

LEAN IN
GIRLS

KICKOFF SESSION:
REDEFINE
LEADERSHIP





KICKOFF SESSION: REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

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Welcome to Lean In Girls! This document contains the written materials needed to successfully run your Kickoff Session. We encourage you to review all materials included in full in order to best prepare for your upcoming session.

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KICKOFF SESSION:
REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

Facilitator Session Guide

SESSION GOALS

Participants expand their view of leadership and establish a brave, safe space to learn and practice leading.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Traditional definitions of leadership are unnecessarily limiting.
- Leadership isn't just for adults—teens can and do lead now.

WHY THIS SESSION MATTERS

This session provides participants with an engaging introduction to Lean In Girls and a shared understanding of the program philosophy and goals, including a sense of how the program will challenge common assumptions about leadership. The session also supports development of a group identity and fosters an inclusive, respectful group dynamic—conditions that are critical for participants to engage meaningfully with the rest of the program content.

SESSION AT A GLANCE

Welcome and Introduction to Lean In Girls	5 min
Ignite (“Defining Leadership”): Teens reflect on images of “traditional” leaders and learn a more expansive definition of leadership.	10 min
Community Agreements Vision Board: Teens build a vision board describing how they want to co-create a brave, safe space.	20 min
Leadership Interviews: Teens get to know each other through interview questions related to leadership.	15 min
Closing and One Action	10 min

SESSION OVERVIEW

Gather materials:

- Participant packet: Print out and staple a packet for each member in your group
 - Activity materials: Print one copy each for the group
 - Narrow Leader Images (cut out each image)
 - Expansive Leader Images (cut out each image)
 - Vision Board Prompts
 - Sticky notes (10 to 15 for each teen)
 - Pens or pencils (one for each teen)
 - A few large sheets of poster paper
 - A marker for the poster paper
 - Wall-safe tape
 - (*optional*) Name tags (one for yourself and for each teen)
-

Room setup:

- If possible, ensure teens have space to complete writing activities in pairs or small groups.
 - Hang the Vision Board Prompts on the wall around the room.
 - Hang large sheets of poster paper where everyone can see them (e.g., on the wall at the front of the room).
-

Get ready to facilitate:

- Familiarize yourself with the session materials and instructions.
 - Write in your responses to the “facilitator example” prompts in the session instructions so you’re prepared to share examples with the group as needed.
 - Write in your planned start and end times for each part of the session.
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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO LEAN IN GIRLS

Estimated time: 5 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____



We recommend using name tags for this first session if the teens in your group don't know each other well. You can have each teen fill out a name tag as they arrive.

1. Welcome teens to the program and introduce yourself! We recommend sharing some fun details about yourself and a personal story about why you wanted to facilitate the program.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Hi everyone! My name is [your name], and I'm excited to be here to share a leadership program called Lean In Girls. Some fun facts about me:*

FACILITATOR EXAMPLE *Two to three fun facts about you (e.g., your hobbies, pets, favorite movie, favorite food, etc.):*

FACILITATOR EXAMPLE *Brief explanation of why you wanted to facilitate the program:*

2. Summarize the goals and format of the program, and share the focus of today's session.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *This program is about exploring who you are as a leader and helping you make a difference in the ways that matter to you. Each session, we'll explore a different leadership topic through activities and discussions. Today, we're going to talk about what it means to be a leader. We'll also take time later in the session to start getting to know each other.*

3. Let teens know that you're not an expert in everything you're going to talk about, and that you're here to learn with and from them.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *You should also know that I'm here to guide you through the program, but I'm not an expert on all the topics we're going to cover. I'm here to learn with you and from you. If you have a question I don't know the answer to, we'll try to figure it out together. And if you disagree with something I say, please speak up! Hearing what you think is really important to me.*

IGNITE: DEFINE LEADERSHIP

Estimated time: 10 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

Goals: Teens reflect on narrow views of leadership and understand that this program will focus on a more expansive definition.

At a glance:

- The facilitator shares images that capture a limiting and outdated view of leadership and guides a discussion on the people, skills, and situations that are missing from these images.
- The facilitator introduces a more expansive definition of leadership.

Step 1: Leader Images

Estimated time: 5 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

1. Present the Narrow Leader Images one at a time, in the order provided. These are intended to be restrictive and outdated images about who can lead and what leaders are like. Use the sample script and discussion questions to guide a conversation on what teens see in the images—and what's missing. For each question, call on two or three teens to share responses and draw out key ideas as indicated.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

We're going to look at some images of what a lot of people think leadership looks like and point out the things that are missing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *What do these images tell us about what leaders look like?*
Draw out: adult, men, white, in uniforms, etc.
- *What do these images tell us about what leaders do?*
Draw out: talk loudly, be in charge, tell others what to do, etc.

