

HEALTH, WELLNESS AND LIFE SKILLS

FACILITATOR'S
GUIDE



FOR GIRLS

AGES 8-18



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA



Kimberly-Clark

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Foreword

I am delighted to present the new, completely revised SMART Girls program. SMART Girls is designed to provide Club girls opportunities to develop leadership skills, confidence and independence. In this updated version, the educational experiences have been redeveloped to reach girls in three specific age groups: 8-10, 11-13 and 14-18. With the generous support and collaboration of our partner Kimberly-Clark, a new generation of Club girls will learn the necessary skills needed to navigate the challenges that can sometimes occur during the adolescent years.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America has a successful history as a youth development organization that provides exceptional programs and services for young people. We believe in, and research supports, the importance of “girls only” programming being offered in every Clubhouse across the country. SMART Girls pairs the tested, proven Skills, Mastery And Resistance Training concept with gender- and age-specific information to assist young women in developing the skills necessary to lead long, healthy and prosperous lives.

The SMART Girls program is designed to offer a safe environment where girls can be authentic, honest and candid when expressing feelings about their mind, body and community. By instilling the values of integrity, self-discipline and mutual respect, SMART Girls helps to enhance the quality of life for our female Club members.

In addition to physical wellness, it is important for young women to establish healthy interpersonal relationships. Therefore, adult mentoring is integrated throughout the curriculum to foster self-confidence and enhance participants’ communication skills. A direct result of the mentoring component will be positive character development that contributes to the maturation process and overall well-being of girls.

Finally, SMART Girls provides opportunities for Club staff to emphasize and reinforce virtues on an ongoing basis. It provides the benefit of rich experiential activities designed to build girls and young women of strong character, healthy self-concept and great potential.



Damon A. Williams, Ph.D.

Senior Vice President, Program, Training & Youth Development Services
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Introduction

The landscape of girlhood has changed dramatically in the past 25 years. The advent of social media alone has transformed the way young people interact with the world, and with their communities. It has become vitally important to their process of self-discovery and identification. Now more than ever, **young women need a solid foundation for building healthy attitudes and lifestyles.**

The **Boys & Girls Clubs of America's SMART Girls program helps girls build that foundation** by equipping them with critical knowledge and skills in the areas of physical health and wellness, mental health and self-esteem, and relationships. Encompassing the physical, emotional and social changes a girl will go through between the ages of 8 and 18, this holistic approach supports her complete experience.

This guide is designed to familiarize Clubs with the SMART Girls program; to define why programs like these are important to girls' positive development; and to help Club staff implement the program.

What Is SMART Girls?

SMART Girls is one of the Boys & Girls Clubs' top programs. It is taught year-round at Clubs across the country, reaching nearly 90,000 girls ages 8 to 18. Its **targeted curriculum ensures girls get the right information and the right support at the right time.** Separate modules are specially tailored to three distinct age groups: 8 to 10, 11 to 13 and 14 to 18. The interactive, engaging, small-group sessions engender camaraderie, while also encouraging each girl to explore and express her individuality through discussions, hands-on games and activities, role-play, take-home challenges and activities, and collaborative decision-making and problem-solving.

Grounded in Research

This 2014 edition of SMART Girls is grounded in research. Vetted by an advisory committee comprised of health, wellness and education professionals, and piloted in 10 Clubs across the country, this edition of SMART Girls is **outcome-driven and multidisciplinary.** It **caters to various learning styles** through differentiated instruction, and **supports self-directed learning via extension activities** that encourage girls to apply and expand their knowledge outside the SMART Girls classroom. It also incorporates content dosing – i.e., review of the previous session's learnings at the top of the following session – to solidify girls' knowledge and reinforce program learning objectives.

A survey of similar workshop- and classroom-based programs and online forums inspired the curriculum's three-part framework that addresses the physical, emotional and social aspects of a girl's life. Among those surveyed were:

- U by Kotex provides young women ages 14-22 an online platform where they can get the facts about vaginal health and learn more about feminine hygiene products Girl Talk, a national peer-to-peer mentoring program that connects high school and middle school girls
- GirlsHealth.gov, the national Office on Women's Health's wellness site for girls ages 10 to 16
- Girls Inc., a national workshop-based curriculum that addresses health and wellness, financial and media literacy, and STEM education
- Girls Leadership Institute, Girls for a Change and Black Girls Rock, which empower girls to create art and social change, to embrace their leadership potential, and to cultivate strong self-worth
- Procter & Gamble's Being Girl addresses periods and the physical changes that accompany puberty, as well as shifts in body image and self-esteem
- My Black Is Beautiful and the Dove Self-Esteem Project, which encourages girls to develop and celebrate their own standards of beauty

