



Girl Scouts Give Back: National Civic Action—Promote the Vote Instructions for Troop Leaders

Since Girl Scouts' founding in 1912, our girls have created lasting, positive change through advocacy and civic action. And though some girls may be too young to cast a ballot, they can still mobilize their communities to take action like a Girl Scout.

As we mark the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which lifted the gender restriction to voting, Girl Scouts is launching a national civic "Promote the Vote" initiative to engage Girl Scout troops in the democratic process.

Voting is arguably our most important civic duty—but barriers 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. In other words, there's work to be done—and girls can play a part!

We all have a role in helping people exercise their right to participate in the democratic process, including in this challenging time of COVID-19.

Our 2020 election cycle presents an incredible opportunity to be a part of the American political process. This November 3, elections will be held for president, one third of the U.S. Senate, and the entire House of Representatives, as well as many important local government positions in cities and communities across the country. Our elected officials create laws and policies that impact the issues girls care about, so it's crucial that everyone's voice is heard through their vote.

Promote the Vote is a nonpolitical and nonpartisan initiative designed to increase civic participation. As tax-exempt, § 501(c)(3) organizations, GSUSA and Girl Scout councils cannot take sides in elections or support or oppose any political candidates. Promote the Vote materials should not be used to target a particular political party or individuals on any one side of an issue. The focus should be on encouraging everyone, regardless of political party, affiliation, or beliefs, to participate in the democratic process.

Here's how you can help your Girl Scout troop promote the vote:

1. Prepare for your meeting by learning about the history of suffrage and about voting deadlines and processes in your state. (Hint: your troop could earn one of our new [Democracy badges](#) in the process!)
2. Discuss as a troop the importance of voting. Lead your girls in a conversation about why voting is our most important civic duty and the power they have to increase access to the vote and to encourage others to vote, even if they are too young to vote themselves. Consider using our questions and prompts to guide your conversation.
3. As a troop, walk through the steps to voting. Many people in your community may not know how or when to vote; your troop can encourage them to do so by reaching out with information about these two steps:
 - Register to vote.
 - Make a plan to vote. (Go through *Instructions to Promote the Vote* as a troop.)

You may also choose to review specific deadlines and voting options in your state. We suggest visiting:

- [Vote.gov](#)
 - [Vote411.org](#)
 - [NonProfitVOTE.org](#)
 - [VoteAmerica.com](#)
4. Make a plan and set a goal. With your troop, decide which action/s you'll take to encourage people to either register to vote or plan to vote, and how many people your troop will reach out to.

There are so many ways your troop can share essential voter information and get the word out:

- Write a letter (recommended for younger girls)
- Send an email
- Post on social media
- Make a yard sign (recommended for younger girls)
- Phone bank (or send text messages)
- Host a virtual event (Facebook Live or Instagram) or create a video to share

Remember:

- If your troop engages online as a part of this project, please ask girls to take the Girl Scout [Internet Safety Pledge](#).
 - The goal of Promote the Vote is to encourage everyone, regardless of political party, affiliation, or beliefs, to participate in the democratic process. As your girls reach out to others using Promote the Vote templates, make sure their message remains nonpartisan.
5. Take action! Will each girl write a letter during your meeting? Will your troop host a virtual conversation with family members? Will each girl ensure 10 or more people are

registered to vote? These actions can be done in one meeting, between meetings, or in another timeframe that makes sense for your troop.

If your troop decides to reach out to friends or family who don't live in your state, decide whether your girls will research that state's voting deadlines and processes or if you'll simply provide the resources to individuals to do their own research.

6. Help Senior and Ambassador troops register to vote and make their plan to vote!
 - If members of your troop are 18 years old, they're eligible to vote! Celebrate this powerful milestone by talking about how and when girls will cast their ballots.
 - Check your state's age requirements for voter registration. Some states allow residents who are 16 or older to "pre-register." If girls pre-register, they are automatically registered to vote when they turn 18.
 - Support girls as they follow the steps in our *Instructions to Promote the Vote*.
7. Share your story on social media. Research shows that if you persuade one person to vote, they'll likely influence at least one friend or family member to vote too! If you use social to educate and inspire others to vote, be sure to tag us using @girlscouts.
8. [Complete our survey](#) so your troop's impact can be counted in our national service projects.
9. Encourage your girls' ongoing civic engagement through earning our brand-new [Democracy badges](#) or using [GSUSA's suffrage toolkit](#).

Troop Discussion Guide: Girls & Voting

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?
 - Do you know that the people we elect to local, state, and federal government have the power to create laws that impact these issues? And to decide where our tax money goes, including to important causes such as schools and healthcare?
3. This year is the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which removed the gender restriction to voting. Why is it important for all women to be able 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. Other women of color also waited decades more to be granted access to the vote. Why is it important that people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds have equal access to voting?
5. 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 access to the vote?
6. Young people are one of the least likely groups to vote. How can we convince young people to vote in this next election—and in all future elections?
7. What would *you* do if you were able to vote?

Additional Points to Raise with Your Troop:

- With some exceptions, U.S. citizens who are 18 years of age and older can legally vote. Women—and especially women of color—had to fight for the right to vote. **We can honor them by exercising that right!**
- Girls under 18 cannot vote, so adults can go to the polls on their behalf to vote for candidates who promise a better future for girls.
- 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!
- Voting is our chance to decide who makes policy that affects the issues we care about.
- Voting is a habit—the more we vote, the more likely we are to continue voting.
- Every vote matters—elections often come down to very small margins, and when it's that close, every single vote is important.