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE ►

- *What do you not see in these images?*
Draw out: people of color, young people, people with disabilities, etc.
- *What about the places that aren't part of these images? Are there places you spend a lot of time in that aren't showing up here?*
Draw out: homes, schools, religious centers, community events, etc.
- *How does it make you feel to see images like this?*
Draw out: like I'm not a leader, not interested in leading, not welcome, determined to lead anyway, determined to lead in my own way.

 If you're short on time, skip the last two discussion questions.

2. Emphasize that this is a narrow and outdated definition of leadership.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *These images represent a really narrow definition of leadership. This definition makes it hard for a lot of people to be seen as leaders and see themselves as leaders. It's common, but that doesn't mean it's right! This definition misses so much of what leadership is really all about.*

Step 2: Leadership Definition

Estimated time: 5 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

1. Direct teens to the Leadership Definition handout in their packet, and ask for a few volunteers to read the definition aloud (one sentence per volunteer).

The Lean In Girls leadership definition: *Everyone can be a leader and there are many ways to lead. You can show leadership in big, bold ways, and through the small things you do every day. Leading could look like speaking up, working toward a shared goal, respecting and including people around you, encouraging or inspiring someone, or creating something new on your own or as part of a team. No matter their approach, leaders put their values into action, even when it takes courage.*

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

2. Use the questions below to guide a discussion on the leadership definition. For each question, call on two or three teens to share responses and draw out some of the key ideas below.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *Which part of this definition is your favorite part?*

Draw out: anyone can lead, no one right way, can be big or small, people don't have to call you a leader in order for you to be one—you can lead now without a formal position.

- *What are some examples of showing leadership through the small things you do every day?*

Draw out: volunteering to lead an activity, trying something new, inspiring others by being true to yourself, pushing back when you see something unfair, helping others feel appreciated or like they belong.

- *Looking at this definition, can you think of a way you've shown leadership recently?*

3. Present the Expansive Leader Images one at a time, in the order provided. These are intended to be more truthful, inclusive images about who can lead and what leaders are like.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Now we're going to look at some images that show what leadership can look like when we're not limited by narrow and outdated thinking.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *What do these images tell you about leadership, and how does that relate to the definition we just talked about?*

Draw out: these images show people of all ages, genders, and races as leaders; leadership can happen in everyday moments; you can lead in lots of ways, like by speaking up/being an activist, teaching others, taking care of people, building things, etc.

- *If you were putting together a photo collection of leaders, who else would you include? What do the leaders in your life and community look like?*

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS VISION BOARD

Estimated time: 20 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

Goals: Teens identify leadership behaviors they want to practice within sessions and commit to co-creating a brave, safe space.

At a glance:

- Teens write out sticky note responses to prompts about how they want the group to show respect and support for each other throughout the program and share their responses by posting them around the room.
- The facilitator draws out common themes in the responses and writes them on large sheets of poster paper; these sheets become the group's community agreements.

Step 1: Vision Board Brainstorm

Estimated time: 10 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

1. Explain that teens can and do lead now, and that the next activity is an opportunity to put their leadership skills into practice.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Adults often focus on how teens can lead someday in the future. But the reality is that you can and do lead now. In this next activity, we're going to see the ways you already think like leaders by creating some agreements for how we want to support each other in this group.*

I'm confident in your ability to create the environment you want. So, instead of asking you to agree to a list of rules I created, we're going to create a "vision board" for the ways we'll practice leadership together. We'll do this by responding to a few prompts.

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

2. Direct teens to the Vision Board Prompts handout in their packet and ask for a few volunteers to read the prompts aloud.

 If you're short on time, you can omit prompts four and five.

Vision board prompts:

1. In this group, we show that we respect each other by ...
2. In this group, the facilitator shows they respect us by ...
3. I want this group to be a place where we can ...
4. In this group, it's important that I feel ...
5. In this group, I'm going to challenge myself to ...

3. Ask teens to write their responses to the prompts on sticky notes (one response per sticky) and add their stickies to the Vision Board Prompts around the room.

 We recommend doing this activity alongside teens! If there are norms and behaviors that will help you feel safe and brave as a facilitator, make sure to add those to the Vision Board Posters.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Grab some sticky notes and start writing down your responses to these questions. You should write one response per sticky—so you'll probably have a few stickies for each question. Feel free to mark each sticky with the question number to help you keep track.*

These questions are also written on pieces of paper around the room. When you're ready, stand up and post your sticky note responses on the matching question's poster. You can keep writing new responses if you think of other ideas!

