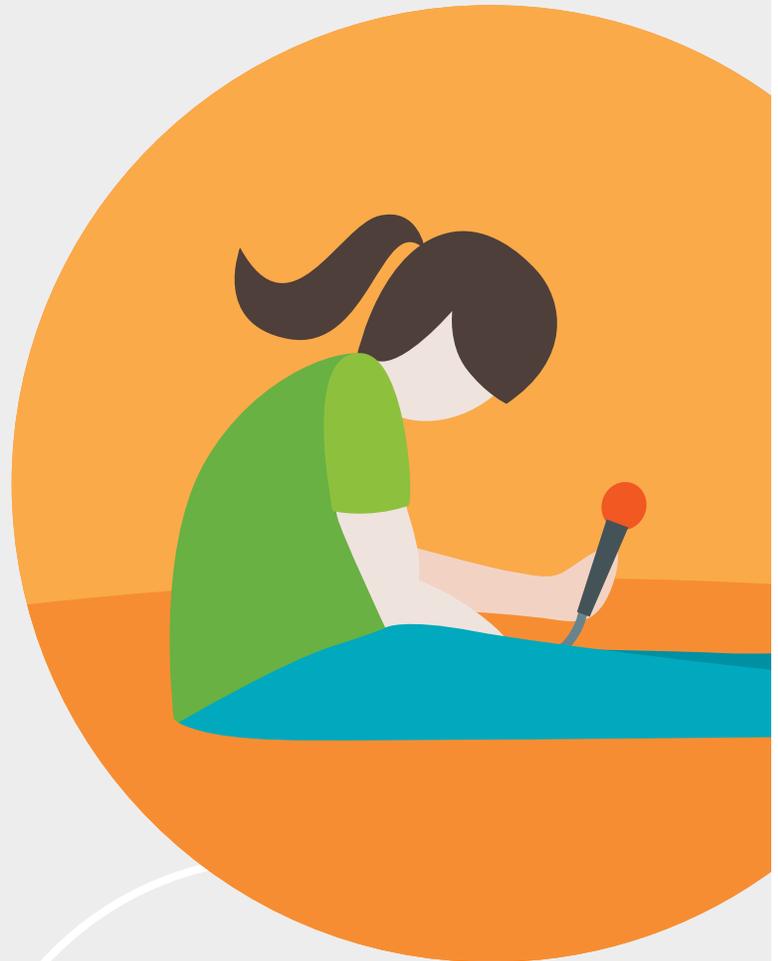
DID YOU KNOW?

Girls are twice as likely as boys to worry that leadership roles will make them seem "bossy."

Source: Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008 [8]

BAN BØSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

6. Encourage Girls to Speak Up

THE SITUATION >

Research shows that women often underestimate their abilities, while men often overestimate theirs.[9] In the same vein, girls often fear being wrong. As a result, some girls don't speak up unless they're 100 percent sure they have the right answer, while others ruminate over the perfect answer. Unfortunately, the time spent figuring out the right thing to say—or a response that will be popular with others—can delay or even suppress their true feelings.

THE SOLUTION >

After you ask a question, pause for a few moments, even if it's awkward, to give girls more time to contribute. Help girls find their voice by starting discussions that don't require factual responses. Ask the girls in your troop to adopt and hold a position or wrestle with an idea together. Start your question with "There's no right answer," and remind the girls that discussion leads to important questions and insights. If there are quieter girls in the group, privately take them each aside and encourage them to contribute.

☑ ACTIVITY

Encourage Girls to Speak Up

Divide the girls into pairs. Have each pair designate an "A" and "B" person, and give each pair a tennis ball. Ask A's to throw the ball and say a word that names something they're interested in—say, dogs or music or cooking. When B catches the ball, she has to throw it back and ask a question about that word. It could be anything, like "What's your favorite breed of dog?" or "Who's your favorite artist?" After a few times, switch the A and B roles. This exercise works particularly well for an opening ceremony for a Girl Scout meeting. It warms girls up and challenges them to develop the capacity to think on their feet and ask questions. BONUS EXERCISE: Try the same activity, but ask the girls to express an opinion about the word instead of asking a question about it.

DID YOU KNOW?

Girls are typically called on less in class than boys—so it's important teach them to get their hands up!

