



The Girl Scout Spirit of

**Inclusion**



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# What is inclusion?

The term “inclusion” closely follows the mission and purpose of Girl Scouting. In fact, Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council has our own inclusivity statement:

*Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council embraces pluralism and actively promotes inclusivity within our organization and the world.*

Inclusion means that all girls plan and participate in all activities, regardless of level of ability. Inclusion means girls with disabilities participate in activities alongside girls without disabilities, of the same age and in the same troop or group. The inclusion of girls with disabilities beside girls without disabilities benefits all girls. Everyone learns that she is more alike than different.

# What is a disability?

The law does not define particular disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures the same basic civil rights for people with disabilities that people without disabilities already enjoy in housing, transportation, communications, and public access to buildings and activities – including in Girl Scouting.

## **The ADA protects any person who:**

- » Has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity
- » Has a record of such impairment
- » Is regarded as having such an impairment

## **The ADA Title III**

- » Requires places of public accommodation to be accessible and usable by people with disabilities
- » Prohibits discrimination by private businesses in the “goods, services, facilities, procedures, privileges, advantages, and accommodations offered to the public.”

## **Who is the girl with a disability?**

- » A stranger’s daughter
- » A neighbor’s niece
- » A friend’s cousin
- » Your daughter’s friend
- » It could be your own child

*Strive for unity  
with inclusion.  
It’s not about  
“those girls,” it’s  
about “our girls.”*

# Ability on Continuum

Within each Girl Scout troop or group is a world of diversity and a wide variety of talents and abilities. Some girls can run fast and some cannot. Some girls do well with activities requiring attention to fine detail such as jewelry-making and illustration. Others excel in tasks like archery and canoeing. Some girls are outgoing, and others are more introverted. All of the differences within the troop or group add to the excitement and rewards for the girls and the leaders. The challenge is to blend the differences together into a cohesive

whole, while allowing each girl to remain an individual with her unique interests, talents and strengths.

In an overall sense, the girl with a disability is not different from a girl without a disability. Simply, a girl with a disability is placed at a different location on a particular continuum. It is a mistake to think that the disability will affect all continuums. An effective Girl Scout leader will see each girl as having a combination of high and low skill levels, and must shape activities so that all girls, regardless of their positions on the continuums, may participate. All Girl Scouts, both with and without disabilities, challenge the leader to be creative, sensitive, and energetic.

As a leader, you may have noticed that each girl in your troop or group functions according to her individual ability in a particular area. These ranges of ability form continuums and apply to all girls. Each girl's level of skill will be located at a certain point on each continuum. Five major continuums are important to the Girl Scout leader:

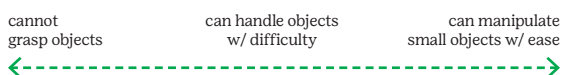
1. **Learning:** the ability to understand new ideas and to master new skills.
2. **Communication:** the ability to read, understand, and convey ideas through speaking and writing.
3. **Motor and physical ability:** the ability to move about, use tools, and manipulate objects.
4. **Emotional adjustment:** the ability to accept personal strengths and weaknesses and to react to situations in a socially appropriate manner.
5. **Sensory abilities:** the capacity to hear, feel, see, smell and taste.

For example, girls who have difficulty using their hands are placed at the low end of the continuum on sewing and writing. However, these same girls may be able to speak in public very well and could be placed at the high end of the continuum when public speaking is the skill under consideration.

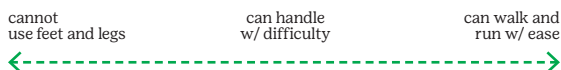
## Examples of Continuums

### Motor

#### *using their hands*



#### *using their feet*



### Communication

#### *using their voice*



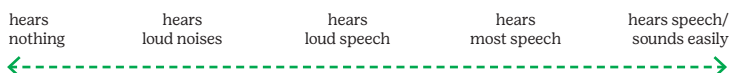
#### *using the written word*



#### *ability to see images*



#### *ability to hear sounds*



By providing the needed support, the Girl Scout troop or group can include all girls no matter the diversity of their abilities. Note that such support doesn't always or necessarily require expertise in special education or therapeutic recreation, nor does it always or necessarily require expensive adaptations or modifications.

