

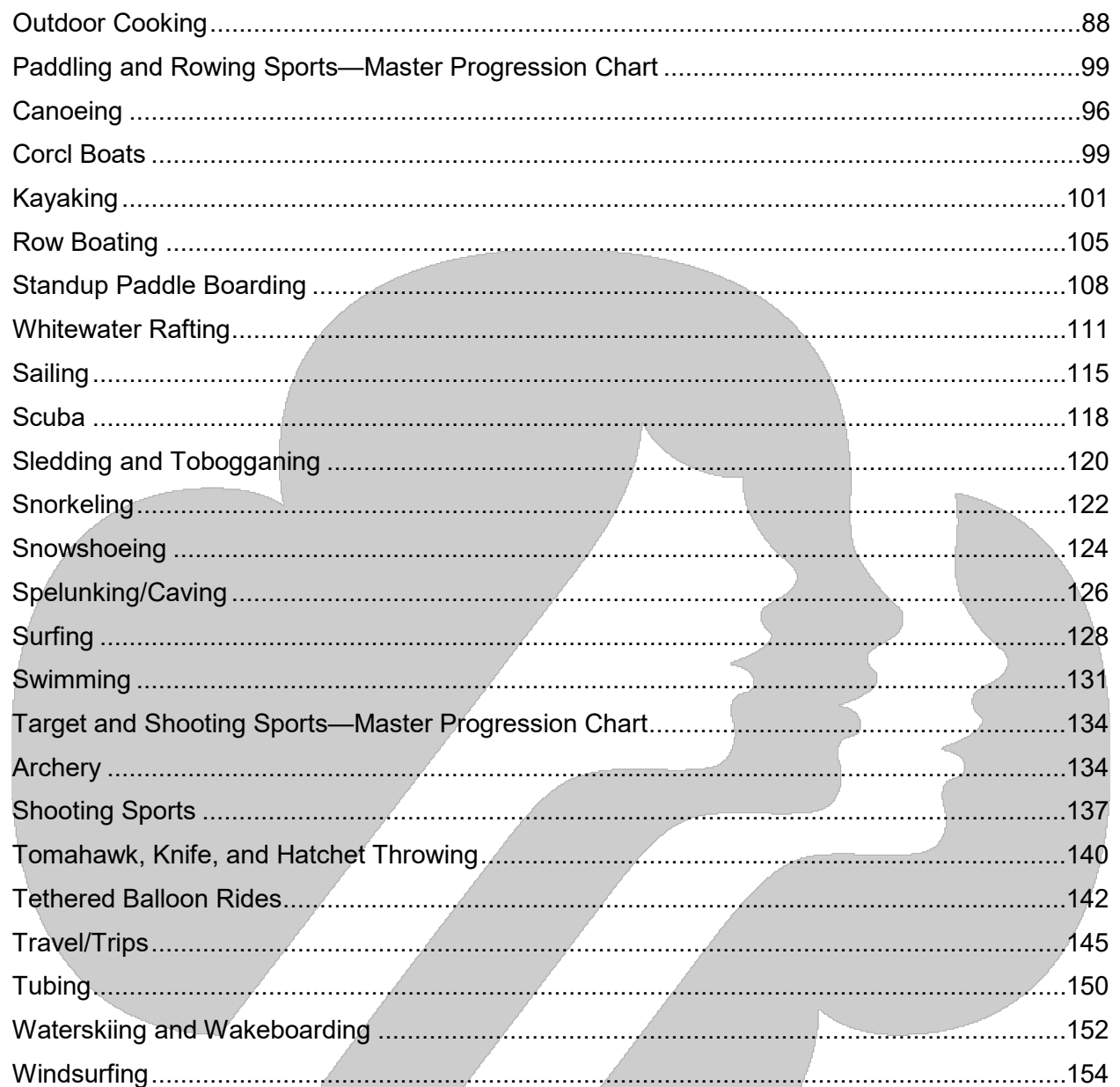
SAFETY ACTIVITY CHECKPOINTS 2018

girl scouts



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Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*

Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

General Statement about *Safety Activity Checkpoints*

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC) is a resource that provides safety standards and guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA)—approved activities.

GSUSA, local councils, and other units holding a credential—including USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO) committees—shall be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these guidelines.

Our Goals with Regard to Outdoor Activities in Girl Scouting

- Deliver on the Girl Scout mission
- Serve girls by offering girl-led activities and challenging opportunities that teach outdoor skills safely
- Provide opportunities for active, experiential learning
- Help councils and troops maximize the delivery of the Girl Scout mission by providing a nationally consistent policy that aims to safeguard the well-being of girls and the Girl Scout organization

Overview of *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*

Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018 has been developed through collaboration between GSUSA and Girl Scout councils in the form of a task group. The SAC task group is responsible for researching outdoor program aspects pertaining to girls' health, safety, and well-being, as well as each approved activity, including transportation to and from the activities.

Activity specifications, safety gear, age, and experience requirements were developed by researching available safety information for each individual activity. Guidelines—including the presence of certified instructors and lifeguards, adult-to-child ratios, travel specifications, activity progression, and activity-specific safety precautions—have been established after taking into consideration factors such as activity-specific loss data, Girl Scouts' historical experience, American Camp Association recommendations, and the industry trends and standards that are considered best practices for safety.

Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018 provides a chart for the activities, called "Activities at a Glance," as an easy reference grid with respect to grade-level specifications for activity participation, council approval requirements, and instructor credentialing (i.e., required certification/experience).

Throughout the resource, several individual activities, such as paddling and rowing, climbing and adventure, and target sports, are categorized under related sections to show progression. A "Miscellaneous Activity" chart is provided for quick and easy reference to popular activities that

do require important safety information, but for which a detailed activity checkpoint has not been necessary or fully developed. For these popular activities, safety determinations may be made by the hosting facility. The sections on these activities include safety tips and important links to information that can help you learn more.

Girl Scout Safety Standards and Activity Guidelines

This section provides general safety standards and guidelines, by topics that apply to all activities. Please read and get familiar with these standards and guidelines.

Take these safety guidelines into account for all group outings. Also, incorporate the standards with the specific activity checkpoint provided for individual approved activities.

Council Approval Requirement. At the top of each activity page you will see a field indicating whether your council's approval is required to perform the activity. There are three categories for this field:

- **Required.** Certain higher-risk activities will require an extra measure of risk management input. This could be related to travel; ensuring a local facility is safe and adequately insured; checking a council's own liability insurance to make sure coverage is adequate; or determining if girls of a certain grade level have the skills to safely engage in an activity. Examples include swimming, skiing, and all travel involving an overnight stay. For these activities, the activity heading will read: "Council Approval: Required."
- **May be required.** Some activities fall into a category that indicates it's up to your council to determine whether it needs or wants to be advised ahead of time. Activities that are accepted and typical in one state may not be common in another state. In addition, facilities and organizations offering activities can vary greatly from state to state. These activities may require adherence to local policy, practice, or statute and consistency with your council's Girl Scout culture to ensure a specific activity is endorsed. In addition, the extremity or intensity of the sport or activity can vary greatly—bicycling, backpacking, and amusement park rides are examples of this. Your council may simply wish to know the grade level of participants for certain activities. Your council is free to update this field accordingly. For these activities, the activity heading will read: "Council Approval: May be required."
- **Not required.** Activities that have traditionally and historically been accepted and successfully performed in all states across the nation and carry a known or predictable risk but are not considered dangerous will carry no insurance implications or exclusions. Examples of this range from geocaching to STEM projects to crafting and the arts. For these activities, the activity heading will read: "Council Approval: Not required."

Activity Preparation. Communicate with your Girl Scout council and girls' parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Make arrangements in advance for all transportation and confirm plans before departure. Girls are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

Adult Supervision. The adult-to-girl ratio is two non-related adults, including one woman, for every:

- 6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 12 Girl Scout Brownies
- 16 Girl Scout Juniors
- 20 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 24 Girl Scout Seniors
- 24 Girl Scout Ambassadors

There should be one extra adult for every additional:

- 1–4 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1–6 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1–8 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1–10 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1–12 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1–12 Girl Scout Ambassadors

Some high-adventure activities may require more adult-to-girl supervision than stated above. For those activities, the safety activity checkpoints for that activity will provide specific adult-to-girl supervision ratios. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger girls, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger girls may not be permitted to participate based on their age—as appropriate, this is called out in the individual activity write-ups. Adult-to-girl ratios do not apply to girls who are not permitted to participate. In cases where younger-girl participation is an option but only under certain conditions, this is indicated toward the top (on some occasions, with an asterisk that's followed by explanation further into the write-up).

Note: For mixed-grade level troops, use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy ratio should be followed.

Itinerary and Key Contacts. Give an itinerary to a contact person at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list that includes girls' parent/guardian contact information, council contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact information can easily be saved to mobile phones.

Safety Gear. Safety gear includes clothing and equipment girls will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary and are required by the industry and/or the American Camp Association while performing the activity. The necessary safety gear is clearly listed under each approved activity. For example, helmets are necessary for bicycling, skiing, and other activities. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it's not listed here. Take roller rinks for example—some offer roller derby or roller dancing, and so they may offer helmets. Other rinks, such as those featuring traditional skating, may not. If a rink offers helmets, accept them for the girls. The same applies to organized sledding or tobogganing. Some runs are faster than others and trail types vary. Therefore, if an organized company is running it and they offer helmets, use them.

Required Gear. Required gear simply means the gear that girls need to actually participate in the activity. For example, ski poles and ski boots are necessary to ski.

Additional Gear. Additional gear may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. These items can be used in any activity, including daylong hikes and camping and other overnight trips, and often make the experience more comfortable.

Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:

- Layers of clothing for wintertime or for activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, lip balm
- Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as spelunking
- Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside, in order to prevent ticks and blisters
- Watch, compass, maps
- Insect repellent
- Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities
- Bottle of drinking water, healthy snacks
- Backpacks—girls carry their own gear and supplies!

Always take additional gear into consideration when planning an outdoor activity or trip in addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity.

Instructor Credibility. Verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or on-site instructors possess the proper skill set, knowledge, training and certification, or documented experience required to meet your council's guidelines and as outlined in the specific approved activity.

With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level and years of experience can positively impact the support needed for volunteers to safeguard girls. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard instructor is 18, qualified instructors of 21 years of age are preferred whenever possible.

General Insurance. Commercial general liability insurance protects the Girl Scout organization. The facility or vendor that hosts your troop event (for example, a riding stable, a hotel, or a bus company) should carry general liability insurance, and auto liability when motor vehicles are involved. A facility that carries valid general liability insurance has almost always been examined for risk by its insurance carrier. If a place does not carry general liability insurance, it's a red flag. It may not be safe, so it would be best to select another place.

When your council requires you to provide documented evidence of insurance, ask the facility for a certificate of insurance for your records. But be aware that some places do not provide documented evidence of insurance to all customers, or only provide a certificate of insurance when a group is large or if the group plans to pay a certain amount.

If you plan to enter into a written contract with a facility or are considering a new vendor, remember to consult your council for the proper insurance requirements. Check to be sure the certificate of insurance you will be obtaining validates the insurance limits outlined in your contract or agreement.

Activity Accident Insurance. Activity accident insurance is a supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities including trips that involve two or fewer overnights.

Trips that are three overnights or more are not covered under automatic activity accident insurance. Also, international trips and any activity with non-members are not automatically covered. Activity accident insurance must be individually purchased for coverage under these scenarios.

You will need to purchase extra activity accident insurance for outings and events that:

- Involve three or more overnights
- Take place outside U.S. territory
- Include non-members, such as siblings and friends

When planning trips, always consult your council to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed.

Respecting the Environment. Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility, and remember our principle of [Leave no trace](#) (scroll down to the “How to Leave No Trace Outdoors” video)—and, in fact, Girl Scouts have a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Doing so will teach girls responsibility and also safeguard your troop and local council from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

Emergency Preparation. Familiarize yourself with basic first aid, emergency response requirements, and other precautions. Know how far away emergency medical and law enforcement services are located. Understand your surroundings in relation to the closest medical facility or hospital. Also, familiarize yourself with the forms of emergency communication and emergency transportation options that are available.

First Aid. Be prepared. Ensure the presence of a first-aid kit and an adult with current certification in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, and one who is prepared to handle cases of abrasions, sprains, and fractures. When camping or hiking, if any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first-aid training. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

Weather Conditions. Always monitor the weather in the days preceding an activity or trip. Check the local weather report on the day of the trip. For circumstances in which forecasted weather could be a risk to safety, consider scheduling alternatives. In the case of severe wind, lightning, hail, ice, snow storm, flood warnings due to heavy rain, or a hurricane or tropical storm, consider contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Consider rescheduling the event if the weather report is severe. Adhere to public safety announcements concerning staying indoors or evacuating the area. In extremely hot weather, girls should go on rides and do other outdoor activities in the morning and late afternoon hours, and during the hottest time of day stay in a shaded area or inside with air conditioning. It is important on extremely hot days to plan for easy access to plenty of drinking water to prevent heat exhaustion or dehydration.

If extreme weather or temperature conditions prevent a trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Buddy System. Use the buddy system, which means pairing girls up as partners. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy throughout a trip or activity. A buddy can warn her partner of danger, give a helping hand, or get immediate assistance when the situation warrants it. All girls are encouraged to stay near the group so that if someone is injured or not feeling well, there are others, including an adult, close by to seek help.

Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme Disease Prevention. Mosquitoes, ticks, and insect bites are an inherent risk to any warm weather outdoor activity. Ensure parents and guardians are aware of the need to have their girls properly covered, preferably with closed shoes and light-colored clothing and socks. It is important to advise parents and guardians of this risk and the safety precautions they should take. The understanding that your troop or council cannot be held responsible for tick bites can be reinforced with a waiver reference on a permission slip

An excellent resource for learning more is the [tick and Lyme disease prevention section of UpToDate](#). This site is used by medical professionals and patients worldwide to find answers to medical questions.

To learn more about using insect repellent safely, visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at [EPA Using Repellents Safely](#). To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out [EPA DEET](#). And for more on skin-applied and clothing-only repellent education, review [EPA Insect Repellents](#).

Health History. Girl Scout councils require an annual health history form to be completed and signed by one parent/guardian for every Girl Scout and filed with the troop leader.

Follow council guidelines to comply with this. The form should reflect any significant medical condition, health issue, or allergy and be updated each year. The form can also reflect any over-the-counter medication that a girl is not permitted to take, if there are any.

If parents send medication on trips or activities, it should be in an original labeled container and administered by one designated adult. Health history forms can be shared with the site or camp physician or nurse ahead of time.

Keep a current and signed health history form for each girl with you when traveling. You may require an updated mid-year health history for overnight trips. For physically demanding activities, such as water sports, horseback riding, or skiing, an additional current health history form may be obtained to make sure all adults are aware of any current medical conditions or special needs. Councils will retain all health history forms in accordance with state record retention requirements and laws.

Health Exams. Some councils also require a health exam for any activity that is three overnights or longer, which may include resident camp. Again, follow your council guidelines with respect to health exams. In most cases, the health exam needs to have been completed within one year of the last date of the trip for a girl to participate. Your council may require a current health exam for adult volunteers who participate in trips of three nights or more, so ask your local council about their policy. A health exam can be given by a licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant, or a registered nurse. The health exam form must be signed by the medical provider.

For large events or trips longer in duration, such as resident camp or a weeklong trip to a ranch, the designated health professional at the trip location is responsible for collecting all health exam forms and health history forms for girls and adults.

Health exam forms and health history forms are to be shared only with designated health professionals and your local council staff responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information is private (by law) and must not be shared or publicly available, so keep it safe and secure. Only share information on a need-to-know basis.

Councils will retain all health exam forms in accordance with individual state record retention requirements and laws.

Vaccination and Immunization. Issues or questions with respect to vaccination exemption periodically arise with activity and trip participation. Vaccine exemption laws vary by state and focus on public and private school attendance more directly than they do for youth organizations, sport clubs, and activities. Therefore, it is best to obtain local state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance if vaccination exemption or girl immunization becomes an issue. A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the [National Conference of State Legislatures website](#).

If you have any questions about your obligation to communicate immunization issues with parents, contact your local Girl Scout council, which may wish to seek legal guidance. Absent state laws that speak directly to vaccine immunization for participation in volunteer youth organizations, the legal guidance with respect to parent communication or advisement should be in accordance with local/state law as it pertains to school attendance.

Including Girls with Disabilities. Girl Scouts is committed to making reasonable accommodations for any physical or cognitive limitations a girl may have. Communicate with girls of all abilities and/or their caregivers to assess special needs and accommodations. To learn more about the resources available, visit [Disabled World](#), which provides general information about people with disabilities. On the site you can also find information and resources available for certain sports and activities—so always check when planning to include a girl with a disability that may impact her participation in a specific activity.

Permission Slips. It is imperative to secure a signed permission slip from a girl's parent or guardian for any trip or special activity. This applies to all girls under the age of 18. In most cases, one parental consent is legally acceptable. However, there may be certain extenuating circumstances regarding a custody situation where dual consent may be best to safeguard troop or council liability. These situations are typically the exception, but it is important to remain both aware of and sensitive to potential scenarios. If there is a question about single versus dual parental consent, please alert your council so they can consult local or state laws for specific legal guidance. For international trips, always get both parents'/guardians' written consent.

Transportation. Keep in mind that 15-passenger vans have been flagged as unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and therefore are not permitted for use in transporting girls. For chartered buses or rented vehicles, always ensure the possession of safety credentials and commercial driving licenses, and the use of seatbelts. Make certain proper insurance is in place by requesting a certificate of insurance with a minimum of \$1 million in auto liability coverage. Uber, Lyft, Curb, and similar ridesharing companies are not permitted to transport girls because the safety, credibility, and insurance of the drivers is far more difficult to qualify than that of traditional or well-known charter and rental companies. Complete auto insurance coverage is often not available or not sufficient for the majority of rideshare drivers.

Overnight Trips. Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in the planning so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During

family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in designated program areas. When parents are staffing an event, daughters should remain in sleeping quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.

The use of Airbnb and other private rentals is not permitted. The safety, credibility, and insurance requirements of private rentals are difficult to qualify compared to traditional commercial properties. With traditional commercial properties like hotels, safety standards are continually monitored. With a private rental there is no way to adequately guarantee that locks are on the doors, that a group of male or female adults are not also present in close quarters, that there are no animals in the building, that the property itself is safe and secure, that the owner is credible, and that there are adequate fire exits. Proper liability coverage or homeowners insurance is often unavailable or not applicable to private rentals in the scenario where guests are paying money for use of the property. In other words, there is no effective insurance on personal private property being rented for commercial public use. This means the property has not been investigated, appraised, or approved for safe public use, including by children. For these reasons, the guideline is to stay away from private rentals such as Airbnb, VRBO, Flipkey, Roomarama, Homeaway, VayStays, Tripping, Wimdu, and Couchsurfing.

Emotional Safety. Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouts a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team-spirited environment and coaching girls to honor this agreement. Team-spirit agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse feelings and opinions, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying, avoiding clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive and helpful communication with others.

Equal Treatment. Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

Modeling the Right Behavior. Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls, unless given special permission by your council for target sport activities. Always obey the law, for example, by not talking on a phone or texting while driving.

Reporting Abuse. Improper touching, sexual advances, sexual communications, or sexual pressure of any kind is strictly prohibited in Girl Scouting. Any form of abuse—whether it be in a sexual context involving minors or in the form of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse—is not acceptable. Volunteers are responsible for following their council's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around abuse or neglect with respect to girls.

Online Safety. Instruct girls never to put their full names or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge and ask them to commit to it.

Money-Earning Activities. Safety is an important consideration throughout money-earning activities, including Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales. During Girl Scout product sales, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to serve as their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-

earning activities that represent partisan politics or are not Girl Scout–approved product sales and efforts. It is imperative that Girl Scouts do not partake in anything that can be construed as unrelated business income, in order to protect our organization’s 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If there is a questionable circumstance, consult your council.

Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it’s only natural that girls will sometimes want to take part in activities that are not specifically addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. In many cases, as new activity options arise, there may not have been an opportunity or a need to fully provide a safety checkpoint. In addition, some activities may be unique to a specific area of the country. If there is a question or a need for specific guidelines on an unlisted activity, please bring it to the attention of your council for specific direction.

After being thoroughly investigated, some activities are clearly classified as “not permitted.” Each sport or activity on the “not permitted” list is evaluated annually on safety factors, council feedback, insurability, and accident history. These activities pose a high risk of severe bodily injury, require extensive prior experience, or require a license to participate. Activities with a poor accident history based on loss data gathered from various industries are not approved and, thus, are deemed “not permitted.” The purpose of prohibiting certain activities is first and foremost to protect girls. The prohibitions also safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of your local council and the Girl Scout organization.

GSUSA cannot approve, endorse, or provide safety checkpoints for these “not permitted” activities.

The following activities are in the **not permitted** category:

- Bungee jumping
- Firearms
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Untethered hot-air ballooning
- Hunting
- Jet skiing or using WaveRunners
- Riding a motorbike
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting/skydiving
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

Bungee Jumping. Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous.

High Risk Activities. Hang gliding, parasailing, zorbing, parachuting/skydiving, and untethered hot-air ballooning are activities similar to bungee jumping in terms of safety regulations, consistency of facilitation, and insurance implications. These are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities from a claims perspective deem them to be high risk.

Privately Owned Aircraft. Flying in privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and (most) councils' commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, your council would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy (if your council purchases this type of policy, which it may not), a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are often excluded.

The severity factor of private-plane risk to girl safety is very high. Although there may not be many plane accidents, there are rarely minor plane accidents. The risk involved concerns multiple fatalities. Also, the risk assessment process involved for a private aircraft itself and the credentialing of private pilots (including the owner's private aviation insurance for passengers, which may exclude anything that resembles commercial use) is too much responsibility to place on volunteers chaperoning girls. Private flying is very uncommon in most states, so the risk assessment process is foreign to most councils and volunteers. There is not enough knowledge of aircraft risk for most councils and GSUSA to be confident about its safety, in addition to the adverse insurance implications.

Outdoor Trampolines. The outdoor trampoline poses a high risk of injury for children. The activity can result in sprains and fractures in the arms or legs—as well as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is so high that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor trampoline park injuries also are an area of emerging concern. Indoor trampolines in a confined padded indoor facility with higher supervision are far safer, but still not recommend for children under six years old.

Paintball Tag. Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a girl is certain to experience some pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting a girl with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury and has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited. Target paintball shooting, however, is permitted.

Hunting. Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are not uncommon during hunting trips. This is also a sport which rarely, if ever, comes up as a requested activity. A very large majority of councils do not commonly hunt or request hunting trips.

Jet Skiing, Motor Biking, ATVs. Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding ATVs are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to poor accident history. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motor bikes

and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

Understanding Higher-Risk Activities—Council Approval Required

Flying in Private Aircraft. Note that flying in private aircraft is a clear and definitive exclusion under most commercial general liability insurance policies and is definitively listed as a “not permitted” activity.

Small chartered aircraft trips are not prohibited because the safety factors involving equipment and pilots are easier to qualify. Also, you will need to check your council’s commercial general liability insurance policy because chartered aviation activity may be covered. Your council may carry a non-owned aviation liability insurance policy, which should also be confirmed. (Again, these policies almost always exclude private aircraft.) An accident involving an aircraft mishap involves the highest possible risk, which is multiple fatalities. Your council itself could be financially liable for any potential loss or lawsuit, should the worst occur. Your council will want to make sure the aviation company has evidenced proper insurance showing a minimum of \$1 million liability insurance with a \$5 million umbrella. It is imperative to get council-level approval and it is strongly recommended that your council consult with GSUSA Risk & Insurance via LShimborski@girlscouts.org for help determining the safety, risk, and insurance aspects of any small professionally chartered aviation activity.

Target Sports. Girl Scouts Nation’s Capital permits target paintball, slingshots, tomahawk throwing and archery with Council permission. Girls may participate in certain target sports not involving the use of firearms, as they are strictly prohibited,

Indoor Skydiving. If your council expressly approves indoor skydiving because it is contained, low-impact, and adjustable to the size and skill-level of participants, then it is not prohibited. Indoor skydiving is not recommended for Girl Scout Daisies or Brownies.

Tethered Hot-Air Ballooning. Some outdoor parks may offer the opportunity to learn the skill of hot-air ballooning in a relatively safe and controlled environment utilizing a tethered hot-air balloon. Consult your council so they can check their general liability insurance to determine if this activity is covered. The council should also examine its non-owned aircraft liability policy, if they have one. A hot-air balloon is an aircraft and viewed the same as small planes or helicopters from an aviation risk perspective. Therefore the same standard applies—chartered (tethered only) hot-air ballooning can be considered, but private hot air balloons cannot.

Tomahawk/Ax Throwing. This is an activity that has been removed from the prohibited list for Girl Scout Ambassadors, Seniors, and Cadettes only. It was determined that girls in these grade-level groups can actively and safely learn tomahawk/ax throwing, which hones their ability to perform the skill in the outdoors. However, handling blades, especially heavy bladed tools, can be risky for beginners. The maturity level of girls should always be considered. The skill set, experience level, and credentials of the facilitator should be thoroughly vetted and approved by your council.

Remember to have a specific process in place for handling requests regarding activities not addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.

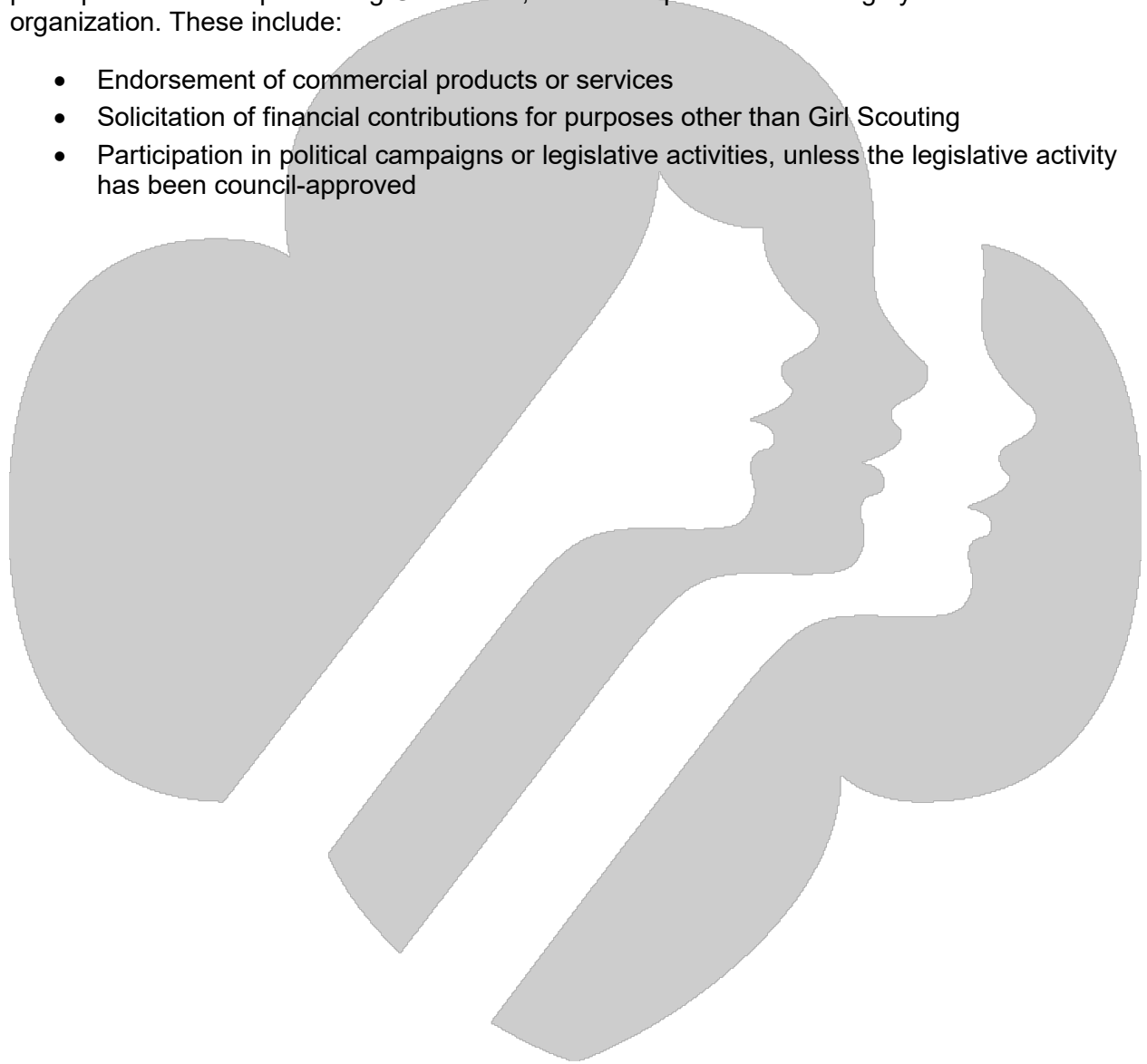
- First, investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity covered in *SAC 2018*.

- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any expert supervision or special certification.
- If there is still a question, always consult your local council for clarification and approval.

Other Actions Girls and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, there are other activities that girls and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts, in order to preserve the integrity of our organization. These include:

- Endorsement of commercial products or services
- Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting
- Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities, unless the legislative activity has been council-approved



Activities at a Glance

Activities in Girl Scouting require consideration by the safe and caring adult who guides the girls through the planning of each activity. Noting the abilities of girl and considering the progression of skills it takes from the easiest to the most difficult part of the activity is the role of the adult. Making sure the complexity of the activities does not exceed girls' individual skills is the reason why the Safety Activities Checkpoints are based on progressive experience. As you explore the many options to engage girls in exciting activities, you will notice that there are recommendations for some activities to start at an older grade level. These recommendations have taken into consideration the emotional, physical, and developmental stages of girls and should guide you as you plan activities with the girls. Please reach out to your council if you have specific questions about the progression. Guidelines may differ from state to state. The ultimate goal is for girls to feel confident and comfortable with each planned activity.

Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	Certificate of Insurance
Amusement Parks	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Animal Interaction and Adventure	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Arts and Crafts	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Backpacking	*	*	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Bicycling	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required when using a vendor
Camping	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Climbing and Adventure							
Challenge Courses	*D	*B	J	C	S	A	Required
Climbing and Rappelling	*D	*B	J	C	S	A	Required

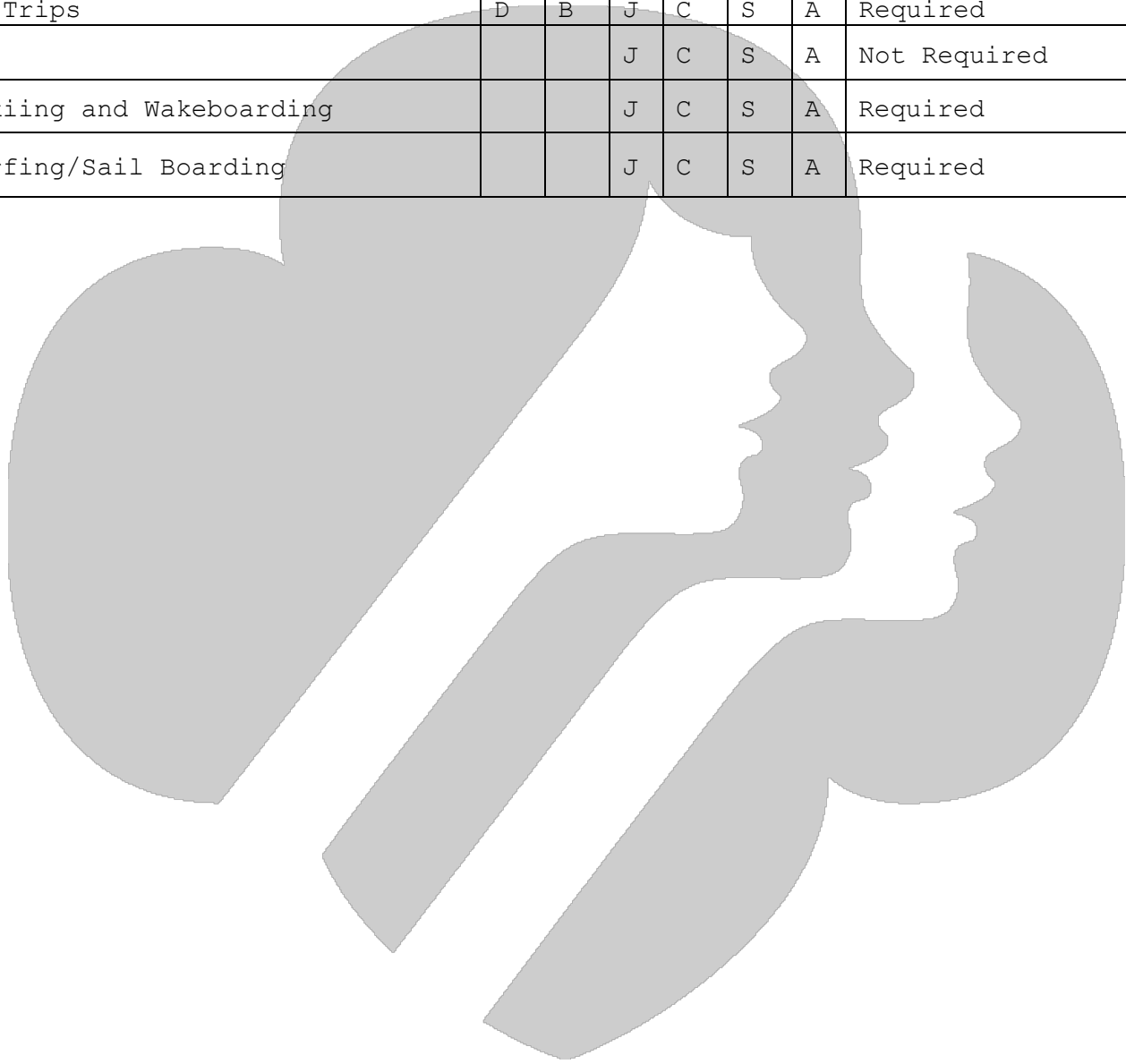
Recreational Tree Climbing			J	C	S	A	Not Required
Zip Lining		*B	J	C	S	A	Required
Computer and Internet Use	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not required
Cookie and Product Sales	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not required
Cross-Country Skiing		B	J	C	S	A	Required
Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Fencing	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Fishing and Ice Fishing	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Geocaching	*D	B	J	C	S	A	Not required
Go-Karts			*J	C	S	A	Required
Hayrides	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Hiking	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Horseback Riding	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Ice Skating	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Indoor Skydiving			J	C	S	A	Required
Indoor Trampoline		B	J	C	S	A	Required
In-Line Skating and Roller Skating	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required

Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	Certificate of Insurance
Inflatables							
Aquatic Bounce Houses and Slides		B	J	C	S	A	Required
Aquatic Climbing Walls			J	C	S	A	Required
Bounce Houses	*D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Bubble Soccer			J	C	S	A	Not Required
Land Sports	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Laser Tag	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Offshore Water/Large Passenger Vessels	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Orienteering			J	C	S	A	Not Required
Outdoor Cooking	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Paddle Sports							
Canoeing	*D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Corcl Boats		B	J	C	S	A	Required when using a vendor
Kayaking		B	J	C	S	A	Required
Row Boating	*D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Standup Paddle Boarding			J	C	S	A	Required
Whitewater Rafting		*B	** J	C	S	A	Required
Parades and Other Large Group Gatherings	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Sailing			J	C	S	A	Required
Scuba Diving				C	S	A	Required

Segway				C	S	A	Required
Skateboarding		B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Sledding, Tobogganing, and Snow Tubing	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Snorkeling			J	C	S	A	Required
Snowshoeing	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Spelunking/Caving			J	C	S	A	Required
STEM Activities	D	B	J	C	S	A	Not Required
Surfing			J	C	S	A	Required
Swimming	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required

Activities at a Glance	Daisies	Brownies	Juniors	Cadettes	Seniors	Ambassadors	Certificate of Insurance
Target Sports							
3-D Archery			J	C	S	A	Required
Archery		B	J	C	S	A	Required
Knife Throwing				C	S	A	Required
Target Slingshot	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Target Paintball		B	J	C	S	A	Required
Tomahawk/Hatchet				C	S	A	Required

Tethered Balloon Rides			J	C	S	A	Required
Travel/Trips	D	B	J	C	S	A	Required
Tubing			J	C	S	A	Not Required
Waterskiing and Wakeboarding			J	C	S	A	Required
Windsurfing/Sail Boarding			J	C	S	A	Required



Amusement Parks

Includes:

- Large theme parks
- Carnivals/smaller amusement-type parks
- Any waterpark or facility that includes more than a pool
- Themed adventure parks
- Controlled go-kart activities

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Amusement Parks

Adventure parks take a wide variety of forms depending on where they are geographically located and the audience they are geared toward. These parks are commercially operated enterprises that offer rides, games, activities, and other forms of entertainment. To ensure a safe park experience, it's important to look at the various activities individually for safety to be sure they are in compliance.

Currently 44 out of 50 states regulate amusement parks. The six without state oversight are Alabama, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, Wyoming, and Utah. These states contain few, if any, amusement parks. (Wyoming has no parks.)

Keep in mind that some locations may have certain activities that are not permissible Girl Scout activities, such as bungee jumping. Be sure to identify these prior to making final plans, and communicate with girls and adults which activities may be restricted because of age, height, and weight. Also, discuss ride and crowd safety, have a designated meeting space, and encourage girls to act responsibly.

Learn More:

- [Saferparks database](#)
- [Guide to U.S. theme parks](#)
- [International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions](#)

Amusement and other types of adventure parks, as listed above, can be found in most states.

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Connect with your Girl Scout council for approved sites or site suggestions to ensure the location is vetted. If it is not, allow enough time to have the location approved.

Inquire about adequate insurance. The park you attend may or may not be able or willing to provide evidence of \$1 million liability insurance and instructor certifications upon request, depending on the size of the group. It's best to at least inquire and have the conversation in order to verify credibility of the park's management.

Ensure safety of theme-park rides. Obtain full information about the rides and other activities and evaluate them for safety especially concerning the age, height, and weight levels of girls.

Follow the "Swimming" safety activity checkpoints. Pay particular attention to water park safety rules. Ensure there are certified lifeguards at each activity. Girls will need to have a swim test prior to the trip to ensure they can swim.

Know where girls are at all times. Keep track of girls' whereabouts. Conduct a head count before and after activities. Ensure that girls know where to go and how to act when confronted by strangers.

Review plans upon arrival. Adults should obtain a copy of the park guide to facilitate the visit and gain important information on park policies, as well as the location of restrooms and the first-aid station. Plan the rides or events to attend with predetermined groups.

Determine a meeting spot beforehand. Adults should discuss plans for the visit with girls and set a place to meet, establishing a home base spot for girls to go if they get separated from the group.

Verify first-aid particulars. Know where the first-aid station is located. Ensure the presence of a first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of abrasions, sprains, and fractures.



Animal Interaction

Includes:

- All animal tourism and interaction
- Farm animals and home pets
- Wild animals (e.g., dolphin rides)
- Rescue, shelter, and therapy animals

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Animal Interaction

Planned interaction with animals is a popular and desired activity for many Girl Scouts. From petting zoos to therapy dogs to rescue animals. Girls can learn about animals and have memorable experiences.

Unplanned interaction with animals can occur during other activities, such as hiking. Making a decision not to interact with an animal may provide a valuable learning opportunity as well.

This activity primarily focuses on planned animal interaction under a controlled environment, including all educational programs, wildlife tourism, and farm animals.

Learn More:

- [International Union for the Conservation of Nature](#)
- Benefits of interacting with animals: [UVA School of Medicine study](#)
- Child safety around animals: [HealthyChildren.org](#)

Animal Safety and Health Reminders

Partner with reputable organizations. Ensuring they have liability insurance helps credibility.

Assess your girls. Ensure they are mature enough to follow rules and exercise self-control. Do not allow children under age five to interact with reptiles, amphibians, baby chicks, ducklings, or petting zoo animals (per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

Control their interaction. Let girls know that it's not okay to tease, hurt, or play roughly with any animal.

Keep it clean. Have girls wash hands before and after contact with animals, animal bedding, or waste.

Be vigilant. Treat bites or scratches according to the first-aider's training to avoid infection. Report animal aggression, bites, or other concerns to the authorities and to your council.

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Review some basic animal interaction rules:

- Do not pet or otherwise disturb an animal that is sleeping or eating.
- Stay away from an animal's food.
- Do not tease or abuse an animal.
- Watch for warning signs like growling or hissing.
- Never pet an unfamiliar dog, cat, or other animal.

- Be cautious about touching animals, such as puppies and kittens, within view of their mother.

In addition, in the case of dogs for example, don't run when approached by an unfamiliar one. Running may make the dog aggressive. Instead, slowly back away, avoid sudden movements, and avoid direct eye contact, but keep the dog within view.

Pets, Therapy Animals, and Rescue Shelters

Protect girls as well as hosts' house pets. This should be taken into consideration during meetings, overnights, and activities. Secure all pets out of reach when girls are present.

Certified, trained service animals like guide or hearing dogs must be welcomed. Please be welcoming whenever their handler is present.

Follow rules. These are often provided by animal rescue facilities and shelters.

Supervise girls closely. Watch the girls, and practice the buddy system.

Be clean. Take care to wash hands and sanitize footwear to protect girls from disease and to prevent spreading disease from one animal to another.

Make it a learning experience. Talk to girls and research the root causes that lead to animals being in shelters. Brainstorm Take Action projects the troop might plan to help.

Avoid these activities while at the rescue or shelter:

- Eating or drinking
- Sitting or playing on the ground
- Feeding the animals, unless shelter personnel supervise and contact is controlled with barriers
- Coming in contact with animals if you have an open wound
- Coming in contact with animal waste

Petting Zoos and Animal Ambassadors

- Follow rules provided by the zoo.
- Take care to wash hands and sanitize footwear, as directed.
- Do not handle bedding, food, water, or manure unless trained to do so.

Drive-Through Zoos and Parks

- Drive vehicles with secure roofs and with doors and windows that fully close.
- Keep windows rolled up.
- Do not get out of the vehicle.

Swimming with Dolphins and Other Interactive Experiences

- Choose a safe and responsible animal organization. See the "Selecting a Partner Organization" section below.

- Review safety management with the organization before visiting the site.
- Make sure predators are secured or separated from girls.
- Contact your council for specific approval and guidance for wolf, big cat, shark, or similar interactions.
- Follow any related safety activity checkpoints. For example, follow the swimming checkpoints when swimming with dolphins.

Farm Animals and Husbandry

- Ask permission before entering a farm or barnyard.
- Ask if there are areas to avoid.
- Get an orientation from an on-site expert. Learn and follow their safety rules.
- See the safety activity checkpoints for horseback riding or vaulting on horseback, if you will work with or ride horses.

Wild Animals

- Learn about the animals that live in the area you frequent or will visit.
- Never approach wild animals. Generally, animals will not attack or bite if left alone.
- Back away if you come across baby animals and assume that there is a protective mother nearby. Backing away protects you and the babies.
- Report animals that appear sick or that behave strangely to the authorities.
- Take care in snake country:
 - Don't stick your hand or foot in places you can't see.
 - Wear closed-toed shoes.
 - Use a flashlight when walking on hot nights to avoid stepping on a snake.
 - Do not handle snakes, even if you think they are dead.
 - Back away slowly if you encounter a snake.
- Never feed wild animals.
- Store food well away from tents and out of the reach of animals. If the site is in bear country, check with local authorities on precautions to take, and ask if a bear-proof canister is required for food.

Choosing Partner Organizations

Select those that have visitor safety and animal well-being as top priorities.

For visitor safety, look for organizations that:

- Provide handwashing stations
- Provide an orientation or training on safety rules
- Supervise visitors
- Limit visits so that animals don't get overwhelmed
- Keep the environment clean, especially with manure picked up
- Have food stations for visitors that are separate from animal enclosures

For animal well-being, look for organizations that:

- Keep animals healthy and cared for with food, clean water, and a sheltered place to rest
- Don't have animals that sway or pace in their enclosures, as these behaviors can be signs of stress
- Keep exotic or wild animals only while they recover or because they can't be reintroduced into the wild
- Don't engage in the commercial trade of animals or animal parts
- Don't breed animals and have measures in place to prevent breeding, unless the animals are part of an authorized release program
- Don't take in more animals than they can humanely handle
- Don't use animals for entertainment, forcing animals to perform acts such as rides, shows, or tricks
- Operate in the best interest of the animals, rather than for profit
- Don't allow venomous animals to be handled

Note: Be wary of places that claim to be sanctuaries, especially those overseas. They often operate for profit and are likely to exploit animals. Wildlife tourism sites, including those that offer elephant rides, the opportunity to hold newborn cubs, or the chance to pet tigers, are also potentially exploitive and dangerous. Investigate these beforehand at the [Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries](#) or [WASP](#). Ethical tour operators can be found [here](#).

Help girls learn about animal exploitation in the cub petting or elephant riding industries. Share [this National Geographic article](#) that explains why girls may want to forgo activities that include wild animal interaction.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Backpacking

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies and Brownies

About Backpacking

A backpacker's primary mission is to explore on foot, while carrying all her gear in a backpack and being a good steward of the land. These checkpoints focus on preparing for backpacking in remote areas, but the recommendations can be used in urban areas too.

Backpacking is not recommended for Daisies and Brownie because of the equipment used in backpacking trips (see below) and the longer duration of the activity. Hiking is recommended for Daisies and Brownies to prepare them for the adventure of backpacking at the next grade level.

When choosing a destination, connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions, such as Girl Scout camps.

Learn More:

- AmericanTrails.org
- Backpacker.com
- Trails.com
- LeaveNoTrace.org

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Contact national parks to inquire about their accommodations for people with disabilities. To find resources to adapt various sports, including backpacking, to persons of all abilities visit [Disabled Sports USA](http://DisabledSportsUSA.org). To find backpacking programs for youth of various abilities contact [No Barriers USA](http://NoBarriersUSA.org) and [Wilderness Inquiry](http://WildernessInquiry.org).

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Encourage girls to share resources. Have girls make a list of needed gear and supplies and determine which items can be shared. This way no girl is carrying a heavier backpack than necessary.

Choose an appropriate backpacking route. The route chosen needs to be within the ability of every person in the group, and the pace needs to accommodate the slowest backpacker. Determine the length of the trip by the backpackers' grade levels, level of experience and ability, physical condition, nature of the terrain, and weight of the load to be carried as well as the season and weather conditions, the water quantity and quality, and the activities planned along the way.

Assess the safety of backpacking sites. The route needs to be known to at least one of the adults or a report should be obtained in advance to assess potential hazards. Ensure that a land-management or similar agency is contacted during the trip-planning stage to help with available routes and campsites, recommended group size, information about water quantity and quality, and permits (if needed).

Assess backpack quality and do a trial run. Ensure that backpacks and all equipment (including food and water) weigh no more than 20 percent of each person's ideal (not actual) body weight. Guide girls in choosing backpacks, adjusting straps, and taking them on and off. Have the girls plan and conduct a series of conditioning hikes before the backpacking trip.

Ensure that backpackers have a comprehensive understanding of the trip. Group members need to be trained to be observant of the route, the surroundings, and the fatigue of individuals. Instruction should be given on the safety rules for backpacking, such as staying

together in a group, recognizing poisonous plants and biting or stinging insects and ticks, respecting wild animals, and behaving effectively in emergencies. Ensure that girls know how to read maps, use a compass, navigate a route, and estimate distance.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid (including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED), who is prepared to handle cases caused by extremes of temperature, such as heat exhaustion, heat stroke, frostbite, cold exposure, and hypothermia, as well as sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness. Ensure that emergency transportation is available, if possible; if any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first-aid certification. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training. The designated adult should have a working cell phone for emergencies.

Take safety precautions. Create a risk management plan with the girls and leave a copy at home. Search-and-rescue procedures for missing persons should be written out in advance, reviewed, and practiced by girls and adults. Methods of communication with sources of emergency care, such as police, hospitals, and park and fire officials, should also be arranged in advance. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans that cover any situation with girls.

Practice safe backpacking. Hiking after dusk is not permitted. Off-trail hiking must be done with an experienced leader. The group must hike away from the edges of waterfalls, rock ledges, and slopes with loose rocks. Girls are never allowed to go on high-altitude climbs.

Safety Gear

Backpacking requires various equipment dependent on the length of trip, location, and weather.

- Lightweight, layered clothing and outerwear appropriate for weather conditions
- Water bottle or hydration pack (each girl should carry at least one quart)
- Non-perishable, high-energy, lightweight foods such as dehydrated meals, fruits, and nuts
- Whistle
- Ten-essentials emergency survival kit, including a flashlight, first-aid kit, extra clothing (including a waterproof jacket), snacks, tablets for purifying water, emergency shelter, matches in a waterproof container, a knife, a map, a compass or GPS, and a water bottle
- Backpack appropriate for size and experience of user
- Sturdy hiking/trail footwear with thick soles (soft-soled shoes to wear on campsite after removing hiking footwear), high-tech socks designed for hiking along with wicking-liner socks to keep moisture away from feet
- Map and compass or compass and GPS
- Sleeping bag, preferably a mummy or lightweight sleeping bag; closed-cell sleeping pad
- Potable water or water purification supplies to remove potential contaminations from natural water sources; use water filters designed to remove *Giardia lamblia*—see the outdoor cooking safety activity checkpoints for purification tips
- Unbreakable, lightweight knife/fork/spoon combo, with a bowl and cup
- Portable cook stove and fuel, whenever possible (to reduce the use of firewood)

- Waste management supplies (toilet paper, garbage bag, plastic trowel to dig a cat hole, hand sanitizer)
- Food storage (check local regulations to find out if a bear-proof canister is required)
- A working cell phone for emergencies (in the hands of an adult) or a specific backup plan
- Hat or bandana

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Bicycling

Council Approval: May be required for trips

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Bicycling

Cycling is a fun activity that girls can enjoy their entire lives. As with all activities, progression through skill building and conditioning are very important. Long day cycling trips, mountain and road biking, and long-distance cycling trips can be strenuous. The terrain may be difficult. Girls must also carry more gear and supplies than on short day trips. For this type of cycling, it's essential for girls to have opportunities to condition themselves beforehand. When training for lengthy bicycle trips, set realistic goals for mileage. Plan to gradually increase the distance. For instance, one week aim to ride ten miles. Strive for 15 the next.

Learn More:

- Middle and high school mountain biking teams: [National Interscholastic Cycling Association](#)
- [American Bicyclists](#)
- [People for Bikes](#)
- [International Mountain Bicycling Association](#)
- [Teen Trail Corps](#)
- [Adventure Cycling Association](#)
- [USA Cycling](#)
- [Tread Lightly](#)

Learn about road bike routes at [AdventureCycling.org](https://adventurecycling.org). Find out about mountain bike trails in your area at [MTBproject.com](https://mtbproject.com). Check in with your local bicycle coalition or mountain bike association for events that can help you learn. Contact local bike shops and ask if they will host a maintenance clinic or guided ride for your group.

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](https://www.nationalcenteronhealth.org) provides for people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Organize cycling groups. Participants should travel in groups of five or six, unless on a bike path. An adult must ride at the head and rear of every two groups. Groups should ride with at least 150 feet between them so that vehicles may pass. Each girl must have her own bike, unless riding tandem. Girls riding tandem bikes must have their own seats.

Select a safe cycling site or route. A community bike park is an excellent place to evaluate and practice bike handling skills. When selecting a trip route, use designated bicycle paths whenever possible. Avoid routes with heavy traffic and observe all state and local biking rules.

Make careful plans for the type of road or trail to be traveled. For example, secondary roads are quiet, but may have trees, curves, and hills that obstruct visibility. When planning to cycle on trails, check that trails are authorized for cycling by contacting land managers or checking jurisdictional websites and maps. Notify jurisdictional authorities about the group's trip when necessary.

Know your surroundings. Check the location of emergency and medical services along the route.

Consider your riders. Ensure that the length and terrain of the route, the time of day, weather, and the equipment are appropriate for the girls' experience level and physical condition. Review the route together and practice map-reading skills.

Check the ABCs:

- **Air:** Check tire pressure and ensure that it meets the tires' specific air requirement.
- **Brakes:** Check that pads and brakes are adjusted appropriately.
- **Chain:** Make sure that the chain is engaged with gears, and shifting smoothly.

Ride safely. Plan to ride only during daylight hours. Ride with the flow of traffic. Obey traffic regulations, signals, lane markings, and local ordinances pertaining to bicycling. When on natural surface trails, cyclists yield to all others on the trail including hikers and those on horseback. Review trail etiquette guidelines.

Help girls learn to:

- **Watch the road.** Recognize and avoid common roadway hazards like drainage grates and manhole covers, sand, gravel, glass, wet leaves, litter, and other road and trail hazards.
- **Communicate and cooperate with other road and trail users.**
- **Ride defensively.** Girls should stay aware of their surroundings and put themselves in the best position for safety.
- **Prepare for the unexpected.**
- **Pack light.** In addition, cyclists should carry a load weight on practice rides which is similar to the load weight they will carry on the planned, longer trip.
- **Practice packing and storing gear.** Light gear is stored in bicycle panniers (foldable carriers) or packs on the back of the bike.
- **Practice bike-riding skills in traffic.** These include signaling, scanning ahead and behind (especially before moving left), yielding to oncoming traffic, and making left turns. Girls should ride single file with traffic, but can ride side-by-side briefly in order to pass a slower rider.
- **Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead.**
- **Be aware of hazards.** Understand that motor vehicle traffic presents the greatest danger to cyclists. Other hazards that also cause cycling accidents include oil, wet leaves, parked cars, parked cars with doors that open in front of a cyclist, and rocks.
- **Brake early.** Girls should brake before they have to, especially on curves and when going downhill.
- **Stop fully.** It's important to make a full stop and look left, right, and left again, especially at the end of a driveway and before entering a street or roadway.
- **Walk bikes across busy intersections. Signal properly.** Use hand signals to let other cyclists and drivers know when they plan to turn and stop. Girls should also let other cyclists know when they plan to pass, prior to actually passing.
- **Use lights.** Keep lights on to increase visibility.
- **Make basic repairs.** This should be based on what is age-appropriate
- **Dress the right way.** Dress in layers in cooler temperatures, and shed layers as you get warmer. Avoid cotton and use synthetic fabrics instead because they wick sweat away from skin. Wear reflective or light-colored clothing when cycling at dusk, and wear bright-colored or fluorescent clothing during the day. On longer trips in cooler weather, carry extra clothing and rain gear. Don't wear dangling earrings, bracelets, or necklaces that can tangle in equipment.

Learn emergency moves. Read about and practice the quick stop, rock dodge, and instant turn at www.bikeleague.org, which also provides tips for beginners.

On bicycling day:

- **Stretch your muscles.** Before cycling, always warm up. Try walking, jogging, or cycling slowly before going faster. Gently stretch your hamstrings, quads (against a wall), and calves, before and especially after riding.
- **Be prepared in case of an emergency.** Provide a detailed itinerary and plan to call and check in with someone each day. Carry identification and a list of emergency phone numbers and contact information for bike repair shops.
- **Prepare for the long haul.** Adjust bicycles frequently for comfort. Check handlebars after adjusting the seat for proper leg extension. When stopping for the day, cool down gradually by walking around for a few minutes—don't stop cycling abruptly. Watch girls so that they don't push beyond their endurance levels.

Safety Gear

Safety gear needed will depend on the length of your trip, the location, and the weather.

Bicycles should be in good working order and appropriate for the type of riding planned. Seats should be adjusted to the right height for each rider. Girls should have a slight bend in the knee when seated. A seat that's set too low is a common problem and causes significant discomfort. Watch for seats set too high, too; A girl's legs should never be fully extended.

It's also important for girls to have appropriate pedals for their experience level. Beginners should use flat pedals; experienced riders may choose clip-in pedals. Protective bicycle helmets with properly fitted safety straps are also important. Helmets should fit comfortably but snugly, be worn level on the head, and not move in any direction when the chin strap is securely fastened.

The helmet should meet the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F1163-88 requirements. Check the helmet for a Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) seal.

You'll also need a cycling repair kit for each group. Each kit should contain:

- A tire pump
- Spare tubes of appropriate size
- A tire patch kit
- Tools, including tire irons, a screwdriver, an adjustable wrench, pliers, and hex-head (Allen) wrenches
- Lubricating fluid
- Front and rear lights, for visibility during the day and at dusk
- Bike bell
- Reflectors
- Two water bottles or a hydration pack
- Day pack
- Appropriate clothing, such as bike shorts designed for cycling with wicking fabric

- Non-perishable, high-energy foods such as energy bars, fruits, and nuts
- Cycling gloves
- Stiff-soled athletic shoes such as court shoes or cycling shoes for beginners. Shoes with clips for experienced riders using clip-in pedals.
- General map and/or bike route map or map app on a smart phone

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Camping



Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Camping

Camping, a great Girl Scout tradition, is one of the very first activities that Girl Scouts' founder Juliette Gordon Low encouraged for girls. The key to an enjoyable camping experience is being prepared—by packing just enough gear, supplies, and weather-appropriate clothing. Girl Scouts advocate for the Leave No Trace method of camping, which involves leaving a campground the way it exists in nature, free of garbage and human impact.

You can add to the experience with a camp kaper chart. Divide up cooking duties and get creative about preplanning outdoor meals. Be ready with camp entertainment. Before you go camping, read about camping stories, songs, activities, and games.

Note: When planning activities to do while camping, remember that girls are never allowed to hunt, go on high altitude climbs, or ride all-terrain vehicles or motor bikes.

For travel camping—camping as you travel—note the additional safety precautions listed.

Learn More:

- [American Camp Association](#)
- [Go Camping America](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)

Camping with Daisies and Brownies

A Daisy troop may participate in an occasional overnight camping experience. Daisies who have completed kindergarten may independently participate at day camp and in resident camp experiences lasting up to three nights. Daisies who have completed first grade may independently participate in resident camp experiences lasting four or more nights.

Travel camping is not recommended for Daisies and Brownies.

Know where to camp when camping with Daisies and Brownies, which includes Girl Scout camps; public, private, state, and national parks; and sites deemed appropriate by local and state authorities.

Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions and for information on using a non-council-owned site. Search for campground locations at [Reserve America](#).

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls of various abilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about adapting camping activities at [Disabled Sports USA](#).

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Safe camping locations are Girl Scout camps; public, private, state, and national parks; and sites deemed appropriate by local and state authorities. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions and for information on using a non-council-owned site. The campsite should be able to provide evidence of \$1 million liability insurance and instructor certifications upon request.

Verify leader/instructor knowledge, experience, judgment, and maturity. Ensure that at least one adult is trained or possesses knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas:

- Outdoor program activities and leadership
- Girls' emotional responses to trips, including homesickness
- Trip planning in a girl-led environment
- Safety management
- Program activities specific to the trip
- Group dynamics and management
- Outdoor cooking (if relevant)

Ensure that supervision of girls and adults for travel camping include at least two adults who are additionally trained, or have documented experience, in the following areas:

- Participation in similar trips
- Familiarity with the area in which the trip is conducted
- Physical fitness and skills necessary to support the group
- Chosen mode(s) of transportation
- Site orientation
- Emergency procedures

- Minor maintenance for equipment and vehicles, as appropriate

If travel camping (using campsites as a means of accommodations), verify the following adult certifications and standards:

- For trips by small craft, one adult is currently certified as required by the safety activity checkpoints for the particular mode of transportation being used (canoe or kayak, for instance).
- For trips that involve swimming, one adult who is present is currently certified in basic lifeguarding.
- Each driver of motorized transportation is at least 21 years old and holds a valid license appropriate to the vehicle.
- No adult drives more than six hours per day, with rest breaks every two hours.
- If a trailer is used, it is in compliance with all state, local, and federal regulations for the areas of travel. The assigned driver is experienced in pulling a trailer. No girls or adult leaders ride in the trailer.
- No caravanning (cars following closely together, with the lead vehicle in charge) is allowed. Each driver must have information about route and destination in addition to the cell phone numbers of other drivers.
- Ensure that girl and adult participants receive information about first-aid procedures, emergency and rescue procedures, environmental awareness, and program plans for mode of travel and geographic area, as well as operational procedures (water purification, food preparation, camping equipment, sanitation, and food storage procedures).

Sleeping Arrangements

Male volunteers may not sleep in the same space as girls. During indoor camping overnights, men must sleep in another activity area or a room that's separate from girls, or (if the weather permits) in a tent outside. If possible, men should have their own designated bathroom. If a unisex bathroom is used the door must have a working lock, or a system for notifying others that the bathroom is in use. This system should be reviewed and understood by all girls and adults.

Men should not have to walk through the girls' sleeping area to get to the bathroom. When camping in tents or single room cabins, men must stay in a tent or a cabin that's separate from the girls or women.

During family or "he and me" events (in which girls share sleeping accommodations with men), ensure the sleeping details are clearly explained in a parent/guardian permission slip.

More than one family may use a tent or single-room cabin during these events only if both families agree.

In public venue overnights, such as museums or at malls, ask if there is a separate sleeping area and bathrooms for men. If no such area exists, designate an area out of the way or off to the side so that men are not sleeping alongside the girls.

For long-distance travel, men must have separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms away from girls. Each participant should have her own bed. If girls want to share a bed, they must obtain parent/guardian permission. Girls and adults may not share a bed, however, though some councils may make exceptions for mothers and daughters.

Women are not required to sleep in the sleeping area (for example, a tent or cabin) with girls, but if a woman does share the sleeping area, two unrelated women must always be present.