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

Step 2: Vision Board Synthesis

Estimated time: 10 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

1. Let teens know you're going to work together to synthesize the responses into community agreements. Invite them to tour the room to read all the responses, adding stars or check marks to their favorites.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Now, we're going to look for themes in the responses to create our community agreements. Start by reading the responses other people have added and marking your favorite responses with a star or a check mark.*

2. Bring the group back together and ask for volunteers to read the responses with the most stars/check marks aloud while you arrange them into themes. Write the themes on the large sheets of poster paper you set up before the session. Repeat this process until the group has discussed all the prompts.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Okay, let's all come back together. Does anyone want to read the favorite responses to the first prompt? I'll write down the themes as you point them out.*

3. If teens don't bring them up naturally, add the following essential guardrails to the first prompt: commit to confidentiality, respect boundaries, and put away electronic devices.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *I want to add a few more agreements that I've found are important in a group like this.*

- *The first one is commit to confidentiality. This means we won't use other people's names when sharing stories and we won't talk about things that are shared outside this group.*
- *The second one is respect each other's boundaries. This means we'll encourage each other to try new things, but we won't push anyone to do something they're not comfortable with.*
- *Finally, I'm hoping we can put away electronic devices so it's easier for everyone to listen and contribute to group discussions.*

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE ►

4. Add that you hope everyone in the group has fun!

SAMPLE SCRIPT *And even though we can't technically commit to this one, I think it's important to add that I hope we'll have fun together! This is a place where we can be silly and laugh and express ourselves and I intend to do all three of those things!*

5. Ask teens to give a thumbs-up if they feel good about the agreements. Address any final questions or additions before moving to the next activity.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Can I get a thumbs-up if you're feeling good about these agreements? If you have questions or want to add anything else to the list, feel free to raise your hand.*

LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS

Estimated time: 15 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

Goals: Teens get to know each other and begin to see each other, and themselves, as leaders.

At a glance: Teens interview each other and introduce their peers to the group.

1. Arrange the group into pairs. Direct teens to the Leadership Interviews handout and explain the activity.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *To start to get to know each other and think about who you are as leaders, you and your partner are going to interview each other using the questions in your packet. No one has to answer all the questions—if you don't want to answer one, just say, "Pass."*

When you're the interviewer, record your partner's answers on the handout. When you finish the interview, pick your favorite answer and write it at the bottom.

Decide who will be the interviewer first, and we'll get started! You'll have about three minutes for each interview. After the first three minutes, I'll call, "Switch."

2. After everyone has been interviewed, have teens introduce their partners and share their favorite answers. Invite them to acknowledge the introductions at the end by clapping, snapping, etc.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Let's all come back together and we'll introduce our partners to the group! When it's your turn, introduce your partner with the name they said they want to be called and share your favorite answer from their interview. We'll move through this quickly, so let's hold for a big round of applause at the end after everyone's been introduced.*

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE 

3. Use the questions below to guide a discussion on the interview exercise. For each question, call on two or three teens to share responses.

 Don't skip the second discussion question! Identifying the things teens have in common builds a shared group identity, which will help them feel safer and braver in this group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *What are some examples of how these questions connect to leadership?*
- *Did anyone learn that they had something in common with their partner? If so, what?*

4. Close the activity by sharing that there's no "one experience" of leadership for girls and emphasizing that everyone's experiences are valid.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *It's great to recognize all the things we have in common. But it's also important to remember that there's no "one experience" when it comes to leadership for girls. Girls aren't all the same, and different girls express themselves in different ways. That means we all face different challenges based on our background and who we are.*

As we go through this program, you might hear your peers share stories or hear me share research that doesn't match up with your experiences or points of view. When it comes to individual experiences, everyone's experiences are valid, and the more we're all willing to share, the more we get to learn from each other.

CLOSE AND ONE ACTION

Estimated time: 10 minutes / Start time: _____ End time: _____

Goals: Teens reflect on what they've learned and commit to putting the session content to use in a way that matters to them.

At a glance: Teens choose a way they'd like to show leadership before the next session.

1. Ask teens to think about what they're hoping to get out of the program. Model the type of responses you're hoping to hear by sharing your answer first, and then ask for a few volunteers to share.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Before we wrap up for today, I want to ask you to think for a minute about what you most want to get out of this program. For example, I'll start by sharing that I'm hoping to ...*

FACILITATOR EXAMPLE *What you're hoping to get from the program:*

Does anyone else want to share what they're hoping for?