Media, and especially social media, plays a tremendous role in girls' lives. Therefore, a **survey of content created by and for girls influenced the curriculum's tone, activities and objectives**, including:



- Proud2BMe, a social community for girls that addresses self-esteem and media literacy
- New Moon Girls, an ad-free social community for girls ages 8+
- Rookie Magazine, a blog and accompanying quarterly journal written by and for teen girls, focusing on of-the-moment issues around adolescence and women's empowerment
- the SPARK Movement and Project Girl, which support media literacy and positive self-image

This content in particular enriched curriculum development due to its immediacy and authenticity. It is recommended that facilitators familiarize themselves with this and other by-girls, for-girls content to ensure up-to-date knowledge of the issues affecting their SMART Girls participants.

Information and statistics are drawn from trusted sources, including government agencies and women's and girls' health, wellness and empowerment programs. Many of these sources appear on the Recommended Resources list at the end of this guide; specific citations appear in the Endnotes.

Additional research explored girls' developmental stages, the benefits of differentiated instruction, and the advantages of gamification. These are addressed on the following pages.

The Developmental Stages of Girls

Understanding where a girl is in her journey of growing up is a great asset to SMART Girls staff leaders and mentors. The following age-based profiles¹ give an overview of each group the program targets, and offers a glimpse into the developmental stages of today's girl:

Ages 8 to 10

Girls at this age are beginning to formulate personal identities. They take note of others, and **start comparing themselves to peers in both appearance and performance**. They spend more time with friends, one-on-one and in small groups. This is the age when girls start to **form close bonds with one or two peers**, and begin to share secrets. It's also the age of using reasoning, rather than physical violence, to solve an argument.

Ages 11 to 13

This is the **prime age for developing identity**. Girls start to classify or categorize each other based on interests or aptitudes, and become conscious of fashion, music and hobby choices as expressions of their individuality and social standing. Cliques begin to form during these years and **girls spend increasing amounts of time with friends instead of family**. They clash with parents and other adults more frequently, and express feelings of being misunderstood.

Girls typically start puberty during these years, which affects them both physically and emotionally. They become more body-conscious and develop stronger sexual attractions. They develop crushes and may try dating in small groups.

Ages 14 to 18

During these years, **girls define who they are through interests, activities, and likes and dislikes**. They increase their independence from their families and **rely heavily on friends and peers for validation**. They choose friends based on common interests and **explore virtual relationships**, both of which aid their process of self-discovery. **Many use social media as a tool of self-expression**. Girls mature sexually and explore issues of sexual identity.

As they evolve their complexity of thinking and further develop their own moral standards, **they become interested in giving back, and get involved in community service and other altruistic projects**. In these final years before independence and adulthood, they do more future planning and goal-setting.

The Benefits of Differentiated Instruction

Each SMART Girls session is made up of several discrete activities, each of which supports the learning objective of that session and its umbrella unit. (For more in-depth information on session composition, read the Components of the Program and Leading the Sessions sections.) These activities range in type from guided discussions; to improv and role play; to physical challenges, writing prompts and art projects; to small-group problem-solving; to mini-games and competitions.

This **differentiation gives girls multiple avenues to obtain the same information**. What's more, it gives **facilitators the latitude to create a bespoke program that benefits all types of learners**. (See the Tailoring the Program to Your Group section for more information.)

SMART Girls Got Game

In addition, the curriculum **incorporates game-design elements and terminology** into individual activities and the overall program to provide ongoing recognition, to help girls track their progress, and to incentivize continued participation.

These gaming conventions fit the modern girl's experience and interests. Thanks to video games (both online and console-based) and traditional tabletop games, **girls today are more familiar with gaming than ever**. Increasing numbers of girls are gamers. In fact, Mashable cites a recent GirlsGoGames.com study that reports 50 percent of girls between the ages of 8 and 12 enjoy social gaming online.² Highlights of the SMART Girls program include:

- Girls **create personalized profiles** that encourage them to think about who they are and what's important to them.
- Girls **earn badges, power-ups and achievements** to mark milestones in the program, which spurs excitement and engagement.

The curriculum features a variety of interactive activities, including small-group problem-solving, improv and role-play, which help girls practice making good decisions.