### **The Empowerment Model of Inclusion**

- » The problem is in the lack of supports
- » The problem rests in the systems
- » The solution is to develop supports
- » The person in charge is the person with a disability
- » The outcome is interdependence

## What's expected of a Girl Scout Leader?

Ensuring that all girls in your troop or group feel included requires a willingness to get to know each girl, an interest in facilitating interaction, and a belief in the benefits of inclusion for everyone.

Understand that inclusion is a process, not a product, and that it requires flexibility, creativity and advance planning. In short, it's what you're already doing as a Girl Scout troop leader!

### **As a Girl Scout Troop Leader:**

- » Create an environment that values and respects diversity and inclusion
- » Model respectful ways to interact with all people
- » Help facilitate friendships between the girls in your troop or group
- » Recognize that all children have value

## What does inclusion look like?

Inclusion looks like a Girl Scout troop or group where girls with and without disabilities play, learn, and grow together. Inclusion means that regardless of ability, all girls in a troop are together, participating in the same activities, at all times. Inclusion involves girls with and without disabilities participating in Girl Scouting with peers of the same age, in the troop level corresponding to their school grade. Inclusion is invisible.

### **Inclusion**

- » Promotes acceptance
- » Supports self-determination
- » Facilitates positive, healthy relationships
- » Embraces differences
- » Requires collaboration, creativity and flexibility
- » Respects the entire family
- » Involves same-age peers
- » Focuses on outcomes
- » Welcomes ALL

Remember, inclusion is not a privilege nor is it separate from the mission and values of the Girl Scout movement. Inclusion benefits girls with disabilities and their families, as well as girls without disabilities and their families, the entire Girl Scouts organization, and the community as a whole.

# First Person Language

Everyone has unique personal characteristics. Emily is a child who likes to swim. Mayra is a child who likes to play basketball and has epilepsy. We are all different. Some of us wear eyeglass or contact lenses to help us see. Some people are short and some people are tall. We all look differently and learn differently. We should all be celebrated for our accomplishments and our abilities, not our limitations. This is what makes us who we are and makes everyone valuable.

## The Dos and Don'ts of Etiquette

**Do** refer to “people with disabilities.”

**Don't** label people with disabilities as a group.

- » “The disabled”
- » “The handicapped”

**Do** put the person before the disability, and only mention the disability when a girl needs special consideration or action to accommodate it. Do emphasize a person's abilities, not disabilities.

**Don't** use a disability to describe someone. Don't mention the disability unless it's necessary.

- » “Lily, the girl in my troop who is deaf, taught the troop how to sign the Girl Scout promise.”
- » “Katie loves to sing.”

- » “The deaf girl in my troop.”
- » “Katie's epileptic, but she loves to sing.”

**Do** allow a person with a disability to speak for herself. If a girl is not able to speak for herself, either she or her personal assistant will let you know. If you want to know about her disability, ask her – not the person standing next to her. And if she doesn't want to discuss her disability, respect her wishes and don't keep asking.

**Don't** assume someone can't speak for themselves.

**Do** get to know the whole individual.

**Don't** base your opinion of a person on their disability.

Always put the person before the disability. When you put the person first, you are not only being more concise but you are taking emphasis off a person's physical or mental characteristics. A good reminder is to use “have” verbs, rather than “be” verbs. Rather than saying a person “is blind,” or “is quadriplegic,” say the person “has a vision impairment,” or “has a mobility impairment.” Emphasize a person's abilities and not her limitations.

We do not use stereotypes with people that we respect. Think before you speak and remember the key concept is “person first language.”

