

We see many variations in BDM uniforms because girls (or their parents) had to purchase uniforms and insignia, or make them at home using approved patterns that were sold at department stores.

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## Life in the BDM

The smallest grouping within the League was the Mädelschaft, which consisted of 10 to 15 members. Members were assigned to a group based on their home address, and most girls already knew each other from their neighborhoods or schools.

Groups met twice every week: for the sports afternoon on Wednesdays and for the social evening on Saturdays.

Sports did not play as important a role in the BDM as it did in the male Hitler Youth, but it was nonetheless considered a part of the curriculum. Because many groups did not have sports facilities at their disposal, they did mostly gymnastics, track and field sports, and games.

The social evenings varied widely from group to group. Officially, all training was supposed to consist of part National-socialist ideological education, and part arts, crafts, theater, music, etc. However, it came down mostly on the girl in charge what the group did – some experienced “boring talks on politics”, as one former member put it, while others spent their time mostly with music, crafts, or theater.



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## The BDM at War

While the BDM, unlike the male Hitler Youth, did not receive any paramilitary training and were not groomed to becoming future soldiers, they nevertheless played an important role during the war.

Social evenings during the war were now often used to make items for the troops at the front, writing letters, and packing care packages.

Younger members collected clothing, shoes, and donations for the Winter Relief, held scrap drives, and gathered medicinal herbs.

Older members were expected to take more hands-on positions and often volunteered for the Luftschutz, social services positions (such as helping displaced persons at the train station), or medical positions (such as nurses aides).

However, unlike the male Hitler Youth, hardly a handful of BDM girls took an active part in the last-ditch fighting.

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# Der BDM – Bund Deutscher Mädel

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## The League of German Girls

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## A Brief Introduction

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The League of German Girls saw its start in the 1920s in the form of regional auxiliaries to the male Hitler Youth, which had been founded at the 1926 party congress.

It was not until 1930 that the League of German Girls became official, and not until 1932 that it became a part of the overall Hitler Youth movement.

In 1936, the First Hitler Youth Law made membership in the Hitler Youth mandatory for all children over the age of 10.

Girls between 10 and 14 belonged to the Jungmädel, the junior division of the BDM, and girls over the age of 14 belonged to the League proper.

In 1937, the BDM introduced the “Glaube und Schönheit” (Belief & Beauty) Society, which was supposed to serve as a tie-in between the League and the Frauenschaft. Membership in this group was voluntary and open to girls between the ages of 17 and 21.

Members could remain in the organization into their 20’s and even 30’s, just as long as they did not marry or have children, and the majority of paid leadership positions were held by young women in their mid- to late 20s.

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## Uniforms and Insignia

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When members of the BDM attended official events, or went to their meetings, they were required to wear their uniforms.

The basic uniform was comprised of a dark navy blue skirt and a white blouse, which was open at the neck and worn with a black neckerchief that was held together with a brown leather slide. Worn over the blouse was a short brown jacket.



Worn on the left upper sleeve of both the blouse and the jacket was a black triangle-shaped patch called the Gaudreiteck, which denoted the member’s Obergau and Gau.



On the left chest pocket of both the blouse and sometimes the jacket, members wore their Hitler Youth membership pin, which was a lozenge-shaped enamel pin. On the jacket, this was sometimes worn as a BeVo woven patch on the left sleeve.

Unlike the male Hitler Youth, the BDM only had medical skill badges. Those took the form of a white oval badge with a red y-shaped rune on it. It was worn on the right chest pocket of the blouse or the left cuff of the jacket.



Rank was denoted by the use of colored lanyards. Lanyards came in a short version, like the one pictured above, which was worn looped through the leather slide on the neckerchief and tucked into the left chest pocket, and a long version which was worn around the neck and tucked into the left chest pocket.

The lowest rank in the BDM was that of Mädelschaftsführerin, for which a red and white lanyard was worn. The highest rank was that of the BDM-Reichsreferentin, or national speaker, who reported to the Reichsjugendführer.

In 1938, a new uniform was introduced for leaders above the rank of Gruppenführerin. It consisted of a dark blue skirt, worn with a white blouse and a dark blue tunic. In incimate weather, this uniform was worn with a blue hat and overcoat.

The insignia on the new leaders’ uniform consisted of a cufftitle worn on the lower left cuff of the jacket, and an embroidered eagle worn on the left chest.