Girls ages 8 to 13 receive customizable badges at the end of each SMART Girls session, which they can decorate and affix to their session worksheets. A printable Badge Map, included with the Session 1 materials for ages 8 to 13, helps girls visualize their badge-earning opportunities. **Girls ages 14 to 18 keep tabs on badge earnings using the Badge Tracker sheet** (included with Session 1 materials for that age group), which you initial as they earn each badge. Print a Map or Tracker for each girl to keep.

Earning certain badge combinations helps girls ages 8 to 13 unlock customizable achievement badges. (These are stipulated in the instructions for their corresponding sessions.) Girls ages 14 to 18 unlock opportunities to mentor younger members of the SMART Girls program. More information on mentorship is included in the SMART Girls Mentors section at the end of this guide.

Feel free to devise group incentives too. For example, when all girls complete a curriculum unit, take them on a picnic at a local beach or park, or reward everyone with a new diary or journal. The group incentive structure and rewards are up to you, so do something fun and memorable with your girls. They earned it!

Desired Outcomes of SMART Girls

Long-Term Outcomes

A SMART Girl maintains a positive self-image. She practices good decision making regarding personal health and wellness, as well as relationships.

Intermediate Outcomes

A SMART Girl:

- Exhibits high self-esteem and confidence in appearance, comportment and relationships
- Communicates effectively; is willing to collaborate to resolve conflict



- Accesses healthcare systems that address the unique needs of the female body
- Dates responsibly, builds strong friendships and nurtures family relationships
- Supports fellow girls and women in building self-confidence, seeking proper healthcare, and engaging in healthy relationships

Short-Term Outcomes

A SMART Girl:

- Has an increased knowledge of the female body's physiological and emotional changes
- Has an accurate knowledge of sexual myths, truths and responsibilities
- Has communication skills necessary for managing conflict and developing healthy relationships

Why Is SMART Girls Important?

Growing up isn't easy. While girls today have incredible opportunities to explore their interests and capabilities, they also face many challenges. As they move from being little girls into their pre-tweens, they start to feel pressure to be top performers in school, in sports, and with friends and family. As tweens, they feel pressure to conform and be cool – or in many cases, to pass under the radar just to avoid the day-to-day drama. This is especially difficult when their bodies and emotions are changing so rapidly. As girls move into their teens, they feel pressure to be connected to friends via social media – to be part of the crowd at all times. All of these pressures add up to an experience that can be as rough as it is rewarding.³

SMART Girls gives girls the space, support and tools to navigate adolescence, and to emerge strong, healthy young adults. The program provides critical information, including education on:

- the emotional and physical changes associated with pre-pubescence and puberty;
- maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes a balanced diet and physical activity;
- the influence of mass- and social media on attitudes toward girls and women;
- relationship management and responsibilities (romantic, platonic, familial);
- peer pressure and bullying;
- and sexual health, and pregnancy- and STD prevention;

as well as contact lists for local clinics, resource persons and organizations, and helplines.

But it does more than that: *SMART Girls* tackles issues that girls deal with every day – from troubles and triumphs with friends and family, to struggles with body image and self-esteem, to the impact of school stress and bullying, and more – in a safe and open environment. Giving girls this outlet to talk about their experiences, and to vent concerns and ask questions, not only **increases girls' confidence and compassion; it also leads to improved performance in the classroom.** Girl Talk, an international mentoring program that links teen- and middle-school-aged girls for weekly discussions about getting through the tough tween years, reports that its participants increased their math grades by 14 percent, and their language arts grades by 24 percent.³

And the more education girls have, the better off they are: more education increases a woman's earning potential, meaning that she has access to higher-paying jobs. It also correlates to a greater degree of health awareness for herself, and for her family, and tends to lead to later ages of first intercourse, marriage, and childbirth.⁴ In short, **by providing girls with the support they need during these formative years, SMART Girls helps girls develop healthy attitudes and lifestyles** that they will carry into adulthood.

How Do I Implement SMART Girls in My Club?

Implementing *SMART Girls* in your Club is a great way to help your girls build confidence, develop empathy, and



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- The emotional and physical changes associated with pre-pubescence and puberty
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes a balanced diet and physical activity
- The influence of mass- and social media on attitudes toward girls and women
- Relationship management (romantic, platonic, familial)
- Dating violence and bullying
- Depression, eating disorders and self-harm
- Sexual health, pregnancy and STD prevention

The program also provides contact lists for local clinics, resource persons and organizations, and helplines.