CONTINUE ACTIVITY ON THE NEXT PAGE ►

2. Direct teens to the One Action handout in their packets. Explain the One Action routine and ask them to write down a way to practice putting what they've learned today to use.

 If you have extra time at the end of the session, ask a few teens to share their One Action with the group, or have them discuss their One Actions in pairs.

SAMPLE SCRIPT *Each time we meet, we'll end by choosing a One Action—a way to practice putting what we've learned to use. Today, I'd like all of you to pick a way you want to show leadership before our next session. Take a few minutes to write down your response.*

3. Close by collecting handouts and thanking the group for a great session!

 It's a good idea to collect participant packets at the end of the session to keep teens' private work from being shared. Also, for the final celebration session, you'll be asked to hand out the packets so the participants can look back on what they've learned.

 After the session, take a few minutes to look over the One Action each teen picked. This will give you insight into their individual goals and help reveal any misunderstandings of today's topics.



KICKOFF SESSION: **REDEFINE LEADERSHIP**

Activity Materials

Print one copy for the group



NARROW LEADER IMAGES

If you prefer not to print these photographs, you can have teens scan this QR code on their phone to access the materials.



 We recommend you break the group into three or four smaller groups that review the materials together; this way everyone doesn't have to have a phone.

We want to thank our partner Getty Images for the imagery included in this activity.

NARROW LEADER IMAGES



NARROW LEADER IMAGES



NARROW LEADER IMAGES





EXPANSIVE LEADER IMAGES

If you prefer not to print these photographs, you can have teens scan this QR code on their phone to access the materials.



 We recommend you break the group into three or four smaller groups that review the materials together; this way everyone doesn't have to have a phone.

We want to thank our partner Getty Images for the imagery included in this activity.

EXPANSIVE LEADER IMAGES



EXPANSIVE LEADER IMAGES



EXPANSIVE LEADER IMAGES



VISION BOARD PROMPTS

1.

IN THIS GROUP,

**we show
each other
respect by...**

VISION BOARD PROMPTS

2.

IN THIS GROUP,
the facilitator
shows they
respect us by...

VISION BOARD PROMPTS

3.

I WANT THIS GROUP

**to be a place
where we can...**

VISION BOARD PROMPTS

4.

IN THIS GROUP,
it's important
that I feel...

VISION BOARD PROMPTS

5.

IN THIS GROUP,

**I'm going
to challenge
myself to...**



KICKOFF SESSION: REDEFINE LEADERSHIP

Participant Packet

Print one copy of each handout for each participant

 It's a good idea to collect these packets at the end of the session to keep teens' private work from being shared. Also, for the final celebration session, you'll be asked to hand out the packets so the participants can look back on what they've learned.

LEADERSHIP DEFINITION

Which part of this definition is your favorite part?

Everyone can be a leader and there are many ways to lead.

You can show leadership in big, bold ways, and through the small things you do every day.

Leading could look like speaking up, working toward a shared goal, respecting and including people around you, encouraging or inspiring someone, or creating something new on your own or as part of a team. No matter their approach, leaders put their values into action, even when it takes courage.

VISION BOARD PROMPTS

1.

In this group, we show each other respect by...

2.

In this group, the facilitator shows they respect us by...

3.

I want this group to be a place where we can...

4.

In this group, it's important that I feel...

5.

In this group, I'm going to challenge myself to...

LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS

Use these questions to interview your partner. Write your favorite answer at the bottom. It's okay if you don't get through all the questions!

The name I want everyone in this group to call me is _____.

The bravest thing I've ever done is _____.

I would like to invent something that makes _____ better.

If I were stuck on a desert island with five people, I would contribute to the group's survival by _____.

A secret skill most people don't know I have is _____.

I feel like leaders need to listen more to _____ people.

Aliens from another planet came to earth; I hope they create the type of government where _____.

Someone I admire is _____, because they _____.

It's the year 2050, I hope _____ has changed about the world.

If I weren't afraid, I would speak up about _____.

If I get an award one day, the type of award I would want is _____.

If I were a teacher and I could design my own class, I would teach _____.

Favorite answer:

ONE ACTION: PRACTICE LEADERSHIP

Everyone can be a leader and there are many ways to lead. You can show leadership in big, bold ways, and through the small things you do every day. Leading could look like speaking up, working toward a shared goal, respecting and including people around you, encouraging or inspiring someone, or creating something new on your own or as part of a team. No matter their approach, leaders put their values into action, even when it takes courage.



One way I plan to practice leading this week: