

# Bridging Guide

## What is Bridging anyway?

For a girl who is already a Girl Scout, bridging is the special ceremony in which she officially goes from one level to the next. This can be from Daisies to Brownies all the way through Ambassadors to Adults. In a multi-age troop only some girls will be ready to bridge, or an entire troop can bridge at the same time. Neighboring troops may also choose to come together to put on a larger event.

Most troops choose to bridge at the end of the Girl Scout year. This way, the ceremony is the culminating event for not only that year, but that level, and girls can proudly share what they have learned with family and friends. It can be on a special day set aside, or incorporated into the final troop meeting of the year.

## Requirements

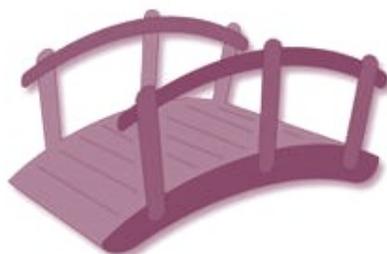
In preparation for bridging, girls and leaders should review their *Girl's Guide to Girl Scouting*. In it, there is a designated section explaining the specific things girls must do to get ready for their adventure to the next level. These activities often include talking to older girls about their experiences, earning a badge from the next level and other ways to explore the exciting opportunities that will be open to them as they go one level higher. While leaders can work with their girls to start planning their bridging ceremony while they are still participating in regular activities, girls must complete all requirements prior to bridging.



## Ceremony

The most important thing to remember is that this should be a girl-led celebration. The girls should be actively engaged in designing what *their* ceremony will look like, and it should reflect their personalities and interests. To help guide them, leaders may want to prompt girls with a general outline of common bridging elements. These can include:

**Opening** – This could be a flag ceremony and a reciting of the Girl Scout Promise. Leaders can ask the girls what they think would be a good way to welcome guests and set the tone for their ceremony.



Girls often walk over a bridge, under an archway, or some other creative way to show girls traveling from one side to another. A leader should greet each girl with the Girl Scout Handshake (shake with the left hand and make the Girl Scout sign with the right) once she reaches the other side.

**Presentation/Performance** – A great opportunity for girls to share something they learned, a favorite Girl Scout memory from their current level, or what a select line of the Girl Scout Law means to them. It could be through song or dance, or reciting a poem they wrote together. Taking turns lighting candles as each girl speaks is a classic way to add a layer of formality to this ceremony.

**Closing** – How do the girls want to wrap-up their time in their former level? They may want to pass the squeeze around a Friendship Circle. If there's something that the troop usually does to close their meetings or events, they may want to share a troop tradition with a bigger audience.

**Crossing and Flying Up** – This is where girls symbolically travel from one level to the next.

**Refreshments** – What creative snack ideas do the girls have? Can they come up with a treat that incorporates the colors of the two levels?

## Tips and Ideas

- ◆ In Girl Scouts, the rainbow is a symbol of bridging. Challenge the girls to think of wearable rainbow art that they can make ahead of time and all wear during the ceremony, such as getting together to make friendship bracelets with multicolored beads or thread.
- ◆ Balloons can be a quick way to create a rainbow arch that girls walk under during the ceremony. Carpet squares, stepping stones or garden pavers, and chalk on a driveway can be used to mark out a path for girls to travel—especially if the girls can personalize them.



- ◆ If the girls have speaking parts during the ceremony, it may be helpful to spend one meeting having the girls write or draw pictures on pieces of paper describing what they will share. Leaders can collect these and hang on to them until the ceremony for the girls to refer to during the

presentation. **\*Extra idea:** these memory cards can be photocopied into a booklet to give out to guests at the ceremony and/or to each girl. Girls can take turns signing their page in each other's book as a way to remember the exciting things that they have accomplished.

- ◆ If you have photos from events through the year (or level), consider creating a slideshow with pictures and comments from the girls.
- ◆ To identify which girls speak about which lines of the Girl Scout Law, put the lines of the law on slips of paper and have girls pull which line they will share. If there are more girls, lines can be duplicated.
- ◆ A court of awards can easily be incorporated into an end-of-year bridging ceremony. The leader can present each girl with key badges and other recognitions earned during the year. Don't forget that there is a Bridging Award for each level that could also be presented.
- ◆ It may be difficult for each girl to take part in every piece of the event planning. Consider dividing tasks up by patrols or committees and asking

girls to take ownership of certain parts such as snack or decorations.

- ◆ Depending on the age of the girls or the setting for the ceremony, turning on flashlights can be substituted for lighting candles.



- ◆ A few meetings prior to the ceremony, provide girls a variety of household materials and craft supplies (paper, glue, cardboard, tape, pipe cleaners, plastic cups, yarn, popsicle sticks, etc.) and challenge them to work together to create a bridge that can be part of their ceremony. (This bridge does not have to be a structure that bears their weight, but rather a model that their fingers can "walk" across.) Be sure the girls give their bridge a name!
- ◆ Though this event should be girl-led, especially with younger girl troops, leaders may need to provide the audience with a bit of context or additional information during the ceremony. It can also be fun to ask for audience involvement—perhaps with a song with easy actions!

## Bridging ceremony location ideas

- ◆ **At a school**—Use the auditorium and stage to make the ceremony extra special
- ◆ **During a troop pool party**—Girls can use a water slide to "slide" from one level to the other, or swim across the pool to the next level
- ◆ **At a camp**—Did you know that many of our council's camp properties have bridges? Perhaps a bridging ceremony can be incorporated into a troop camping trip
- ◆ **With others**—Is your service unit or association holding a community bridging event? Find out how your troop can get involved and be recognized

## Resources

Girls across the country and around the world have been bridging for years, and there are lots of useful resources that can be referenced as the planning for a bridging ceremony begins. Troops can also make an appointment to visit our council's **Archives and History Center** to view old handbooks and see what girls did to bridge years ago. Online communities such as **Pinterest** ([www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)) and **Youtube** ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) have photos and videos of

ideas from previous ceremonies—such as themed snacks, level-based décor, invitation templates and sample scripts. Use keywords "girl scout bridging" for a variety of info. **Girl Scouts of the USA's website** is a great resource for ideas for various elements to include in ceremonies: <http://www.girlscouts.org/en/about-girl-scouts/traditions/ceremonies.html> and **other Girl Scout councils** have resources that can be adapted for local use.