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In short, **by providing girls with the support they need during these formative years, SMART Girls helps girls develop healthy attitudes and lifestyles** that they will carry into adulthood.

How Do I Implement SMART Girls in My Club?

Implementing SMART Girls in your Club is a great way to help your girls build confidence, develop empathy and foster healthy lifestyles. Below, you'll learn about the components of the program, including how to train facilitators and teen mentors, and how to run sessions.

Please note that the Parent/Guardian Permission Form must be completed before a girl can participate in SMART Girls. You can find this form, as well as other important program resources, in the Tools & Resources section at the end of this guide. This section includes information on implementing mentorship opportunities; basic program forms; a shortlist of recommended online resources to share with your group; and endnotes.

Program Basics

The program is designed for small groups (15 or fewer girls). Keeping your groups at this size will facilitate more meaningful interactions between you and the participants and between the participants themselves.

Building trust and a sense of safety within your SMART Girls group is key. Girls will be more willing to share honestly and openly if they feel comfortable with one another. But that doesn't mean you can't introduce new girls to the group, especially during the first few sessions. Be aware, however, that it could affect issues of bonding and confidentiality. **Use your best judgment when adding members to the group midstream.**



Tailoring the Program to Your Group

As the facilitator, **you are responsible for understanding, respecting and accounting for each girl's individual needs, as well as the needs of your group.** You must be sensitive to each girl's level of awareness, cultural background, age and maturity when selecting the activities you present, especially as concerns information on sexual health and sexual responsibilities.

While it is ideal for girls to go through the program consecutively as a group, the sessions and activities are not designed to be used that way exclusively. You can build a program that serves your girls best. **Use this guide as a framework for creating a program that will resonate with your group best.** Running SMART Girls in your Club isn't about following the lessons to the letter – it's about **creating a supportive, educational space for Club members to learn about and explore what it means to be a young woman.**

For example, if a session includes a dance activity, but you know your girls prefer jumping rope or playing tag, replace the dance portion with a fun game of freeze tag or a jump rope competition. Or, if you think your girls would rather discuss first-hand bullying situations than role-play hypothetical ones, let them. Giving your group the agency to direct its activities bolsters investment in the program and builds stronger motivation for participation.

Also feel free to add fun extracurricular activities (e.g., a DIY, good-for-you pizza party to close the session on eating well, or a nail-painting session to cap the discussion on healthy friendships). **If you aren't sure what your group enjoys, ask them!** Take a few minutes during the first session to ask your girls what they like to do. Field trips to a local park? Giving each other makeovers? Reading aloud to one another? Playing games together? Read through the Mentoring Activities section for additional ideas for fun extracurricular events.

Components of the Program

The Structure of SMART Girls

The curriculum is divided into three modules, one for each age group (8 to 10; 11 to 13; 14 to 18). Each of these sections features a three-part framework, which addresses the major pillars of a girl's development.

- **Your Mind:** These sessions address self-image, personal identity and sound mental health.
- **Your Body:** These sessions discuss physical health and wellness.
- **Your Community:** These sessions focus on building positive relationships.

Each session and accompanying activity(ies) aligns with one pillar primarily, but with other pillars peripherally, to support a well-rounded experience.

Question Box

Girls will undoubtedly have questions following their SMART Girls sessions, but they won't always want to share them with the group. **Give your girls a comfortable way to ask anything by creating a SMART Girls Question Box.** You can create one for all age groups, or one for each age group, depending on the composition of your SMART Girls participants. Let girls know they can submit questions to the box anonymously, at any time.

Keep the box in an inconspicuous location, so that girls' anonymity isn't compromised when they submit a question, and to keep any non-SMART Girls participants from planting false questions.

Print several copies of the Question Box slip to keep near the box. The printable template is included with the Session 1 materials for all three age groups. Let girls know they can submit questions on scratch paper or notecards if you run out of Question Box slips.

Check the Question Box before each session, and give yourself enough time to research any questions you can't immediately answer. **Take a few minutes at the beginning of each session to answer any questions.**



Alternatively, set up a weekly, biweekly or monthly Question Box session separate from your SMART Girls sessions, wherein you take 30 to 60 minutes to answer all of the questions in the box. This extra Q&A session can be a great way to jumpstart enriching conversations and to reinforce camaraderie within your group. Be sure to check the box before this extra session, and give yourself enough time to research answers.

