

## New Beginnings – Creating a Behavior Plan for Your Unit

It can happen to any group, at any time – a discipline problem escalates, creating frustration and hurt feelings for girls and Guiders alike. Problems with discipline can prevent meetings from being fun for everyone, and left unchecked can cause people to feel like quitting Guiding. So how do we prevent situations from reaching this level? The simple answer, as with many things, is to “Be Prepared”.

Effective discipline is a partnership of trust between all the parties involved – Girls, Guiders, and Parents. “Being Prepared” by creating a plan together, before problems arise is the easiest way to create a standard of behavior and consequences that is fair to everyone.

### Creating your behavior plan:

1. **Involve the Girls!** Set aside part of your first meeting to discuss what type of behavior needs to be followed by everyone. This should include what should be done, what should not be done, and the reasons why or why not. For example, “*We should ask a leader if we can leave the meeting room to get a drink because they need to know where everyone is if there is an emergency*”, or “*We shouldn’t say or repeat mean things about people because everyone comes to Brownies to have fun, and they can’t have fun if they hear mean things said about themselves or their friends.*”
2. **Define acceptable and unacceptable behavior, as well as the consequences.** This might include a system of warnings, sending people home from meetings, time outs, or additional privileges awarded or removed. Experiment to find the strategies that work best for your group, but be consistent – the same consequences for all.
3. **Record your discussion.** Create a poster or notes so everyone can see what has been decided and post it in a visible spot for a few weeks as a reminder.
4. **Involve and inform the parents.** Parents must be aware of, and be prepared to support the standard of conduct expected of their daughters in order for your plan to succeed. For example, a behavior plan that includes sending girls home from meetings as a consequence of unacceptable behavior cannot work if parents are not willing to pick their daughter up early.

### Tips for maintaining order:

1. **Raise your hand, not your voice.** Use the raised hand “Quiet signal” to gain everyone’s attention before you begin to speak. Wait as long as necessary for the group to settle. Raising your voice to be heard creates a competition for attention.
2. **Follow a common structure when planning meetings.** Meetings flow more smoothly when everyone knows “what happens next”. “*Every week we sing our circle songs, then the Brownie song, then we talk about what activities we will do*” creates a familiar routine, and allows everyone to anticipate the fun ahead.
3. **Let everyone know what they will be missing out on.** Describe your plans at the beginning of each meeting, and let them know the consequences of taking too long to settle down – no time for the craft, or to play a game, etc.
4. **Create a fun and involving program.** Girls who are caught up in what the group is doing won’t have time to think in terms of being good or bad, and most behavior problems will be solved before they even begin. This is what Guiding does best – HAVE FUN!