Source: American Association of University Women, 1992 [10]

BAN BOSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts
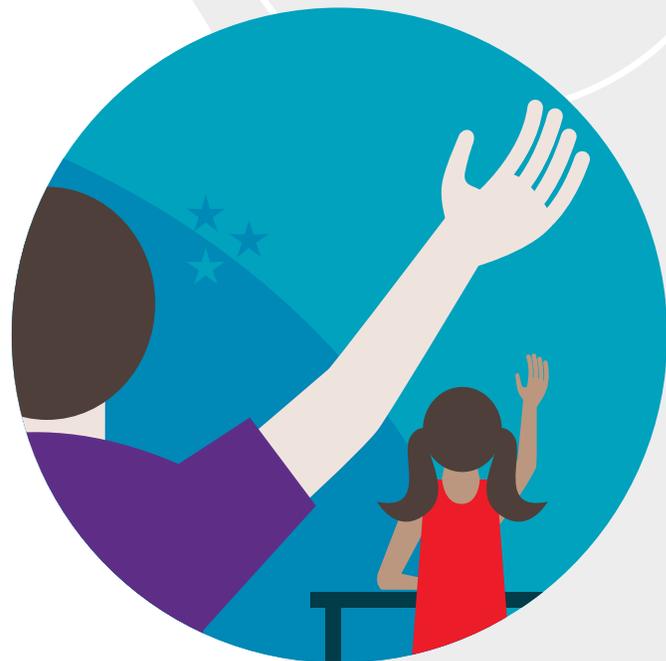
✎ ACTIVITY

Develop Guidelines for Troop Discussion

Warm up your group with two questions: What do we need in order to work together successfully on group projects? What makes working together in a group uncomfortable or unsuccessful? Then divide your troop into small groups and ask, "What do you need from me, and one another, to make sure all voices are heard when we work on a group project?" Have each group make a list and report out. Use their feedback to create a master document that you post and/ or refer back to during group projects. Some sample ideas:

- We will watch our body language when we talk or listen—no eye rolling.

- Girl Scouts is a gossip-free zone.

- Use I-Statements to resolve conflicts and work toward resolution.

7. Foster Effective Collaboration

THE SITUATION >

Research shows that both girls and boys learn best when they collaborate effectively.[11] Working together encourages girls to feel powerful and allows them to flex their collaboration and team-building muscles.

THE SOLUTION >

Lay the groundwork for effective collaboration. Help girls establish guidelines for their team like taking turns talking, building on one another's ideas, and listening actively without interruption. Then encourage the group to check in on what's going well and what isn't. Mix up the teams so that the same girls are not always working together—that way they all gain experience in working with a range of personalities and styles. Promoting cooperation and team building is key to a successful Girl Scout experience.

BAN BØSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

8. Get Media Literate—Together

THE SITUATION >

What girls read and watch often sends the wrong messages. Children's books are almost twice as likely to feature a male hero as a heroine,[12] and male characters outnumber female characters by almost three to one in family films. Even more discouraging, female characters are almost four times as likely to be shown in sexy attire.[13]

DID YOU KNOW?

Heroes outnumber heroines: Children's books are almost twice as likely to feature a male hero.

Sources: McCabe et al., 2011;
Hamilton et al., 2006 [14]

THE SOLUTION >

Take the time to talk to girls about what they're reading and watching and why they like it. Pick a movie or television show and ask: What kinds of messages about girls and women does it send? How are girls and women portrayed, and what do they do and talk about? How are girls' and women's relationships portrayed? Are the relationships built on trust and caring? Have a discussion, not a lecture. Weigh in on your concerns, but remember that they'll take you more seriously when you can all enjoy—and criticize—media together.

☑ ACTIVITY

Take the Bechdel Test

Shape the way your girls understand media by putting their favorite movies through the Bechdel test. Popularized by writer and cartoonist Alison Bechdel, the test challenges you to ask three questions of your favorite films to test for gender parity:

1. Does the film have at least two named female characters?

2. Do the female characters talk to each other?

3. Do they talk to each other about something other than a boy or man?

You'll be surprised by how few movies pass the test—and you'll give your girls a fun, easy way to critically analyze the media they're consuming.

BAN BØSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

9. Let Them Solve Problems on Their Own

THE SITUATION >

Resilience, the ability to overcome obstacles, is a cornerstone of confidence. When adults step in to solve problems, girls don't develop the coping skills they need to handle difficult situations on their own.

THE SOLUTION >

When a girl shares a problem, pause and ask, "What do you want to do about it?" If she says, "I don't know," push her gently to consider strategies she might use to deal with the situation, and then ask her about the possible outcomes. Let her decide what she wants to do (within reason). Even if you disagree with her, give her the chance to own her decision and learn a lesson if it doesn't work out the way she wants. Your confidence in her ability to solve problems on her own will build hers.

DID YOU KNOW?

It pays to be gritty: One of the most common attributes in successful women is resilience.

Source: McKinsey & Company, 2012 [15]

BAN BØSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

10. Encourage Girls to Step Outside Their Comfort Zones

THE SITUATION >

We feel braver when we prove to ourselves that we can leave our comfort zones, overcome barriers, and master challenging tasks. Many girls struggle to take risks because they worry about failing or disappointing others.

THE SOLUTION >

Encourage your girls to try new things, whether it's going to an event where they don't know anyone or taking up a sport they've never played. Push the group just slightly beyond their comfort zones and have them try out new activities together. Being brave is rarely about dramatic moments: it's a skill acquired, little by little, over time. Let the girls know they don't have to be perfect the first time they try something. They just have to try.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many girls gain leadership skills by participating in extracurricular activities that stick with them throughout life. Encourage girls to try something new and work to develop those skills!