For sites without electric lights and toilet facilities (otherwise known as primitive campsites):

- Choose and set up your campsite well before dark.
- Use a previously established campsite if available.
- Make sure the campsite is level, below tree line, and located at least 200 feet away from all water sources and.
- Avoid fragile mountain meadows and areas with wet soil.
- Avoid camping under dead tree limbs.
- Use existing fire rings if a fire is necessary.
- If a latrine is not available, use individual cat holes—holes for human waste that are at least 200 feet away from the trail and known water sources—to dispose of human waste. *Note:* Cat holes are not permitted in some areas, so follow local sanitary codes or alternative instructions in those areas.
- Wash dishes and do personal bathing at least 200 feet away from water sources.
- Store food in a secure location away from tents and out of reach of animals.
- Where necessary, use a bear-proof container to store food or, if allowed or appropriate, hang food at least ten (10) feet off the ground from a rope that's stretched between two trees. If the site is in bear country, check with local authorities for additional precautions.

Safety Gear

- Clothing, including a rain jacket or poncho that can be layered and is appropriate for the weather
- Socks with sturdy shoes, hiking boots, or sneakers (no sandals, clogs, flip-flops, or bare feet)
- A sleeping bag that's rated for the anticipated temperature
- A flashlight and other battery-powered lights for indoor use (no candles, kerosene lamps, portable cook stoves, heaters, or other open-flame devices are to be used inside tents)
- A first-aid kit
- Insect repellent
- A hat or bandana
- A hat, gloves, and thermal underwear for cool temperatures
- Flame-resistant tents or tarp (no plastic tents)
- A map and either a compass or a GPS

- Mosquito netting, where necessary
- Cooking supplies (pots, pans, utensils, mess kit, dunk bag, etc.)
- A cooler for food storage
- Portable cook stoves and fuel whenever possible (to reduce the use of firewood)
- A flashlight or propane-fueled lantern (for outdoor use)
- A water purification kit

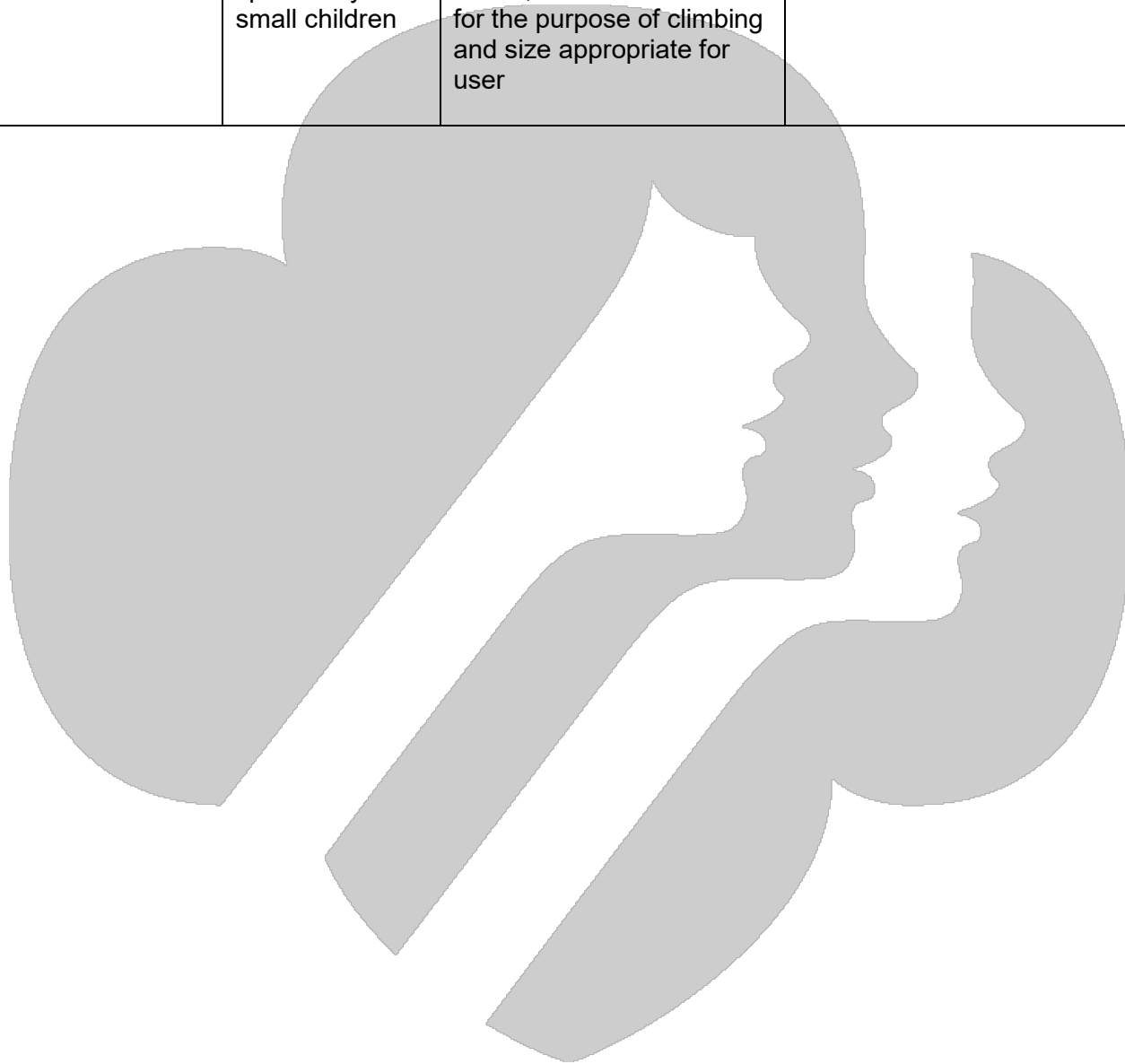
These checkpoints should be reviewed with camps, facilities, or with your council when appropriate.



Climbing and Adventure Sports—Master Progression Chart

Climbing Type	Grade Levels	Safety Standards and Gear	Additional Information
Slacklining	D, B, J, C, S, A	Sneakers Comfortable clothing Specific uniform or costume Slackline Check anchors	Baseline for Beginners Slacklining Outdoor Slacklining
Initiatives and Low Elements (any element that has a fall distance of 6 feet or less)	D, B, J, C, S, A	Sneakers Comfortable clothing appropriate for weather Activity elements and supplies	Ultimate Campsource Team Building Team Building and Low Challenge Elements
High Elements (any element that has a fall distance of 6 feet or more)	B, J, C, S, A Brownies can participate only with indoor high elements specifically designed for small children.	Climbing helmets (Union of International Alpine Association–approved) Belaying equipment: ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets that are designed, tested, and manufactured for the purpose of climbing and size appropriate for user	Association Challenge Course Technology
Bouldering (any element that has a fall distance of 6 feet or less)	B, J, C, S, A	Comfortable clothing Sneakers Spotters	Bouldering Low Elements

Artificial Climbing Walls (indoor and outdoor)	B, J, C, S, A No free climbing above 6 feet; Brownies on indoor walls designed specifically for small children	Auto belay/harnessed indoor ropes Belaying equipment: ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets that are designed, tested, and manufactured for the purpose of climbing and size appropriate for user	Expert Advice Indoor Climbing
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Challenge Courses



Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Challenge Courses

A challenge course is a set of structures that provide a setting for physical challenges designed to increase participants' self-confidence and physical coordination, to increase group cooperation, and to be fun.

Initiative games and low elements require the group to work together to accomplish mental or physical challenges; spotters safeguard the movements of each member of the group. High ropes challenge courses involve components for individual or group challenges that are six feet or more off the ground. A safety belay (a rope to secure a person to an anchor point) is used with a harness, and participants wear helmets. Spotters (participants who safeguard the movements of a member of the group) provide support and protect the head and upper body of a climber in case of a fall.

Each participant must possess the physical strength and technical skills to use the equipment and understand the safety procedures and consequences of her actions. Connect with your council for suggestions and site approval.

Note that Daisies and Brownies may participate only in activities designed for their ages, with equipment suitable to the size and ability of each girl. Outdoor high ropes, and high elements are only permitted for Juniors and older.

Learn More:

- [Association for Experiential Education](#)
- [Association for Challenge Course Technology](#)
- List of accredited vendors: [Professional Ropes Course Association](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](#) provides for people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. High ropes courses require an instructor trained and certified by a verified agency. The instructor must demonstrate competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training. Initiative games and low ropes courses require a trained and certified instructor or an instructor with training and documented experience, according to your council guidelines and Girl Scouts' *Volunteer Essentials* resource.

Qualified instructors will have competence in equipment maintenance, safety techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training. Ensure that the instructor has provided written documentation of the completed training as well as proof of participation in routine instructor review and updates. Instructors need to be skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching and supervising spotting and belaying techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group. Before use, instructors should inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas. A minimum of two instructors need to be present.

Ensure that equipment is well-maintained. There needs to be a documented maintenance schedule and periodic inspection by instructors and outside professionals of all artificial structures and equipment used in the activities. A use log should be kept on all equipment that's subject to stress, wear, and deterioration. A written equipment monitoring and retirement process should be established and followed by the facility.

Girls learn about and prepare for challenge courses. Instructors teach a set of readiness and action commands to all participants for climbing, spotting, and belaying. All participants should use gentle muscle warm-up and stretching activities before beginning physical activities. Instructors must describe the objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants before beginning an activity.

Girls practice safe challenge course techniques. Spotting techniques are taught, demonstrated, and practiced by participants prior to any challenge course activity. All activities are appropriately spotted. For activities where partners are needed, instructors should match participants according to size and skill level, if appropriate. Instructors must supervise all tie-ins, belays, and climbs on high ropes courses and spotting on low elements courses. Participants must not be stacked more than three levels high vertically (in a pyramid, for example) at any time. No one should stand on the middle of someone else's back.

Instructor-to-participant ratios must meet the standard as identified by the course manufacturer or installer and need to be in compliance with industry best practice standards.

Safety Gear

- Sturdy shoes
- Climbing helmets (with Union of International Alpine Association–approved label) must be worn for all climbing activities in which the participant is more than six feet off the ground and/or on belay and by participants standing in the “fall zone” beneath a climbing element
- Disposable shower cap liner, for use with public rental helmets

- Belaying equipment—including ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets—designed and tested for this type of activity and appropriate for the size of the user
- Long pants or bike pants for activities that may lead to skin abrasions on legs
- Close-fitting clothing (avoid wearing loose clothing, especially around the head and neck)
- A chest harness with seat harness or full-body harness for small framed girls when climbing

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Climbing and Rappelling

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Climbing and Rappelling

Girls may participate in various types of climbing, rappelling, and rope adventures.

Note:

- Daisies and Brownies are limited in what they can do in this activity—check the Climbing and Adventure Sports Master Progression Chart. Daisies and Brownies can do slacklining and low-challenge elements.
- Brownies can participate in most indoor climbing activities.
- Outdoor high ropes, high elements, and rappelling are only permitted for Girl Scout Juniors and older.

Bouldering. This sport involves climbing without a rope but at a height not greater than 6 feet off the ground. Spotters (participants who safeguard the movements of a member of the group) provide support and protect the head and upper body of a climber in case of a fall. Spotting is used when descending and ascending high elements or climbing routes.

Top Roping. In this climbing method, the rope is anchored from the top of the climbing route, using belays (safety ropes to secure a person to an anchor point). The belayer (person who

controls the belay/safety line to prevent long and dangerous falls) is set up at the bottom of the route with the other end of the rope tied to the climber.

Multi-Pitch Climbing. For experienced climbers only, this is a climb on a long route that requires several pitches the length of a rope or less. (A “pitch” is the rope-length between belay stations). The group climbs to the top of the first pitch; the lead climber climbs the next pitch, anchors in, and belays each remaining climber individually to the anchor.

Free Climbing. This method, which involves climbing on rocks or walls without a belay system in place, is not approved.

Slacklining: A sport and an art that can involve balance training, recreation, and moving meditation. It is similar, at first glance, to tightrope walking and is accomplished by stretching and tensioning a 1-inch to 2-inch length of nylon/polyester webbing between two anchor points, most often trees. It is a way of passing time while maintaining concentration, fitness, core strength, and balance. It can be used as a team-building activity in which spotters safeguard the movements of each member of the group.

Artificial climbing walls and harnessed indoor ropes are great learning options too.

Learn More:

- [International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation](#)
- [RockClimbing.com](#)
- Indoor climbing advice: [REI](#)
- All about rock climbing: [Mpora.com](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls of all abilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that [Disabled Sports USA](#) provides to people with disabilities.

Safety Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. For bouldering, top roping, and multi-pitch climbing, an instructor with documented experience—indicating competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training (must provide certification) or documented experience according to your council’s guidelines as outlined in *Volunteer Essentials*—directly supervises the group. Ensure that there is a regular process of review and update for all instructors. A minimum of two instructors need to be present, and instructors should be skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching and supervising spotting and belaying techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group. Before use, instructors must inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas.

Facilitators of indoor or outdoor artificial climbing walls and auto belay or harnessed indoor ropes courses should have experience, indicating competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training. A minimum of one facilitator and an additional adult must be present, and facilitators need to be skilled in

selecting appropriate activities, teaching and supervising spotting and lowering techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group. Before use, facilitators should inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas.

Indoor or outdoor artificial climbing walls and auto belay or harnessed indoor ropes courses are activities that do not incorporate an element of high risk and can be done by Brownies through Ambassadors. However, all ages must have appropriately sized harnesses. If no harness properly fits a child, that child cannot participate in climbing and/or rappelling. Daisies are not permitted to participate in climbing and rappelling.

The instructor-to-participant ratios are:

- **Bouldering and top roping:** one instructor to ten participants
- **Multi-pitch climbing:** one instructor (qualified lead climber) to three participants

Select a safe site. Permits and permission requests are filed as required for outdoor natural climbing sites and facilities. All permanent structures and the belaying system are planned and constructed by experienced individuals. Plans and procedures are established to avoid unauthorized use of the site, structures, and equipment. The artificial climbing site must be posted to warn against unauthorized use.

Participants learn about and prepare for climbing and rappelling. Instructors teach a set of readiness and action commands to all participants for climbing, spotting, and belaying. All participants take part in muscle warm-up and stretching activities before beginning physical activities. Instructors describe the objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants before beginning an activity.

Participants practice safe climbing and rappelling techniques. Spotting techniques (if necessary) are taught, demonstrated, and practiced by participants prior to any climbing or rappelling activity. All activities should be appropriately spotted. For activities where partners are needed, instructors must match participants according to size and skill level, if appropriate. Instructors should supervise all tie-ins, belays, and climbs on climbing sites and spotting on bouldering sites.

Safety Gear

- Climbing helmets with the UIAA-approved label—worn for all outdoor natural climbing situations where the participant is more than 6 feet off the ground or on belay
- A disposable liner, such as a shower cap or surgical cap, to wear underneath the helmet to protect against the spread of head lice
- A chest harness with a seat harness or a full-body harness, required for specific climbing or ropes activities
- Sturdy shoes
- Close-fitting clothing—loose clothing should be avoided, especially around the head and neck
- Portable drinking water
- Raingear, as necessary

- Long pants or bike pants, recommended for activities involving potential skin abrasions on legs

All equipment used for belaying, such as ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets, should be designed and tested for the purpose of this type of activity and appropriate for the size of the user.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Recreational Tree Climbing

Council Approval: May be required.

Activity Permitted for: J C S A

About Recreational Tree Climbing

In recreational tree climbing, girls explore the beauty of living trees with guided facilitator support. Recreational tree climbers use ropes, harnesses, saddles, and climbing techniques to ascend into the crowns of trees and the canopies of forests. Care should be taken to keep climbers and trees safe.

Climbing may be done on branches that have at least 6 inches of living tissue. A full inspection of the health of the tree and surrounding area must be made.

Leave No Trace

While climbing in natural areas, it's important to respect the environment. Read tips from the [Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics](#).

The Global Organization of Tree Climbers has an [interactive map](#) to help you find tree-climbing programs.

Learn More:

- Tree Climbing USA: [TreeClimbingUSA.com](https://www.TreeClimbingUSA.com)
- [Leave No Trace](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. If visiting a national park, contact the park in advance. Ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Additional Resources:

Check out [Disabled Sports USA](#) to learn about adaptive climbing.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

- **Choose a certified instructor.** The facilitator needs to have documented experience in leading and teaching tree climbing.
- **File required permits.**
- **Inspect equipment.** The instructor will inspect all equipment before each use. Equipment will be well-maintained. A use log will track wear, stress, and deterioration of gear. Outside professionals should periodically inspect all trees and equipment. A written equipment monitoring and retirement process needs to be followed.
- **Ensure the instructor climbs all routes** before participants begin.
- **Ensure only instructors clip participants** in and out of the tie-in system.
- **Ensure a process for managing safety and performing rescues** is in place.
- **Ensure helmet-only areas are clearly designated** in order to protect participants and passersby from falling debris.
- **Get a weather report.** On the morning of the activity, check a reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. Be prepared to alter the activity plan if weather conditions change. Participants must not climb when trees or gear are wet. In the event of a storm, take shelter away from all trees and other tall objects. Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them.
- **Participants should receive instruction.** Instructors must describe the climb's objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants. Climbers learn:
 - Readiness and action commands
 - Muscle warmup and stretching techniques
 - Safety procedures and site-specific hazards

Safety Gear

- Climbing equipment—such as ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets—designed for this purpose and appropriate for the size of the user
- Climbing helmets worn by all participants who will be more than 6 feet off the ground or on belay; helmets must be approved by the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA)
- Sturdy shoes

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Zip Lining

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: B J C S A

Note: See Master Progression Chart for Climbing and Adventure Sports

About Zip Lining

A zip line consists of a pulley suspended on a cable, usually made of stainless steel, mounted on an incline. It is designed to enable a user propelled by gravity to travel from the top to the bottom of the inclined cable by holding on to, or attaching to, the freely moving pulley. The various types of zip lines include:

- **Playground zip lines:** These are short and low, intended for child's play, and found on some playgrounds and recreation venues. All Girl Scouts are permitted to use them.
- **Zip lines:** These are launched from a platform usually accessed by a staircase, ladder, or climbing wall. They are sometimes found as part of a challenge course. Participants must be able to walk short distances and be able to climb stairs. Daisies are not permitted to participate in zip lines except for playground zip lines. In addition, check with the venue before arrival to determine their rules on age, height, and weight restrictions.
- **Canopy zip line tours:** These are guided aerial explorations or transits of the forest canopy, most commonly done by means of a series of zip lines or aerial walkways with platforms. Canopy tours are not permitted for Daisies and Brownies. In addition, check with the venue before arrival as many have minimum age requirements as well as height and weight restrictions.

Site Selection. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. Girl Scouts should use a venue that has professional accreditation by either the Professional Ropes Course Association (PRCA) or the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) to ensure a regulated experience. Both of these organizations are accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to develop industry standards and regulations.

Note that each venue sets its own rules regarding the age and weight of participants, and some states regulate zip lines as amusement rides.

Learn More:

- [Association for Challenge Course Technology](#)
- [Professional Ropes Course](#) Association

- [Specifications Amusement Ride Safety Act](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that the [National Center on Physical Activity and Disability](#) provides to people with disabilities. Some facilities may have specialized harnesses and a ramp (instead of stairs, a tower, or a wall) for people who use wheelchairs. Ensure that a member of the facility's staff has training and experience helping people with disabilities participate in zip lining. Note that some venues will not allow participation if a person has recent or recurring injuries, or muscular or skeletal disorders.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Arrange for transportation and adult supervision. See "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*" for recommended adult-to-girl ratios.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. An instructor with Association of Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) certification, or similar documented experience, is expected to have knowledge and experience setting stop ropes, tying required knots, assisting guests in proper harness and helmet fitting, demonstrating proper zipping techniques, operating the zip line activity, breaking guest's speed upon incoming approach, performing retrievals and rescues, inspecting equipment, and educating guests about the venue. Ensure that the instructor has provided written documentation of the completed training. In addition, note that there is a regular process of review and update for all instructors.

Dress appropriately for the activity. Wear long pants or biker-type shorts, sturdy closed-toe athletic-type shoes, and a close-fitting top with sleeves. Do not wear: dress shoes, sandals, water shoes, flip-flops, skirts, regular shorts, ponchos, or dangling jewelry of any kind.

All participants may be weighed and have their height measured before being issued zip lining equipment.

Girls learn about and prepare for zip lining. Instructors need to teach a set of readiness and action commands to all participants before beginning an activity. They must describe the objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants before beginning.

Prepare for landing. Zip-line participants should be provided with a hands-on walk-through of what will happen at the landing zone when under full speed. Volunteers must attend the orientation session (even if they will not participate) along with the girls and learn what to watch for in order to supervise the girls in their care.

Girls practice safe zip line course techniques. Zip-line participants should be provided with an explanation of what each piece of gear is used for. Harnesses are designed to support the human body from the hips, and hanging upside down is not permitted.

Safety Gear

- Helmet (supplied by the venue)
- Harness (supplied by the venue)
- Sturdy closed-toed athletic-type shoes

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Computer and Internet Use

Council Approval: Not required

Activity Permitted For: D B J S C A

About Computer and Internet Use

Girl Scouts use the internet for a variety of reasons, such as to communicate with other girls, research travel plans and activities, and create websites for events and series opportunities. In addition, councils may choose to participate in the Digital Cookie® online sales program as well as the online sale and marketing of other approved Girl Scout products. In addition, a Girl Scout group working with an adult may wish to do such things as:

- **Earn a technology award or other such award online.**
- **Research topics.** Girls can search for other Girl Scout council or group websites, or research a badge or community resource.
- **Visit Girl Scouting sites.** Girls can visit the [World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts](#) (WAGGGS) online or member countries' websites. They can also use Girl Scout vendor websites to learn more about product activities.
- **Build a website.** Girls could create a static webpage on the internet (one that looks the same each time users view it, with no commenting or posting capabilities) or set up a secure, password-protected website with a calendar and information for girls and families.
- **Blog about Girl Scouting.** Groups that are planning a Take Action project, road trip, or camping adventure can consider documenting their plans and experiences on a council or national blog, and divvy up the documentation duties (photography, writing, editing, and so on) among the group.

Adults should monitor websites that girls view, ensuring that they are safe and actively controlled. No girl or adult acting on behalf of girl members can collect money online for Girl Scout products or conduct money-earning activities online with two exceptions: The first is for Digital Cookie and the second is for GSUSA-approved magazine vendor programs. For more, please see the safety activity checkpoints for cookie/product sales.

Most girls will go online from their home computers, and older girls may access the internet on their mobile phones. For girls who cannot go online from home, check with your Girl Scout council for suggestions on sites where computers are available for use.

When planning a group learning session, identify locations—such a library, a Girl Scout program center, a school or college computer lab, a computer rental store with training facility, or a museum—that provides group members with opportunities to use computers and to access the internet.

Learn More:

- [Girl Scouts of the USA](#)
- [Go Girls Only](#) (for girls in grades 1–6)
- [Stop, Think, Connect](#)

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Copy and distribute the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge. This is available at the end of this document. All girls, as well as their parents/guardians, must read, agree to, and abide by the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge when going online.

Ensure girls' safety in website design. Girls must understand that the internet is an open means of communication that anyone can access. As such, websites will often attract people other than their intended users. It is therefore imperative that any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and adults not be disclosed on a website. The following measures help to ensure girls' safety while online:

- Use only first names, and never last names.
- Never post addresses, phone numbers, or email addresses of girls.
- Always have a parent or guardian's permission when using pictures of girls on a website. This is important for all girls, and special regulations apply for children younger than 13 years of age.
- Do not post addresses of group meeting places or dates and times of meetings, events, or trips. Instead, an adult who wishes to communicate about upcoming events with families of Girl Scouts should send an email to the families.
- Do not allow automatic posting of messages to a website. All postings on sites such as message boards or guest books should have adult oversight and be screened prior to posting live.
- Ensure that websites do not show personal email addresses of girls, but use a troop or group email or an adult's email address.

Be aware of shared content. When linking to other websites from your site, make sure site contents are in keeping with Girl Scout principles and activities. Avoid linking to commercial sites selling merchandise to avoid implied Girl Scout endorsement of the products they offer. Instead, seek out sites that support girls' participation in Girl Scouting. These sites should be tasteful and program-level appropriate. They should show diversity; be beneficial to girls, adults, and families; and be consistent with the mission of Girl Scouting. As a courtesy, consider emailing the site's webmaster for permission to link to the site.

Use similar criteria to determine which sites you support linking to your group's website.

Respect copyrighted material. The basic principle is, if it's not yours, don't use it. A group's website may not use copyrighted designs, text, graphics, or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder.

Girls may use trademarks owned by GSUSA, which include the trefoil shape; Girl Scout Daisy pin and Girl Scout Brownie pin; contemporary and traditional Girl Scout pins; the words Girl Scout Daisy, Girl Scout Brownie, Girl Scout Junior, Girl Scout Cadette, Girl Scout Senior, Girl Scout Ambassador, Girl Scouting, Girl Scouts, and Girl Scout Cookies; Girl Scout Brownie Try-Its, Girl Scout Junior badges, and all Girl Scout Cadette and Ambassador interest project awards, names, and symbols; and all Girl Scout Journey insignia. Information on the use of GSUSA trademarks can be found on the [national website](#) under Girl Scout Central: Graphics Gallery, and under [Terms and Conditions](#) on the footer of each page of the national site.

Keep in mind that Girl Scout trademarks can be used only in accordance with guidelines for their use. The Girl Scout Trefoil, for example, may not be animated or used as wallpaper for a website. Check with your council's website for complete graphic guidelines and approval information.

Note, too, that some names (such as commercial products and cartoon characters) are trademarked and cannot be incorporated on most websites. Permission is also required from the author or publisher for the use of videos and music on websites—so don't post words from copyrighted songs, poems, or books, as permission must be granted from the record label, publisher, artist, poet, or author, and is nearly impossible to obtain.

A troop/group social networking site may be set up by groups whose girls are at least 13 years old and who have obtained parental permission to do so. In addition, all social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter) must be approved by the council and must meet age limits set by the provider—usually 13 years old and older in most cases, which is in accordance with the United States Child Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA) and the Child Online Protection Act (COPA).

Any online marketing using social networking tools must follow guidelines outlined in the “Managing Group Finances” chapter of *Volunteer Essentials*. Any appearance in a Girl Scout–related online video or picture requires permission from each girl's parent or guardian, using the GSUSA girl/adult permission form. These completed forms should be held by the adult and/or council.

Girls may only post about their participation in Girl Scout programs on social media sites that allow them to restrict access to friends and family, such as Facebook, and not to social media sites open to anyone, such as Craigslist or eBay.

Girls should only share links to their Girl Scout program sites with family, friends, and others they know firsthand.

As part of Girl Scout programs, girls may create their own unique websites to market and sell Girl Scout products. For example with the Digital Cookie platform, girls are able to take and track orders, set sales goals, and show how they will use the proceeds from cookie sales to support Girl Scout activities. Girls upload videos to their websites to help market the Girl Scout Cookie sale. To keep girls safe when they use their own websites, keep in mind:

- Parents/guardians must review and approve a girl's website before it goes live.

- For girls under 13 years old, a parent or guardian must manage the girl's website and be responsible for all content, communication, and information posted.
- Parents/guardians must review and approve any pictures and videos before they are posted to a girl's Digital Cookie website. If the girl is under 13 years old, a parent or guardian must personally post the pictures and videos to the girl's website themselves—girls under 13 are not permitted to do this.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Computer Internet Safety Pledge

Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge for All Girl Scouts

On my honor I pledge that,

I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number(s), parents' or guardians' work address/telephone number(s), and the name and location of my school without the permission of my parent or guardian.

I will tell an adult right away if I come across or receive any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.

I will always follow the rules of internet sites, including those rules that are based on age of use, parental approval and knowledge, and public laws.

I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents or guardians. If my parents or guardian agree to a meeting, I will arrange it in a public place and bring a parent or guardian along.

I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parent or guardian.

I will talk with my parent or guardian so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide on the time of day that I can be online, the length of time that I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.

I will not use the internet to collect money for Girl Scout products other than what is specifically permitted and outlined in the safety guidelines related to Girl Scout product sales.

I will practice online "netiquette" (good manners) at all times when online.

I won't spam others.

I will not bully nor will I tolerate bullying (and I will always tell a trusted adult if this is a problem).

I won't use bad language.

I will be guided by the Girl Scout Promise and Law in all that I do online.

The GSUSA Online Safety Pledge is based on the Online Safety Pledge developed by the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#).



Cookie and Product Sales

Council Approval: Not required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Cookie Sales

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest girl-led business in the United States. Through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, girls develop five essential skills: goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics. Girl Scout council-sponsored product sales—which include products from official Girl Scout Cookie, magazine, and nut vendors—give girls proven opportunities to earn money and/or credits for their Girl Scout program activities, while contributing significantly to their local councils and communities through Take Action projects.

Learn More:

- About Girl Scout Cookies: [Girl Scouts of the USA](#)
 - Select companies are licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce official Girl Scout products for girls to sell. These companies are selected by councils and contracted for one to three years. They include: [Little Brownie Bakers](#) and [ABC Bakers](#)
 - [Ashdon Farms](#) and [Trophy Nut](#)
 - Companies that offer magazine subscription programs approved by GSUSA: [QSP/GAO](#), [M2 Media Group](#) (each provides online tools and activities for download; magazine selection and sales may take place online—check with your council for more details)

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Sell in a designated area. Girl Scouts should observe council jurisdiction (by zip code) when marketing and selling products in person or at a cookie booth. With the Digital Cookie® platform, girls may market and sell to family and friends beyond their council's jurisdiction. Prospects that come from outside council jurisdiction should be referred to [GSUSA's council finder](#). Girl Scouts should observe council jurisdictions when selling cookies at a parent's or guardian's workplace, unless other arrangements are made to accommodate all Girl Scout families connected to that workplace. For cookie booth sales, all booth locations are designated and approved by the council. In addition, all council guidelines with regard to setting up, manning, and taking down a booth must be followed. See below for additional information.

Arrange for adult supervision. Adults should provide supervision and guidance for all program levels, and must accompany Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors when they are selling, taking orders, and delivering products. Adults oversee Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, and must be aware of how, when, and where the girls are selling products. In addition, an adult must be readily accessible to girls when they are participating in product sales. This can be accomplished by an adult being present with the girls or by having the adult and girls exchange telephone numbers. Adults need to be present at booth activities with girls at any program level.

Girls learn and practice personal protection skills such as:

- Advising an adult of each step and involving an adult in the process by exchanging telephone numbers and/or copying the adult on emails for product orders, returns, disputes, or complaints
- Never giving out their phone numbers or personal email addresses
- Ensuring a first-aid kit is available at a booth sale or product sale “walk-about”
- Ensuring immediate telephone access to an adult and/or 911 as part of the emergency plan for Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors

Prepare for cookie and product sales with Daisies. Daisies participate in product sales but always under the direct supervision of an adult. Materials provided by GSUSA for Daisies focus on engaging girls in selling to their circle of friends—only people they know, including neighbors, social groups, and family.