# Examples of First Person Language

## Say:

## Instead of:

People with disabilities.

The disabled or handicapped.

Jasmine has a cognitive disability.

Jasmine is mentally retarded.

Olivia has autism.

Olivia is autistic.

Shayla has Down syndrome.

Shayla's Downs, or she's a Downs person.

Chloe has a learning disability.

Chloe is learning disabled.

Isabella has a physical disability.

Isabella is quadriplegic or she's crippled.

Charissa is of short stature/she's a little person.

Charissa is a dwarf, or she's a midget.

Nora uses a wheelchair.

Nora is confined to a wheelchair.

Tania has a developmental delay.

Tania is developmentally delayed.

Jenny communicates with her eyes/device/etc.

Jenny is non-verbal.

Claudia has a brain injury.

Claudia is brain damaged.

Allie receives special education services.

Allie is special ed.

Mia needs... Or Mia uses...

Mia has problems. Mia has special needs.

Children without disabilities.

Normal/healthy/regular children.



# Myths & Facts About Girls with Disabilities

**Myth 1:** Girls with disabilities are brave and courageous.

**Fact:** Adjusting to a disability requires adapting to a lifestyle, not bravery and courage.

**Myth 2:** Girls with disabilities are more comfortable with “their own kind.”

**Fact:** In the past, grouping people with disabilities in separate schools and institutions reinforced this misconception. Today, many people with disabilities take advantage of new opportunities to join mainstream society.

**Myth 3:** Girls with disabilities always need help.

**Fact:** Many people with disabilities are independent and capable of giving help. If you would like to help someone with a disability, ask if he or she needs it before you act. Anyone may offer assistance, but most people with disabilities prefer to be responsible for themselves.

**Myth 4:** All persons who use wheelchairs are chronically ill or sickly.

**Fact:** The association between wheelchair use and illness may have evolved through hospitals using wheelchairs to transport sick people. A person may use a wheelchair for a variety of reasons, none of which may have anything to do with lingering illness.

**Myth 5:** Wheelchair use is confining; people who use wheelchairs are “wheelchair-bound.”

**Fact:** A wheelchair, like a bicycle or an automobile, is a personal assistive device that enables someone to get around.

**Myth 6:** All persons with hearing disabilities can read lips.

**Fact:** Lip-reading skills vary among people who use them and are never entirely reliable.

**Myth 7:** People who are blind acquire a “sixth sense.”

**Fact:** Although most people who are blind develop their remaining senses more fully, they do not have a “sixth sense.”

**Myth 8:** The lives of girls with disabilities are totally different than the lives of girls without disabilities.

**Fact:** Girls with disabilities go to school, play sports, do chores, laugh, cry, get angry, have close friendships, have families, care about others, plan and dream like girls everywhere.

**Myth 9:** There is nothing one person can do to help eliminate the barriers confronting girls with disabilities.

**Fact:** Everyone can contribute to change. You can help remove barriers by:

- Understanding the need for accessible parking and leaving it for those who need it
- Encouraging participation of people with disabilities in community activities by using accessible meeting and event sites
- Understanding children’s curiosity about disabilities and people who have them
- Advocating a barrier-free environment
- Speaking up when negative words or phrases are used about disability
- Accepting people with disabilities as individuals capable of the same needs and feelings as yourself, and hiring qualified persons with disabilities whenever possible.

# Fostering Diversity

Respecting differences and cultivating a commitment to pluralism is an important part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Volunteers like you play the largest and most important role in ensuring that all girls feel safe, welcome, and valued in Girl Scouting. Fostering diversity is a critical part of ensuring the success of every girl in your troop or group.

- » Understand that each individual brings a unique – and important – experience to Girl Scouting, and embrace those differences.
- » Value, develop, nurture, use, and celebrate both group and individual diversity.
- » Strive for inclusiveness in all activities, removing barriers to participation for both girls and adult parents/guardians.
- » Challenge the biases of others.
- » Treat others fairly.

