



# How to... 'deliver activity for young women at the right time'

## *Why it's important*

'A lack of time' is a perceived barrier to participating in sport and physical activity. Young women have many competing demands on their time, and it is therefore important that activities aimed at getting women active are provided and delivered with this in mind.

In order to increase the chances of getting women active, activities should be provided at a convenient time to fit within their everyday lifestyle.

Projects need to work towards convincing young women and girls that some of their spare time should be spent taking part in sport or physical activity. At present the majority of women and girls are choosing to do other things with their spare time and are not leading active lives.





West Midlands StreetGames Festival

## Factors to consider

### **Who are you targeting?**

Young women between the ages of 16 and 25 will be at very different stages in their life. Some will be in education, some may be out of work, some may have small children, some will be single and others married. These variances will dramatically affect how these young women prioritise their time.

There isn't a specific time that will result in a successful session. The 'best time' varies considerably depending on the needs of the particular target group. Here are some things to consider:

- Mid-morning/daytime sessions – in the community – These are most convenient for women who have school-aged children and don't work/work from home/work part-time. For women with babies/toddlers, daytime sessions which provide activities for mum and child together, or in the same place, are also successful. Putting activity on in the daytime also works for those that are unemployed and who therefore have spare time during the day. Often it is cheaper to run sessions during the day when sports halls and community centres are less busy and activity space is easier to get. Evenings will often be booked already for other activities.

- Daytime sessions – in an education setting/the workplace – There are several ways in which this can be done:
  - Incorporating activity as part of the curriculum – often difficult and dependent on the individual college but generates high numbers.
  - Putting on sessions at lunchtime – this is often seen as providing a break in the day but can be too short and girls don't like getting 'too sweaty' before class or before going back to work. In college, lunchtimes also often differ between faculties which must be considered.
  - Putting on sessions directly after college – this works well but again the variances in timetabling must be considered. Research shows that many college girls prefer to do activity between 4pm and 6pm, leaving their evenings free.

In college, providing sessions that are targeted at females from a certain faculty is a good way to avoid the variable timetabling issues. In the workplace, setting up daytime classes is a great way of making use of what little time these women have.



- **Evenings** – Evening activities are convenient for young women who work or go to college. Evenings are also convenient for young mums who have a partner or another family member who can look after their children whilst they exercise. Popular times for activity are between 6 and 8pm. Friday evening sessions are often successful as they provide for young women who have to balance domestic chores and college/work during the week.
- **Weekends** – Weekend activity can be popular for women who have families. This works well where family sessions are provided or where sessions for adults are run in parallel with children’s activities. Weekend sessions, however, often clash with part-time jobs, especially for college students. Many young people report that weekends are for ‘social time’ and many don’t see sport and physical activity as enjoyable social time – this can be remedied by ensuring that sessions are marketed in the right way and delivered in the right style (see accompanying ‘how to’ guides).

If you have the privilege of having your own facility, you might want to consider offering drop-in activity, any time, rather than having scheduled activity. This allows projects to involve girls more informally in activity.

### **Consistency and regularity of sessions**

Irrespective of who you are targeting, it is important that sessions are regular and consistent. Knowing that a session is on every week at a particular time helps young women who may not keep a diary or calendar or who may have a busy schedule and limited free time.

Projects have also reported a drop off in attendance after there has been a break in sessions, for example for Christmas or Easter. Regularity of sessions is therefore important in retaining participants.

*“I am really enjoying my experience in the gym as part of Us Girls. The gym is very quiet in the day when I attend, which is what I like about coming.”*

—— **Us Girls Participant, Manchester**



## *Case studies*

### **Daytime sessions – in an education setting**

An Us Girls project delivered by an FE college in the East Midlands has added an activity session to the curriculum of young women on a hair and beauty course. The programme has successfully attracted young women to a six-week badminton programme that was scheduled as part of their weekly curriculum. All of the girls on the course attended the sessions.

A different Us Girls project introduced both lunchtime and after-college sessions. The after-college session was extremely popular even though it did not start until one hour after the end of college. Girls who lived close by said they went home and changed and girls who lived further away said that they worked in the library until time to start. The lunchtime sessions were perceived as too short and girls did not like going to their lessons after lunch when they were sweaty. The project manager decided to offer two after-college sessions instead.

*“I liked the time – after ‘dinner’ and before ‘theory’ as ‘it’s a release of energy.’”*

**Student**

### **Daytime sessions – in a community setting**

One of the Chorley Us Girls daytime sessions is offered in partnership with a local children’s centre. Young mums that attended play sessions at a local children’s centre had expressed an interest in doing some sport and physical activity, one of their main barriers to participation was the cost and availability of child care. As a result daytime multi-sport sessions were introduced at the local sports centre with staff from the children’s centre (located across the road) available to care for the children during the activity for the mums.

### **Weekend sessions**

The Us Girls project in Hammersmith and Fulham delivers a female only swimming session on a Saturday morning. This immediately follows a family swim session where the young women attend with their children and partners. This has worked well in attracting a large number of females.





Us Girls Hastings Race for Life

## Top tips

- Think about who you are targeting and recognise the time demands and priorities of that target group – the 'right time' will be different for young women at different life stages.
- Provide activities at a convenient time to fit in around other daily/weekly commitments.
- Ensure a level of continuity – sessions should take place regularly at the same time and place.
- Mid-morning/daytime activities work well for young mums and those out of work.
- For students – put on sessions during or at the end of the college day.
- Weekend activities work well for young women with families.
- Evening activities (between 6 and 8pm) are convenient for working women and those at college.

## Further information

[www.usgirls.org.uk](http://www.usgirls.org.uk)

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