Respect Girl Scout trademarks. As noted previously, “Girl Scout Cookies” and “Girl Scouts” are trademarked by Girl Scouts of the USA and cannot be used to endorse others’ products or services. Any questions regarding the use of these terms must be addressed to the Girl Scout council or trademarks@girlscouts.org.

Remember, the Girl Scout name and other terms trademarked by GSUSA, as well as pictures of Girl Scout Cookie boxes or cookies themselves, can be used only by Girl Scout councils and by girls in conjunction with a Girl Scout program (e.g., product program). These rights are not transferable to customers or businesses purchasing cookies for use with gifting or promotional activities.

Know what’s in the cookie. Read nutritional and health information on product description sheets provided by the vendors annually or check their websites. Girls should be able to discuss serving size, nutritional makeup, and allergen information. Read additional nutrition information at www.GirlScoutCookies.org. Additionally, recycling information is provided on product containers.

On the Day of a Sale:

- Girls must wear a membership pin, uniform, or Girl Scout clothing (e.g., Girl Scout T-shirt) to clearly identify themselves as Girl Scouts.
- Girls and accompanying adults should be familiar with the areas and neighborhoods where product sales take place.
- Girls should participate in door-to-door sales during daylight hours only.
- When Girl Scouts operate a booth in a store, mall, or other public place, adults must be present at all times, regardless of the age of the

Girl Scouts. When planning sales booths, follow council guidelines for additional information about setting up a booth and safety and security suggestions and assistance.

- Use safe pedestrian practices, especially when crossing at busy intersections.
- Do not enter the home or vehicle of a stranger, and avoid selling to people in vehicles (except at designated drive-through cookie booths) or going into alleys.
- Do not carry large amounts of money and ensure provisions have been made for safeguarding the money in advance of the sale.

With regard to booth sales, ensure:

- You have adequate space at the booth for tables, products, and girls that allows for safe passage by pedestrians, bikes, and cars.
- Girls are a safe distance from cars. If possible, set up a safety barrier between cars and the booth—perhaps a few volunteers could park their cars in spaces near the booth location.
- The booth is not blocking a store entrance or exit.
- When girls receive cash from buyers and go to make change, they hand the money to the adult for safekeeping. It's important that cash is kept safe and out of sight. This can be accomplished by:
 - Keeping the cash box against a wall or behind a barrier of cookie boxes
 - Having an adult volunteer keep the money by, for example, securing it in a front-facing pouch tied around her waist
 - Depositing cash as soon as possible to prevent potential thefts or break-ins of vehicles

Safe Online Marketing. Girls participating in traditional cookie sales may call and send email messages to alert friends and family to product sales and accept customer commitments via email or telephone. Girls who are 13 or older may use social networking sites to market products, but must follow council and GSUSA guidelines. Girls sending out product emails or announcements online should sign with their first names only, their troop/group number or name, and their council name. Personal emails or street addresses of girls should never be used for contacting or responding to customers. Instead, use one of the following:

- A blind return address account hosted on a secure site, such as that provided by our product sales partners, where girls' names and personal email addresses are not revealed to customers
- A group account monitored by an adult
- An adult email account supervised by an adult

Digital Cookie® Platform. Read, understand, and comply with the "Computer and Internet Use" safety activity checkpoints.

These checkpoints can be reviewed with the sales site, facility, or with your council when appropriate.



Cross-Country Skiing

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: B J C S A

About Cross-Country Skiing

Also referred to as back-country, Nordic, and XC skiing, cross-country skiing is an excellent form of exercise and an opportune way to explore the outdoors in the wintertime. As with downhill skiers, cross-country skiers use two poles for guidance and bindings to connect boots to skis. Unlike downhill skiing, in which the entire boot is attached to the ski, only the toe of the cross-country boot is attached to the ski. Contact ski shops and cross-country ski organizations to inquire about rental equipment. Cross-country skiing is not permitted for Daisies.

Know where to cross-country ski: designated cross-country ski trails are recommended. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions and approval. Also, xcski.org provides information about cross-country skiing trails.

Learn More:

- [Cross Country Ski Areas Association](http://CrossCountrySkiAreasAssociation.org)
- [National Ski Patrol](http://NationalSkiPatrol.org)
- [XC Ski World](http://XCskiWorld.org)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the ski instructor in advance. Ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Instruction is given by an adult with experience teaching and/or supervising cross-country skiing for the ages involved, or has documented experience, according to your council's guidelines.

Select a safe cross-country skiing site. Girls are encouraged to plan trip details and include adequate rest periods with opportunities to replenish fluids and eat high-energy foods (such as fruits and nuts). The nature of the terrain, potential hazards (such as an avalanche or frozen lake), mileage, and approximate cross-country skiing time should be known to all group members. When a latrine is not available, individual cat holes located at least 200 feet away

from water sources should be used to dispose of human waste (visit www.int.org for more information).

Map the course. The route should be marked on a map. Before skiing, designate a meeting place where girls can contact a supervising adult.

Recover from a fall. The act of hoisting back up while wearing skis can be a cumbersome process. Have girls learn how to get back up on their skis.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness. Emergency transportation should be available. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid. Girls must be trained in winter survival (such as snow-cave building, whiteouts, and avalanche avoidance), as needed. Search-and-rescue procedures are written out in advance and arrangements are made for medical emergencies and evacuation procedures. See Girl Scouts' *Volunteer Essentials* resource for information about first-aid standards and training.

Follow cross-country ski-safety standards. Ski area rules are explained and observed:

- Girls should ski under control to avoid other skiers and objects.
- Girls must yield the right-of-way to those already on the trail. They step to the side to let faster skiers pass. A descending skier has the right of way.
- A faster skier should indicate her desire to pass by calling "track, please."
- Girls do not ski close to the edge of an embankment or a cliff.
- Girls must not walk on ski trails.

Safety and Required Gear

- Skis
- Ski poles
- Boots
- Thick, water-resistant gloves or mittens
- A winter hat
- Heavy insulating socks
- Thermal underwear or long johns
- Sunglasses or ski goggles to protect eyes from glare
- A water bottle
- High-energy food (such as fruits and nuts)
- A daypack to carry personal belongings

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J S C A

About Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding

Whether girls are participating in snowboarding or traditional downhill, slalom, Super G, or other types of skiing, participants use trails and slopes matched to their abilities. Skiing.about.com describes various ski levels, which range from first-time beginner to expert.

In planning a Girl Scout ski or snowboarding trip, contact the ski resort or organization to inquire about rental equipment, lift tickets, and any special accommodations for large groups, and always know the location of the first-aid station. With the appropriate instructors, equipment, and hills/levels, Daisies are permitted to participate in skiing and snowboarding. Most mountains have wonderful educational programs for children as young as four years old!

Note: Even experienced girls are not permitted to do aerial tricks on skis or snowboards.

Learn More:

- Professional Ski Instructors of America and American Association of Snowboard Instructors: [The Snow Pros](http://TheSnowPros)
- [National Ski Patrol](http://NationalSkiPatrol)
- [U.S. Ski and Snowboard](http://US Ski and Snowboard)
- Locate ski resorts by region: [ABC of Snowboarding](http://ABCofSnowboarding)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about specific needs and accommodations. Call ahead to the ski and snowboard resort about accommodating people with disabilities—most are extremely accommodating and offer specialized instructors and trails. You can even ask to speak to an instructor ahead of time.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Be in shape. Participants get in condition by stretching and exercising before the skiing or snowboarding trip. Skiing takes endurance and balance, so be in shape!

Learn how to ride ski lifts. This includes line courtesy, loading and unloading, and emergency procedures.

Observe the basics. Ski and snowboard under control. Participants should ski responsibly, and not beyond their ability level. All rules of the ski area must be explained, learned, and followed.

Stay on trails. Do not ski off-trail or in an unmarked or closed area.

Be aware of terrain. Avoid objects and obstacles, such as trees, rocks, growth coming up under thin snow coverage, and melted puddles, which can occur in spring or during fluctuating weather.

Understand right-of-way protocol. Make others aware before you turn. Yield the right-of-way to those already on the slope. Do not cross the path of skiers.

Prepare for falls. Move quickly to the side of the trail or slope after falling, unless injured.

Summon the ski patrol if a skier is injured. They are usually dressed in red.

Know the slopes. Skiing.about.com details trail ratings, which include green circle as the easiest, blue square as intermediate, and black diamond for expert skiers and snowboarders. Review the trail maps before hitting the slopes.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Instructors are certified by the Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) and the American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI) or possess equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines. Instructors have experience teaching and/or supervising downhill skiing/snowboarding for the ages involved.

Select a safe downhill skiing and/or snowboarding site. Girls are encouraged to plan trip details and include adequate rest periods with opportunities to replenish fluids and eat high-energy foods, such as fruits and nuts. Plan for a nutritious, high-energy snack, and provide beverages to prevent dehydration. Ensure that terrain and potential hazards are known to all participants.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness.

Ensure emergency transportation. Make sure emergency transportation is available; if any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with winter wilderness first-aid experience.

Safety and Required Gear

- Protective helmet with properly fitting safety harness that meets the Snell Memorial Foundation's RS-98 or S-98 standards or the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F2040 requirements (or both) and displays the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) seal
- Ski or snowboarding boots
- Skis or snowboards with bindings
- Ski poles (not needed for snowboarding)
- Sunglasses or ski goggles to protect eyes from glare
- Insulated water-resistant gloves or mittens
- Insulating socks and thermal underwear

- Sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 and lip balm for snow glare protection
- Windproof and waterproof ski jacket and pants

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Fencing

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Fencing

Derived from the word “defense,” fencing is a sport and martial art that involves using swords called foils (practice swords), sabers, and épées (a fencing sword with a bowl-shaped hand guard). The objective of fencing is to touch the opponent with the tip of a sword without getting hit by the opponent’s sword. A fencing game (or bout) is typically three minutes—the first fencer to score five touches (or hits) wins; if neither reaches five within the designated time period, the participant with the most touches wins. If performed correctly with the proper equipment, fencing is a safe activity with a low injury rate. Most fencing clubs provide students with a full kit of equipment. Daisies learn about fencing games and the rules of fencing but should use only foam (mock) swords.

Learn More:

- U.S. Fencing Association: www.usafencing.org
- U.S. Fencing Coaches Association: www.usfca.org
- International Fencing Federation: www.fie.org
- Fencing 101: USA Fencing

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Research relevant resources provided for people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. One adult needs to be a certified fencing instructor or have equivalent certification, or documented experience, in accordance with your

council's guidelines. Ensure that there is a ratio of one instructor for every ten girls. Fencing is always well supervised and appropriate to age, skill level, and endurance.

Note: The instructor-to-participant ratio is not the same as the adult-to-girl ratio in “Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.” Both ratios should be complied with when girls are participating in fencing, particularly Daisies and Brownies.

Assess participants' maturity level. Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves and others. Ensure that swords are appropriate to the age, size, strength, and ability of the girls.

Select a safe site. Check with council staff to see if an approved vendor list is offered. If the council does not have an approved vendor list, look for organized fencing companies or organizations. Call the facility ahead of time to determine accommodations for children, and what ages they have experience with.

Always keep the sword pointed in a safe direction. This is an important rule of fencing. A safe direction means that the sword is pointed away from yourself and other persons, leaning it downward when walking or resting, or anytime when not jousting. Control the sword at all times.

Ensure that equipment to be used is in good condition. Make sure that the equipment is clean and in good working order and that nothing is broken or loose. Check that the épée or foil handles and/or wrist and arm guards are in good repair.

Dress appropriately for the activity. Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment. Also have girls tie back long hair.

Review rules and expectations. The instructor reviews the rules and operating procedures with girls beforehand.

Safety and Required Gear

- Foils, sabers, or épées
- Fencing glove
- Plastron (underarm protector worn on fencing arm)
- Fencing jacket
- Fencing knickers or pants that cover knees
- Long socks that go up to knees (soccer socks are recommended)
- Sneakers or court shoes

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Fishing and Ice Fishing

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Fishing and Ice Fishing

Fishing (also referred to as “angling”) is a sport, a leisurely activity, and a major food industry, depending on who you ask. In the United States, freshwater fishing is more popular than saltwater fishing, and varieties include fly fishing, ice fishing, and match fishing. The best times of day to fish depend on a variety of factors, such as amount of sunlight, temperature, depth of water, and wind. In general, however, the best times are early in the morning or in the mid-evening.

Ice fishing, the practice of fishing through a hole cut in the ice of a body of water, is a relaxing wintertime activity—particularly in the northern U.S. states. Ice anglers often sit on stools inside small ice shanties, which provide shelter and warmth in cold temperatures. Shanties are typically made of wood or plastic and are rented from sport-fishing outlets or made at home. Overall, lakes and ponds tend to be best. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. Consult state ice angler associations for information about ice fishing events and resources.

Fishing teaches respect for fish and wildlife. Whenever possible, use barbless hooks, and return live fish to water.

Learn More:

- All things fishing: [Take Me Fishing](#)
- [American Sportfishing Association](#)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#)
- [International Game Fish Association](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)
- Video about ice fishing: [YouTube](#)
- Minimizing fishing's impact on the environment: [Seafood Watch](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information available at [Fishing Has No Boundaries](#).

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Make sure you've got the right life jackets. If girls are wading in water more than knee-deep or fishing from a boat, ensure that they wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears. [Read about Coast Guard life jackets.](#)

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure that the adult or fishing instructor holds American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience (competencies); the ratio of instructor to participant is 1:10. Consider additional adult watchers for groups that are more scattered and/or not clearly visible at all times.

See the “Offshore Water Vessel” safety activity checkpoints for deep sea fishing trips or any chartered boat fishing trip.

Observe fishing and environmental regulations. When selecting a fishing location, follow local, state, and federal fishing regulations and obtain fishing licenses, where required. Use the correct type of bait and fishing gear permitted in that area, and learn about limits on the number, size, and kind of fish that you can keep.

Verify safety of ice-fishing location. Ensure that ice is solid and thick enough to support the ice fishers' weight. Opinions vary about the appropriate thickness of ice for fishing. Generally the thickness should be between 4 and 6 inches. Your local department of natural resources can provide help. The Department of Natural Resources of the State of Minnesota also provides [guidelines for ice thickness](#). Once arriving at a lake, check the ice thickness, keeping in mind that temperature, snow cover, currents, springs, and rough fish all affect the relative safety of ice. Also, ice is seldom the same thickness over a single body of water, and can be 2 feet thick in one place and 1 inch thick a few yards away. Assess the ice depth at least every 150 feet. [Read more on ice-fishing safety.](#)

Know where to find first aid. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid. Basic ice rescue techniques should be practiced. Appropriate rescue equipment needs to be on hand (for example: ring buoy, rope, throw bag, pole, ladder, and—where necessary—boat).

Safety requirements vary:

- **From a dock:** Fishing from a dock requires the presence of a first-aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Wading above the knee:** Fishing while wading, above knee-deep requires the presence of a first-aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.

- **Wading below the knee:** When fishing from a shoreline or while wading (up to knee-deep), the presence of a first-aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue is recommended, but not required. However, personal flotation devices or other water rescue equipment must be provided. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Fishing from small craft:** American Red Cross Small Craft Safety Certification; the ratio of adult watcher to participant is one to ten, except for Daisies, where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.

Select appropriate boats for water and passengers. Make sure craft weight and capacity are not exceeded (some crafts clearly display maximum capacity). Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment.

File a float plan for extensive boat trips. If going on an extended boat fishing trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify local authorities should your group not return. Float plans must include the names of people on board, destination, craft description, times of departure and return, and additional details about routes and marine communications. The Coast Guard provides an electronic, printable form.

Remove fishing gear, bait, and any dead fish at the end of the fishing activity.

Safety Gear for General Fishing

- Fishing rod appropriate to the type of fishing
- Fishing tackle (and tackle box) appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines
- Layered, non-cotton clothing that's easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended)
- Boat shoes, closed-toe and non-slip hiking/sport sandals with heel strap, water socks, or shoes (no flip-flops)
- Cooler and ice for keeping fish cool and avoiding spoilage (if intended for consumption)
- If fishing from a boat, at least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Fishing net

Safety Gear for Ice Fishing

- Snowsuit, warm coat, hat, and mittens
- Lightweight rubber gloves or hunting/fishing gloves

- Waterproof boots that protect against cold temperatures
- Fishing rod (1- to 3-foot rods are most common)
- Fishing tackle appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught (and tackle box)
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines
- Ice auger (ice saw or chisel); [read about augers and other equipment](#)
- Jigging rod/pole or tip-up to catch fish
- Ice bucket and scoop
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Flashlight and lantern
- Cooler for storing fish (if intended for consumption)
- Shanty (optional)
- Ice sled for pulling equipment (optional)

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Geocaching

Council Approval: Not required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

Note: Daisies are permitted when working with older girls and adults as part of another outdoor activity.

About Geocaching

Geocaching is a recreational outdoor activity that centers on the use of a global positioning system (GPS) device and maps. Geocachers seek out caches (waterproof containers containing logbooks, and/or trinkets) that have been hidden just about anywhere in the world, whether in urban areas, in the wilderness, in tree roots, and so on. As treasure hunters in an international game of hide-and-seek, participants use geocaching to select cache locations and communicate with other geocachers.

Connect with your Girl Scout council to see if there are caches on council sites. When on private or government property, follow all posted rules, guidelines, and etiquette. Geocaching outlines locations that are prohibited for placing a cache.

“Cache in, trash out” is the motto when practicing Leave No Trace—geocachers are encouraged to leave caching sites cleaner than they found them and pick up garbage left by others. Geocachers are invited to participate in International Cache In Trash Out events, which are worldwide cleanup efforts.

Finding a benchmark is key to geocaching. Using a GPS device or directions provided by the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Geodetic Survey](#) (NGS), you can seek out NGS survey markers and other items that have been marked in the United States. [Learn more.](#)

Learn More:

- [Official global GPS cache site](#)
- [Navicache](#)
- [Terracaching](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations.

Additional Resources:

See [HandiCaching.com](#) to find out about geocaching for people of all abilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Girls develop skills about GPS use, latitude and longitude, and reading maps based on grade level. Ideally, each girl is able to use her own GPS device, or two to three girls can share one. When more than three participants share a GPS device, it becomes more difficult for girls to actively participate in the geocaching activity. Keep in mind that a GPS device provides a direct line measurement from the starting point to a destination; a GPS does not include the distance around path obstructions such as bodies of water.

Girls should learn and understand terrain difficulty ratings. As appropriate for their grade level, girls can plan or have input about where to cache and which caches to locate by reading descriptions of the caches as well as ratings about difficulty and terrain. Explain about the terrain of a geocaching site by learning about the Difficulty/Terrain (D/T) Rating ahead of time.

The ratings, which range from 1/1 to 5/5, measure the level of difficulty for finding a cache and for navigating the terrain to the cache. A terrain rating of one typically means the cache is accessible for people with disabilities.

Dress appropriately for the activity. Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in underbrush in wilderness areas. Make sure footwear—consider sneakers versus hiking boots—is appropriate to the location(s) in which you will be geocaching.

Be on lookout for sharp edges, branches, cliffs, animals, or insects or anything that may pose a safety hazard or detour for the group. Be sure to practice Leave No Trace while geocaching so as not to disturb wildlife, trample vegetation, or cross onto private property. Carry out all garbage and discard, as appropriate.

Practice safe geocaching. To prevent injury when searching for caches, inspect areas with care before trekking into potentially dangerous locations or placing hands into unknown nooks and crannies such as ground holes, ponds, creeks, or urban buildings and structures.

Safety Gear

The gear you will need depends on the length of your trip, the location, and weather.

- GPS device
- Compass (for emergencies if going to an unknown or wilderness area)
- Map (for emergencies if going to an unknown or wilderness area)
- Cache coordinates/details uploaded to the GPS device or written out
- First-aid kit
- A working cell phone for emergencies (carried by an adult) or a specific backup plan
- Whistle for wilderness areas
- Clothing appropriate for the activity and weather
- Reusable water bottle
- Swag (or “stuff we all get”), which are the items that geocachers place into caches—usually small plastic toys, key chains, sunglasses—for other geocachers to take once they’ve located a cache
- Topographical and/or standard map of geocaching area if going to an unknown area
- Daypack to carry personal belongings
- Hiking boots for wilderness areas or comfortable and sturdy walking shoes for urban environments

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Go-Karting

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

Note: Go-karts that are privately owned or used for racing are not permitted.

About Go-Karting

This checkpoint applies to “concession” go-karts, which are those found at amusement parks or other public facilities with one driver and no more than one passenger. Girl Scouts may participate in go-kart activities that are on a rail system (such as those that are an amusement park ride). They must follow the weight and height restrictions set by the facility. Go-karts that are privately owned or used for racing are not permitted.

Currently 44 out of 50 states regulate amusement parks. The six without state oversight are Alabama, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, Wyoming, and Utah. These states contain few, if any, amusement parks. (Wyoming, for example, has no parks.)

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Choose locations deemed legal and safe by state and local authorities and that meet council approval.

Verify that all the facility's karts with two seats have them arranged side-by-side with separate safety belts for each seat and that all karts are built and maintained to manufacturer's specifications.

All karts must be governed to a predetermined speed (not to exceed 25 miles per hour) per ASTM standards.

All karts must have:

- Passenger padding in place, with everything in good condition (seat bottom, seatback, steering wheel, headrest, steering column)
- Rollover protection
- Chain and/or belt guards
- Properly guarded/shielded hot and or moving parts
- Gas caps and all components in place and in proper working condition
- Fuel tanks properly secured with no leaks
- No fiberglass laceration hazards

Safety, warning, and instructional signage must be highly visible, in good repair, and appropriately placed, and must note exposure risk. In addition, a maintenance program should be in effect for the go-karts, a minimum of two attendants should be on the track during operations, and no bumping or reckless driving shall be permitted.

The track must have:

- A continuous containment system around the entire track with the exception of the pit entrance and exit
- Minimum of a 10-pound BC-rated fire extinguisher, properly mounted, marked, charged, and easily accessible to the pit attendants
- Within 70 feet of any point on the track, a minimum of a 10-pound BC-rated fire extinguisher must be properly mounted, marked, charged, and accessible
- Entire perimeter restricts unauthorized access to track area
- Brake and gas controls return automatically and are properly labeled or color coded

Safety Gear

- Protective helmet with properly fitting safety harness that meets the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F2416 or F1492 requirements, displaying the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) seal
- Sneakers or sturdy shoes

- Any loose articles of clothing secured
- Long hair tied back or secured

On the Day of Go-Karting:

Dress appropriately. Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment.

Practice safe go-kart procedures. Girls should not ram or bump into other go-karts.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Hayrides

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Hayrides

A hayride, also known as a hayrack ride, is a traditional American and Canadian activity consisting of a recreational ride in a wagon or cart pulled by a tractor, horses, or a truck, which has been loaded with hay or straw for comfortable seating. Hayrides originated with farm workers, including children, who rode loaded hay wagons back to barns for unloading. It was one of the few times during the frenetic days of the haying season that workers could stop to rest.

Hayrides are a fun and enjoyable activity for girls of all ages who are visiting a farm and the rides are often part of other autumn festivities such as apple or pumpkin picking. Hayrides on Halloween are often dubbed “haunted hayrides.” These hayrides sometimes incorporate special effects and actors portraying ghosts, monsters, and other spooky creatures to attract thrill seekers and capitalize on the Halloween season.

Although the fact that hayrides are typically regarded as a safe and lighthearted activity, there have been incidents where hayrides have flipped or veered off the road, resulting in terrible consequences. Therefore, it is very important to follow the safety precautions and learn as much as you can about hayride safety ahead of time.

Learn More:

- On farm and dairy hayride safety: [Safe Agritourism](#)
- Hayride safety checklist: [Safe Agritourism](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about any special needs and accommodations. See what potential accommodations can be made to include all girls.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Assess the safety of the hayride, the vehicle, and the cab. See hayride safety links provided above.

Consider the location. The hayride must take place on sectioned off property (such as fields) intended for hayride use at a maximum speed of 10 miles per hour. Public roads and highways are not used.

Girls do not ride on tractors. The tractor pulling the hayride must weigh more than the gross weight of the heaviest wagon in tow, which is necessary for adequate traction and braking.

Evaluate the wagon. Ensure that the wagon has sturdy steps and handrails for easy loading and unloading of passengers. The wagon should have railings and seating. The cab walls should be 3 to 4 feet high.

Evaluate the driver. A qualified driver who is licensed to drive a vehicle in the jurisdiction and is an adult at least 18 years of age, but preferably 21 years of age, with several years of driving experience and experience hauling a trailer while driving the vehicle being used.

The hauled vehicle is in good working order. It must meet all state and local safety requirements and displays proper identification showing these conditions have been met. The hauled vehicle has protective sides and rear fencing or gates, as well as rear lights in working order. Any coupling of a trailer to a vehicle is appropriate to the load and has a safety chain.

Assess the safety of the hayride site. Before participating in a hayride, ensure that hayride equipment (tractor/truck, bales of hay) are secure, that vehicle weight limitations and seating capacities are not exceeded, and that paths and trails are free of obstructions. Also ensure that girls are responsible riders who stay seated during the hayride.

Girls learn about and practice safe hayrides. Girls do not ride in the hauling vehicle. The hauled vehicle meets all state and local safety requirements and displays proper identification showing these conditions have been met. The hay or straw is properly stacked to prevent slipping. Sufficient seating space is allowed for each person. Girls and adults remain seated during the ride. No feet hang over edges.

Adults accompany girls on the hayride according to the grade level-specific adult-to-girl ratios.

Consider insurance. Make sure the farm has adequate commercial insurance that covers the hayrides for hire in the amount of no less than \$1 million in commercial liability insurance.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Hiking

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Hiking

Unlike short walks, hiking may involve lengthy, cross-country walking trips and often requires sturdy boots to provide traction on rocks and uneven trail beds. When practicing Leave No Trace skills while hiking, it's important for hikers to leave trails as—or better than—they found them. Although the action of one hiker may not strongly affect the environment, the effects of large groups of hikers can degrade trails.

Hiking is the ideal opportunity for girls to learn and practice map and compass skills. Before heading out on a lengthy hike, learn how to read a map and use a compass. Look at a map to understand where you started and where you plan to finish. You can always check with your local, state, or national park for interesting and exciting trail ideas.

Note: For overnight hiking experiences, follow the guidance in the “Backpacking” or “Travel and Camping” safety activity checkpoints.

Learn More:

- Make an emergency survival kit: [REI](#)
- Locate hiking areas near U.S. metropolitan areas: [All Trails](#)
- [American Hiking Society](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. If visiting a national park, contact the park in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

See [Disabled Sports USA](#) to find out about hiking for people of all abilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Girls should plan the activity. Encourage girls to plan routes, activities, and guidelines for dealing with problems that may arise with other groups of hikers.

Prompt girls to share resources. Encourage girls to distribute a list of hiking gear and supplies, and to determine which resources can be shared. Be sure girls and adults have a good understanding of how to practice the Leave No Trace principles on the hike.

Choose an appropriate hiking route. Terrain, mileage, and hiking time should be known to the hikers in advance. Hikes are restricted to a reasonable length as determined by age, level of experience, nature of the terrain, physical condition of the hikers, disabilities, weather conditions, and time of day. The hiking pace must always accommodate the slowest hiker.

Assess safety of hiking routes. The route needs to be known to at least one of the adults or a report is obtained in advance to assess potential hazards, such as poisonous plants, dangerous animals, unsafe drinking water, cliffs, and drop-offs. Ensure that a land-management or similar agency is contacted during the trip planning stage to determine available routes, recommended group size, water quantity and quality, and which permits are needed.

Ensure that hikers have a comprehensive understanding of the trip. Group members are trained to be observant of the route, surroundings, and fatigue of individuals. Instruction is given on the safety rules for hiking, such as staying together in a group, recognizing poisonous plants and biting or stinging insects and ticks, respecting wild animals, practicing Leave No Trace, and behaving effectively in emergencies. Ensure that girls, based on their level, know how to read maps, use a compass, navigate a route, and estimate distance.

Respect the environment and keep trails clean. Use the principles of Leave No Trace. Carry out food and all trash. Hike on established trails. Do not remove natural materials, such as leaves or branches. In addition, avoid eating wild foods, walking on or uprooting plants, interfering with or feeding wild animals, and littering.

Practice safe hiking. Instructions should be given on the safety rules for hiking, which include forbidding hiking off the trail and after dusk. Girls should stay on the pathway to avoid trampling trailside plants and causing erosion. In addition, be sure to take adequate rest periods with time to replenish fluids and eat high-energy food (such as fruits and nuts). Girls must take proper precautions in areas where poisonous plants, snakes, or ticks are prevalent.

Safety Gear

The gear you'll need will depend on the length of your trip, the location, and weather.

- A water bottle or hydration pack with enough water for each girl for the length of the hike
- Sturdy footwear based on the type of trails and length of the hike
- Map and compass or GPS device
- Flashlight, whistle, pocket knife
- A working cell phone held by designated adult for emergencies
- An emergency survival kit

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, outfitter, or your council as appropriate.



Horseback Riding

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Horseback Riding

Horseback riding teaches girls responsibility, patience, discipline, understanding, empathy, compassion, problem solving, and self-control. It allows girls to see the world from a different perspective (on top of a horse!) and can build their confidence and self-esteem. One of the most important aspects of horseback riding is showing respect for horses.

The purpose of these checkpoints is to provide tips for trail riding and ring or corral riding. Some activities, such as vaulting, pack trips, driving, and games, may require special equipment, as well as horses and instructors with specialized training (for vaulting, see the “Vaulting” safety activity checkpoints).

Learn More:

- [American Camp Association](#)
- [Certified Horsemanship Association](#)
- [United States Pony Clubs](#)
- [Horse Channel](#)
- [Think Like a Horse](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. See [Disabled Sports USA](#) to learn more about equipment, adaptations, and finding a program near you.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Riding instructors are adults (at least 18 years old) who have current certification from an accredited horsemanship instructor training organization, such as the Certified Horsemanship Association and American Association for Horsemanship Safety, or documented proof of a minimum of three years’ experience successfully instructing in a general horseback riding program. Assistant riding instructors are at least 16 years old and are certified by an accredited horsemanship instructor training organization or have documented proof of at least one year experience successfully instructing in a general horseback riding program.

Riders are supervised by instructors or assistant instructors when in the proximity of horses, whether mounted or not. For ring or corral riding and trail riding, at least one instructor and one assistant instructor supervise a group of ten or fewer riders. For ring and corral riding, one additional instructor is required for every five additional riders. For beginners and younger girls or for difficult trails more instructors may be needed.

Connect with your Girl Scout council for approved sites or site suggestions. The stable operator should be able to provide evidence of \$1 million liability insurance and instructor certifications upon request.

Assess participants' maturity level. Girls must possess sufficient physical coordination and balance to participate in riding. They need to be old enough to understand and practice safety procedures, to use good judgment in reacting to situations, and to take responsibility for themselves and their horses. Some stables have weight limits for rider eligibility, so check with the stable when making reservations.

Select a safe site. Check with council staff to see if an approved vendor list is offered. If the council does not have an approved vendor list, call the facility to determine the following safety information in order to select a safe site.

