



## How we write

### HELLO

We are Scotland's leading charity for girls and young women, with 50,000 young members. We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good. We give them a space to have fun.

By applying these writing guidelines consistently across all of our work - whether it's a story for our website, a leaflet or simply an email to someone - we can speak with a single, unified voice. A voice that resonates with people and draws more people to us - so we can bring adventure, fun, friendship and confidence into the lives of even more girls across Scotland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Denise King  
Chief Executive, Girlguiding Scotland

### WHAT IS A BRAND ANYWAY?

Our brand is the way we communicate our message to our audiences. It is our shop window. It is how the world out there sees us. And how our members feel about being a part of our organisation. It plays a huge part in how we are perceived by our audiences.

Our brand is made up of several elements - **how we look, what we do and what we say and how we say it.**

### How we look

Our visual brand - logo, colour palette, font, photo guidelines and so on - follows Girlguiding guidelines, available at [www.styleguiding.org.uk](http://www.styleguiding.org.uk).

Netherurd has some unique elements to its visual brand which build on the Girlguiding identity guidelines. If you'd like to find out more, please contact the MarCom team on 0131 226 4511 or [marketing@girlguiding-scot.org.uk](mailto:marketing@girlguiding-scot.org.uk).

### What we do

What we do speaks for itself - changing the lives of our 50,000 young members by helping them to grow in confidence, make new friends, experience adventure and reach for the stars.

We need to stay true to this and make sure everything we do - from the events we design and run to the way we involve girls in our media work - reflects our brand values of being **fun, challenging, caring, inclusive, empowering and inspiring.**

### What we say

Girlguiding Scotland's key messaging sets out the things we want people to hear from any contact or interaction with us. You can get a copy from the MarCom team - call 0131 226 4511 or email [marketing@girlguiding-scot.org.uk](mailto:marketing@girlguiding-scot.org.uk) - or download it from our website.

### How we say it

Girlguiding Scotland has one voice that runs through all our content - reflecting our distinct personality, style and point of view.

Maintaining a consistent way of speaking, or tone of voice, means we can:

- **Speak with a unified voice:** This builds trust and familiarity with our audience and ensures we're not sending out contradictory or mixed messages.
- **Engage more people:** If we talk to people in ways that are relevant, interesting and understandable, not only will more people hear what we have to say, more people will understand it. This moves them one step closer to getting involved.

- **Stand out from the crowd:** By sticking to our own unique tone and style, we ensure that we're never mistaken for anybody else and our message isn't drowned out.

## HOW TO WRITE WELL

**Be clear about the purpose of what you are writing.** Who is it for? For example, is it for members as individuals or for members in their role as Leaders or Trainers? What do you want those people to do as a result of reading it? Make it easy for your target audience to identify what you want them to do and take action, be it signing up for an event or responding to a survey.

Girlguiding Scotland is an organisation that makes things happen! **We do things - we don't have things done to us.** For example, 'Girlguiding Scotland wrote the report' rather than 'The report was written by Girlguiding Scotland'.

**Jargon** isn't just strings of mysterious letters like WAGGGS, GOLD or INTOPS - it's any word or phrase with a specialised meaning within guiding. If you've been involved for a while, it's easy to forget that there was a time when words like section, Promise, Join Us or Patrol meant nothing at all to you. Don't assume everyone knows what you know and don't alienate people by using jargon without explaining it - in fact, avoid it altogether if you can.

**Say please and thank you.** Tell anyone involved in our work the difference they made. This is especially important if you're asking people to do something: 'Sign up for our petition...', 'Send in your form by the end of the month...', 'Tell us what matters most to you...'

**Use short sentences.** Ideally, no more than 20 words. If a sentence looks too long, say what you mean more directly or make it two sentences not one.

**Make it a dialogue.** Ask questions. Offer answers. Include words like 'us', 'our', 'we', 'you' and 'let's' to get the conversation started. For example, 'We have created a new resource for you to use with your units - tell us what you think' rather than 'Girlguiding Scotland is inviting feedback on their new resource for Leaders to use with their units'.