# Learn What a Girl Needs

First, don't assume because a person has a disability, she needs assistance or accommodations. Probably the most important thing you can do is ask the individual girl or her parents or guardians what she needs to make her experience in Girl Scouts successful. If you are frank and accessible to the girl and her parents, it's likely they will respond in kind, creating a better experience for all.

It's important for all girls to be rewarded based on their best efforts – not completion of a task. Give any girl the opportunity to do her best and she will. Sometimes that means changing a few rules or approaching an activity in a more creative way. Here are a few examples:

- » Invite a girl to perform an activity after observing others doing it first.
- » Ask the girls to come up with ideas for how to adapt an activity.

Often what counts most is staying flexible and varying your approach.

# What's expected as a Girl Scout Leader?

Making adaptations and modifications requires creativity and collaboration. Appropriate accommodations vary with individual circumstances such as a girl's age, disability, and Girl Scout setting (e.g. troop meeting, camp, or travel). Be sure to connect with a girl's caregivers to determine what has and has not worked for the girl in the past, as well as to determine her current needs, strengths and interests. Questions to consider include:

- » What adaptations and modifications worked in the past?
- » What adaptations and modifications does the girl currently use in the home and in the community?
- » Does the girl or do her caregivers know of any adaptations and modifications that might be helpful in the current setting?

- » Are there special events (field trips, performances) or different situations (bad weather, upcoming hospitalization) that may require specific adaptations and modifications?
- » Are the planned adaptations flexible for changes in health or medications?
- » Is regular and/or frequent communication between the Troop Leaders and a girl's caregivers needed? If so, is the method clearly defined?

Additionally, in order to ensure continuity of support, it is necessary to communicate with your Co-Leader(s) and Troop Helpers what adaptations and/or modifications are in place. Questions to consider include:

- » Are adaptations and modifications written clearly and specifically so they can be done consistently? Are they available to all adults supporting the troop or group?
- » Is it clear who is responsible for providing which one?
- » Is it clear who will communicate the adaptations and modifications to adults supporting the troop or group?
- » Are plans in place to address the necessity of assistive technology equipment?

## Planning Activities

When planning activities with girls, note the abilities of each girl and carefully consider the progression of skills from the easiest part to the most difficult. Make sure the complexity of the activity does not exceed girls' individual skills – bear in mind that skill levels decline when people are tired, hungry or under stress. For this reason, adaptations and modifications benefit everyone and not only a girl with a disability.

Trial and error, as well as personal experience and creativity, are key sources of ideas for adaptations and modifications. Everyone learns just as much from what does not work, as they learn from success. It is ok to make mistakes, the most important thing is to be creative and do what's right for the girls in your care.

## Adaptations

Adaptations are made when needed so that everyone can take part. An adaptation is an individualized support that helps a girl to participate in Girl Scouting. An example of an adaptation is to provide extra time for a girl to complete an art activity. An exception, however, is excusing her from participation or changing rules or behavioral expectations. Using the example of an art activity, an exception would be allowing her to do art activities throughout the program instead of providing support to transition to the other activities offered. At times, you may question whether you are making adaptations or exceptions. It is helpful to remember an adaptation as a support for a girl so that she can follow the same rules and behavioral expectations put in place for all girls. It is also important to remember that adaptations benefit everyone.

Adaptations are changes in the ways the:

- » Program material is presented
- » Girls express what they have learned
- » Environment enables a girl to fully access Girl Scout program

Adaptations **do not** fundamentally alter the program or lower expectations or standards in instructional level, program content or demonstration of what has been learned.

Examples of adaptations:

- » Presenting information in a diversity of contexts.
- » Offering a variety of opportunities for girls to demonstrate learning.
- » Allowing for additional time to complete a task, or providing more breaks.
- » Increasing the ratio of adult and/or peer support for girls.
- » Changes in the environment.