Check the condition of the facility. For both Girl Scout council-owned and non-Girl Scout riding facilities, the riding area is away from outside distractions and free of debris; the barn and riding areas do not have exposed barbed wire fencing; the instructional rings, corrals, paddocks, and stables have clearly posted rules and regulations; the horses are properly cared for, and the stables, corrals, and barns are clean and uncluttered. Tack (saddles, bridles, etc.) is clean and in good condition.

Talk to the staff. Communicate with the horseback-riding organization about any rider weight limitations; in some cases, heavier riders can cause a horse pain, which, in turn, may cause horses to exhibit dangerous behavior.

Dress appropriately for the activity. Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces. Riders may not ride barefoot, in sandals, or in hiking boots with lug soles. Riders should not wear backpacks, day packs, or fanny packs.

Ensure girls learn about safe horseback riding. A pre-ride demonstration should be given to first-time riders, including mounting, dismounting, starting, stopping, steering, and maintaining a balanced body position. Avoid changing clothing, such as putting on raingear, while mounted on the horse, because it may scare the horse; instead, dismount for clothing changes or adjustments.

Test and classify riders according to riding ability. The horse and the riding area are assigned according to the rider's ability. Beginning riders should attend an introductory safety lesson, including information on horse psychology and behavior and approaching, handling, and leading a horse. Before trail riding, all riders should warm up in a ring or corral to ensure that they are well suited to their horses and can control the gait and function required during the trail ride. Ensure that riders feel confident and demonstrate basic skills in controlling the horse (stop, start, steer) and maintaining proper distance.

Follow basic horseback safety standards. To ensure gear fits properly and/or is properly adjusted, an instructor should make a safety check of each rider's clothing, footwear, helmet, and saddle. He or she needs to check stirrup length to ensure that riders are able to raise their

behinds off the saddle about one hand's depth. Front and rear cinches are checked for tightness, twigs, folds, and bends. The instructor should also check the safety of the riding area before each session. Only one rider is allowed on a horse at any time, and there should be no eating or drinking while riding. Riders should dismount before going through small gates.

Respect ring- or corral-riding standards. Each horse and rider should be under the observation of an instructor at all times, and the riding ring has good footing for the horses and is free of dangerous obstructions. The fencing must be at least 42 inches high, visible, and well maintained. Gates to the ring should remain shut.

Inspect and don't spook horses. Horses displaying uncomfortable or abnormal behaviors should be dismounted and checked for injuries and poor equipment fitting, and may need to be walked back to the stable on foot. If a horse gets loose, do not chase it; instead, have an adult calmly attempt to retrieve the horse.

Respect trail-riding standards. The length of the trail ride and the gait of the horses should be geared to the ability of the least experienced rider. Riding trails should have good footing and be free of dangerous obstructions, such as low hanging branches. Trails are marked, mapped, regularly inspected, and maintained. The participants should ride single file, one full-horse length apart, with an instructor at the head and at the rear of the group. Riders must have control of horses, maintain the spacing between horses, and increase distances between horses when the horses' speed increases. Horses are to be walked (not ridden) up and down hills, and should be walked for the final ten minutes of any riding period in order to cool down.

Avoid public roads and highways whenever possible. If a group must cross a road, the instructor should first halt the group in a line well before the road, check for traffic, and then signal the group to cross. At the signal, all horses are to be turned to face the highway and all cross at the same time.

Safety Gear

- Protective headgear with a properly fitting safety harness that meets the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F1163-88 requirements, displaying the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) seal
- Long pants and appropriate protective clothing that's snug to prevent tangling with the saddle
- Boots or closed-toe shoes with a smooth sole and at least a half-inch heel to prevent feet from sliding through stirrups (no steel-toe shoes, which could bend in stirrups).
- A saddle (sized appropriately for each rider), which the facility will provide
- Extra halter/lead ropes carried by instructor, which the facility will provide
- Cell phone or walkie-talkies to communicate need for emergency services
- Tapaderos (pieces of heavy leather around the front of the stirrup of a stock or range saddle to protect the rider's foot and to keep the foot from sliding through the stirrup). If the saddle does not have tapaderos, the rider should have riding boots with at least a 1-inch heel to prevent the foot from slipping.

- Well-fitting gloves to protect hands from blisters, rope burns, and cuts
- Saddlebag for lengthy trail rides, to carry items such as a water bottle, clothing layers, and lunch

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Indoor Skydiving

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: J C S

About Indoor Skydiving

Indoor skydiving takes place in a vertical wind tunnel (a wind tunnel that moves air in an upward column) to simulate the experience of skydiving without planes or parachutes. The force of the wind generated in the tunnel is based on the size (height and weight), skill level, and needs of the “skydiver.” Each participant “flies” within a column of wind created by the wind tunnel—and the skydiver floats 3 to 6 feet above a trampoline-like net, so if the fan fails, the participant falls into the net and is caught. There are several facilities in the United States that operate vertical wind tunnels for recreation and training; only those facilities with indoor vertical wind tunnels are permitted for use by Girl Scouts.

With this activity, girls get to simulate actual (outdoor) skydiving, including learning about and wearing skydiving gear such as a jumpsuit, goggles, a helmet, eye protection, and earplugs (for the noise).

Indoor skydiving is not approved for Daisies or Brownies.

Learn More:

- Explanation of indoor skydiving: [iFLY](#)
- Difference between skydiving and indoor skydiving: [Indoor Skydiving Source](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the location, vendor, or facility in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Learn ahead of time. Ensure that all first-time participants will be given instruction in how to properly wear and adjust gear and how to float and move in the vertical wind tunnel. All legitimate centers provide instruction.

Practice before flying. With guidance from your instructor, practice body positions ahead of time.

Fall with style. There are several maneuvers skydivers can do while in the wind tunnel including flips, spins, and turns. First-time skydivers will not likely perform or learn any of these maneuvers. This depends on skill level, the instructor, and council guidelines.

Size up gear. Ensure the appropriate sizes of helmets, flight suits, and goggles are available, and make sure that helmets and goggles fit girls' faces securely and comfortably. Make certain that girls with glasses or contacts have goggles that properly accommodate them.

Safeguard valuables. Don't leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. Most indoor skydiving facilities provide a locker area for personal belongings. Check with the facility ahead of time about cost and availability of the facility's storage options.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure that the instructor holds instructional certification from the International Bodyflight Association, or has council-approved equivalent certification or documented experience and skill in teaching and/or supervising indoor skydiving. If you have questions about certification or instructor knowledge, contact either the International Bodyflight Association or Skyventure (a recognized vertical wind tunnel company) to ask about instructors at the facility you intend to use.

Ensure girls stay with an adult. Confirm that the instructor will lead girls to the flight chamber, be with them during the flight experience, and spot them the entire time. The instructor should also lead girls out of the flight chamber.

Physical Restrictions

- This activity is not recommended for those with a history of heart trouble.
- Because the body must be in an arched position with hips forward, people with back issues that prevent this body position should avoid flying.
- It is recommended that people with prior shoulder dislocations do not fly, due to a significant amount of wind on shoulders.
- Those who are pregnant should not fly.
- Participants must weigh less than 300 pounds.
- Verify height and weight restrictions at each location.
- Any other serious health issues should be cleared by a physician prior to flying. Check with specific locations for their restrictions before booking a flight.

Safety Gear

These items are provided by the facility:

- Helmet (full face or open face)
- Goggles
- Flight suit

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Indoor Trampoline

Council Approval: Not required

Activity Permitted For: B J C S A

Activity Not Recommended For: Daisies

About Indoor Trampolines

Indoor trampolines make for a fun and exciting activity. Indoor trampolines are typically offered in an enclosed gymnasium-like space with several different trampolines of varying sizes and shapes. Sometimes a facility is equipped to connect trampolines and turn an entire room into one massive trampoline. Indoor trampoline courts are contained, low-impact, and adjustable to the size and skill level of participants.

Indoor trampoline parks have padded walls and soft (sometimes foam) pits and landing areas and feature huge trampolines divided into sections for individual bouncers. Most offer other activities, such as pits filled with foam cubes to jump into, and trampoline basketball courts.

There should always be a trained staff member around to monitor the group size and ages to make sure proper grade levels are kept where they belong. Trained staff members will also monitor the safe behavior and the overall well-being of participants.

The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons specifically states that trampoline jumping is unsafe for the skeletal frame of children six years old and younger. For this reason, Daisies are not permitted to participate in indoor trampoline activities.

Learn More:

- [International Association of Trampoline Parks](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Safeguard valuables. Don't leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. Most indoor skydiving facilities provide a locker area for personal belongings. Check with the facility ahead of time about cost and availability of the facility's storage amenities.

Ensure girls learn how to trampoline safely. All participants will be given instruction in safety and jumping rules. All legitimate centers provide instruction; it's up to the adult organizing the activity to ensure it takes place. The operator must ensure that each participant receives instruction (in-person or video training) about potential risks and safety guidelines. Participants/guardians will sign a waiver that they have received the training.

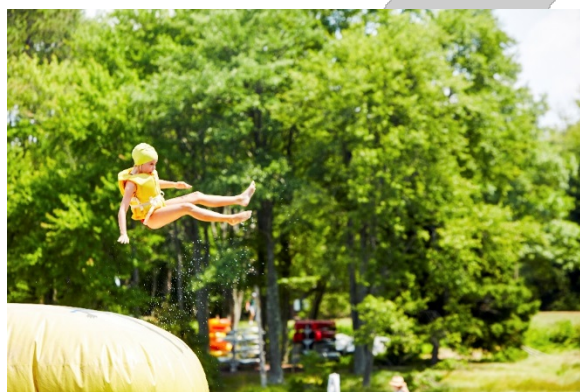
Obey rules. There should be clearly posted rules that prohibit roughhousing, double bouncing (when two jumpers land close to each other at the same time), and clothing that could be dangerous, such as belt buckles and studs, and loose objects like key chains.

Check equipment. Padding should completely cover all trampoline springs. There should be a system of nets below the trampolines. If the park has a foam pit, it should have a trampoline bed underneath it.

Learn and follow common safety rules for indoor trampoline:

- Nothing (including gum or candy) should be in mouths while on the trampoline court.
- Pockets should be emptied entirely.
- Girls should not sit or lie on the court. To rest, exit the court.
- No pushing, running, racing, or horseplay of any kind.
- No touching or hanging on the top pads on the court.
- Be in control of your body at all times.
- Jumpers should be separated by size to the greatest degree possible.
- Be aware of those around you and jump with people of similar size.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Inflatables

Includes:

- Bounce houses
- Bubble soccer
- Aquatic inflatables
- Amusement/theme parks with inflatables

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: *D *B J C S A

About Inflatables

Aquatic inflatables/climbing walls are perfect for hot summer months, providing a fun way to cool down. Most inflatables can be found in public facilities, parks, events, etc. Verify with your council if any additional approvals need to be made in addition to checking with local governing agencies to ensure all safety guidelines are being followed. *Aquatic inflatable bounce houses and slides are approved for Brownies and above. *Daisies cannot participate in aquatic bounce houses.

Aquatic climbing walls are made from a variety of materials and placed on the deep end of the pool. Participants need to be strong swimmers who can swim in water deeper than 5 feet. *Aquatic climbing walls are not permitted for Daisies and Brownies.

Bounce houses (closed inflatable trampolines, bouncy houses, bouncy castles, moon bounces, moonwalks, jumpers, etc.) are temporary inflatable structures and buildings used for recreational purposes, particularly for children. And bubble soccer is an exciting twist on the traditional game of soccer. Girls are wrapped in a giant, soft inflatable bubble ball with shoulder harnesses and handles inside. Bubble soccer is not permitted for Daisies and Brownies, and Daisies may only participate in bounce houses that are specific for their age, height, and/or weight.

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities.

Information on accommodations for inflatable parks is similar to that for amusement parks.

Learn More:

- [International Association of Amusement Parks and Attraction](#)

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Connect with your Girl Scout council for approved sites or site suggestions to ensure the location is vetted. Allow enough time to have the location approved.

Inquire about adequate insurance. The park you attend may or may not be able or willing to provide evidence of \$1 million liability insurance and instructor certifications upon request, depending on the size of the group. It's best to inquire and have the conversation in order to verify credibility of the park's management.

Ensure safety of theme park rides. Obtain full information about the rides and other activities and evaluate them for safety, especially concerning the age, height, and weight levels of girls.

For water parks, follow the "Swimming" safety activity checkpoints. Pay particular attention to water park safety rules. Ensure there are certified lifeguards at each activity. Girls will need to take a swim test prior to the trip to ensure they can swim.

Know where girls are at all times. Keep track of girls' whereabouts. Conduct a head count before and after activities. Ensure that girls know where to go and how to act when confronted by strangers or intruders.

Review plans upon arrival. Adults should obtain a copy of the park guide to facilitate the visit and gain important information on park policies and the location of restrooms and the first-aid station.

Have a predetermined meeting spot. Adults should discuss plans for the visit with girls and set a place to meet in case the group gets separated.

Know where the first-aid station is located. Ensure the presence of a first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of abrasions, sprains, and fractures.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Miscellaneous Activities

Includes:

- Arts, crafts, and STEM
- Land sports
- Laser tag
- Parades and large gatherings
- Segway

Council Approval: May be required

Activities Permitted: See grade level chart

About the Miscellaneous Activities

Arts, Crafts, and STEM. From crafting and the arts to STEM projects, girls create, develop, and engage in a variety of projects. The activities are broad and varied and can include painting, pottery, beading, sewing, astronomy exploration, and engineering design and investigation—to name just a few.

Land Sports. Depending on location, these sports can be played year-round or during a specific time of year, indoors or outdoors. The category is intended to include all land sports, including soccer, basketball, flag football, softball, hockey, basketball, tennis, and more.

Laser Tag. This popular activity usually takes place at an indoor venue but can be done outdoors as well. This tag game is played by using laser guns with infrared beams. Laser tag vests or other types of specific clothing may be used and, if so, are available at the facility. This is a fun and exciting way to learn team work and good sportsmanship as well as healthy camaraderie!

Parades and Large Gatherings. These are excellent opportunities to “suit up and show up” in and for girl communities. When participating in parades, events, or other large gatherings it is important to represent Girl Scouts in the best possible way, doing what makes the most sense for the occasion.

Segway. A Segway is a personal transportation device that has become very popular in tourist areas. It's an automated standing cart-like machine with two wheels and a steering bar. Not quite driving, but close to it, Segway is recommended for older girls.

Skateboards. Skateboarding is a land activity in which a person can ride in a standing or crouching position using a variety of boards and wheels (depending on the style) and propelling themselves by occasionally pushing one foot against the ground.

Skating. Both ice and roller skating can be enjoyed in both indoor and outdoor rinks. Ice skating can take place on a frozen lake, but only if the lake has been tested and verified for ice safety and there are regular organized and approved skating sessions taking place.



Offshore Water Vessels

Large Passenger Vessels

Includes:

- Ferries
- Cruise ships
- Chartered fishing boats
- Whale watching

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Offshore Water Vessels

Passenger vessels include ferries, cruise ships, sport-fishing boats, airboats, whale-watching boats, and private yachts over 30 feet long. They can be either commercial or recreational vessels.

Know where to go on a voyage. Look for ports with access to oceans, lakes, rivers, and coastal waterways.

Note: Small craft, such as canoes, kayaks, rowboats, and small sailboats are not considered offshore large passenger water vessels. If you plan to use these types of small craft, see specific chapters about them in *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.

Learn More:

- Find life jackets to borrow in all 50 states: [Boat U.S. Foundation](#)
- Resources, regulations, and statistics: [U.S. Coast Guard*](#)
- Federal requirements for recreational boats: [U.S. Coast Guard Boater's Guide](#)
- Free basic boating safety courses for each state: [Boat U.S. Foundation](#)

*The United States Coast Guard app (IOS and Android) provides state boating information, a checklist of required safety equipment, and a way to report hazards, pollution, or suspicious situations.

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Connect with the ship or boat operator to determine any access or safety steps that need to be arranged in advance. Additionally, the [United States Access Board](#) has relevant resources and information for people with disabilities.

Safety Gear

The gear you'll need will depend on the type of vessel, length of your trip, location, and weather.

Choose life jackets or personal flotation devices (PFDs) carefully. Must be Coast Guard–approved. Find approval on the label located on the inside back of the jacket.

Ensure life jackets fit snugly. Check the “user weight” on the label to make sure a jacket is the right size for a child. If the label isn’t readable, don’t use the jacket—and don’t use inflatable life jackets for youth or adults. Once you’ve found the right fit, fasten all clips, zippers, and straps, then pull up on the shoulder straps. The jacket should be snug enough that the chin and earlobes cannot slip through. Tighten straps as necessary.

Be vigilant. Check to see that all life jackets are in serviceable condition: no broken clips, straps, or zippers. Make sure the life jackets aren’t waterlogged or torn.

Ensure each child and adult wears a life jacket at all times while on a recreational vessel, unless in an enclosed cabin. They must also wear one whenever a commercial vessel operator instructs them to do so.

Follow your state’s laws about the use of life jackets. Laws may differ depending on a child’s age, the type of boat, and the type of boating operation.

Use safety gear as required by the U.S. Coast Guard or by your state’s boating and waterways regulations. Reputable ship operators will be in compliance with these laws. Specific gear varies by ship size and use. Ask for an orientation on how to use safety gear, if appropriate. Take care when engaging ship operators outside the United States.

Additional gear/supplies:

- Layered clothing to protect from wind, sea spray, and other weather
- Non-slip, closed-toed shoes
- Seasickness remedies (see below), if needed
- Bottled water and healthy snacks
- Binoculars
- Hat or visor

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Teach girls these general safety rules:

- Do not run at any time while on the vessel, dock, or near the water.
- Listen to the orientation and follow the rules noted.
- Use the buddy system.
- Follow instructions in an emergency.
- Find out what to do if someone falls overboard or if other accidents occur.

Select a qualified operator. Commercial vessel operators are licensed through the U.S. Coast Guard. In foreign waters, the “flag of the ship” (the country under which it is registered) dictates the training and licensing required. These standards can vary widely. In the United States, passenger vessels (ferries, cruise ships, and whale-watching boats) that carry more than six passengers are licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard. The Coast Guard examines operator training and certification, vessel condition, and safety equipment. Federal laws and regulations are supplemented by state laws and international navigation standards.

Passenger Vessel with a Commercial License

In the United States, you can expect a passenger vessel with a commercial license to:

- Give a basic safety orientation, possibly through a loudspeaker. The orientation should cover the location of life jackets and other critical information. On cruise ships, an evacuation drill will be held.
- Have a professional, licensed crew that has training and experience in handling emergency situations.
- Possess current liability insurance.
- Be a well-maintained vessel being used as it was designed to be used.
- Know about state and federal regulations for life jackets. If you are instructed to use a life jacket, you must do so.

Privately-Owned Recreational Vessels (Yachts)

In the United States, privately-owned recreational vessels (yachts) are governed by Coast Guard requirements and by state training and licensing requirements, which vary by state. When in doubt, follow the guidelines that are the most strict. Check with the owner about these items:

- The operator must have sufficient training and be licensed to operate that type of vessel. Contact your council or the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary for guidance. Training includes safe operation, weather conditions, emergency response, navigation, and rules of the waterway.
- The vessel must have had a U.S. Coast Guard safety check within the last year.
- The vessel is currently registered by the state or is “documented” (a federal registration type) by the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Life jackets or personal flotation devices are available for the number and size of all passengers on board.
- Adequate liability insurance (\$1 million or more) is in effect.

- The vessel is well-maintained and has all safety equipment required for its type and purpose.
- Passengers must wear a life jacket while the vessel is moving, unless in an enclosed cabin.
- A throwable floating device (i.e., a Type IV cushion, horseshoe buoy, or life ring) is available and placed where it is easily and quickly accessible. Ask about the procedures for if someone falls overboard.
- File a float plan to communicate your route.

Chartered or Rented Vessels

A chartered vessel is rented by the group for a specific length of time. Charters may or may not include a captain and/or crew.

If a boat is chartered with a crew, use the guidelines (above) for privately-owned recreational vessels.

If a vessel is chartered without crew, you'll need to provide your own captain and crew. Both must meet training and licensing standards designated by the U.S. Coast Guard. The standards that apply will depend on the size and type of the vessel. Review this article and contact your council for additional guidance and approval.

Cruise Ships

Before you book, check the Vessel Sanitation Program ratings of the Centers for Disease Control, which routinely inspects ships for cleanliness, repair, food preparation, and storage.

Book cabins in a block either across the hall from or next to one another so that your group stays together. Teach and use the buddy system and have a plan for communicating if members of the group get separated. Be aware that cell phones may not work on board.

Also, be sure to secure valuables in the ship's safe.

Follow Girl Scout standards and the guidelines in *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018* for use of swimming pools, climbing walls, snorkeling, and other higher-risk activities. Choose shore excursions carefully, keeping in mind that cruise ships and related vendors are not aware of Girl Scout standards. Be thorough in asking questions about safety.

Know too that often other countries don't maintain the same strict boating laws as the United States does. Research the standards of the country you're planning to visit; if standards seem poor, find out how to best ensure safety, or avoid unsafe situations completely. Contact your council for guidance.

Additionally, suggest that girls and adults who get motion sickness consider taking a remedy. Dramamine, Bonine, or a homeopathic remedy are all options. Let troop families decide whether to use these, and if they do, let them know that the remedies are more effective when taken in advance. Other tips:

- Bring mint, ginger candies, gingersnaps, or plain crackers to settle queasy stomachs.
- Have seasick persons stay on deck in the fresh air, if possible. Have them keep their eyes on the horizon. Going below deck can worsen

symptoms. The stern (back) of most boats is usually calmer. But avoid this area if exhaust fumes are a problem.

- Respect the environment. Choose responsible operators who follow local environmental laws. Whale-watching boats should respect wildlife and should not aggressively chase or harass the whales.
- Check weather with ship operator. If lightning or high winds are expected, consider rescheduling.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Orienteering

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies and Brownies

About Orienteering

Orienteering is an activity that involves using a map, compass, and navigational skills to find your way around or across an unfamiliar area. The activity may also incorporate camping, backpacking, boating, hiking, cross-country skiing, or horseback-riding skills.

Orienteering often takes place on wilderness trails, although events can take place in just about any terrain such as a beach, urban area, or park. Orienteering meets use control markers to flag various land features found on the map, serving as checkpoints along a course.

Be certain to practice Leave No Trace while orienteering. Girls should always stay on trails.

Orienteering is not recommended for Daisies and Brownies, but they may be ready to learn pre-orienteering activities such as map reading, navigation, and map drawing. Brownies may also enjoy geocaching (see “Geocaching” safety activity checkpoints).

Learn More:

- [Orienteering USA](#)
- [Orienteering Course Safety](#)
- Ethics and generally accepted rules of orienteering: [Orienteering Association of British Columbia](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints for Trail Orienteering

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Participants receive instruction from a person experienced in orienteering before navigating an orienteering course. First-timers participate on a beginner-level course. Girls with previous topographic map-reading experience may be eligible to attempt an advanced beginners' course.

Select a safe orienteering site. The site selected is a park, camp, or other area with a good trail network; proper landowner permission is secured to use the site.

Always avoid orienteering during hunting season.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED; if any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first-aid training.

Follow basic orienteering safety standards. Girls take part as a group or with buddies. Each participant is given a specific time period to complete the course and must check in at the finish area whether or not she completed the course. Beginning and finishing course times of each participant are carefully noted to ensure that all participants have returned.

Take proper precautions in areas where poisonous plants, snakes, or ticks are prevalent.

Map your course. [Get to know map symbols](#) and how things like elevation and relief are communicated on maps.

Learn about orienteering techniques. Before participating in orienteering, [learn about strategies such as pacing, thumbing, and handrails](#).

Plan the right activity for the age group. Juniors should do orienteering in small groups and be accompanied on a course by an adult with basic instruction in orienteering. Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors who have received training may orienteer in groups of at least two.

Competitive orienteering courses often require participants to operate independently; solo competition is not recommended for inexperienced girls or Juniors. However, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors whose skills match or exceed the demands of the course may participate in such competitions.

Plan ahead. When participating in a meet, there should be a clear area of safety (a safety lane), a specific finish time and location, and a search-and-rescue procedure designed by the competition's host and the Girl Scout adult volunteer.

Practice Leave No Trace skills before participating in orienteering. Pick up garbage you find along the way, be sure not to trample vegetation, and be aware of wildlife.

Safety Gear

- Orienteering map
- Compass and watch
- Emergency signaling whistle

- Long pants, hiking boots, sneakers
- Daypack to carry personal belongings

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the instructor, facility, or your council when appropriate.



Outdoor Cooking

Council Approval: Not required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Outdoor Cooking

Historically, wood fires were the primary source of heat for camp cooking, but the practice of cooking with large fires is no longer recommended because of the detrimental effects on the environment and surrounding vegetation. Instead, use an established fire pit to ignite a small fire or use alternative cooking methods, such as a portable fuel-based cook stove or a solar or box oven.

Extensive outdoor cooking is not recommended for Daisies, but a less extensive activity, such as roasting marshmallows or cooking a one-pot meal, is appropriate. Look for campsites and parks with designated fire pit areas.

As girls progress, they can learn to use a variety of cooking methods, including wood fire, propane, gas stoves, charcoal, canned heat (great for grilled cheese sandwiches!), and even solar energy.

As older girls become accomplished outdoor chefs, they can expand their skills with new types and techniques of cooking. Learn how to start a fire without matches, try solar cooking, or test taste new campfire cuisine. Plan outdoor recipes. Vote for your favorite meals and plan how to cook them outdoors.

Learn More:

- [Leave No Trace](#)
- Outdoor recipe ideas: [Discover the Outdoors](#), [Outdoor Cook](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs, special food requirements, and other accommodations.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify leader/instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure at least one adult is trained or possesses knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas:

- Outdoor cooking activities and leadership, including dishwashing, food storage, sanitation, menu planning, and level-appropriate cooking methods
- Outdoor skills necessary to lead the group
- Safety management
- Judgment and maturity
- Group dynamics and management
- Supervision of girls and adults

Connect with your Girl Scout council regarding permits with the local fire district, land management agency, and/or conservation office. The adult volunteer also checks the fire index with local authorities and ensures local air pollution regulations are followed.

Encourage girls to share resources. Support girls in creating a checklist of group and personal equipment and distribute to group members. Repackage all food to minimize waste and the amount of garbage that needs to be removed from the campsite.

Never cook inside a tent!

Be prepared for primitive campsites. If cooking in primitive areas with little to no modern conveniences, observe these standards:

- Use existing fire rings if a fire is necessary.
- Make sure the campsite is located at least 200 feet from all water sources.
- Avoid fragile mountain meadows and areas of wet soil.
- Avoid camping under dead tree limbs.
- Do dishwashing and personal bathing at least 200 feet away from water sources.

Store food well away from tents and out of reach of animals. Check local regulations to find out if a bear-proof canister is required. If the site is in bear country, check with local authorities on precautions to take. Ensure that garbage, sanitary supplies, and toilet paper are carried out.

Take safety precautions. Fire safety rules, emergency procedures, and first aid for burns are reviewed with the group and understood. Procedures are established and known in advance for notifying the fire department or land management agency officials in case of a fire. Fire drills are practiced at each site.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle burns and other injuries related to the location, including extremes of temperature, such as heat exhaustion, heat stroke, frostbite, cold exposure, and hypothermia, as well as

sprains, fractures, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first-aid training. If feasible, a vehicle is available to transport an injured or sick person.

On the Day of Outdoor Cooking:

Store garbage in insect- and animal-proof containers with plastic inner linings, and cover it securely when there is a campsite garbage-pickup service. When there is no garbage-pickup service, remove garbage from campsite in plastic bags and discard, as appropriate. Recycle whenever possible. Do not bury food; carry out food, trash, grease, and fuel canisters. Do not remove natural materials, such as leaves or branches.

Prepare for safe use of portable cook stoves. Portable cook stoves differ in size and in fuel use. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully, and closely supervise the girls when using any stove. Take an adequate amount of fuel, and store the extra fuel supply away from the cooking flame. Do not overheat the fuel tank.

Keep all stove parts clean. Check that lines and burners are not clogged. Do not refuel the cook stove or change canisters near an open flame. Take care not to spill fuel; if fuel does spill, relocate the stove before lighting it.

Be aware of stability. Place portable cook stoves in safe, level, and stable positions, shielded from the wind and away from foot traffic. Do not pile rocks or other items around the cook stove for stability. Use pots of appropriate size, so that the stove is not top-heavy.

Do not dispose of pressurized cans in a fire, leave them in direct sunlight, or keep them in enclosed areas where the temperature is high. See the manufacturer's instructions on the label. Store and dispose of fuel canisters in the recommended manner.

Consider fire safety. Be sure to check with local authorities to make sure cook stoves are permitted during times of extreme fire danger.

Cook safely with solar stoves. If using solar cookware, remember that pots and food inside a solar oven are hot even if the stove does not feel hot. Use insulated gloves when removing pots and opening the lid. Ensure adequate cooking time for your area.

Practice safe cooking with open fire. If cooking over open flames:

- Build fires in designated areas, and avoid establishing new fire sites. An established fire site is clear of overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotted stumps or logs, dry grass and leaves, and cleared of any burnable material, such as litter, duff, or pine needles.
- Use existing fire rings if a fire is necessary.
- Tie long hair back on girls and adults or cover hair with bandanas
- No plastic garments, such as ponchos, are to be worn around open flames.
- Where wood gathering is permitted, use only dead, fallen wood, and keep the cooking fires small. Store wood away from the fire area. Watch for flying sparks and put them out immediately.
- Before leaving the site, check that the fire is completely out by sprinkling the fire with water or smothering it with earth or sand,

stirring, and then sprinkling or smothering again. Do not douse the fire with water, as it will create steam which can cause severe burns.

- Hold hands over coals, ashes, partially burned wood, or charcoal for one minute to verify coolness.
- Make a plan for disposing of cold ashes and partially burned wood. You may scatter ashes and burned wood throughout the woods away from the campsite. Do not put ashes and burned wood in a plastic pail; do not leave a pail with ashes or burned wood against the side of a building or on a wood deck.
- Obtain wood from local sources to avoid bringing pests and diseases from one location to another.
- Practice safe cooking with charcoal fires. If using charcoal, fires should be started with fuels explicitly labeled “charcoal starters.” Never use gasoline as a fire starter. Never add charcoal lighter fluid to a fire once it has started.

Tips for Safe Food Preparation and Storage

Pack the appropriate amount of food. In order to avoid discarding unused food, make sure to bring along the appropriate amount of food for the group. To properly plan food supplies, consider the activities you’ll be participating in, keeping in mind that girls will burn more calories and hence need to eat more when participating in rigorous activities. Also, more calories are needed during cold weather.

Prepare nutritious meals. Meals should be prepared with consideration of food allergies, religious beliefs, and dietary restrictions (such as vegetarianism and veganism). Whenever possible, buy food and supplies that avoid excess packaging, and buy in bulk. Review health considerations, including the importance of keeping utensils and food preparation surfaces sanitized, cleaning hands, cooking meats thoroughly (use a meat thermometer to verify cooking temperatures), refrigerating perishables, and using clean water when preparing food. Do not use chipped or cracked cups and plates.