Of course, tell girls they are *always welcome* to approach you individually with any additional questions, thoughts or concerns.

SMART Girl's Badge Book & Journal

Each girl in the SMART Girls program will keep her own SMART Girl's Badge Book & Journal, where she can **earn badges for program participation; jot down notes, thoughts and questions; and track resources.** Girls across all three age groups create their journals during the opening session of the program, but the book can be created at any point during the program, should a girl join partway through.

- **Each girl should have a three-ring binder**, approx. ½" to 1" thick, with a clear plastic cover that allows a sheet of paper to be slipped inside. Girls are encouraged to customize their binders using the SMART Girls cover sheet (included with the Session 1 materials for each age group).
- **Each session includes a specially designed worksheet** that you can photocopy and distribute to the girls. These worksheets have space for the girls to take notes, write down resources and participate in session activities. Worksheets for the 8-to-13-year-olds also include a spot to affix the session's corresponding badge, which girls can decorate at the end of each session.

Your group may prefer discussion over writing, and that's totally OK! You can save these worksheets for girls to complete outside their SMART Girls sessions. For example, you can send them home with girls to complete with a parent or guardian, or another family member or role model. Or, you can ask girls to pair up or split into small groups to complete their worksheets. Feel free to incentivize worksheet completion with special rewards for those who fill out their sheets each week.

Whatever method or incentive you choose, do encourage girls to fill out their worksheets. Doing so helps them practice both critical thinking and writing skills, and it keeps SMART Girls top-of-mind throughout the program.

Girls can use the SMART Girls journal extension sheets (included with the Session 1 materials for each age group) to expand their note-taking space. Print several copies to have on-hand.

- **Unless a girl chooses to share what she has written, her journal entries remain private.** Between sessions, store the younger girls' journals in a locked cabinet to maintain confidentiality.

Because journaling outside of SMART Girls session time is part of the curriculum for ages 14 to 18, allow girls to take their journals home with them. If they don't feel safe keeping their journals at home, or if they think they might forget to bring their journals back to a session, offer to keep them at the Club. Be sure to remind them to reflect on each session in order to earn their badge.

- **If a girl is attending only a few sessions**, print the corresponding worksheets, badges and other materials, as well as a copy of the Recommended Resources list, located in the Tools & Resources section at the back of this guide.

SMART Girls Contract

Girls in each age group draw up a SMART Girls Contract collectively during the first session of the program. This contract **stipulates standards of conduct and communication, and it gives girls a chance to determine values collaboratively.** Involving girls in this process gives them a sense of ownership, which in turn encourages adherence to the guidelines.



If conflicts arise, refer back to this contract. Give girls the chance to work through their issues together, using the contract as the baseline for acceptable behavior. Moderate any conflict resolution using these SMART Girls guidelines, as well as any guidelines specific to your Club.

SMART Girls Mentors

Mentorship plays a key role in the SMART Girls program. **Teen SMART Girls participants mentor their younger counterparts**, ages 8 to 13. This encourages leadership, responsibility and accountability for older girls, and it gives younger girls a contact who is trustworthy, kind and understanding.

The Drama Years, by Haley Kilpatrick and Whitney Joiner, calls this relationship the “adopted older sister.” **This adopted older sister is a positive role model who can relate to a younger girl.** She herself has recently navigated girl- and tween-hood, so she’s well-equipped to address any questions, concerns, fears and troubles.⁶

Teen SMART Girls unlock mentorship opportunities by earning badges. These opportunities are noted on the Badge Tracker sheet. For example, if a teen earns a badge for the Talk to Yourself session, she can exchange pen-pal letters (or, if appropriate, text-pal texts) with a tween SMART Girl. Completing the Your Sexual Health session (and earning the It’s My Body badge) means she can participate on the Puberty Panel as part of the Growing Up session for tweens. Review the Badge Tracker sheet for these and other achievement opportunities.

Refer to the Mentoring Activities for a list of activities you can insert at-will into the curriculum. Activities like Girls’ Night and Community Service are great ways to get girls involved with one another, outside SMART Girls sessions. The activities you choose to implement depend on your group’s interests and your mentors’ leadership skills.

If your 11 to 13-year-olds show strong leadership abilities, you can create a two-tiered mentoring system in which tweens mentoring the 8- to-10-year-olds, and teens mentor the tweens. Use the same badges-earned method to determine mentorship opportunities for your tweens, if you go this route.