Always write **simply and directly.** For example, 'We created a comfortable uniform for Rainbows because they told us they like to be able to move freely and run around', rather than 'With Rainbows telling us they are keen to move freely and run around, we created a comfortable uniform to meet their needs'.

**Simpler words are better** than long, formal or old-fashioned ones. For example, 'use' instead of 'utilise', 'take part' instead of 'participate'.

**Paint a picture with words.** Make your writing sing by using similes and metaphors to compare something to something else, for example: 'The Tartan Gig auditorium was a sea of flashing bunny ears and glow sticks'.

Many people have a mental block when it comes to numbers. Try to use **everyday comparisons** to create a picture in their head, for example, '500 girls attended the Big Brownie Birthday sleepover in the Science Museum - that's enough to fill six double decker buses'.

Talk about your subject in a way that makes it **relevant to the reader**, by grounding it in your audience's experience. Add lashings of popular culture or things that are of interest to people in their everyday life. If you can connect pop stars, football or taking selfies to whatever you are talking about then a far greater proportion of the population's ears will prick up!

Rather than 'Graduates can gain valuable publicity experience with Girlguiding Scotland's marketing internship', try something like 'Are you a wannabe Peggy Olson? Do you need experience to help you break into the competitive world of marketing and publicity? Find out how you could give your CV the edge with Girlguiding Scotland's new marketing internship...'

**Tell a story.** A compelling story can be much more inspiring than the simple presentation of facts. For example, 'I met a girl called Lauren this weekend. On the face of it, she's an ordinary girl from Glasgow, balancing studying for her degree with leading a thriving Guide unit. But this weekend she got to do something extraordinary - stand up before an audience of Government Ministers and put the importance of fighting for girls' rights firmly on the political map...'

## OUR TONE

Girlguiding has chosen ten [values](#) to describe the way we want to come across and the language we use. These are summarised below with relevant examples for Girlguiding Scotland's work.

Depending on what you're writing, you'll want to emphasise different aspects of Girlguiding Scotland's voice. So for example, if you're writing information for parents you would probably use a trusted, practical and helpful tone. If you are writing web content about our pop concert Tartan Gig, you might lean more towards the adventurous and fun aspects of our tone. But they both still sound like us.

How we sound	Why	Example
<b>Adventurous, fun and youthful</b> without being childish or cheeky	Girlguiding Scotland is all about adventure and giving girls the space to enjoy themselves. We should encourage this by communicating with them in a fun and	Check out our video of the moment Rixton got 3,000 Guides singing along to their hit 'Me and my Broken Heart' at Tartan Gig 2015 - and tried on a pair of flashing bunny ears!

	youthful style that appeals to our girls and volunteers of all ages.	
<b>Helpful, supportive and approachable</b> without being over-friendly	We build girls' confidence so when we're talking to them we must make them feel that their voice is important and should be heard. It should be clear that Girlguiding Scotland is there for members throughout their guiding journey without pressuring them to take on too much.	Are you moving to new school this September? We hope you will find time for Guides. Speak to your Leader if you're worried about balancing everything - and good luck!
<b>Challenging, thought-provoking and aspirational</b> without being too radical.	We raise girls' aspirations so should always encourage them to take risks to discover their full potential and be a powerful force for good, while recognising that we are not the only influence in their lives.	Ever thought about a career in engineering? Samirah, a member of The Senior Section from Glasgow, had never considered it until she heard about Rolls-Royce's apprenticeship scheme. She's now in her second year...
<b>Fresh, creative and cool</b> without being hip, urgent or trend-driven	Girlguiding Scotland is for the girls and young women of today. We should be using their language and culturally relevant examples that they understand and can relate to when we talk to them.	Did your friends post No Make-up Selfies or take the Ice Bucket Challenge? We have loads of unusual ideas to help you fundraise for your unit's next adventure.
<b>Trusted, consistent and experienced</b> without being too formal	Girlguiding Scotland has a long traditional history and has been supporting girls and young women for more than 100 years. This knowledge and experience gives us a voice people can rely on, respect and take advice from.	Thousands of girls and young women have told us what's important to them through Girlguiding's annual survey of girls' attitudes. And we've helped them to be heard where it matters, from the media to the Scottish Parliament.  Young members from Scotland helped shape Girlguiding's campaign to ensure #girlsmatter at the 2015 General Election.  Several MSPs, including First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, have already committed to tackling sexism and making life fairer for