Cook with caution. Girls should learn about the safe use of kitchen tools and equipment, including knives. Maintain discipline in the cooking area to prevent accidents with hot food and sharp utensils. Do not overfill cooking pots, and do not use pressurized cans, soda-can stoves, or plastic basins, bottles, or cooking utensils near an open flame.

Avoid spreading germs. Each person has an individual drinking cup. Wash hands before food preparation and eating. No person with a skin infection, a cold, or a communicable disease participates in food preparation.

Be certain all cooks and fire tenders roll up long sleeves and tie back long hair.

Keep perishables cool. Store perishables such as creamed dishes, dairy products, meats, and salads at or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit in a refrigerator or insulated cooler with ice. If this will not be possible, use powdered, dehydrated, freeze-dried, or canned foods. On extended trips, do not use foods requiring refrigeration.

Use safe drinking water (see the “Water Purification Tips”) to reconstitute powdered, dehydrated, or freeze-dried food. Once reconstituted, eat perishable items within one hour or refrigerate them.

Dispose of leftover food to avoid food poisoning.

Water Purification Tips

Access a safe drinking water supply for cooking, drinking, and personal use. Safe drinking water is defined as tap water tested and approved by the local health department. All other sources are considered potentially contaminated and must be purified before use. *Giardia lamblia* (a parasite) should be suspected in all surface water supplies.

Use one of the three water-purification methods:

Strain water through a clean cloth into a clean container to remove sediment, then...

- boil water rapidly for a full minute and let cool (if over 6,500 feet in elevation, boil for three minutes);
- disinfect water with water-purification tablets, following the manufacturer's instructions (check product's shelf life to make sure it hasn't expired)*; or
- process water through a water purifier or specially designed water-filtration device that removes *Giardia lamblia* (method will also remove many other contaminants; follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully).

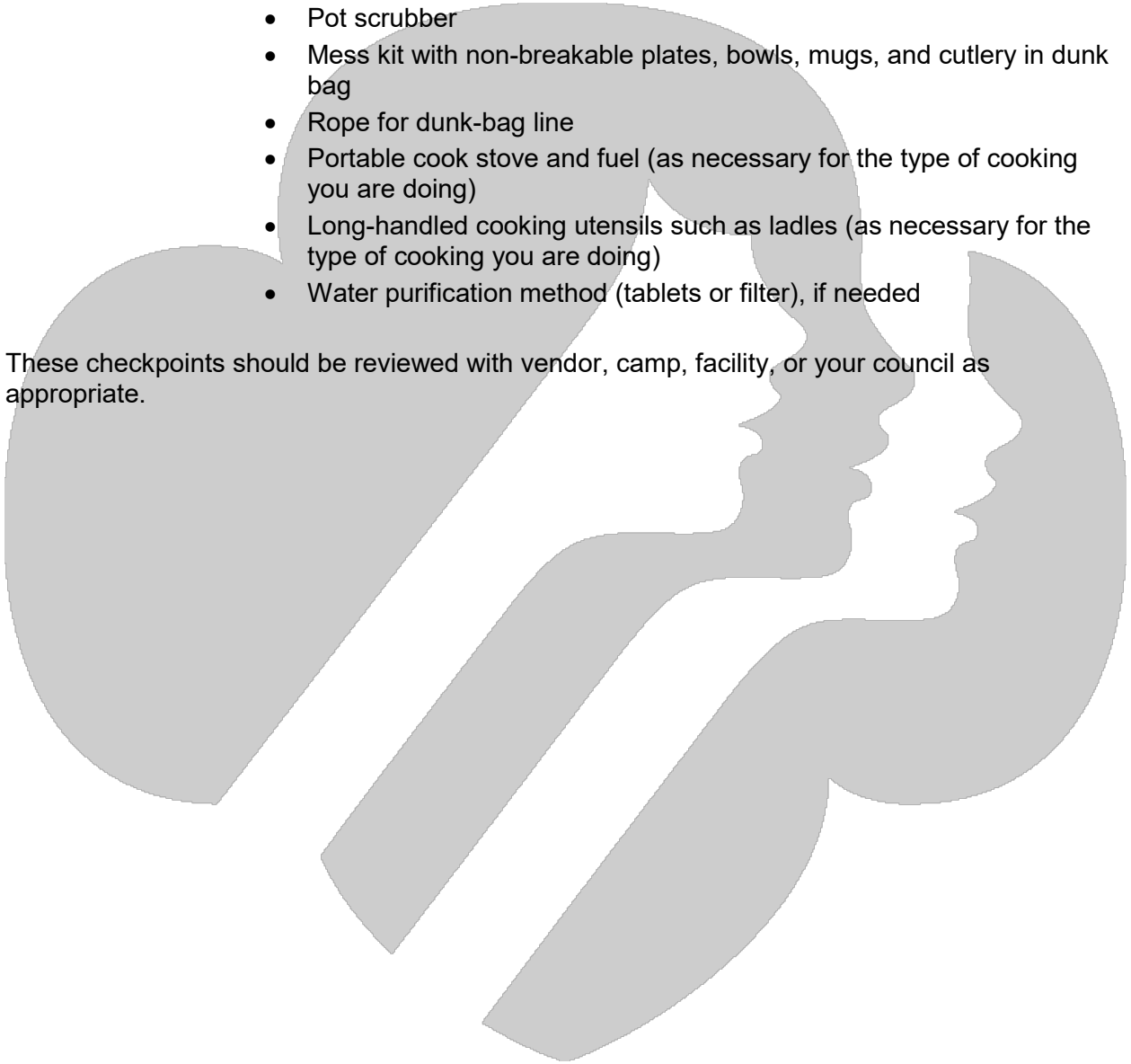
*Using water-purification tablets may not remove *Giardia lamblia* from water, so it's best to either boil water or use a filtration system.

Wash dishes in a prescribed area according to this procedure:

- Remove food particles from utensils and dishes and dispose of properly in waste bags.
- Wash dishes in warm, soapy water.
- Rinse dishes in hot, clear water.
- Sanitize dishes by dipping in clear, boiling water or immersing for at least two minutes in a sanitizing solution approved by the local health department. Use long-handled utensil, tongs, or tool to remove sanitized dishes.
- Air-dry and store dishes in a clean, covered area.
- Dispose of dishwashing and rinse water according to the campsite regulations. In backcountry areas, scatter particle-free wastewater on the ground at least 200 feet beyond any water source or trail.

Safety Gear

- Potable water for drinking, cooking, and cleaning
- Source of refrigeration to keep perishable foods cold such as an insulated cooler, along with ice
- Fuel source (as necessary for the type of cooking you are doing)
- Insulated fire-retardant gloves

- 
- Firefighting equipment, such as fire extinguisher, bucket of water, loose soil or sand, and a shovel and rake
 - Hand sanitizer or soap and paper towels
 - Knives and cutting boards
 - Rubber bands, barrettes, or bandanas to tie back hair
 - Three dish pans for dishwashing, along with biodegradable dishwashing soap
 - Pot scrubber
 - Mess kit with non-breakable plates, bowls, mugs, and cutlery in dunk bag
 - Rope for dunk-bag line
 - Portable cook stove and fuel (as necessary for the type of cooking you are doing)
 - Long-handled cooking utensils such as ladles (as necessary for the type of cooking you are doing)
 - Water purification method (tablets or filter), if needed

These checkpoints should be reviewed with vendor, camp, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart

Type of Craft and Water	Grade Level/ Minimum Age	Participant-to- Instructor Ratio	Instructor/Expert Certification
Rowboats			
Rowboat Flat, no current	D, B, J, C, S, A Daisies only with adult in boat	12:1 plus 1 watcher/helper	American Red Cross (ARC) Small Craft Safety Certification-Rowing, ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, or equivalent
Scull or shell Flat, no current	C, S, A who are strong swimmers	Varies; consult instructor or coach	U.S. Rowing Coach, Level 1 or higher; or equivalent
Corcl Boat			
Flat, no current	B, J, C, S, A	12:1 plus 1 watcher/helper	American Red Cross (ARC) Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, or equivalent
Canoeing			
Flat, near shore, no current	D, B, J, C, S, A Daisies permitted only with an adult in their canoe	6:1, or 12:1 with qualified assistant	American Canoe Association (ACA) Canoe Level 1 Instructor or higher, ACA Paddle Sports Safety Facilitator in canoeing, ARC Small Craft Safety Certification-Canoeing, or completion of boat-education paddle sports course for your state, ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, or equivalent
Class I	J, C, S, A	6:1, or 12:1 with qualified assistant	ACA River Canoeing Level 2 Instructor or higher, or equivalent
Class II	C, S, A	6:1, or 12:1 with qualified assistant	ACA River Canoeing Level 3 Instructor or higher, or equivalent
Class III	C, S, A	6:1, or 12:1 with qualified assistant	ACA Whitewater Canoeing Instructor, Level 4 or higher
Trips on Class II–III	C, S, A	Varies; ask outfitter	Licensed professional guide or instructor, provided by an outfitter
Kayaking			
Flat, near shore, lakes, no current	B, J, C, S, A Daisies not permitted	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	ACA Kayaking Level 1 Instructor or higher, ACA Paddle Sports Safety Facilitator-Kayaking, American Red Cross (ARC) Small Craft Safety Certification-Kayaking, or completion of boat- education paddle sports course for your state, ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, or equivalent
River, Class I	J, C, S, A	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	ACA River Kayaking Level 2 Instructor or higher, or equivalent
River, Class II	C, S, A	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	ACA River Kayaking Level 3 Instructor or higher, or equivalent

Type of Craft and Water	Grade Level/ Minimum Age	Participant-to-Instructor Ratio	Instructor/Expert Certification
River, Class III	C, S, A	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	ACA River Kayaking Instructor Level 4 or higher, or equivalent
Sea/surf	C, S, A	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	ACA Coastal Surf or Coastal Kayaking Level 2 Instructor or higher, or equivalent
Standup Paddle Boarding			
Flat, near shore, no current	J, C, S, A	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	American Canoe Association (ACA) SUP Instructor Level 1 or higher, ACA Paddle Sports Safety Facilitator-SUP, or completed boat-education paddle sports course for your state, American Red Cross Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, or equivalent. ACA SUP Yoga endorsement or equivalent for yoga on flat water.
Coastal	C, S, A	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	ACA Coastal SUP Instructor Level 3, or equivalent
Ocean surf	C, S, A	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	ACA Ocean Surf SUP Instructor Level 3 or higher, or equivalent
Class I–II	C, S, A	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	ACA River SUP Instructor 3 or higher, or equivalent
Trips	C, S, A	Varies; ask outfitter	Licensed professional guide or instructor, provided by an outfitter
Class III–V	Not permitted	N/A	N/A
Whitewater Rafting			
Whitewater rafting day trips Class I–II	B, J, C, S, A	6:1, or 12:1 with qualified assistant	American Canoe Association (ACA) Rafting Level 4 Instructor or higher, International Rafting Federation (IRF) Guide Certification, or equivalent
Whitewater rafting day trips Class I–III	J, C, S, A	Varies; ask outfitter	Licensed professional river guide provided by an outfitter
Whitewater rafting day trips Class I–IV	C, S, A	Varies; ask outfitter	Licensed professional river guide provided by an outfitter
Whitewater trips Class I–IV	C, S, A	Varies; ask outfitter	Licensed professional river guide provided by an outfitter



Canoeing

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: *D B J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies, except with an experienced adult in each canoe and on flat water

About Canoeing

Canoeing is a great team-building exercise and a fun way to enjoy the outdoors. Whether you're playing games on a pond or taking a whitewater trip on a river, there's a canoeing option for everyone. Canoeists sit on a seat or kneel in the canoe, and use a paddle to propel their boat. Most canoes are for two people, but some canoes can hold up to 12.

Currents, waves, rapids, and wind affect conditions. Those conditions and type of canoe will determine what is appropriate for your troop. See the Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart for details. Be sure all participants have the training and experience to participate in the level expected. Class III rapids require prior council approval. Participants may be Cadettes and older who have demonstrated and documented prior experience of progression.

Whitewater canoeing can only be done on water that has been run and rated, and only up to Class III difficulty, as defined by the American version of the [International Scale of River Difficulty](#).

Learn More:

- [American Canoe Association](#)
- [Canoe and Kayak magazine](#)
- Interactive maps of places to go: [Paddling.com](#) and [American Whitewater](#)
- Instructional videos about canoeing strokes: [Paddling.com](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the canoeing instructor or boating facility in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Additional Resources:

- See [Disabled Sports USA](#) to find out about inclusion in canoeing.
- Check out [Paralympic.org](#) for inspiring stories of paddlers with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are able to swim. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conduct a swimming test in advance. See “Swimming” safety activity checkpoints for samples, or ask your instructor for guidelines. If a swimming test is not possible, presume all participants are non-swimmers. Only strong swimmers are approved for whitewater canoeing.

All paddlers must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket. Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Practice recovery procedures. The instructor demonstrates self-recovery and righting techniques. Girls learn and practice these skills. This will help prevent being disoriented or frightened if they end up in the water, and provides important skills.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. The skill level of the adults must be higher than the difficulty of the intended canoeing type.

The instructor or guide must be able to effectively communicate commands and instructions.

Ensure that the instructor or guide reviews site-specific emergency techniques. For example, whitewater canoeists are instructed in how to float through rapids, how to breathe while swimming in rapids, and how to swim to shore. The lead instructor or guide must have firsthand knowledge of the hazards and conditions of the location being used.

At least one adult instructor or guide should be certified by the American Canoe Association, the American Red Cross, or other sponsoring organization approved by your council. Certifications must be appropriate for the activity.

Check lifeguard qualifications. Ensure that lifeguards overseeing canoeing have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the body of water and the specific watercraft involved.

Be aware of the lifeguard’s position. A stationary lifeguard can only be used when canoeing is taking place on flat water close to shore. For large bodies of water or rivers, the lifeguard must be in a canoe and positioned with the group.

Arrange for watchers/helpers. An adult watcher or skilled helper is required for certain size groups. See the chart below. This person should have basic skills in the activity and supports the group by reinforcing instructions. They also watch for possible emergencies and help the instructor with rescues if needed. Basic water rescue, small craft safety, or similar training is the preferred preparation. Consult the instructor for specific watcher/helper qualifications.

Select a safe site. Don’t paddle in unknown areas. Know the locations of all shipping channels. Do not canoe more than one mile from the nearest shore. Make sure of the following:

Avoid busy channels when possible. If you must cross them, do so at a 90-degree angle to the channel traffic. Also avoid surf zones and areas with standing waves, unless they’re part of planned whitewater canoeing.

On long passages, boats should stay close enough together that a group decision can be made if wind and water conditions change.

Be aware of possible changes in water level, due to tides or dam releases, and how these affect water conditions

Avoid hazards such as strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences, and low power lines. Rapids must be avoided unless part of a planned whitewater route.

Research water conditions and select the right boats for participant skill level. Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment to be carried. Make sure:

- The craft weight and capacity are not exceeded. Many boats have a plate near the stern (back), showing these maximums.
- Canoes that are 15 feet or shorter hold no more than two people.
- You are aware of the type of canoe needed for the water to be used.
- Canoes are not overloaded with gear, and gear is distributed evenly among paddlers.

Know universal signals. Whistle and visual signals are used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at [Paddle Education](#).

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify authorities should your group not return on time.

Get a weather and wind report. Check [Weather.com](#) or other reliable weather sources, including the “boat and beach” forecast, which covers wind speed, water temperature, and wave height. Be prepared with a backup plan or postpone the activity if weather prevents the outing.

Review what to do in a storm. If thunder is heard or lightning seen, get everyone off the water immediately. Do not return until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last evidence of the storm. If you cannot get to shore, secure all loose gear, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low. If possible, do not touch metal or water, when lightning is possible.

Use the buddy system. Instruct girls to keep their boat within sight of at least one other boat. Use the buddy system on the water with boats the same as you would on land.

Transport boats safely. Use car-top racks or trailers specifically designed for canoes. Secure boats with two lines across the top (one at each end), and with lines at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.

Report accidents. Notify marine law enforcement or your council as appropriate.

Safety Gear

- Canoes suitable for the type of water, with proper flotation, and air bag, if used, checked before use
- Paddles appropriate size and style for the canoeist and the type of canoeing
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, compressed air horn, or VHF radio on navigable waters

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket for each paddler. Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications.
- Rescue gear appropriate for boat type and conditions (ask your instructor), such as:
 - Throw bag or throw line
 - Waist-mounted tow system (lightweight rope which attaches to towing person and to towed boat)
 - Rescue sling to get participants back into a boat
 - Designated rescue craft, such as a paddleboard or chase boat
 - Any other items required by the boating jurisdiction in which you'll paddle
- Emergency gear appropriate for the canoeing type and distance from shore, such as:
 - Emergency repair kit: duct tape or electrical tape, screwdriver, pliers
 - Spare paddle, waterproof first-aid kit, repair kit, and standard safety equipment, including signaling equipment
- Emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, pocket knife, 10-foot by 10-foot tarp, rope, food, and appropriate liquids. Food and water bottles should be secured in the boat
- A safety helmet with a strong, flexible plastic shell and chin strap, as well as openings for drainage, worn when paddling in waters that are Class II or III
- Bailer (a scoop for removing water from a boat)
- A waterproof flashlight
- A painter (a strong line at the bow used for securing the canoe that's at least half the length of the boat)
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Compass, waterproof chart, VHF marine radio, and other essentials for extended trips
- Locking blade knife carried by instructor/guide/qualified adult in their life jacket or other readily accessible place, and a line for towing or rescue

Note that canoeing at night may require additional gear; consult your instructor.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the instructor, guide, or your council as appropriate.

Corcl Boats

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: B J C S A

Not Appropriate For: Daisies

About Corcl Boats

The Corcl boat is designed specifically for 8- to 15-year-olds to enjoy in flat water: spinning, racing, and having fun at the shore. Corcls offer a great first experience for girls who will progress to other paddle sports. Paddlers can move easily and quickly through the water. The boats feature a 225-pound capacity, an innovative double-hull that's designed for many ways to paddle, and ergonomic handles for easy carrying and transport.

Corcls flip over easily, so paddlers need to be comfortable in the water. Corcls are not to be towed behind a motorized craft and are for use in flat, calm waters only.

Learn More:

- Instructions, tips, and games to use with girls: [Corcl.com](https://www.corcl.com)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations.

Additional Resources:

See [Abilities.com](https://www.abilities.com) and [Dream Adaptive](https://www.dreamadaptive.com) for information about inclusion and adaptive equipment for paddlers.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are able to swim and are comfortable in the water. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conduct a swimming test in advance. See the “Swimming” safety activity checkpoints for samples, or ask your instructor for guidelines. SUP paddlers must be strong swimmers.

Ensure all paddlers are wearing a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket. Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Start in shallow water where girls can learn how to navigate paddling, board their boat, balance using their arms and paddles, and stay centered.

Verify lifeguard qualifications and experience. Ensure lifeguards have current certification in American Red Cross (ARC) Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, or the equivalent.

The instructor or lifeguard must be able to effectively communicate commands and instructions and reviews them with girls before the activity begins.

Ensure the instructor or lifeguard reviews site-specific emergency plans.

Note that a stationary lifeguard can only be used when canoeing is taking place on flat water close to a dock or shore. For large bodies of flat water, the lifeguard must be in a boat and positioned with the group.

Arrange for watchers/helpers. One adult watcher or skilled helper is required for every 12 girls, plus one additional adult. See the Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart in *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*. Watchers should have basic skills in the activity and support the group by reinforcing instructions, watching for possible emergencies, and helping

with rescues if needed. Basic water rescue, small craft safety, or similar training is the preferred preparation.

Remind girls to stay clear of paddles. Because Corcls are small and boats can float close to one another, paddlers can inadvertently hit other paddlers and boats.

Practice recovery procedures. When girls step on the edge of a boat, the Corcl will flip. Demonstrate self-recovery and righting techniques, and have girls learn and practice these skills. This will help prevent this situation from disorientating or frightening them if their Corcl flips and they end up in the water.

Select a safe site. Corcl boats are only approved for flat water. Don't paddle in unknown areas. Paddling is only permitted near shore.

Learn lifeguard signals. Whistle and visual signals may be used to pass messages, call girls in, or call for help. Cover these before beginning the activity.

Prepare for emergencies. Pack a waterproof first-aid kit. Follow other guidelines in "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*."

Safety Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket for every paddler
- Kayak paddle for each boat (smaller girls may go two girls to a Corcl, but only one paddle is used per boat)
- Rescue gear such as throw bag or throw line
- Tether or painter attached to each boat
- Cell phone or walkie-talkies to communicate need for emergency services

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the camp, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Kayaking

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: B J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies

About Kayaking

Virtually any body of water is suitable for some kind of kayaking. Start with flat water with little or no current, and progress to more advanced conditions. Kayaks come in a variety of shapes and sizes, designed for different types of water and paddler skill levels. "Sit on top" kayaks are

simple, stable boats that are great for beginners. “Decked” or “sit inside” kayaks are covered by a deck and spray skirt; the paddler sits inside with legs extended. All involve moving a kayak across water using a double-bladed paddle, and combine exercise, transportation, and fun!

Your troop can kayak on bays, rivers, lakes, and oceans. Currents, waves, rapids, and wind affect conditions. Those conditions and type of boat will determine what is appropriate for your troop. Be sure all participants have the training and experience to participate in the level expected.

Learn More:

- Interactive maps of places to go: Paddling.com and [American Whitewater](http://AmericanWhitewater)
- [International Scale of River Difficulty](http://InternationalScaleofRiverDifficulty)
- Basic interpretation of rapids and river difficulty: ThoughtCo.com
- About canoeing, kayaking, and standup paddle boarding: [American Canoe Association](http://AmericanCanoeAssociation)
- Info on gear selection and how-to's: Paddling.com

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the kayaking instructor in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Additional Resources:

See [Disabled Sports USA](http://DisabledSportsUSA) to find out about inclusion in kayaking.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are able to swim. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conduct a swimming test in advance. See the “Swimming” safety activity checkpoints for samples, or ask your instructor for guidelines. If a swimming test is not possible, presume all participants are non-swimmers.

Ensure all paddlers wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket. Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Practice recovery procedures. The instructor should demonstrate self-recovery and righting techniques, and girls should learn and practice these skills. This will help prevent their becoming disoriented or frightened if they end up in the water.

Paddlers must be trained on how to perform wet exits and must be able to execute one successfully before being allowed to use a decked kayak. If spray skirts are used, wet exits must be performed before the outing can begin.

Practices appropriate self-rescue and reentry techniques. If kayaking in cold water, paddlers should learn cold water survival techniques and treatment for hypothermia.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. The skill level of the adults must be higher than the difficulty of the intended kayaking type.

Ensure the instructor/guide will review site-specific emergency techniques for the type of craft used. For example, whitewater kayakers are instructed in how to float through rapids, how to breathe while swimming in rapids, and how to swim to shore.

Ensure the lead instructor/guide has firsthand knowledge of the hazards and conditions of the location and type of boat being used.

You'll want to verify that at least one adult instructor/guide is certified by the American Canoe Association, the American Red Cross, or other sponsoring organization approved by your council. Certifications must be appropriate for the activity.

Verify lifeguard qualifications and experience. Ensure lifeguards have current certification in American Red Cross (ARC) Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, or its equivalent.

Arrange for watchers/helpers. An adult watcher or skilled helper is required for certain size groups. See the chart below. This person should have basic canoeing skills. They support the group by reinforcing instructions. They also watch for possible emergencies and help the instructor with rescues if needed. Basic water rescue, small craft safety or similar training is the preferred preparation. Consult the instructor for specific watcher/helper qualifications.

Keep weight evenly distributed. Keeping gear and fellow paddlers evenly distributed makes the boat safer and easier to paddle.

Select a safe site. Don't paddle in unknown areas. Know the locations of all shipping channels. Do not kayak farther than one mile from the nearest shore.

Avoid busy channels when possible. If you must cross them, do so at a 90-degree angle to the channel traffic.

Avoid surf zones and areas with standing waves unless they're part of planned whitewater kayaking.

Stay together. On long passages, boats should stay close enough together that a group decision can be made if wind and water conditions change.

Only perform this activity on water that has been run and rated and up to Class III difficulty, as defined by the American version of the [International Scale of River Difficulty](#).

Be aware of possible changes in water level, due to tides or dam releases, and how these affect water conditions.

Avoid hazards such as strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences and low power lines. Rapids must be avoided unless part of a planned whitewater route.

Research water conditions and select the right boats for participant skill level. Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment to be carried. Make sure that:

Watch that kayak weight and capacity are not exceeded. Many boats have a plate near the stern (back), showing these maximums.

Use the type of kayak needed for the water conditions present, and ensure the kayak is sized for the person(s) using it.

Ensure kayaks are not overloaded with gear. Gear should be distributed evenly with paddlers.

Know universal signals. Whistle and visual signals are used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at [Paddle Education](#).

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance trip, file a float plan with a reliable person will notify authorities should your group not return on time.

On the Day of Paddling or Rowing:

Get a weather and wind report. Check [Weather.com](#) or other reliable weather sources, including the “boat and beach” forecast, which covers wind speed, water temperature, and wave height. Be prepared with a backup plan or postpone the activity if weather prevents the outing.

Review what to do in a storm. If thunder is heard, or lightning seen, get everyone off the water immediately. Do not return until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last evidence of the storm. If you cannot get to shore, secure all loose gear, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low. If possible, do not touch metal or water, when lightning is possible.

Review self-rescue techniques. See above.

Use the buddy system. Instruct girls to keep their boat within sight of at least one other boat at all times.

Transport boats safely. Use car-top racks or trailers specifically designed for kayaks. Secure boats with two lines across the top (one at each end), and with lines at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.

Report accidents. Notify marine law enforcement or your council, if appropriate.

Safety Gear

Some gear will depend on the type of kayaking, or on water conditions. Check with your instructor.

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III life jackets recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications)
- Kayak sized appropriately for the participants and suitable for the type of water
- Kayaks with proper flotation and any air bags checked before use (if float bags are used, make sure they’re secured to kayak)
- Double-bladed paddle in the appropriate size and style for the activity and person using them (ask instructor about proper fit)
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, compressed air horn, or VHF radio
- Rescue gear appropriate for kayak type and conditions (ask your instructor), such as:
 - At least one graspable and throw able personal flotation device, throw bag, or throw line

- Waist-mounted tow system (lightweight rope which attaches to towing person and to towed boat); should be one tow system for every three to four kayaks
- Emergency gear appropriate for the kayaking type and distance from shore, such as:
 - Emergency repair kit: duct tape or electrical tape, screwdriver, pliers, spare plugs
 - Spare paddle, first-aid kit, repair kit, and standard safety equipment, like signaling equipment
 - Emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, pocket knife, 10-foot by 10-foot tarp, rope, food and appropriate liquids (food and water bottles should be secured in the boat)
- A safety helmet with strong, flexible plastic shell and chin strap, as well as openings for drainage should be worn when:
 - Paddling in waters that are Class II or III
 - Paddling in or near sea caves
- Bailer (a scoop or sponge for removing water from a boat) secured to the kayak

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Row Boating

Council Approval: May Be Required

Activity Permitted For: *D B J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies, except with an experienced adult in each row boat.

About Row Boating

Rowing uses oars to propel a boat across the water, and is one of the earliest forms of transportation. It's a great way to build teamwork and skill. Beginners can start rowing in a stable boat on flat water. Daisies may use basic row boats only if they have an adult in the boat with them. Interested rowers can progress to competitive "crew" racing, or specialized rowing, like Venetian gondolas. Currents, waves, rapids, and wind affect conditions. Those conditions and type of boat will determine what is appropriate for your troop. See the Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart in *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.

Most rowing is done on flat water with little or no current, like a lake, calm river, or pond. Oceans and rivers can be suitable if rowers have advanced instruction and skills. Consult local experts or your council for suggestions.

You can learn a lot about rowing online. You should learn basic skills from an expert, but it's fun to discover gear options, places to go, and cool tips. Check out the basics at [U.S. Rowing](#).

Also find out about collegiate and Olympic rowing. Some colleges and universities have women's crew teams, which race streamlined boats called "sculls" and "shells" in races called "regattas."

Learn More:

- [Rowing vocabulary](#)
- [U.S. Rowing Association](#)
- General boating safety: [Boat Safe](#), [Boat-Ed](#), [U.S. Coast Guard](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the rowing instructor in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Additional Resources:

Check out inspiring stories of rowers with disabilities at [Paralympic.org](#).

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are wearing PFDs. ([U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket](#).) Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Exception for competitive racing sculls and shells: because they can get caught on oars in fast-paced team rowing, it is acceptable to carry life jackets in a chase boat. All competitive rowers must be strong swimmers.

Check swimming ability. Only strong swimmers may row in sculls and shells.

Practice recovery procedures. The instructor should demonstrate self-recovery and righting techniques for the type of boat being used. Girls can then learn and practice these skills, as appropriate for the trip. This will help prevent them from becoming disoriented or frightened if they end up in the water.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. The skill level of the adults must be higher than the difficulty of the intended activity.

Ensure the instructor will review site-specific emergency techniques for the type of craft used.

Ensure the lead instructor has firsthand knowledge of the hazards and conditions of the location and type of boat being used.

Ensure adult certifications are appropriate for the activity.

Check lifeguard qualifications. Ensure lifeguards overseeing rowing have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the body of water and the specific watercraft involved.

Arrange for watchers/helpers. An adult watcher or skilled helper is required to assist the instructor. This person should have basic skills in rowing and supports the group by reinforcing instructions and watching for possible emergencies. Basic water rescue, small craft safety, or similar training is the preferred preparation. Consult the instructor for specific watcher/helper qualifications.

Select a safe site. Don't row in unknown areas; know the locations of all shipping channels. Rowing is not permitted farther than one mile from the nearest shore. Make sure of the following:

- Busy channels are avoided when possible and crossed carefully when necessary, at a 90-degree angle to the channel traffic
- Surf zones and areas with standing waves are avoided
- On long passages, boats are close enough together so that a group decision can be made if wind and water conditions change
- You're aware of possible changes in water level, due to tides or dam releases, and how these affect water conditions

Avoid hazards. These include strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences, and low power lines. Rapids must be avoided.

Don't exceed boat weight and capacity. Many boats have a plate near the stern (back) showing these maximums.

Ensure boats aren't overloaded with gear. Gear should be distributed evenly among rowers.

Know universal signals. Whistle and visual signals should be used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at [Paddle Education](#).

Prepare for emergencies. Pack a waterproof first-aid kit if taking a rowing trip, and follow other guidelines in "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*."

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify authorities should your group not return on time.

On the Day of Paddling or Rowing:

Get a weather and wind report. Check [Weather.com](#) or other reliable weather sources, including the "boat and beach" forecast, which covers wind speed, water temperature, and wave height. Be prepared with a backup plan or postpone the activity if weather prevents the outing.