If you don’t have teens who are interested in mentoring younger SMART Girls, don’t sweat it. You can complete the mentoring activities by involving other women, like Club volunteers, girls’ parents and guardians, and/or community leaders. **It is recommended that you incorporate mentorship into your program in some way, as it gives SMART Girls the chance to meet and form relationships with older girls and women who can serve as positive role models.**

Please ensure all outside mentors undergo the screening process required by your Club. Also ensure these mentors are equipped with correct knowledge about female health and wellness. You can do this by reviewing SMART Girls content appropriate to the age of their mentees prior to the mentoring activities.

Guest Speakers and Panels

You can further enrich the SMART Girls experience by bringing in guest speakers and/or panels appropriate to the curriculum. For example, bring in a local women’s health professional to talk about puberty or sexuality. Ask members of a high school girls’ sports team to join the sessions on staying fit, or engage a local nutritionist to discuss healthy eating choices. Feel free to get creative! Guests not only offer their unique expertise, they also provide a change of pace for your group. Here are some tips for making a guest visit run smoothly:

- Be sure to screen guests according to your Club’s guidelines.
- Share session materials beforehand, so guests are prepared to present and/or discuss age-appropriate information.
- If guests are providing or presenting materials (handouts, PowerPoint presentations, websites, etc.), approve them before the session.
- Set up any audio-visual equipment your presenter requests.
- Ensure guests know when and where to arrive, and stress the importance of punctuality.



Celebration Activity

The capstone of the SMART Girls program is a celebration that includes girls from all three age groups, as well as their friends and family, Club staff and community leaders. Involve SMART Girls participants in planning the celebration. You can involve everyone, or designate a small committee, with representation from all three age groups.

Invite a woman from your community – for example, a health advocate, a business leader or a teacher – to give brief remarks (three to five minutes), about how this type of education affects girls and, by extension, their communities.

Ask each girl to prepare a brief statement (one or two sentences) about the most important thing she learned or gained from the SMART Girls program. Upon arriving at the celebration, have each girl choose a number out of a hat; further instructions follow.

Arrange for the celebration to take place in the Club. Serve refreshments, and personalize and print the SMART Girls Certificates of Completion (located in the Tools & Resources section at the back of this guide). Prepare any other acknowledgments you wish to present to the girls (e.g., SMART Girls T-shirts, bead bracelets, journals, etc.).

Below are guidelines for facilitating the celebration:

- Welcome those in attendance; review the content and structure of the SMART Girls program.
- Acknowledge the girls, mentors, guest speakers, parents/guardians, community leaders, donors and others involved in the program. Thank them for their participation.
- Introduce the guest speaker; allow her three to five minutes to give her remarks.
- Thank the guest speaker, and talk about how many good reasons there are to participate in SMART Girls.
- Then, ask for the first reason to participate, and have the girl who picked No. 1 out of the hat stand and read her prepared statement. Next, ask for reason No. 2, then reason No. 3, etc., until all girls have given their statements.

If your group is too large to have everyone read her statement, combine the reasons. For example, call on one girl to read out her statement, and then ask all other girls who share that sentiment to stand. Continue in this way until all girls are standing. (Note that you won't need the hat and numbered slips for this version of the activity, but you will need to ask a handful of girls to prepare statements before the celebration.)

- Ask girls to file onstage to receive their Certificates of Completion and any other acknowledgements you have prepared.
- Adjourn for refreshments and conversation.

Leading the Sessions

This guide includes a lesson plan for each session, the components of which are reviewed below. Note that all of these components are not included in every session, nor do you have to include all components in your sessions (see more on this topic under the *Session time* section below). Session resources, including worksheets, badges and other session materials, are included following the lesson plan for each session.



Remember, **you can tailor every session to fit the needs and interests of your group** – but if you choose to add your own activities, you'll need to build in extra preparation time for yourself.

- **Overview.** The overview outlines the focus and goals of the session.
- **Topics covered.** These are the key topics that will be covered in the session (e.g., self-esteem, body image, puberty, healthy eating, etc.). If you are planning to teach a protracted version of the curriculum, it is recommended that you select sessions that cover a range of topics.
- **Badges earned.** This lists the badge(s) girls earn by completing the session. Badges are distributed at the end of each session. Girls ages 8 to 13 can decorate and affix their badges to the designated badge space on their session worksheets (printable badges are located in the materials for each session). Girls ages 14 to 18 use the Badge Tracker sheet to keep tabs on the badges they've earned. Initial girls' Badge Trackers as they complete each session and its accompanying journal assignment.