		girls by taking the Girls Matter pledge, and a motion about it received cross-party backing in at Holyrood.
<b>Down-to-earth, practical and real</b> without being over-friendly	At Girlguiding Scotland, we are real people with real life experience all working to support girls and young women. Our tone shows that we are realistic in our expectations of them at the same time as raising their aspirations.	You don't need any special equipment or training to get your Performing Arts badge. And you don't even have to get on stage if that's not your thing - you could take charge of lighting, directing, costume or special effects instead.
<b>Straight-talking, clear and concise</b> without being too simple	We should never make girls and volunteers - or external audiences - feel they don't understand or are missing the point. We must provide enough detail for them to understand and want to explore further.	The Queen's Guide Award is the highest award for girls in guiding. By setting and working towards your own challenges, you can get skills for life and work - and an achievement you can be proud of forever! You can start it as soon as you turn 16, and should finish it within three years.
<b>Inclusive and representative</b> without being complex	We are for all girls. Our content should never exclude anyone - by making assumptions about a reader's experiences, home life or sexuality, for example - and should always be seen to encourage our members to be themselves.	If you see something online that upsets you, speak to a parent, teacher or other adult that you trust.
<b>Current, timely and responsive</b> without being too slick or random	Girlguiding Scotland should always have an opinion on current affairs or issues that are relevant at the time. We should be knowledgeable about the subject we're talking about without saying something for the sake of it.	Girlguiding Scotland speaks out on issues that girls tell us matter to them - from Page 3 to body image and women's rights. Our call on using the Licensing Bill as an opportunity for politicians to listen to girls' calls on stopping children seeing harmful sexualised content gained us a brilliant mention in the Scottish Parliament at the Bill's stage 1 debate.
<b>Focused, relevant and age-appropriate</b>	We should focus on one thing at a time, making our message clear without confusing	We're asking you to share a photo of yourself wearing your Promise badge on Thinking Day

	<p>the matter. We should talk to different sections in ways - and about things - that are appropriate for their age group.</p>	<p>to show the world you're proud to be part of Girlguiding Scotland and the global Girlguiding family.</p> <p>Whether you're on parade, hanging out with friends or climbing a mountain, send us a snap of you wearing your badge on Sunday 22 February.</p> <p>Please tweet us your picture @GirlguidingScot using the hashtag #MyPromiseBadge or post it on Facebook.</p>
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## WRITING WELL

The most important thing to do with something you've written is to let someone else read it - not just to pick up mistakes, but to point out anything that's missing or confusing.

You can also make sure we sound consistent by always following Girlguiding's **house style**. This provides clear guidance on how to write certain terms - including guiding-specific terms - and use capitals, set out dates and so on in a standardised way. You can find the full document on the [Girlguiding website](#). There is also a brief checklist of common mistakes at [www.styleguiding.org.uk](http://www.styleguiding.org.uk).

Below are some key points to remember.

## OUR HOUSE STYLE

### Spelling

Girlguiding Scotland spelling follows the Oxford English Dictionary ([www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)), with the notable exception of using '-ise' instead of '-ize' endings. For example, we say 'specialise' rather than 'specialize'.

### Punctuation

Use a single space after a full stop, not double.

### **Abbreviations, acronyms and contractions**

If you use an acronym, spell it out in full the first time, with the abbreviation in brackets afterwards. For example, “The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) has 10 million members”. You can use the shortened version from that point on, safe in the knowledge that no-one’s feeling lost.

Write ‘Page 44’ and ‘pages 44-46’ not ‘p44’ and ‘pp44-46’.

Do not use full points with Mr, Mrs or other titles; etc, eg, ie; ext, Tel; cm, kg, ml.

Plurals such as TACs and PRAs do not use apostrophes.

### **Numbers, dates and measurements**

Dates are written as ‘Monday 20 October 2014’ or ‘20 October 2014’. Do not write ‘Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2014’ or ‘October 20 2014’.

