



National Civic Action: Promote the Vote

Instructions for Troop Leaders

The Girl Scout Movement has a long history of advocacy and civil action. From the very beginning, Girl Scouts have used hard work and their passionate voices to create lasting, positive change in the world.

One critical way to drive change is to get out and vote! Voting is the best way to participate in the democratic process and make our voices heard—arguably our most important civic duty. Thanks to the 19th Amendment of 1920, which allowed women the right to vote, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which guaranteed voting access to people of color, all American citizens (with some exceptions—see discussion guide) now enjoy this fundamental right.

Unfortunately, today—long after these pieces of legislation were passed—barriers to voting still exist. In many parts of the country, voting laws and protocols make it difficult for many people, especially people of color, to cast their votes in local and federal elections. But people care about their communities and deserve to have a say in the decisions that affect them. Girl Scouts can help make it happen!

While most Girl Scouts aren't yet old enough to cast a ballot, they can still get involved in the process. Younger Girl Scouts can educate themselves about how and when to register to vote, where to find key information, how to evaluate candidates and issues, how to make a voting plan, and more. In the meantime, they can inspire others to carry the torch—until they're ready to take it up themselves.

In your role as troop leader, you will lead the way. Through Promote the Vote, you'll help Girl Scouts inform and inspire others about the voting process while becoming inspired themselves. Today's youth will lead tomorrow's future, and Girl Scouts are ready to chart the course.

How to Guide Your Troop

1. **Prepare** for your meeting by browsing [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org) to see and understand the many voting support tools available to the public. Other ways to prepare might include:

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- Learning about the history of the suffrage movement and the Voting Rights Act
 - Looking up the names of your elected officials
 - Getting up to speed on the voting deadlines and processes in your state
 - Reviewing the Girl Scouts Civics and Citizen badge lines for possible inclusion in your meeting
 - Checking out our Girl Scouts and League of Women Voters' **collaboration guide** to see how LWV volunteers can support your goals
2. **Lead a discussion.** Talk to your troop about the importance and history of voting. Help them understand that they have the power to increase voting access and encourage others to vote, even if they are too young to vote themselves. Consider using the questions, prompts, and tools in this document to guide your conversation.
 3. **Go through the steps to voting.** Many people in your community may not know how or when to vote. Your troop can support them to do so by reaching out with information about the following key steps:
 - Learn about state-specific **elections, deadlines, and rules**.
 - **Register to vote** or **check your registration**.
 - How to request an **absentee ballot**.
 - Learn what's on your ballot in an **upcoming election**.
 - Look up and/or **contact your election officials** about issues you care about.
 - **Make a plan to vote**. Go through the appropriate section in the Girl Scout-facing Promote the Vote guide with the troop.
 4. **Make a plan and set a goal.** With your troop, decide how you'll support people in your community to either register to vote or plan to vote. Set a goal for how many people your troop will contact.

There are so many ways your troop can share essential voter information and get the word out! Before getting started, choose the options you like from the list below or come up with your own ideas. (The Girl Scout-facing Promote the Vote guide includes more information on

each option below and written **templates** are available for most options.)

- Write a letter (recommended for younger Girl Scouts)
- Send an email
- Set up a phone bank or send text messages
- Post on social media
- Make a yard or window sign (recommended for younger Girl Scouts)
- Host a virtual event or create a video to share

When you've chosen your options, use these **templates** to help your troop script their outreach efforts.

Remember:

- If your troop engages online as part of this project, participants must take the **Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge** first.
- The goal of Promote the Vote is to encourage everyone, regardless of political party, affiliation, or beliefs, to participate in the democratic process. As Girl Scouts reach out to others using Promote the Vote templates, make sure their message remains nonpartisan.

5. **Take action!** Will each Girl Scout write a letter during your meeting? Will your troop host a virtual conversation with family members? Will each troop member ensure that ten or more people are registered to vote? These actions and others can be done in one meeting, between meetings, or whenever it makes sense for your troop.

If anyone decides to reach out to friends or family in another state, decide whether Girl Scouts will research that state's voting deadlines and processes or if they will simply provide the resources so individuals can do their own research.

6. **Register.** Help Senior and Ambassador Girl Scouts register and make their plan to vote!
- Girl Scouts who are at least 18 years old are eligible to vote! Celebrate this milestone by talking about how and when they will register and cast their ballots.
 - Check your state's age requirements for voter registration. Some states allow

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residents who are 16 or 17 to pre-register. Those who pre-register are automatically registered to vote once they turn 18.

- Support your troop as they follow the steps in the **Instructions for Girl Scouts**.
7. **Spread the word online.** Encourage Girl Scouts to spread the word about voting on their favorite social media apps. Tell them that research shows if you persuade one person to vote, that person will likely influence at least one friend or family member to vote, too!
 - If Girl Scouts promote voting online, be sure to have them tag us: **@girlscouts**
 - If they're using VOTE411, be sure to tag them too: **@VOTE411**
 8. **Look to the future.** Have Girl Scouts consider pursuing election and civic engagement projects to earn their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award. They could also explore organizations such as the League of Women Voters as an avenue for continued civic leadership.
 9. **Complete this Girl Scout survey** to tell us about your troop's impact. Find the survey **here**.
 10. **Earn badges.** Consider encouraging Girl Scouts' ongoing civic engagement by helping your troop to earn their Civics or Citizen badges.