Review what to do in a storm. If thunder is heard or lightning seen, get everyone off the water immediately. Do not return until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last evidence of the storm. If you cannot get to shore, secure all loose gear, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low. If possible, do not touch metal or water when lightning is possible.

Report accidents. Notify marine law enforcement or your council as appropriate.

Safety and Required Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III life jackets recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications)
- Rowboat, scull, or shell, sized appropriately for the participants and suitable for the type of water
- Oars that are the right size and style for the boat type and person using them
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, compressed air horn, or VHF radio on navigable waters
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water (for boats 16 feet or longer)
- Rescue gear appropriate for boat type and conditions
- Emergency gear appropriate for the activity type and distance from shore, such as:
 - Bailer (a scoop for removing water from a boat) or foot pump
 - Emergency repair kit: duct tape or electrical tape, screwdriver, pliers, spare plugs
 - A spare oar or paddle, first-aid kit, repair kit, and standard safety equipment, including signaling equipment
 - Emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, pocket knife, 10-foot by 10-foot tarp, rope, food, and appropriate liquids (food and water bottles should be secured in the boat)
- All other items required by the boating jurisdiction in which you'll row

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Standup Paddle Boarding

Council Approval: May Be Required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies and Brownies

About Standup Paddle Boarding

While standing, paddlers propel standup paddleboards (SUPs) across the water with long-handled paddles. Paddling is a full-body sport which uses core muscles and develops excellent balance and coordination. With instruction, beginners can quickly learn to paddle on flat water lakes and bays. Experienced paddlers can tackle ocean surf or rivers with a certified instructor's guidance.

With the right instruction, equipment, and preparation, almost any body of water is suitable for SUP. Start with flat water with little or no current, and progress to more advanced conditions like rivers or oceans.

The U.S. Coast Guard considers SUPs as vessels when they are used outside of designated swim areas or ocean surfing zones. Therefore, federal regulations about life jackets, sound devices, and lights apply.

Learn More:

- Interactive maps of places to go: Paddling.com and [American Whitewater](http://AmericanWhitewater)
- For river paddling: [International Scale of River Difficulty](http://InternationalScaleofRiverDifficulty)
- About canoeing, kayaking, and SUP: [American Canoe Association](http://AmericanCanoeAssociation)
- [Stand Up Paddle World magazine](http://StandUpPaddleWorldmagazine)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the SUP instructor in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Additional Resources:

- See Abilities.com and [Dream Adaptive](http://DreamAdaptive) to find out about inclusion and adaptive equipment for paddlers.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are able to swim. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conduct a swimming test in advance. See “Swimming” safety activity checkpoints for samples, or ask your instructor for guidelines. SUP paddlers must be strong swimmers.

Ensure all paddlers wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket. Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Practice recovery procedures. The instructor demonstrates self-recovery and righting techniques. Girls learn and practice these skills. This will help prevent them from becoming disoriented or frightened if they end up in the water (likely with SUP).

Verifying instructor knowledge and experience:

- The skill level of the adults must be higher than the difficulty of the intended activity.
- The instructor or guide must be able to effectively communicate commands and instructions.
- The instructor or guide needs to review site-specific emergency techniques. For example, when paddling in shallow water, the instructor should remind girls how to fall from their boards.
- The lead instructor or guide needs to have firsthand knowledge of the hazards and conditions of the location being used.

- At least one adult instructor or guide should be currently certified by the American Canoe Association, the American Red Cross, or other sponsoring organization approved by your council. Certifications must be appropriate for the activity.

Check lifeguard qualifications. For lifeguards overseeing SUP, ensure they have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the body of water being used.

Arrange for watchers/helpers. An adult watcher or skilled helper is required for some group sizes. See the Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart. This person should have basic skills in the activity, and support the group by reinforcing instructions, watching for possible emergencies, and helping with rescues if needed. Basic water rescue, small craft safety, or similar training is the preferred preparation. Consult the instructor for specific watcher/helper qualifications.

Select a safe site. Don't paddle in unknown areas; know the locations of all shipping channels. Paddling is not permitted farther than one mile from the nearest shore. Make sure of the following:

- The launching area is free of glass and debris and has a gentle slope and good footing. Rocks should be avoided.
- Busy channels are avoided when possible and crossed carefully, when necessary, at a 90-degree angle to the channel traffic.
- Surf zones and areas with standing waves are avoided, except as part of planned ocean/surf or whitewater paddling.
- On long passages, boards are close enough together so that a group decision can be made if wind and water conditions change.
- You're aware of possible changes in water level, due to tides or dam releases, and how these affect water conditions.
- Avoid hazards such as strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences, and low power lines. Rapids must be avoided unless part of a planned whitewater route.

Research water conditions. Select the right boards for participant skill level and conditions.

Know universal signals. Whistle and visual signals are used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at [Paddle Education](#).

Prepare for emergencies. Pack a waterproof first-aid kit if you'll be away from shore. Follow other guidelines in "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*."

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify authorities should your group not return on time.

Get a weather and wind report. Check [Weather.com](#) or other reliable weather sources, including the "boat and beach" forecast, which covers wind speed, water temperature, and wave height. Be prepared with a backup plan or postpone the activity if weather prevents the outing.

Review what to do in a storm. If thunder is heard, or lightning seen, get everyone off the water immediately. Do not return until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last evidence of the

storm. If you cannot get to shore, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low.

Review self-rescue techniques. Ensure each person can get back on their board. When paddling in cold water, also review cold-water survival techniques and treatment for hypothermia.

Use the buddy system. Instruct girls to stay within sight of at least one other board.

Transport boats safely. Use car-top racks or trailers specifically designed for paddle boards. Secure them with two lines across the top (one at each end), and with lines at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.

Report accidents. Notify marine law enforcement or your council as appropriate.

Safety Gear

Some of the gear you'll need depends on the type of paddling or on the water conditions. Check with your instructor.

- A U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket worn at all times while paddling (Type III life jackets recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications)
- Paddle board sized appropriately for the participants and suitable for the type of water
- Paddles the appropriate size and style for the activity and person using them (a good rule of thumb is 10 inches higher than the paddler's height; keep extras on hand)
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle
- Rescue gear appropriate for conditions, such as throw bag or throw line or waist-mounted tow system
- Leash to keep board close in case paddler falls off (no leashes in rivers, to avoid entrapment)
- Helmet, chest protector, arm and leg protection for whitewater standup paddle boarding (inflatable board recommended)
- Any other items required by the boating jurisdiction in which you'll paddle.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the facility, instructor, or your council as appropriate.

Whitewater Rafting

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: B (Class I–II rapids), J (Class I–III rapids), C S A (Class I–IV rapids)

About Whitewater Rafting

Whitewater rafting is a thrilling experience for challenge-seeking Girl Scouts, as well as those who just love the outdoors. Rafts come in a variety of styles and lengths, usually 11 to 20 feet long, seating four to twelve rafters. You'll need to find a reputable outfitter to arrange the trip. Ask your council about places and outfitters in your area. A river guide will come with you and provide instruction, steering, and coaching. They'll know the river well and be able to perform rescues, if needed.

Rafting should only be done on rivers that have been run and rated, and only up to Class IV. It's important to understand the International Scale of River Difficulty or Whitewater Classification System. Be sure all participants have the training and experience to participate in the level expected. Be sure your guide has run the leg of the river before. See the Progression of Rafting Types with Guide Ratios chart for the types of whitewater Girl Scouts may run, by program level.

The Whitewater Classification System:

Class I (Easy): Moving water with small disturbances on the surface and a few small waves; poses little to no danger to swimmers

Class II (Novice/Beginner): Faster-moving water with easily avoided rocks, holes, and waves; danger to swimmers is still slight but care must be taken

Class III (Intermediate): Fast-moving water containing various rocks, holes, currents, and waves that require skillful maneuvering to avoid; swimmers could be at risk and may require help

Class IV (Advanced): Strong rapids, large waves, big holes, unpredictable currents, and dangerous obstructions requiring multiple maneuvers to get through or around; swimmers at risk and will require help to be rescued

Class V (Expert): All of the characteristics of Class IV with the added danger of being longer and containing more continuous features that may not be avoided; serious risk to swimmers, others may be of no help

Class VI (Unrunnable): Only a team of experts who carefully plan every aspect of this expedition would have hope of surviving these rivers and rapids

Learn More:

- Interactive map of places to go and a list of rivers: [American Whitewater](#)
- Tips for a first whitewater rafting trip: [The Clymb](#)
- Whitewater rafting terms: [Pinnacle Travel](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the outfitter in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

[Disabled Sports USA](#) lists programs available nationwide, plus general information about adaptive rafting. And the blog of the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](#) [Endless CapABILITIES](#) offers encouragement for paddlers with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are able to swim. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conduct a swimming test in advance. See “Swimming” safety activity checkpoints for samples, or ask your outfitter for guidelines.

All rafters must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket. Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Ensure the skill level of the adults is higher than the difficulty of the intended activity.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Make sure the instructor or guide has certification from a formal training program, such as the American Canoe Association’s rafting program or the International Rafting Federation. The guide needs to be able to effectively communicate commands and instructions. Also important:

- An instructor can demonstrate self-recovery and righting techniques for the type of trip. (Girls should learn and practice these skills when possible.)
- A guide should review site-specific emergency techniques and help rafters learn how to float through rapids, how to breathe while swimming in rapids, and how to swim to shore.
- The lead instructor or guide has firsthand knowledge of the hazards and conditions of the location and type of boat being used.
- At least one guide has documented training and experience guiding in the type of river being run and has run the river in advance.
- The guide subscribes to the American Whitewater Safety Code.

Select durable rafts. Make sure the outfitter uses rafts that:

- Are of heavy-duty construction
- Have at least four air compartments
- Have an adequate number of large D-rings securely attached to the sides
- Have snug hand lines along the sides
- Aren’t loaded beyond capacity of participants or gear

Select a safe site:

- Don’t paddle in unknown areas.
- Only raft on water that has been run and rated and up to Class IV difficulty, as defined by the American version of the [International Scale of River Difficulty](#).
- Be aware of possible changes in water level due to tides or dam releases and how these affect water conditions.

- Avoid hazards such as strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences, and low power lines.

Know universal signals. Whistle and visual signals are used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at [Paddle Education](#).

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify authorities should your group not return on time.

On the Day of Rafting:

Get a weather and wind report. Check with your outfitter about expected weather and river flow. Be prepared with a backup plan or postpone the activity if weather prevents the outing.

Review what to do in a storm. If thunder is heard, or lightning seen, get everyone off the water immediately. Do not return until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last evidence of the storm.

Transport boats safely. Use car-top racks or trailers specifically designed for the type of craft. Secure boats with two lines across the top (one at each end), and with lines at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.

Report accidents. Notify marine law enforcement or your council as appropriate.

Safety Gear

The gear you will need depends on the type of trip, water conditions, and weather expected. Check with your outfitter.

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket for each person (Type III life jackets recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications)
- Raft sized appropriately for the participants and suitable for the type of rapids
- Paddles of the style and size required for the activity and person using them
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, compressed air horn, or VHF radio on navigable waters
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water (boats 16 feet or longer)

Rescue and emergency gear appropriate for boat type and conditions, such as:

- A throw bag or throw line
- Raft repair kit
- Spare paddle, first-aid kit, and standard safety equipment, including signaling equipment

- Emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, pocket knife, 10-foot by 10-foot tarp, rope, food, and appropriate liquids (food and water bottles should be secured in the boat)
- A safety helmet for each person with a strong, flexible plastic shell and chin strap, as well as openings for when rafting in waters that are Class II or higher
- Protective clothing (wet suit or drysuit) worn when rafting in water below 70 degrees Fahrenheit (when water is warmer, wear layered, non-cotton clothing; store any extra clothing in a waterproof bag)
- Bailer (a scoop for removing water from a boat) or foot pump, if the boat is not self-bailing
- Secure, closed-toe hiking/sport sandals or water shoes, or other non-slip footwear (old sneakers are fine; no flip flops or loose slip-on water moccasins)
- Eyeglass keepers or goggles for those who need them
- Dry bags and/or waterproof containers to keep gear dry on extended trips; encourage girls to pack wisely (don't overload rafts)
- Compass, waterproof chart, and other essentials for extended trips
- Locking blade knife carried by river guide in their life jacket or other readily accessible place
- Any other items required by the boating jurisdiction in which you'll raft

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the guide, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Sailing

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

About Sailing

The sport of sailing has become very high-tech and competitive since its humble beginnings, but sailors and racers still must rely on the force of wind to propel their boats. There are a wide variety of sailboats, including small and large sailboats, keelboats, and multihulls. Sailing is not recommended for Daisies and Brownies.

Note: Girls are not allowed to operate motorized boats without council permission and girls are never allowed to parasail.

Know where to sail. Oceans and lakes are ideal for sailing, but many sailing or yacht clubs offer instructions on reservoirs, rivers, and ponds. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions.

Learn More:

- [American Sail Training Association](#)
- [International Sailing Federation](#)
- [U.S. Sailing](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations.

Learn about the resources and information that the [International Sailing Federation](#) and [Disabled Sports USA](#) provide to people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checklist

Ensure participants are able to swim. Participants' swimming abilities are classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, etc.) at council-approved sites, or participants provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test is conducted before or on the day of the activity. If this is not possible, presume all participants are non-swimmers. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

Each sailor must have a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure that the adult or sailing instructor is certified as a sailing instructor or sailing counselor by U.S. Sailing, holds American Red Cross Small Craft Safety Certification, or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines, as outlined in *Volunteer Essentials*.

Compile key contacts. See "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*."

Select appropriate sailboats for water and passengers. Make sure craft weight and passenger capacities are not exceeded (some crafts clearly display maximum capacity). Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment.

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance sailing trip, it is recommended that a float plan be completed and filed (left) with a person knowledgeable about the trip and when to expect the party back. Float plans cannot be filed with the U.S. Coast Guard.

Transport sailboats safely. Sailboats are transported on car-top racks or trailers designed to haul sailboats. Sailboats should be secured with two lines across the top and a line at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

On the Day of Sailing:

Get a weather and wind report. Never sail on a stormy or excessively windy day. On the day of the sailing trip or lesson, visit Weather.com (which includes marine forecasts, including water temperature and wave height) to determine if conditions are appropriate. Intellicast also reports on sailing conditions. If weather conditions prevent the sailing activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternate activity.

Review rescue tips. U.S. Sailing provides instructions for small-boat capsize recovery.

Use the buddy system. See “Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.”

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them. During storms, if shore cannot be reached, secure all loose gear, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low.

Ensure docking safety. Ensure that docking lines are in good condition. Follow general safety guidelines provided by boating facility for docking the craft, and ensure the boat is securely connected to the dock before participants exit.

Safety Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications
- Boat shoes, closed-toe and non-slip hiking/sport sandals with a heel strap, or water socks or shoes (no flip-flops)
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, fog horn, or sounding flares
- Layered clothing that’s easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended)
- Sailing gloves (these help save tender hands and improve grip)
- A rigging knife
- Emergency repair kit (duct tape or electrical tape, screwdriver, pliers, shackles, extra line, sewing kit, a spare drain plug, extra cotter rings/pins, and a short piece of light line/rope)
- Emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, raincoat, pocket knife, minimum of 10-foot by 10-foot tarp, rope, drinking cup, food and appropriate liquids (food and water bottles should be secured in the sailboat)
- Paddle (as second means of propulsion)

- Bailer (a bucket used to remove water from a boat)
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Scuba

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: C S A

About Scuba

Scuba diving is an eye-opening opportunity to experience the underwater world of sea life. Scuba is an acronym for “self-contained underwater breathing apparatus” and requires specialized equipment, most of which certified scuba-diving schools rent for lessons. Scuba diving can be done throughout the country in a variety of locations, including oceans, lakes, and rivers.

Organizations such as the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) and the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) offer online tools to locate certified scuba instructors. Scuba diving is a challenging activity, and girls who wish to learn to scuba dive must be at least 12 years old and meet the age and health requirements set by the certifying agency.

Learn More:

- World’s best dives for kids and teens: [Sport Diver](#)
- Family-friendly scuba dives: [The Active Times](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities, and check out the [Handicapped SCUBA Association](#) and more information on [adaptive scuba programs](#).

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are able to swim. Participants’ swimming abilities need to be classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced

swimmers, etc.) at council-approved sites, or participants must provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test should be conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance. Ensure participants also have an understanding of the body of water they are going to dive in and aware of the type of marine life they may come across.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure that the scuba-diving teacher holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI), PADI, the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), or the YMCA. The instructor-to-girl ratio should be one to four.

Verify a certified lifeguard is present. If the scuba instructor is not also a certified lifeguard, you will need a lifeguard present. Lifeguards need current ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, YMCA Waterfront Lifeguarding Certification, or the equivalent. You need one certified lifeguard for every 25 swimmers. The primary guard must be an adult (age 18). Secondary guards can be 16 years old.

Select a safe diving site. Make sure your instructor is familiar with the scuba site. Scuba trips to unknown or non-designated areas are not allowed.

Size up scuba gear. Communicate girls' ages, heights, and weights to instructors and equipment providers to ensure the appropriate size of scuba gear is available. Be sure that the instructor and participants check equipment before use.

Safeguard valuables. Don't leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a scuba-diving school or camp, inquire about the organization's storage amenities.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid.

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately, and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them.

Safety and required gear:

- When divers are waiting on a boat, participants must wear a [U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket](#) (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure they're in good condition and contain no tears.
- A wet suit or dive skin
- Air tank
- Underwater compass, depth gauge, temperature gauge, and bottom clock
- Snorkel
- Weight belt (weights help a diver descend into water)

- Floating dive flag
- Mask
- Mask defogger solution
- Fins
- Gloves
- Regulator
- Writing slate and pencil
- Lights
- At least one graspable and personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) should be immediately available for each group on the water.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Sledding and Tobogganing



Council Approval: Not required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

Includes: Snow tubing

About Sledding and Tobogganing

The history of sledding is quite interesting: Traditionally sleds were used to transport goods and people in places where wheels couldn't operate. Toboggans made of poles tied together with leather were used by Native Americans to carry food, clothing, and other items through snow. Today, people of all ages enjoy sledding, tobogganing, and tubing as an enjoyable outdoor winter activity and sport. Today, tobogganing is even a formal sport in the winter Olympics.

Sleds and toboggans will vary in design, shape, and material and can range from round plastic discs to rectangular wood structures with metal runners. A toboggan is typically a long, flat-bottomed sled made of thin boards that curve upward in a C-shape at one end. Snow tubes are inflatable, doughnut-shaped rubber or plastic inner tubes similar to those used in water tubing, but with dimpled centers.

Girls must stick to designated sledding, tobogganing, and snow-tubing hills away from roads or heavily wooded areas to enjoy sledding safely. They should also receive basic instruction in sledding safety and conduct rules and learn to perform basic steering skills, including how to slow down and stop.

You can always connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. In addition, some ski resorts will offer snow-tubing and tobogganing classes within specially designated areas, so check with your local ski resorts if you have any nearby.

Learn More:

- Competitive and Olympic sledding: [Team USA](#)
- More on sledding: [Sled Riding](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about resources and information for people with disabilities at [Disabled Sports USA](#).

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Select a safe site. Ensure that sledding is conducted in an area free of vehicles and that the site has no obstructions such as rocks, poles, benches, trees, or signposts. The nature of the terrain, potential hazards (such as an avalanche or frozen lake), mileage, and approximate activity time should be known to all group members in advance. Avoid sledding near streets or highways.

Make smart decisions. Girls should slide downhill feet first (like Olympians) to reduce the potential for head injuries from collisions. Use of helmets is strongly recommended.

Ensure girls aren't towed. Girl Scouts are not permitted to be towed on sleds, toboggans, or tubes behind a motor vehicle of any kind including snow mobiles. Never use a motorized vehicle to pull a sled or tube.

Get a weather report. On the morning of the activity, check [Weather.com](#) or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. If weather conditions prevent the activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity, or postpone the activity. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans for severe weather with girls.

Practice safe sledding, tobogganing, and snow tubing. Conditions should be monitored, and breaks taken to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Girls and adults must agree on the portion of slope to be used for sledding and the portion to be used for walking uphill.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, and altitude sickness. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid.

Safety and Recommended Gear

- Hat, mittens, or warm gloves
- Waterproof winter boots
- Bicycle or ski helmets (may be required by some organized sledding facilities)
- Heavy, wool insulating socks (avoid cotton socks)
- Layered clothing
- Thermal underwear or long johns

- Snow pants, snowsuit, or waterproof pants over warm layers

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, parks facility, or your council as appropriate.



Snorkeling

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

About Snorkeling

Snorkeling is a great way to explore underwater life without the complicated equipment required of scuba diving. It's important to learn how to breathe properly using snorkels and to receive instruction from an experienced snorkeler or equipment-rental facility.

Coral, an ecosystem of shell and marine life, is a popular attraction for snorkelers and must be respected. As ocean organisms that support plants and fish, coral reefs are an essential part of the underwater ecosystem. Unfortunately, the coral reef is threatened by climate change, ocean acidification, and people who mistreat it. Touching coral can harm the delicate outer layer, which may take up to 100 years to recover.

It's important to know where to snorkel: just about any body of water is appropriate, but snorkeling is most recommended in warm ocean water with minimal waves or current.

Learn More:

- [National Association of Underwater Instructors](#)
- [Professional Association of Diving Instructors](#)
- [Snorkeling info](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn about the resources and information that the [National Instructors Association for Divers with Disabilities](#) provides people with.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure participants are able to swim. Participants' swimming abilities need to be classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, etc.) at council-approved sites, or participants can provide proof of swimming-test

certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test should be conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure the snorkeling instructor holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI) or the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), or has equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines, as outlined in *Volunteer Essentials*.

Verify certified lifeguard is present. If the scuba instructor is not also a certified lifeguard, you will need a lifeguard present. Lifeguards need current ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module or YMCA Waterfront Lifeguarding Certification, or the equivalent. You need one certified lifeguard for every 25 swimmers. The primary guard must be an adult (age 18). Secondary guards can be 16 years old.

Size up snorkeling gear. Ensure the appropriate sizes of masks, snorkels, and fins are available, and make sure that masks fit girls' faces securely and comfortably. An air space is needed in front of the eyes in order to see properly underwater. Also keep in mind that objects viewed underwater while wearing a mask appear about 25 percent larger and closer than objects seen through a mask out of water.

Safeguard valuables. Don't leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a snorkeling school, inquire about the company's storage amenities.

Prepare for emergencies. An adult with rescue experience and/or certification must be present. If snorkeling from a boat, at least one adult should have small-craft safety certification or equivalent experience. (Both of these qualifications can be held by one person.)

Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid.

Get a weather and wind report. Never snorkel on a stormy or extremely windy day; strong winds and large waves decrease visibility and make swimming difficult. On the day of the snorkeling trip or lesson, check [Weather.com](https://www.weather.com), or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. If weather conditions prevent the snorkeling activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Use the buddy system. See "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*."

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately, and head to shore. Take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet and place hands on knees with head between them.

Safety and Required Gear

- **Wearable flotation device:** Consult with your instructor to evaluate whether participants should wear a flotation device such as a simple waist belt or snorkeling vest. Water currents or surge, visibility, and participants' swimming ability should be considered. If life jackets are

recommended by the instructor, then use [U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets](#) (Type III recommended) that fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure they're in good condition with no tears.

- **Snorkel**
- **Mask**
- **Emergency flotation device:** At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) needs to be immediately available

These checkpoints should be reviewed with instructor, guard, vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Snowshoeing

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Snowshoeing

Snow shoeing has been around for thousands of years and is a great way for girls of all ages to get outdoors in the winter. Snowshoeing extends the hiking season into winter. It lets girls enjoy favorite trails and parks in a new way. Best of all, all ages and ability levels can enjoy the sport together.

As the saying goes, "If you can walk, you can snowshoe." The learning curve is much shorter than that of skiing or snowboarding.

There are a few techniques, however, that are worth practicing: widening your stance (to avoid stepping on snowshoe frames), going up and down hills, traversing slopes, and pole usage.

No lift ticket is required. In ski areas you can often rent snow shoes, and your council may have youth snow shoes available.

Learn More:

- For those who are new to the activity: [Snowshoe Magazine](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the ski instructor in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Instruction needs to be given by an adult with experience teaching and/or supervising snowshoeing or has documented experience according to your council's guidelines.

Know girls' limits, especially for new or inexperienced snowshoers. There is nothing wrong with a half-hour hike—15 minutes out and 15 minutes back. Start slowly, planning short routes and building up the level of adventure once girls gain confidence and ability.

Compile key contacts. See "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*."

Select a safe snowshoeing trail. Girls are encouraged to plan trip details and include adequate rest periods with opportunities to replenish fluids and eat high-energy foods (such as fruits and nuts). Stick to established trails at first. Many ski areas have cross-country ski trails that snowshoers can share. On those, you're never too far from other people, and you're not likely to encounter avalanche hazards.

Be able to recognize trail hazards. Creek crossings, changing weather, avalanche conditions, and tree or rock wells can be difficult or downright dangerous.

Share your plan. Make sure a contact knows where you are snowshoeing and when to expect the group to return home.

Practice recovering from a fall. The act of getting up while wearing snowshoes can be a cumbersome process. It doesn't happen a lot, but girls can fall down when snowshoeing, most often on descents. Have girls practice getting back up from the ground.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, and sprains. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

Dress for the conditions: Be sure girls carry extra layers for warmth, particularly extra base layer tops in case the ones they're wearing get wet from exertion or the weather. Know the signs of hypothermia so you can recognize them in girls.

Follow snowshoeing safety standards:

- When sharing the trail with cross-country skiers, try to make your own trail whenever possible, staying out of the tracks skiers have worked hard to set.
- Skiers have the right-of-way on trail systems, since it's easier for a snowshoer to step off the trail safely than it is for a skier to stop or go around. Always be polite to the folks you meet along the trail.
- A skier indicates her desire to pass by calling "track, please."
- Do not snowshoe close to the edge of an embankment or a cliff.

Safety and Required Gear

- Snowshoes, sized to each person's height/weight
- Poles sized to each person's height
- Winter boots
- Thick, water-resistant gloves or mittens
- A winter hat
- Heavy insulating socks
- Thermal underwear or long johns
- A water bottle
- High-energy food (such as fruits and nuts)
- A daypack to carry personal belongings
- A windproof, waterproof jacket

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Spelunking/Caving

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies

About Spelunking

Spelunking, or caving, is an exciting, hands-on way to learn about speleology, the study of caves, as well as paleontology, which is the study of life from past geologic periods by examining plant and animal fossils. As a sport, caving is similar to rock climbing and often involves using ropes to crawl and climb through cavern nooks and crannies. These checkpoints do not apply to groups taking trips to tourist or commercial caves, which often include safety features such as paths, electric lights, and stairways. Caving is not permitted for Daisies and Brownies.

Never go into a cave alone. Never go caving with fewer than four people in your group. Appoint a reliable, experienced caver as the “trail guide” or “sweeper” whose job it is to keep the group together. When climbing in a cave, always use three points of contact, hands, feet, knees, and, possibly, the seat of your pants (the cave scoot).

Learn More:

- U.S. caving clubs: [National Speleological Society](#)
- White-nose syndrome in bat populations: [White Nose Syndrome](#)
- [National Caves Association](#)
- Guide to responsible caving: [American Cave Conservation Association](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls of all abilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Check with public, governmental, and tourist caves about their accessibility provisions. Learn about the resources and information that [Disabled Sports USA](#) provides people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. A guide with documented experience in cave exploration should accompany the group into the cave. A guide can also help decide which caves are suitable. Pre-trip instruction should be given by an adult with documented experience according to your council's guidelines.

Select a safe site. Obtain guidance from a local chapter of the National Speleological Society to select a cave to explore. Never explore a cave without a guide and without written permission from the site owner/operator. Check with your Girl Scout council for approval if needed.

Compile key contacts. See "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*" for information.

Educate in advance. Girls should learn about basic caving guidelines before planning a caving trip and they must understand safety procedures and know how to handle equipment. Caves are fragile and sensitive environments, and they need to recognize and use resistant surfaces for travel. If no latrine is available, pack out all human waste, solids, and fluids. The smallest food crumbs can impact cave environments, so choose less crumbly foods such as nuts and chewy energy bars.

Dress appropriately for the activity. Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of soft tissue and bone injury and hypothermia. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

Get a weather report. See "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*." Also, in wet weather, avoid caves with stream passages, as some caves can flood.

Safety Gear

- Properly fitting safety helmet with a strong chin strap. For horizontal caves, bump helmets may be used; for vertical caves, use safety helmets carrying the Union of International Alpine Association (UIAA) seal, which is located on the inside of the helmet. It is recommended that a disposable liner, such as a shower cap or surgical cap, be worn underneath the helmet to protect against the spread of head lice.
- Sturdy boots with ankle protection (hiking boots for dry areas; rubber boots or wellies for wet caves)

- Warm, rubber gloves (to keep hands warm and protect against cuts and abrasions)
- Long pants and shirt with long sleeves
- Extra set of clothes
- Non-perishable, high-energy foods, such as fruits and nuts
- Water
- Knee and elbow pads
- Water-resistant “wet socks” (for wet caves)
- Belt and harness
- Compass
- Three sources of light: the main light should be electric and mounted on the safety helmet, while the other two light sources may be flashlights
- Spare bulbs and batteries
- A trash bag (use as a poncho or for covering dirty equipment after the caving activity; cavers keep an empty trash bag in their safety helmets)

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, guides, or your council as appropriate.



Surfing

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

Not Recommended For: Brownies, Daisies, and non-swimmers

About Surfing

Surfing (also referred to as “surfboarding”) is one of the most challenging water sports, but if a new surfer is well prepared, it can be a safe, rewarding experience that develops balance, agility, strength, and confidence. With proper instruction from an experienced surfing instructor, many first-timers are able to stand up on their boards during the initial two- to four-hour session.

While people learn at different paces, three to four lessons are recommended for beginners. Enrolling girls in a surf camp or daylong surfboarding lesson is highly recommended for

beginners. Be sure to inform the surf school of girls' ages, heights, and sizes to reserve appropriate surfboards and wet suits.

During lessons, even before going in the water, girls can learn the basics of surfing, such as:

- Finding the best position for the body on the board; steering out from the shore; keeping the nose of the surfboard pointed toward the surf in order to cut through the waves; and not getting positioned sideways (in order to avoid getting caught by a wave and tumbled around)
- Going around the break line (the point at which waves begin to break) when paddling out from the shore and not through it in order to allow other surfers plenty of space
- Sharing the waves, staying out of the way of other surfers, and never taking off on a wave in front of another surfer (called "snaking")
- Keeping the board by always using the ankle leash (it's dangerous to other surfers and swimmers when surfers let go of surfboards)

The ocean is best to surf, but some rivers and regions along the Great Lakes also can be suitable for surfing as long as the weather is warm.

Learn More:

- [Surfline glossary](#)
- Tips for beginners and intermediate surfers, plus overviews on ocean safety and gear: [Surfing Handbook](#)
- [International Surfing Association](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations with respect to water sports.