If a girl misses a session, it is recommended you allow her to complete the non-group portions of that session. Set up a one-on-one discussion with her about the content, or set up an extra meeting with her SMART Girls mentor, before awarding her badge.

Please remember the goal of the badge system isn't to create competition between girls. Rather, it is both a way to incentivize continued participation, and a way for girls to track their progress in the program.

- **Session time.** Sessions can run anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes. You can tailor the length of sessions to the needs of the girls in your program. Each session is split into discrete activities, each of which includes an estimated running time. Feel free to complete the entire session, split the session into multiple sessions across a few days, or pick and choose which components of each session will benefit your girls most. For example, some Clubs run the program year-round, in short weekly sessions – a fantastic way to maintain solidarity among your SMART Girls.
- Note that some mentoring and recognition activities take place outside the Club. You will need to obtain the proper permissions before you can complete such extracurricular activities.
- **Preparation time.** The suggested preparation time ranges from 30 to 60 minutes. This is your time to familiarize yourself with the content of the session, take notes and research any questions you may have, set up visits from local experts and/or mentors (teen or otherwise), and gather and prep materials.
 - **Materials needed.** These are the materials and supplies you will need to complete the activities in the session.
 - **Resources needed.** These are the source materials – such as websites, and/or resource persons – you will need to complete the activities in the session.
 - **Preparing for the session.** This section lists the steps to prepare for the session. It includes directions on the preparation of materials and resources.
 - **Conducting the session.** Sessions are broken into several linked activities, which fall into the categories listed below. As mentioned above, and in Tailoring the Program to Your Group, it is up to you to determine which activities and discussions you will include in each session. You can add, subtract or rearrange – it's your choice!
 - **Recap discussion.** At the beginning of each session, set aside five to 10 minutes to recap the previous session. This review will help reinforce program learnings and help girls solidify their knowledge. Because you will be tailoring the sessions to your group, the focus of these recap discussions will not be prescribed in the guide.



Refer to the previous session's Overview and/or your session notes to determine an opening question and discussion starter. For example, after you've completed the session on self-esteem, start the following session with a recap question – e.g., *What is self-esteem, and where does it come from?* – followed by a discussion starter (e.g., *What have you done in the past week to boost your self-esteem?*).

Alternatively, if you are leading a group of teens (14 to 18) or your girls are completing session worksheets at home, you can use the worksheet prompts to jumpstart your discussion.

- **Introductory activity.** Most sessions begin with an icebreaker or roundtable discussion, designed to get girls interested in the topic(s) at hand. This is a great time for you to assess what girls know about certain topics, and how they value those topics. It also gives you a chance to set the tone and direction for the session. Listen carefully, empathize with any troubles the girls share, and synthesize their thoughts either verbally, or on a whiteboard or sheet of poster-paper. You can also use this time to discuss any Question Box questions from the previous session.
- **Knowledge activity.** This activity is designed to give girls basic skills and information related to the session topic(s). It's also a good time to share facts and resources associated with the session topic(s) and to pass out session worksheets, if you haven't already done so.
- **Life-skills activity.** This is an interactive activity or discussion, designed to increase girls' proficiency in the session topic area(s) through practical application or Q&A.
- **Mentoring extension or activity.** Some sessions include a mentoring extension or mentoring activity, either with a teen member of the SMART Girls program, or an adult. (For more information, see the SMART Girls Mentors section above.) While not every session includes a specific mentoring activity, you are welcome to add activities from the Mentoring Activities list, located in the Tools & Resources section.
- **SMART Girl's Badge Book & Journal activity.** This activity gives girls a chance to reflect on what they've learned in the session; decorate and/or affix any badges earned during the session; and ask any remaining questions.

If your group is less excited about writing, turn this into a wrap-up discussion like the *Closing conversation* below, or use this time for a fun activity that speaks to the girls' interests (reading aloud from a new young adult novel, doing each other's nails, having a pizza party, etc.).

The curriculum for the 14- to 18-year-olds does not include journal time. Instead, girls in this age group are asked to journal outside SMART Girls session time.

- **Closing conversation.** This is exclusive to the curriculum for 14- to 18-year-olds. This is a time to discuss any follow-up questions the girls may have, and to distribute their journal and extension assignments for the coming week. Note that the sessions for this age group involve more group discussion, rather than hands-on games and crafts. Girls at this age are much more verbal, and SMART Girls provides the perfect forum for them to voice their thoughts and concerns.

