



How to Run a Girls in *FIRST* Conference

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Section 1 General Guidelines

Section 1.1. Preplanning

There are several things to keep in mind before the conference(s) for a successful event. It is important to begin planning well before the event to make sure there is ample time for organization and accommodation.

Send out a survey to gather information about the girls who are attending. If necessary, like if there are a surplus of applicants, you may send an additional form or email asking for more information for the selective process.

Have volunteers sign up before the participants so that you know what the capacity for the event is. You will need volunteers for the several roles at your events, including some floaters during tutorials/hands on activities (if you have them) to help people who encounter problems.

● Here are some questions to answer before creating the sign-up form:

- Will they need to bring their own lunch? Will we be providing any kind of food/beverages?
- What materials do you anticipate you will have?
- What kinds of workshops, presentations, and activities will there be?
- Will there be a cut-off?
- Who are you targeting?

● Here is some information that can be gathered:

- Dietary restrictions
- Pre-event survey questions to gauge opinions on targeted topics before the event
- Whether or not they can bring a laptop

Make sure you send them their responses and include the time and date and contact information on the sign-up form so that girls can contact you if there is a change/mistake in one or more responses/availability.

● Make sure you also have the following in place:

- Deadline for signing up to have time to accommodate and plan around numbers
- Set a maximum number of girls to apply so there are enough volunteers
- Flyers/pamphlets for advertising
- Reminder emails coming up before the event, emails for:
 - Logistics - ie. meals, schedule of events, groups, speakers, etc.

If an email has important information, have participants reply to the emails you send to ensure that everyone is receiving emails. If someone does not receive an email, they may be missing out on crucial information.

Section 1.2. The Conference

Section 1.2.1 Presentations

- Presentations should span more than one subject in technology, social justice, empowerment, and more, including but not limited to:
 - Overcoming Obstacles
 - Technology of the Future
 - The Importance of Allies
 - etc.

This list is very loose, as presentation topics can vary wildly even within the same conference. Make sure, however, that it is an engaging topic that is relevant to the audience to which it will be presented.

Depending on the target audience for the conference, it is also appropriate and necessary to make the presentations on appropriate to your audience.

Section 1.2.2 Group Activities

- Depending on your audience, you may have a large number of people who may or may not know each other. Depending on the numbers, you should address whether you would like to allow those who know each other to stick together, or whether you should focus on encouraging the audience to make new connections. Here are a few examples of group activities that can be modified to target groups that know each other (team building) or groups who are meeting for the first time (friend making).
 - 21 Questions
 - Blind Building Activities
 - Where some members are not allowed to see what they are to build, and others must instruct those members to build the object
 - Riddle Scavenger Hunt
 - Building Challenge
 - ie. Making the tallest tower out of a roll of paper and tape

The number and the kinds of activities held should reflect what your target audience for the conference is. You may even want to include themed sessions geared towards niche audiences, like FRC, FTC, FLL, or those who are enrolled in Computer Science/Software Engineering at a post secondary institution. It is important to take note of this, so that the activities are appropriate for the skill levels of the girls who are joining.

- Some questions to answer:
 - How many people are in groups of people they already know?
 - How many are coming in not knowing anyone?
 - How much time do we have to dedicate to these sorts of activities?
 - What sort of a space do you have to dedicate to activities?
 - Would you like to incorporate physical activity into the activities?
 - How can you arrange the groups so that they don't set anyone up to be excluded?

Section 1.2.3. Other Things to Consider

You are not limited to “classic” presentations or activities! The above are simply some examples of what can be executed. Feel free to lead a themed conference, a conference whose target audience is more specific, conferences that are held over multiple sessions, and more! You can include environmental and industrial engineering presentations (non-classic STEM fields), as well as conference that have a much more specific goal (ie. Minorities Game or App Development).

Section 2. Agenda

You are free to schedule your conference in any way, but be mindful of how things are arranged. If there are to be multiple presentations to be presented at the same time, try to avoid presentations that may cause a conflict of interest. For example, if there are presentations A, B, and C, and two of them are to be scheduled within the same time slot, consider each topic. Say A and C are different enough topics that someone interested in A is less likely to be interested in C than they are to be interested in B. In such a case, it would be best to schedule A and C together. It is important to make sure the schedule is appropriately laid out for your conference’s objectives.

You can include any other supplementary activities in your schedule, like panels, guest speakers, team building activities - the list goes on.

Section 3. Guest Speakers and Panelists

There are many formats a guest speaker’s talk or a panel can take place. It is important to think about what you message you wish to give to participants when reaching out to people to be guest speakers or panelists.

● Some of these goals may include:

- Empowering the girls with female role models
- Showing the girls they have male allies
- Informing the girls of what there is in store for them in tech fields
- Discussing different opportunities and support systems available
- A theme of development over one’s career

● There are many people you can bring out to be guest speakers or to be panelists, which may include:

- Women in tech fields
 - To talk about their hardships and triumphs
 - To give the girls advice
 - To inspire and encourage the girls
- Male allies
 - To make the girls feel less solitary in tech
 - To help them feel welcome
 - To know they are not alone
- Program ambassadors
 - To inform the girls about opportunities

If you are having a guest speaker, think of the kind of message you want to give to the participants, and perhaps suggest themes that can be in the talk that your guest speaker(s) is/are going to give.

If you are having a panel, open the floor to questions, but also create a set of questions that addresses some of the messages you want to be given to the girls.

Section 4. Tips

- Conferences can be very difficult to organise, but there are several things that you can do so that it is a smoother ride:
 - Use a digital survey to gather all the information, especially one that allows you to see statistics
 - This way all of the information is already gathered for you, and you can see information on who has said what so you can appropriately plan for volunteers
 - For example, if one activity/presentation is popular, you can arrange for it to have more helpers and be in a larger room
 - Have ushers available to help girls who are looking for rooms
 - Have as many girls to lead the sessions as possible
 - This will show the participants that there are females in the roles for which they are preparing
 - “If you can see her you can be her”
 - However, male allies are also incredible assets, and should not be left unconsidered
 - Welcome male participants to help out and sit in on activities, panels, discussions, etc.
 - This will educate males on what sorts of sentiments their female counterparts feel, and what obstacles they face
 - Male allies are important for pushing females to enter tech fields
 - Send a survey after the event to gather information to see how you can improve
 - Take lots of photos and videos
 - Make a recap video! It’s good to have that to watch after the event.
 - Thank your sponsors
 - Make sure your volunteers know their responsibilities and designations
 - Stay positive, even if things aren’t running as smoothly as anticipated
 - Use social media and personal connections to advocate for your event
 - Post sign up links and flyers to social media and your website (if applicable)
 - Keep participants updated
 - Send schedules, room designations, addresses, and other information well before the event so girls are informed

And most of all, stay organized! Organized events are much more successful than those that are not organized!

Section 5. Summary

Girls in *FIRST* Conferences may seem like a large ordeal, but it isn't as daunting as it may seem. It is a great event to hold, and everyone learns a great deal from volunteering in events such as these. Keep your event true to your own goals, and have fun!

Key points from this package:

- Preplanning
- The nature and subjects of sessions in the conference
- Scheduling and organisation
- Guest speakers and panelists
- Tips