Working with the League of Women Voters (LWV) to Promote the Vote

GSUSA and the LWV have long histories of empowering girls, advocating for civil rights, and advancing policies that support girls and women. Our organizations are excited to work together nationally and locally to provide Girl Scouts with more opportunities to learn about and engage with civics, voting, and democracy.

Please check out our **Collaboration Guide** for guidance on working with your local League to support your troop's participation in Promote the Vote and other Girl Scout badges and activities.

Girl Scouts' 2024 Promote the Vote materials were produced with support from the League of Women Voters Education Fund, a 501(C)(3) nonpartisan organization that works to register and provide voters with election information through its election resource **VOTE411.org**.

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Troop Discussion Guide: Girls & Voting

Tools to Get Ready

- **Check upcoming elections and deadlines in your area.** State rules, election dates, and deadlines for actions like voter registration change often. Make sure you're aware of upcoming important dates using this [state map tool](#) and incorporate these deadlines into your plans.
- **Learn about early voting options in your area.** Many states offer absentee, mail-in voting, or in-person early voting options. Find out what [your state allows](#).
- **Explore your Election Day options.** Find out where you can vote in person and what you need to bring with you on Election Day by entering your address [here](#).
- **Research what's going to be on the ballot** if you have an upcoming election in your area. Use VOTE411's [ballot guide tool](#) to prepare before you vote. Learn where candidates running for office in your area stand on the issues and research any measures on your ballot. *Note: VOTE411's nonpartisan ballot guides go live four to six weeks before an election. If your guide is not yet live, check back closer to your election date.*
- **Learn about upcoming civic holidays** that may be helpful to plan programming around:
 - National Voter Registration Day ([link](#))
 - National Voter Education Week ([link](#))
 - Vote Early Day ([link](#))
- **Check out** our Democracy or Citizen badges for possible inclusion in your program.
- **For additional voting resources**, check out [Vote.gov](#).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about voting? Why do you think it's important for people to vote?
2. What issues do you care about? The people we elect to local, state, and federal government have the power to create laws that impact these issues. They also decide where our tax money goes, including to important causes such as schools and healthcare. What do you

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think about this and how might it impact our community?

3. It wasn't until 1920 that the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution passed, granting women the right to vote. Why is it important for all women to exercise their right to vote? Can you imagine what a world without women's votes would be like?
4. Even after the gender restriction to voting was lifted, discriminatory laws known as Jim Crow laws prevented Black women and men from voting. Legal restrictions and discriminatory practices denied women of color access to the vote for decades. Why is it important that people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds have equal access to voting?
5. Although nearly all U.S. citizens at least 18 years of age have the right to vote, there are exceptions. Some people who have committed felonies or who are serving time for other crimes (the rules vary by state) are not allowed to vote. People with certain mental disabilities are not allowed to vote in some states. And U.S. citizens living in U.S. territories cannot vote for president. Why do you think these rules exist? Do you think they're fair?
6. The term "voter suppression" refers to actions designed to prevent certain groups of people from voting, even if they are legally allowed to vote. Examples might include restrictive ID laws, limited voting locations, misinformation campaigns, or legal action. Have you experienced any of these things? What do you think can be done to combat voter suppression?
7. Voting is arguably our most important civic duty, but barriers still exist today. In many parts of the country, voting laws make it difficult for many people, especially people of color, to cast their votes in local and federal elections. What can we do to increase access to the vote? How can we help educate our friends, families, and communities about this issue? What policies can we advocate for individually and as a group with our local, state, and national government officials to ensure all people have equal access to the vote?
8. Many voters turn 18 between elections and are newly ready to make their voices heard. Let's make sure they get involved! How can we help young people to vote in this next election—and in all future elections?
9. What would *you* do if you were (or are) able to vote?
10. Do you know who represents you at the federal, state, and local level? How many of these representatives are women? How many are people of color? Who else would you like to see representing our community?

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11. Presidential elections are important, but they're just one of many voting opportunities. Local elections are just as important, and they happen more frequently. How might local elections affect your day-to-day life?
12. When is the next election in your area, and what are the key deadlines people in the community should know about to make sure they can vote? *Hint: Use [VOTE411](#) to find this information.*

Additional Points to Raise with Your Troop

1. With some exceptions, US citizens who are 18 years of age and older can vote. Women—and especially women of color—had to fight for the right to vote. **We can honor them by exercising that right!**
2. Citizens under 18 cannot vote, so adults can go to the polls on their behalf to vote for candidates who promise a better future for youth.
3. If there's an issue we care about, voting (and/or encouraging others to vote) for elected officials who share the same views or goals is one way to support that issue!
4. Voting is our chance to decide who makes the policies that affect the issues we care about.
5. Voting is a habit—the more we vote, the more likely we are to continue voting.
6. Every vote matters—elections often come down to very small margins, and when it's that close, every single vote is important.