The content of these activities is designed to be age-appropriate, but some portions may be too mature for your group. The sessions that address more sensitive topics are scalable – you can choose how in-depth you want to go with a given topic. **It is up to you to select content that is suitable for your girls and adheres to your Club's guidelines and protocol.**



Managing the Group Process

As the facilitator, you are responsible for setting a strong example of support and respect for your SMART Girls group. During the first session of the program, girls discuss respectful communication and collaboration. Familiarize yourself with these four hallmarks of an effective group discussion. You will be discussing these with your SMART Girls group during the first session of the program:

- **Everyone has a chance to speak.** Everyone should feel free to express herself. Interrupting, talking over, cutting off and dismissing are not allowed. Discussions should not be dominated by one person.
- **Everyone has a point of view.** In any group, people's experiences and perspectives will differ. It's OK to think differently than other girls in the group.
- **Everyone's ideas are welcome.** Girls should feel safe to test ideas and to share thoughts that aren't fully formed when they're in their SMART Girls group. This encourages collaborative thinking.
- **Everyone can give feedback, but it must be constructive.** Girls are welcome to give honest and constructive feedback, but it should be delivered in a respectful manner. Point out that feedback is usually more effective when asked as a question, rather than given as a suggestion.

Adhering to these guidelines during your SMART Girls sessions sends a very strong message: **Girls have a right to speak and be heard, and their opinions and feelings should be respected.**

Using the co-facilitator method for leading sessions is recommended. Sharing the responsibilities of facilitation increases interaction between staff and girls, and it allows you to observe the group dynamic more closely. Allowing your SMART Girls to lead different sessions can be empowering, too. If you choose to do this, select peer leaders based on maturity, a strong knowledge of the session(s) they will lead, and a high level of dedication to the program.

Additional tips for effective facilitation:

- **Be prepared.** Familiarize yourself with the content of your session, and do additional research if necessary. Understand where your girls are in their emotional and physical journeys to adulthood, and tailor content accordingly.
- **Be honest.** If you don't know the answer to a question, assure the girls you will find it. Be accountable for reporting back.
- **Be respectful.** Show girls you value them and their opinions by listening carefully and responding in a respectful way. Respect different cultural and religious perspectives.
- **Be empathetic.** What you might consider a small problem can seem like a major crisis to a growing girl. Remember: You were there once, too!
- **Be open.** Share your age-appropriate stories and experiences. Reassure girls they aren't alone, and that they will get through their troubles.
- **Be knowledgeable.** Know the phone numbers and URLs of community resource persons and organizations, especially those that support girls, women and families. Know how to refer a girl or her family to an appropriate resource person or organization.
- **Be available.** It is possible that you are a girl's only source of accurate information about her health and wellness. It is possible that you are her most trusted mentor. Make time for your SMART Girls. Hold "open office hours," wherein girls can come to you with questions, thoughts or concerns. Plan extracurricular activities. Be willing to talk – any time.



Providing Ongoing Recognition

Beyond the badge system and other game elements, ongoing recognition – whether planned or spontaneous – keeps girls' interest and self-esteem high. You can provide recognition and build excitement in many ways, including:

- Regularly displaying the work girls create as part of the program.
- Promoting program activities and achievements through articles in the Club's newsletter, news releases in the media, and presentations before Board Members, Club staff and/or community organizations.
- Providing healthy snacks and drinks at sessions.
- Organizing field trips and/or scheduling meetings in different settings, like parks, beaches or playfields.
- Putting special effort and resources into planning and carrying out the Celebration activity, and involving SMART Girls participants in the event planning.

Involving Parents/Guardians

SMART Girls participants must obtain permission from a parent or guardian before beginning the program.

The mandatory Parent/Guardian Permission Form, which is located in the Tools & Resources section, includes a basic overview of the program and information on the topics to be covered. Discussion starters are included as well, so parents and guardians can support SMART Girls learnings at home.

Encourage parents/guardians to attend an information session prior to the program-start. Hold the 30-minute session at the Club and invite any parents/guardians whose daughters have expressed interest in the program. Pass out permission forms and discussion questions as attendees arrive. Begin with a brief overview of the program, and then open the floor for Q&A.

You can also involve parents/guardians in mentor and recognition activities throughout the program. Obtain a list of parents/guardians who are interested in participating and keep it with your program materials.