## Multiple Methods for Sharing Information

In addition to written and oral formats, additional opportunities to share information with girls exist. Be creative and experiment with different formats. You may discover that you're particularly skilled in developing visual representations of information. Or, quick research on resources in your community may reveal materials available in Braille. Because all children have different learning styles, ensuring availability of different presentation formats benefits all girls. Similarly, providing girls with multiple options to demonstrate what they've learned and express themselves, allows all girls to experiment with what is most effective, comfortable, and engaging for them as individuals.

- » Use visual aids.
- » Enlarge text.
- » Include concrete examples.
- » Use graphic representation of concepts.
- » Offer hands-on activities.
- » Place girls in cooperative groups.
- » Provide girls written directions, as well as oral explanations.
- » Structure the meetings so that girls can build on skills they've learned as they progress.
- » Give one direction at a time.
- » Provide girls with printed materials.
- » Encourage girls to verbally repeat instructions and/or guide each other.
- » Teach mnemonic devices (acronyms or rhymes)
- » Demonstrate rather than explain or write.
- » Use social media and interactive web tools.

## Environmental Considerations

Environmental strategies can help girls successfully complete projects, prevent distraction, and foster teamwork. They can be helpful for all girls, not simply girls with disabilities.

- » Allow additional time for completion of a task.
- » Create a "quiet zone," or "relaxation spot" apart from the main activities.
- » Pair girls together for cooperative learning.
- » Provide frequent breaks during a task.
- » Use earphones to mask extraneous noises.
- » Have the girls hold hands or link arms when transitioning from one activity to another.
- » Use colored electrical tape to divide a meeting space into segments for different activities.
- » Create a "First/Then" and/or a "Choice Board" to represent the program visually.

# Modifications

Modifications are changes in the content, standards, expectations and other aspects of Girl Scout program so that a girl may participate. Modifications help to provide successful experiences for girls with disabilities.

Unlike adaptations, modifications do fundamentally alter the curriculum or lower expectations in instructional level, program content or evaluation criteria to meet the needs of an individual girl. Although a girl may require modifications in certain topics or activities, she may not need modifications of all aspects of the Girl Scout program. For instance, a girl may be challenged with the writing portion of the haiku activity in the Brownie Quest Journey, but she may do very well helping to prepare the healthy recipes included in the same Journey. All girls in your troop or group should be provided with multiple options to explore Girl Scout activities, as well as to demonstrate their strengths and what they've learned.

A girl who requires a modification should work on the same subject area as the other girls in her troop or group at the same time, but with different material and/or a different measurement of success. For example:

- » Writing one paragraph while the troop or group works on an entire story.
- » Working on math facts while the troop or group is engaged in multiplication.
- » Developing a cheer for the troop or group while they work on a multi-phasic advocacy activity.

# What does inclusion look like?

Inclusiveness is an attitude that reflects how everyone thinks about children with and without disabilities. As a Girl Scout volunteer, you have the ability to be a positive role model, actively embracing inclusivity. And doing so doesn't have to be complicated!

- » Ask questions of people who know each girl and have conversations with them about effectively supporting her.
- » Recognize the similarities in all children, acknowledge differences, and have curiosity about a girl's unique point of view.
- » Find creative ways to include all girls in Girl Scout activities that are flexible about the ways girls might participate.
- » Make a commitment to be as inclusive as possible – one girl at a time. This is not a statement only about girls with known disabilities. Many children not categorized as disabled or having a particular syndrome can be a handful at times.
- » Think about supporting inclusion for each child by:
  - Greeting every girl with pleasure and curiosity
  - Noticing a girl's attention and energy
  - Acknowledging what you see and hear
  - Joining in, even briefly, following the girl's lead
  - Inviting a reasonable expansion on what the girl is doing or saying
  - Using a buddy system to connect girls with/without special needs
  - Encouraging peer relationships





**girl scouts**   
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