Date ranges in main body of text use a ‘to’ in between, eg: ‘The training weekend will take place from 13 to 15 February’.

Decades are referred to as ‘the 1970s’ or ‘the seventies’, not ‘the ‘70s’ or ‘the 1970’s’.

Write out numbers one to ten as words, 11 and over are numerals except at the beginning of a sentence. For example, ‘Sixty Rainbows went to the camp, along with 14 Leaders’. Exceptions are percentages, measurements and equipment/ingredient lists, or to avoid mixing numerals and words in number ranges (in which case choose one form and stick to it).

Place commas in numbers four or more digits long.

Break phone numbers down after the area code - 0131 229 2345 - and divide mobile numbers 5-3-3: 07783 456 123.

Use ‘per cent’ not ‘%’ except in tables.

### **Email and websites**

Email addresses are all lower case, for example [hilde@girlguiding-scot.org.uk](mailto:hilde@girlguiding-scot.org.uk) or [reception@girlguiding-scot.org.uk](mailto:reception@girlguiding-scot.org.uk). It doesn’t matter that our Outlook system spells them with a capital as email addresses are never case sensitive.

Don't include http:// in web addresses unless they don't start with www.

## People

Avoid outdated or offensive terms that stereotype or define people by their disability, diagnosis, race or sexuality.

For example, say 'people with disabilities' or 'disabled people' rather than 'the disabled'. Use 'developing countries' rather than 'the third world'.

Don't say 'Scottish members' or 'Scottish Guides' etc. It's better to say 'Girlguiding Scotland members' or 'Guides in Scotland'.

## Scotland and the rest of the UK

When you're talking about the UK-wide charity, write Girlguiding not Girlguiding UK - unless it's in an international context.

Always clarify whether you are talking about the UK Parliament/Government or the Scottish ones.

## GUIDING TERMINOLOGY

### Girlguiding Scotland is singular

We are Girlguiding Scotland, Scotland's leading charity for girls and young women. Charity/organisation is singular so we are a singular entity. Say 'Girlguiding Scotland is/does/has...' not 'Girlguiding Scotland are/do/have...' It's the same for The Guide Association Scotland.

### Girlguiding Scotland and The Guide Association Scotland

Always use Girlguiding Scotland unless it's a business/financial or legal context.

Say 'the charity' instead of 'the organisation' wherever possible, unless it affects the meaning. For example, 'Girlguiding Scotland is the leading charity for girls and young women in Scotland...', 'Members across the organisation...'

Never abbreviate Girlguiding Scotland to GGS or The Guide Association Scotland to TGAS or GAS.

Always refer to 'guiding' in the lower case unless it's in the same sentence as Scouting or in a WAGGGS-related context such as World Guiding.

Where you refer to Guiding and Scouting together, capitalise Guiding and always put it before Scouting.

'Guiding' is not interchangeable with 'Girlguiding'. Only use 'Girlguiding' when referring to the charity or as part of the name of a guiding location. It's fine to say 'Girlguiding Scotland', for example, but not 'the girlguiding movement' or 'girls love meeting up for weekly girlguiding meetings'.

### Using capitals

For non-guiding terms, only use capitals for proper nouns, ie: names. Using capitals unnecessarily looks a bit formal and outdated.

Unit doesn't need a capital letter unless it's part of the unit's full name, for example '3<sup>rd</sup> Kinlochleven Rainbow Unit'.

Badge is lower case, with an initial upper case letter on the first word of the badge name only. For example, 'Out and about badge'.

The following words should always start with a capital letter:

- Girlguiding (never GirlGuiding)
- Rainbow, Brownie, Guide
- The Senior Section (not TSS, the SS or the Senior Section)
- Leaders, Assistant Leader, Young Leader, Trainer, Commissioner, Brownie/Guide Helper
- Six, Sixer, Seconder
- Patrol, Patrol Leader, Patrol Second
- Chief Guide
- Peer Educator
- Advocate (when referring to Girlguiding's youth panel)
- Country/Region, County, Division, District
- Guide Law
- Scottish Headquarters (SHQ), or if you're writing for people who aren't members, Girlguiding Scotland Headquarters/HQ

ENDS