Source: Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008 [16]

BAN BOSSY

LEAN IN   girl scouts

JOIN US TO BAN BOSSY

Post **"I will #banbossy"** to your social media channels and visit **banbossy.com** to take the pledge and learn more.

LeanIn.Org

LeanIn.Org is the nonprofit organization founded by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg to empower all women to achieve their ambitions. LeanIn.Org offers inspiration and support through an online community, free expert lectures, and Lean In Circles, small peer groups who meet regularly to share and learn together.

leanin.org

Rachel Simmons

Rachel is co-founder of the Girls Leadership Institute, a national nonprofit that teaches girls the skills to know who they are, what they believe, and how to express it, empowering them to make change in their world. She is the author of two best-selling books, *Odd Girl Out* and *The Curse of the Good Girl*, and develops leadership programs for students at Smith College.

rachelsimmons.com

Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts of the USA gives every girl access to life-changing experiences that inspire and motivate her to do something big for herself, for her community, and the world. Visit them online to learn more about how the Girl Scouts are building girls of courage, confidence, and character.

girlscouts.org
girlscouts.org/banbossy

BAN BØSSY

Endnotes

1 Barbara Schneider, *Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development*, 1992–1997, ICPSR04551-v2, Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/4551/version/2. When asked whether the statement "I like to take the lead when a group does things together" applied to them, 72 percent of sixth grade boys reported yes, versus 54 percent of sixth grade girls.

2 Alison L. Booth and Patrick J. Nolen, "Choosing to Compete: How Different Are Girls and Boys?," *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organisation* 81 (2012): 542–55; Myra Sadker, David M. Sadker, and Karen R. Zittleman, *Still Failing at Fairness: How Gender Bias Cheats Girls and Boys in School and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Scribner, 2009); and Jennifer D. Shapka and Daniel P. Keating, "Effects of a Girls-Only Curriculum During Adolescence: Performance, Persistence, and Engagement in Mathematics and Science," *American Educational Research Journal* 40, no. 4 (2003): 929—60.

3 Girl Scout Research Institute, *Change It Up: What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership* (2008), http://www.girlscouts.org/research/pdf/change_it_up_executive_summary_english.pdf.

4 Judith V. Jordan, "Relational Resilience in Girls," in *Handbook of Resilience in Children* (2nd ed.), ed. Sam Goldstein and Robert B. Brooks (New York: Spring Science + Business Media, 2013), 73—86.

5 Girl Scout Research Institute, *Change It Up*.

6 Ibid.

7 American Association of University Women, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* (1991).

8 Girl Scout Research Institute, *Change It Up*.

9 Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *Men Rule: The Continued Under-Representation of Women in U.S. Politics,* Women & Politics Institute, American University School of Public Affairs (January 2012), http://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/upload/2012-Men-Rule-Report-final-web.pdf; S. Scott Lind et al., "Competency-Based Student Self-Assessment on a Surgery Rotation," *Journal of Surgical Research* 105, no. 1 (2002): 31—34; and Kimberly A. Daubman, Laurie Heatherington, and Alicia Ahn, "Gender and the Self-Presentation of Academic Achievement," *Sex Roles* 27, nos. 3–4 (1992): 187—204.

10 American Association of University Women, *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (1992).

11 Jo Boaler, *Experiencing School Mathematics: Traditional and Reform Approaches to Teaching and Their Impact on Student Learning* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002); David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, "An Educational Psychology Success Story: Social Interdependence Theory and Cooperative Learning," *Educational Research* 38, no. 5 (2009): 365—79, http://www.co-operation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ER.CL-Success-Story-Pub-Version-09.pdf; and Leonard Springer, Mary Elizabeth Stanne, and Samuel S. Donovan, "Effects of Small-Group Learning on Undergraduates in Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technology: A Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 69, no. 1 (1999): 21—51, http://archive.wceruw.org/nise/Publications/Research_Monographs/SPRINGER/SpringerALL.pdf.

12 Janice McCabe et al., "Gender in Twentieth-Century Children's Books: Patterns of Disparity in Titles and Central Characters," *Gender & Society* 25, no. 2 (2011): 197—226; and Mykol C. Hamilton et al., "Gender Stereotyping and Under-Representation of Female Characters in 200 Popular Children's Picture Books: A Twenty-First Century Update," *Sex Roles* 55, nos. 11–12 (2006): 757—65.

13 Geena Davis Institute, "Research Facts," http://www.seejane.org/research/index.php.

14 McCabe et al., "Gender in Twentieth-Century Children's Books"; and Hamilton et al., "Gender Stereotyping and Under-representation of Female Characters in 200 Popular Children's Picture Books."

15 Barsh and Yee, *Special Report: Unlocking the Full Potential of Women at Work*, McKinsey & Company (2012), http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/womenreportnew.pdf.

16 Girl Scout Research Institute, *Change It Up*.

BAN
BØSSY