

# Bridging

## WHAT AND WHY

- Bridging is an important transition in a Girl Scout's life usually held at the end of the year. It is a rite of passage when Girl Scouts change their program level. The bridging ceremony celebrates her past achievements and future adventures. Celebrating this change should be fun and memorable for everyone involved.
- Hopefully, most service units are currently planning a service unit-wide bridging ceremony. While an individual troop bridging ceremony in their usual meeting place is nice, service unit-wide bridging ceremonies give the younger girls an opportunity to see the older girls bridge to the next level. Sometimes our youngest Girl Scouts think that this is all there is when they go to their meetings, but we all know that there is so much more.

## HOW

- Bridging ceremonies are typically made up of a:
  - Flag Ceremony –
  - Welcome – guests are welcomed, the tone is set, and ceremony is explained
  - Bridging – girls participate in ceremony to celebrate moving from one level to the next in which the next level up welcomes them on the other side with a Girl Scout handshake.
  - Closing – girls can participate in a friendship circle, sing a song, thank their guests, and even have a potluck type meal

### Also:

- Be creative. Look for ideas on the web. Make your bridging unique
- Don't do it alone. Form a small committee to make plans and share the work and remember to allow opportunities for the girls to plan and participate in their own bridging in some way.
- A program pamphlet makes a very nice keepsake.
- The ceremony can also be embellished with girls singing songs or presenting a skit, a keynote speaker, a presentation of the leaders and key volunteers. Awards can be presented and/or acknowledged for Volunteer of Excellence etc. Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for the year can be announced as well.
- Having an emcee is very helpful; typically the service unit manager or a well-spoken member of the service team.
- Invite VIPs from your town: selectmen, city council, and businesses who may be receiving a Community Certificate award. You can even invite council staff.

## WHERE

### Where to hold your event

My personal favorite location is a high school auditorium because it is generally the most formal spot for such a ceremony, has ample parking, a sound system, and room for girls of every level, and their parents and/or family. But it may also take place at a community center, church, or a park.

If you choose an outdoor location, please have a back-up plan in case of rain or unexpected cold. The plan should include who and how you will inform parents where the bridging will actually be. Planning ahead is key. Please don't make grandma stand out in 100-degree weather or suffer from hypothermia in the rain while she waits for the bridging to start, or for the hour that girls are bridging etc. You don't want people suffering through your bridging ceremony because of the weather.

## WHEN

### When will your ceremony be?

Keep in mind that if you want parents to help and participate in troops, have the ceremony in the early evening during the week so they can attend. Please find out when your first communions, major dance recitals, and major sports events will be so that there are as few conflicts as possible. Be aware that you will probably never find a good day for everyone. Again, plan ahead.

## **DO THIS/DON'T DO THAT**

- ❑ Let's show our Girl Scout pride by wearing our uniforms, girls and adults alike. Uniforms show that we belong to something fabulous! The standard girl uniform is their vest or sash, khaki bottoms and a white top **in good taste**. Khaki **hot** pants and a tiny tank top is most likely **not** what GSUSA had in mind when they decided that this uniform should be affordable to all. Adults wear navy blue business attire and their pins. Please avoid flip-flop sandals.
- ❑ Please make sure that parents know where the pins go. There are many websites that make it clear where the earned recognitions go and where the fun patches go, as well as on which shoulder the sash hangs. When girls bridge from Daisies to Brownies, and Brownies to Juniors, they should not put their Daisy or Brownie membership pins on the uniform for the next level. Please make sure that the parents are well-informed on this as well as appropriate attire for their daughters.
- ❑ Regarding the ubiquitous slide show – Keep it brief! It's great for girls to remember what they did as Juniors or Brownies and provides wonderful memories, but please try not to make parents sit through a half hour of this. Keeping the entire ceremony brief is a good idea for everyone. Around an hour or so is usually good. Two hours is too long.
- ❑ **Please hold your applause until after the entire troop or group has crossed the bridge.**  
If girls have brought cheering sections with them who start to get exuberant, please repeat this mantra as many times as you need during the ceremony. Excess noise from the audience should also be addressed.
- ❑ Please have a microphone turned up high enough that soft-spoken leaders and small children can **actually be heard**. Remind them to speak directly into the microphone. It's also a good idea to make sure that a sturdy stool is available at the podium so that diminutive folks can get a boost up to the microphone.
- ❑ Girls **should not** be given their membership pin for the next level at the bridging ceremony. Wait until the fall when they can plan their investiture service. They **should be given** the bridge if they've earned it, the wings for Brownies, membership stars, and any other recognition they may have earned in their current level that they have not yet received. [http://www.girlscouts.org/program/basics/for\\_volunteers/insignia/gc\\_uniform\\_how\\_to\\_wear.pdf](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/basics/for_volunteers/insignia/gc_uniform_how_to_wear.pdf)
- ❑ If they are at a town-wide bridging, and their troop funds allow for them to receive the vest or sash for the next level or any other gift that the leaders would like to give them, please wait until your next regular meeting to do it. Other parents will wonder why one troop is getting a big bag of stuff while all their daughter got was a few badges in a zip lock bag. Daisies getting daisies is a different story. At a town-wide bridging, try to make sure **all the bridging Daisies** get one.

## **BRIDGING REQUIREMENTS**

- ❑ The bridging requirements for each level are in the Girls Guide to Girl Scouting. They are also available on the GSUSA website [http://www.girlscouts.org/program/basics/for\\_volunteers/bridging\\_awards/](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/basics/for_volunteers/bridging_awards/). Invite girls to check out [ForGirls](#), section on the GSUSA website, to get ideas about what they might want to do next—and stay connected with what other girls are doing across the country.
- ❑ The requirements must be completed in order for girls to earn the bridge. The bridge is an earned badge that can be worn on the vests/sashes of subsequent levels. Remind leaders to plan ahead for their bridging girls to have time to earn the bridge. Any girl who has not earned the bridge is still allowed to **cross** the bridge. She just doesn't **earn** the bridge badge.
- ❑ Brownies not only have the opportunity to earn a bridge, they also get wings and fly up to Juniors. The Brownie wings can be worn on the Junior uniform as well as subsequent levels. Brownie wings are automatic if a girl was a Brownie before she was a Junior.