When planning to visit a waterfront at a park, contact the park office in advance. Also contact the instructor or facility teaching or hosting the surfing event. Ask about accommodating people with disabilities and make any possible accommodations to include girls with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Check swimming ability. Participants' swimming abilities should be classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored wristbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, and so on) at council-approved sites, or participants can provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test should be conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Instructors should hold a certification from the National Surf Schools and Instructors Association, the International Surfing Association, or similar certification. Ocean lifeguard certifications are required. The instructor-to-girl ratio should be one to four.

Note: The instructor-to-participant ratio is not the same as the adult-to-girl ratio found in “Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.” Both ratios must be complied with when girls are participating in surfing. For example, if 15 Juniors are participating in surfing, there must be four instructors plus two adult Girl Scout volunteers who are not instructors.

Pick an ability-appropriate site. Make sure the surfing location complements the surfers’ ability levels. Some beaches designate areas for beginners, intermediate surfers, and higher-level surfers. If the surfing location does not designate areas by skill level, verify with the surfing instructor that the location is appropriate for the girls.

Select a safe location. A location with a soft, sandy, or muddy bottom is best. Scout out a location that does not have a sharp-edged or rocky bottom, which can be dangerous and can cut feet and limbs. Also, inquire about potential dangerous marine life and rip tides. Keep girls away from these hazards when they become evident.

Safeguard valuables. Don’t leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a surfboarding school or camp, call ahead to inquire about the company’s storage amenities.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid.

Get a weather and tide report. Never surf on a stormy day. Following rainy weather, check the water quality before surfing. On the morning of the surf trip, determine whether conditions will be appropriate for surfing by searching for regional surf reports on SurfLine.com, FreeTideTables.com, 17ft.com, and Weather.com. If weather conditions prevent the surf trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Assess wave heights. Call the surf instructor on the day of the trip to confirm that wave heights are appropriate for girls. Wave heights rely heavily on wind strengths; two- to three-foot waves are recommended for beginners. When waves surpass five feet, it can be difficult to paddle out from the shore.

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet and place hands on knees with head between them.

Required Gear

- Surfboard (soft-deck long boards are generally recommended for beginners)
- Bathing suit
- Rash guard
- Wet suit (recommended for warmth and skin protection, especially when water temperature is below 70 degrees Fahrenheit; most surf schools rent full-body or partial suits, but they may not be “required” depending on the temperatures)
- Rocky bottom surf shoes

- Goggles for girls with glasses

Safety Gear

- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water (check with lifeguards at the waterfront)
- Leash, also referred to as a leg rope—cord that attaches the surfboard to the surfer's ankle, so that she doesn't have to swim too far to catch up to the board after a wipeout (usually included with a surfboard rental)

Recommended Gear

- Beach towel
- Dry clothing and sunglasses to wear after surfing

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Swimming

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Swimming

Swimming is a Girl Scout tradition that builds fitness, leadership, and team-building skills. Your troop can swim in pools, water parks, or natural bodies of water like oceans, rivers, or lakes. Safety is one of the keys to having fun in the water. Some Girl Scout camps have places to swim, and backyard, hotel, cruise ship, and water park pools are possibilities, too. You can also visit national and regional parks that allow swimming.

Consult a local parks and recreation department, YMCA, or American Red Cross for swimming lessons.

Learn More:

- [Fun swimming games](#)
- [Swimming World magazine](#)
- Safety around water: [YMCA](#)
- [American Red Cross lifeguard training](#)
- [USA Swimming](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations.

Additional Resources:

See [Disabled Sports USA](#) to learn more about equipment, adaptations, and finding a program near you.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Identify lifeguard(s). When using a staffed public facility, lifeguards will be provided. At beaches or waterfronts, make sure a lifeguard will be on duty. For swimming on your own, you'll need to recruit a lifeguard. Ask your council for suggestions. At least one lifeguard (certified in American Red Cross Lifeguard Training) and one watcher are present at all times. When using more than one lifeguard, lifeguards under 18 may be included in the total, as long as there is at least 1 adult lifeguard also present. Additional lifeguards and watchers may be needed; see the table below.

Exception for lake, rivers, streams: At least one lifeguard (certified in American Red Cross Waterfront Lifeguard course or the equivalent) is present for every 10 swimmers, plus one watcher.

Exception for pools: For swimming activities in public pools, hotel and cruise-ship pools, and backyard pools, the lifeguards are at least 16 years old and have American Red Cross Lifeguard Training certification or the equivalent. When girls are wading in water more than knee-deep, an adult with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification or with documented experience according to your council's guidelines, as outlined in [Volunteer Essentials](#).

Identify watchers. One adult watcher is needed for every ten swimmers. This person assists the group by watching for possible emergencies. Lifeguards and watchers are stationed at separate posts. They stay out of the water, except in emergencies. American Red Cross (ARC) Basic Water Rescue, YMCA Aquatics Safety Assistant, or similar training is the preferred preparation. Alternately, the lifeguard may be able to give watchers an orientation. Again, check with your council in advance.

These numbers are a minimum. The ratio of lifeguards and watchers to swimmers may need to be increased depending on the number of girls in one area, swimming level and ability, girls with disabilities, age level and ability to follow instructions, type of swimming activity (instruction, recreation), type of swimming area, weather / water conditions, and rescue equipment available.

Swimming Lifeguards and Watchers Ratios

Number of Swimmers	Lifeguards	Watchers
1–10	1 adult (see exception for pools above)	1*
11–25	1 adult (see exception for pools above)	2*
26–35	2 persons, at least 1 is an adult; others may be 16 years of age or older.	3*
36–50	2 persons, at least 1 is an adult; others may be 16 years of age or older.	4*

****Some states allow watchers to be under the age of 18, but in all states, they must be at least 16 years of age.***

Clearly identify swimming abilities. These could be indicated, for example, with different colored wristbands to signify beginners, intermediate, and advanced swimmers. Swim tests can be conducted in advance, or on the day of swimming. The pool operator or lifeguard may determine the type of swim test, based on the skills needed. Some examples:

- In pools, the lifeguard can ask each participant to enter the water slowly, stay close to the edge of the pool, swim from one end to the other, and then float for 30 seconds.
- In lakes, the lifeguard can ask each participant to jump into the water, swim for 50 yards, then float or tread water for one minute.
- In surf, the swimming test should be held in advance. The lifeguard asks each participant to jump into water over her head, swim 100 yards using a combination of freestyle and elementary backstroke, and then tread water for two minutes.

Ensure swimming site safety. Ensure that:

- A posting indicates water quality passes health department tests and sanitation standards.
- Shallow areas are marked “No Diving.”
- Diving areas are separate from other swim areas.
- Chlorine levels are tested and maintained. Water should be clear.
- The area around the pool is free of clutter.
- No electrical appliances are anywhere near the pool.
- The swimming area should be free from dangerous marine life and clearly marked.
- No sharp, rocked, or heavily shelled beach waters should be chosen, if possible.
- At water parks, do not dive or run. Most water park injuries are from slips and falls.
- Participants should know their physical limits. Observe a water ride before going on. Use extra care on water slides.
- Monitor time in the water. How long should participants swim? Swimmers’ ability, weather conditions, and water temperature should be considered. Often, 30-minute time periods are plenty.
- Swim only during daylight or in well-lit pools.
- Diving is prohibited in waters of unknown depth or conditions. For all diving, the required water depth extends 10 feet on each side of the board or jumping point. If tides, drought, or other forces affect the water depth, it is checked each time before diving is permitted. Girls do not dive off the side of the board.

Safety Gear

- Ask the pool operator or lifeguard what’s available:
- Reaching pole, rescue tube, backboard, ring buoy, throw bag with line (typically 30 feet)
- For open water, a paddle board, rescue can, kayak, or other rescue gear
- Goggles, swim cap, and/or nose and ear plugs for girls who need them

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Target Sports

Target and Shooting Sports—Master Progression Chart

Shooting Type	Grade Level/ Minimum Age	Participant-to- Instructor Ratio	Instructor/Expert Certification
Slingshot	D B J C S A	D, B - 5:1 J C S A - 10:1	One adult instructor is trained in slingshot safety, form, and technique, range rules, and emergency procedures.
Target Paintball	B J C S A	B - 5:1 J C S A - 10:1	One adult is trained in paintball safety, range rules, and emergency procedures.
Air/BB Guns			Not Permitted in Nation's Capital Council
Archery	B J C S A	B - 5:1 J C S A - 10:1	One adult is certified by National Field Archery Association, USA Archery, or Easton Foundation.
3-D Archery	J C S A	10:1	One adult is a certified by National Field Archery Association, USA Archery, or Easton Foundation.
Knife/Tomahawk/ Hatchet Throwing	C S A	2:1*	One adult trained in throwing safety for equipment you are using, form and technique, range rules, and emergency procedures. Plus one adult assisting for every additional two Cadettes, Seniors, or Ambassadors is required.
Rifle			Not Permitted in Nation's Capital Council
Shotgun- Trap/ Skeet Shooting			Not Permitted in Nation's Capital Council
Muzzle Loading			Not Permitted in Nation's Capital Council
Pistol			Not Permitted in Nation's Capital Council

*Participant is considered to be those on the throwing line, those who are waiting outside the range do not count towards the participant to instructor ratio. At least one instructor must be trained and certified in Tomahawks/Hatchets, additional adults assisting should have some familiarity about the activity to be included in the instructor ratio.

Archery



Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: B J C S A

Note: 3-D archery permitted only for J C S A

About Archery

One of the oldest weapons and hunting methods, archery is still used for its traditional purposes, but is more common today in the United States as a recreational and competitive activity. There are a variety of styles and sizes of bows and arrows, but they're all used for one purpose: to hit a target. Girls will develop skills based on proper procedures and form, handling equipment, getting the right stance, sighting, and observing safety practices.

Archery is not permitted for Daisies, however they may participate in using slingshots as a progression to learning the rules and range commands for archery. Slingshots for Daisies should be simple, fun, and easy to use.

Brownies can participate in some archery activities if the equipment is designed for children of that grade level and body size. Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves and others. Ensure that bows and arrows are appropriate to the age, size, strength, and ability of the girls. Juniors, and older may participate in a 3-D archery course where girls move to the targets, which might vary, to enhance their accuracy and skill level.

Learn More:

- Archery tournaments and events: [National Field Archery Association](#)
- Archery clubs/events: [Team USA Archery](#)
- Videos on archery basics: [YouTube](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. See [Disabled Sports USA](#) and [Team USA](#) for more about equipment, adaptations, and finding a program near you.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. One adult needs to be a certified USA Archery instructor or have equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines. Ensure that there is a ratio of one instructor for every ten girls. Archery on a 3-D course is well supervised and appropriate to age, skill level, and location of shooting.

Note: The instructor-to-participant ratio is not the same as the adult-to-girl ratio found in "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*." Both ratios must be complied with when girls are participating in target sports. For example, if there are 15 Girl Scout Cadettes on the shooting line, there must be two instructors plus two adult Girl Scout volunteers (who are not instructors).

Assess participants' maturity level. Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves and others. Ensure that bows and arrows are appropriate to the age, size, strength, and ability of the girls.

A beginner uses arrows that extend one to two inches in front of the bow when the bow is at full draw.

Select a safe site. Check with council staff to see if an approved vendor list is offered. If the council does not have an approved vendor list, look for organized indoor and outdoor archery ranges. Call the facility to determine the following safety information is in order:

- Equipment is stored in box/closet/cabinet and locked when not in use.
- Clear safety signals and range commands to control the activity are posted and taught to all participants in advance of stepping on to the range.
- Backstops or a specific safety zone are set behind the targets.
- Clearly delineated rear and side safety buffers are known to the entire facility population.
- Shooting line is clearly defined.

At an outdoor range, check that:

- Targets are not placed in front of houses, roads, trails, or tents.
- Areas with pedestrian traffic are avoided.
- Areas are clear of brush. A hillside backstop is recommended.
- The shooting area and the spectator area behind the shooting area are clearly marked.
- In the shooting area, there is a safe distance at least 50 yards behind the targets and 20 yards on each side of the range.
- The range is not used after nightfall.

At an indoor range, make sure:

- Targets are well-lit.
- Doors or entries to the range are locked or blocked from the inside.
- Fire exits are not blocked.
- Ensure equipment is properly sized for the girls.
- Compound bows are offered in both right- and left-handed models, are the proper size, and have the correct draw weight for the girls.
- Only target tip arrows are used, never broadhead/hunting tips.

Always keep the bow pointed in a safe direction. This is the primary rule of target sport safety. A safe direction means that the bow is pointed so that even if it were to go off it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control where the front end of the bow is pointed at all times.

Ensure that equipment to be used is in good condition. Make sure that the equipment is clean, in good working order, and nothing is broken or loose. Targets and backstops for targets need to be in good repair.

Dress appropriately for the activity. Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment. Also, have girls tie back long hair.

Ensure the instructor reviews the rules and operating procedures with girls beforehand. The instructor covers safety procedures, including:

- No “dry” firing, as it can damage equipment
- Always keeping the bow pointed in a safe direction

Safety and Required Gear

- Wrist, finger, and arm protection, such as finger tabs and arm guards (right- and left-handed models)
- Bows and arrows
- Targets
- Quivers

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Shooting Sports

***Firearms not permitted in Nation's Capital Council**

About Shooting Sports

Why teach shooting sports? Handling a gun and good marksmanship develop positive traits such as patience, discipline, determination, focus, attention to detail, and persistence. Since these skills are key elements of leadership and confidence, we encourage girls to take what they learn from any sport or activity and apply it in their lives, communities, and the world.

Learning how to handle guns properly and safely is of paramount importance, as is the healthy respect girls will develop when properly trained in shooting sports. There are a variety of styles and sizes of guns, each appropriate for specific grade levels. The guns girls will be learning on are for the express purpose of safe target shooting. Girls are not permitted to hunt.

Learn More:

- Safety re: various shooting sports/events, and youth videos: [USA Shooting](#)
- More safety information: [National Rifle Association](#)
- Safety at home and on the range: [National Shooting Sports Foundation](#)

- Trap and skeet shooting for high school girls: [USA High School Clay Target League](#)
- Safe shooting certification: [USA Clay Target Safety](#)
- Learn how to shoot: [Revolutionary War Veterans](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. One adult needs to be a certified National Rifle Association Range safety officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor, or have equivalent certification or documented experience and skill teaching/supervising firearm safety or shooting sports according to your council's guidelines and as outlined in *Volunteer Essentials*.

Note: The instructor to participant ratio is not the same as the adult to girl ratio that is found in "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*." Both ratios must be complied with when girls are participating in sport shooting. For example, if 15 Cadettes are on the shooting line, then there must be three instructors plus two adult Girl Scout volunteers (who are not instructors).

Connect with your Girl Scout council for approved sites. Groups are required to use council approved indoor and outdoor firing ranges. Council must approve all sites in advance.

Keep in mind that safe sites include those where:

- Equipment is stored in a box, closet, or cabinet and locked when not in use.
- Ammunition and firearms are stored in separate locked containers or areas with different locks and combinations.
- Caliber firearms have working trigger locks for storage (exceptions: BB and air guns).
- Clear safety signals and range commands to control the activity are posted and taught to all participants in advance of stepping on to the range.
- Backstops or a specific safety zone are set behind the targets.
- Clearly delineated rear and side safety buffers are known to the entire facility population.
- The shooting line is clearly defined.

At an outdoor range, check that:

- Targets are not placed in front of houses, roads, trails, or tents.
- Areas with pedestrian traffic are avoided.
- Areas are clear of brush. A hillside backstop is recommended.
- The shooting area and the spectator area behind the shooting area are clearly marked.
- In the shooting area, there is a safe distance at least 100 yards behind the targets and 30 yards on each side of the range.
- The range is not used after nightfall.

At an indoor range, check that:

- Targets are well-lit.
- Doors or entries to the range are locked or blocked from the inside.
- Fire exits are not blocked.
- Ensure equipment is properly sized for the girls.

Assess participants' maturity level. Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves and others.

Girls should learn about shooting. Girls develop skills based on proper procedures and form, handling the equipment, getting the right stance, sighting, and observing safety practices.

Ensure to always keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction. This is the primary rule of target sport safety. A safe direction means that the firearm is pointed so that even if it were to go off it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control where the front end of the firearm is pointed at all times.

Ensure that equipment to be used is in good condition. Make sure that the equipment is clean, in good working order, and nothing is broken or loose. Targets and backstops for targets are must be in good repair.

On the Day of Shooting:

Dress appropriately. Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment. Tie back long hair.

Limit shooters' exposure to lead. For firearm sports, be sure that the range safety officer and/or the instructor provide wet wipes for the girls to cleanse their hands and faces immediately after shooting.

In addition, the girls must return to a restroom facility and wash their hands and faces with soap and cold water. Cold water keeps pores closed so that less lead is absorbed into the blood stream. Girls should not take casings as souvenirs.

Ensure the instructor reviews the rules and operating procedures with girls beforehand. The instructor covers safety procedures, including:

- No dry firing, as it can damage equipment
- Keep the safety clip on until it is time to shoot
- Always keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction, away from self and others

Safety Gear

- Firearm (automatic firearms are not permitted at any time)
- Ammunition
- Targets
- Safety glasses

- Ear protection
- Barrel-blocking device (sleeve) for paintball
- CO2 or compressed air tank for paintball
- Paintball hopper (loader) for paintball

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Tomahawk, Knife, and Hatchet Throwing

Revised by Girl Scout Nation's Capital Camping Services September 2018

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: C S A

Note: See Target and Shooting Sports—Master Progression Chart

About Tomahawk, Knife, and Hatchet Throwing

Some of the oldest weapons, tools, and hunting methods include the ax, tomahawk, knife, and hatchet and they are still used for their traditional purposes in some areas today. Learning how to handle them safely by aiming at targets for accuracy is also common today as a recreational and competitive activity. It is an ideal way to learn how to handle these tools safely, tools that can be used in the great outdoors and wilderness excursions.

Good throwing requires learning positive traits such as patience, determination, focus, attention to detail, discipline, and persistence. Since these skills are likewise key elements of leadership and confidence, we encourage our girls to take what disciplines they learn from any sport or activity and apply it to their participation in their communities and the world.

There are a variety of styles and sizes of tomahawks, knives, and hatchets. The ones the girls will be learning about are designed for the express purpose of hitting a target.

Learn More:

- [National Axe Throwing Federation](#)
- [American Knife Throwers Alliance](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs, interest, and special accommodations. Check with facilities ahead of time to determine what accommodations can be made.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. One adult needs to be trained in tomahawk, hatchet, or knife throwing safety (depending on which you are doing), form and technique, range rules, and emergency procedures.

Note: The instructor-to-participant ratio is not the same as the adult-to-girl ratio found in “Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.” You must follow the Target and Shooting Sports—Master Progression Chart. However, both ratios must be complied with when girls are participating in throwing sports.

Select a safe site. Check with council staff to see if an approved vendor list is offered. If the council does not have an approved vendor list, look for organized indoor and outdoor throwing ranges. Call the facility to determine the following safety information in order to select a safe site:

- Equipment should be stored in a box, closet, or cabinet and locked when not in use.
- Clear safety signals and range commands to control the activity are posted and taught to all participants in advance of stepping on to the range.
- Backstops or a specific safety zone is set behind the targets.
- Clearly delineated rear and side safety buffers are known to the entire facility population.
- The shooting line is clearly defined.

At an outdoor range, check that:

- Targets are not placed in front of houses, roads, trails, or tents.
- Areas with pedestrian traffic are prohibited.
- Areas are clear of brush. A hillside backstop is recommended.
- The shooting area and the spectator area behind the shooting area are clearly marked.
- In the shooting area, there is a safe distance at least 50 yards behind the targets and 20 yards on each side of the range.
- The range is not used after nightfall.

At an indoor range, make sure that:

- Targets are well-lit
- Doors or entries to the range are locked or blocked from the inside.
- Fire exits are not blocked.

For hatchet throwing, indoor ceilings must be a minimum of 12 feet high; metal chain link 15-foot floor-to-ceiling partitions must separate sets of two targets; and within a set of two targets, there must be a 6-foot floor-to-ceiling partition between the targets.

Ensure equipment is properly sized for the girls and is made for throwing. Knives should be between 9 to 16 inches and not overly sharp. Hatchet heads should weigh between 1.25 and 1.75 pounds, the handle should be wood, length must be at least 13 inches, including the handle in the eye of the blade and the face (blade) of the axe must be no longer than 4 inches and not overly sharp.

Assess participants' maturity level. Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves and others.

Girls should learn about throwing. Girls develop skills based on proper procedures and form, handling the equipment, getting the right stance, sighting, and observing safety practices.

Always keep the knife/hatchet pointed in a safe direction. This is the primary rule of target sport safety. A safe direction means that the knife/hatchet is handled so that even if it were to be dropped or slip out of the throwers grip it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control your actions at all times.

Ensure that equipment to be used is in good condition. Make sure that the equipment is clean, in good working order, and that nothing is broken or loose. Targets and backstops for targets are in good repair.

Dress appropriately for the activity. Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment. Also have girls tie back long hair.

Plan in advance. Call ahead to determine any special suggestions from the vendor or facility.

Ensure the instructor reviews all rules, range, and operating procedures with girls beforehand.

Safety Gear

- Targets (positioned at recommended/safe distance)
- Hard shoes (to protect feet from bounce backs)
- Gloves (may be provided)

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Tethered Balloon Rides

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

About Tethered Balloon Rides

Hot air or helium balloons that remain tethered to the earth provide a new perspective and exciting experience. The balloons are attached to ground-level anchors while passengers ride in a basket or gondola under the balloon. Riders must be Juniors and above, and must be taller than the basket (a head above the basket, which is typically 3.5 feet high).

Look for well-established amusement parks, zoos, and similar facilities that might offer helium balloon rides. Some hot air balloon operators can set up temporary tethered rides in a suitable place. Contact local vendors.

Note: Untethered hot air balloons, blimps, helicopters, and small private planes, are not permitted.

Learn More:

- Suggestions for riders and more: [Balloon Federation of America](#)
- About complying with rules for pilots: The Federal Aviation Administration's [Balloon Flying Handbook](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Connect with the balloon ride operator to determine any access or safety steps that need to be arranged in advance. The [United States Access Board](#) has transportation resources and information to support people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Select a qualified operator. Ensure operators have liability insurance and are licensed through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Pilots must be currently licensed. Here are some questions to ask of an operator you're considering:

- Do you comply with the Envelope of Safety or FAA Wings programs? These voluntary programs, promoted by the FAA, indicate an operator or pilot is willing to achieve a high level of preparation and training.
- How long have you been flying/operating in this area?
- Do you have a commercial pilot's FAA certificate?
- What is your safety/accident record?
- What insurance coverage does your company carry?
- Will you be flying or piloting our ride, or just booking it for another pilot?
- Do you have a business license for flying in this area?

Choose a balloon that meets Girl Scout standards. The balloon must be certified and registered with the Federal Aviation Administration for passenger use.

Helium balloon rides are likely to be permanently installed and inflated with helium, a gas lighter than air. They can carry a large number of riders in a donut-shaped gondola below the balloon. A single cable runs from the balloon to the ground through the hole in the gondola. The operator controls the rise and descent of the balloon with the cable.

Tethered hot air balloons use heated air to inflate a large, colorful envelope. Because heated air is less dense than ambient air, the balloon rises. A passenger basket or gondola is suspended

below the balloon. To rise and descend, a licensed pilot carefully manages the heated air with fuel—typically propane. The aircraft is tethered by ropes or straps to three heavy or fixed items (anchors) on the ground. The pilot and ground crew monitor wind direction and speed and anchor placement. A crew member manages any riders waiting for a turn.

Know the local laws. Many other countries do not maintain the same strict flight standards as those in the United States. Research the standards and enforcement practices of the country you'll visit. Ride only in countries with firm safety standards. Contact your council for guidance.

On the Day of Riding:

Get a weather report. Be prepared to postpone or cancel rides in case of poor weather. There should be no lightning storms predicted within a 50-mile radius of the site. Strong winds or lightning are especially dangerous, but even winds of over 5 mph can be too much. Contact the balloon operator or pilot for guidance.

Observe general safety rules:

- Follow pilot and crew instructions about getting into and out of the basket or gondola.
- Listen to the orientation and follow the rules mentioned.
- Never lift someone to see over the edge of the basket.
- Use the buddy system and adult supervision at all times.
- Follow instructions in an emergency.
- Do not play on or around the ground anchors or tethers.

Address seasickness. Suggest to parents and adults that girls and adults who get motion sickness consider taking a remedy in advance. Other tips:

- Bring mint, ginger candies, gingersnaps, or plain crackers to settle queasy stomachs.
- Have seasick persons stay in the fresh air. Have them keep their eyes on the horizon.

Safety Gear

- Tethers for hot air balloons may be ropes or straps, which must be in good condition. Operators should inspect them before each use and monitor them throughout the ride(s). Hot air balloons should use a three-point tether. Helium balloons may use a single tethering cable.
- Rescue and safety gear, according to industry standards for the aircraft type, including fire extinguishers and weights
- Layered clothing, according to the weather and no loose or dangling items
- Seasickness remedies (see above) if needed

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, balloon pilot, or your council as appropriate.



Travel/Trips

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

Note: Approval for international travel must often be obtained a year or more in advance of the trip.

About Travel/Trips

Some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while taking trips. Travel offers a wealth of opportunities for girls to develop leadership, confidence, and practical life skills. The following information can help you and girls prepare for local, regional, or international travel.

Girl Scouts is a great place for girls to learn how to plan and take exciting trips, because travel is built on a progression of activities—one activity leads to the next. Daisies can begin with a discovery walk. As girls grow in their travel skills and can better manage the planning process, they progress to longer trips—even international ones!

For Daisies, this could mean a day trip to an arboretum as part of the Journey they're working on. For Seniors or Ambassadors, it might mean whitewater rafting in Costa Rica or exploring the Our Chalet World Center in Switzerland.

Although many troops decide to travel together, Girl Scouts may also get together specifically for the purpose of traveling. Girls might join a trip with other girls from around their council, or form a new troop with other girls who like to travel. Girl Scouts of the USA also offers individual Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors the chance to travel independently and meet other Girl Scouts from across the country through the Destinations program.

The Journey adult guides have a lot of ideas about trips that bring the Journeys to life, and many troops choose to earn badges as part of their trip-planning and travel adventures. The Senior Traveler badge is the most obvious example, but many badges—from Junior Eco Camper to Ambassador Photographer—can certainly be earned while traveling!

The recommended progression of trips and travel for Girl Scouts are:

Short trips to local points of interest (Daisies and older): A walk to a nearby garden or a short ride by car or public transportation to a firehouse or courthouse is a great first step for Daisies.

Day trip (Daisies and older): An all-day visit to a point of historical or natural interest (bringing their own lunch) or a daylong trip to a nearby city (stopping at a restaurant for a meal) allows younger girls to select locations and do much of the trip-planning, while never being too far from home.

Note: Full-day trips may be very challenging for Daisies, especially for kindergarteners who have not experienced short trips. Make sure girls take some short trips before they progress to a full day trip.

Overnight trips (Daisies and older): A trip of one—or possibly two—nights away could start with one night camping or staying at a Girl Scout property and progress to a visit to a state or national park, or nearby city for sightseeing, staying in a hotel, motel, or campground—or even an overnight at a large museum! These short trips are just long enough to get girls excited about travel, but not long enough to generate homesickness.

Note: A Daisy troop may participate in an overnight experience if the girls are ready. Brownie troops can participate up to two nights. For camp this differs: girls who have completed kindergarten may independently participate at day camp and in resident camp experiences lasting up to three nights. Girls who have completed first grade may independently participate in resident camp experiences lasting four or more nights.

Extended overnight trips (Juniors and older): Three or four nights camping or staying in a hotel, motel, or hostel within the girls' home region take girls up to a few hours away from home.

National trips (Cadettes and older): Travel anywhere in the country can often last a week or more. Try to steer clear of ordinary recreational trips girls might take with their families and consider those that offer some educational component—such as incredible cities, historic sites, and museums around the country. Perhaps the girls want to plan a trip to some national parks as part of the Girl Scout Ranger program.

International trips (Cadettes and older): Travel around the world can require one to three years of preparation. Ensure passports, documentation, visas, and customs requirements are in order well in advance of your trip. International trips are available to Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors, but only to those who have successfully participated in a progression of overnight and extended trips within Girl Scouting.

When thinking about progression, consider things like girls':

- Ability to be away from parents and their homes
- Ability to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings and situations
- Ability to make decisions for themselves and the good of the group well and easily
- Ability to get along with each other and handle challenges
- Previous cross-cultural experiences, skills, interests, and language skills (where applicable)

Non-Girl Scouts. If you plan to include non-Girl Scouts on your trip, such as siblings, they should also be the same appropriate grade level in progression with travel experience. For example, an eight-year-old sibling of a Senior should not participate in an international trip. And remember, you will have to purchase supplemental insurance for nonmembers.

WAGGGS World Centers or your Girl Scout council may have additional or different guidelines regarding age requirements for international travel.

Learn More:

- [WAGGGS World Centers](#)
- [International events through Girl Scouts](#)
- Girl Scouts' [Destinations program](#)

- U.S. passports and international travel: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- Travelers' health (vaccines, medicine, advice): [Centers for Disease Control](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls of various abilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. A great reference for learning about travelling with disabilities is the [Open Doors](#) organization.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Plan ahead. When planning transportation, keep in mind that large 15-passenger vans have been flagged as unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and, therefore, are not permitted for transporting girls. For chartered buses or rented vehicles always ensure the possession of safety credentials and commercial driving licenses and availability of seatbelts. Request a copy of a certificate of insurance with a minimum of \$1 million in auto liability coverage.

Uber, Lyft, Curb, and similar ride-sharing companies are not permitted to transport girls because the safety, credibility, and insurance of the drivers is far more difficult to qualify than traditional or well-known charter and rental companies. Complete auto insurance coverage is often unavailable for a vast majority of rideshare drivers.

Airbnbs and other personal overnight accommodations for hire are not permitted. The safety, credibility, and insurance of these facilities is difficult, if not impossible, to qualify, unlike those for traditional or well-known commercial properties. Proper liability or homeowners' insurance coverage is often unavailable or not applicable to personal housing when guests are paying for the service. In other words, there is no effective insurance on personal property being used for commercial use.

Involve girls in arrangements. Safe overnight outings include preparing girls to be away from home by involving them in planning, so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women to promote a girl-led experience. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in designated program areas. When parents are staffing an event, daughters should remain in sleeping quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.

Try to make sure international permission slips are signed by both parents. Discuss with your council about having both parents sign the permission slip and notarizing it. This is recommended by the U.S. Customs Office and strongly suggested as a best practice.

Take the insurance. When booking flights, consider cancellation insurance which primarily covers the cost for airfare in the event a trip is cancelled due to illness. Discuss this option with your council as it could be costly.

For trips longer than two nights, inquire with your council about accident activity insurance. You must enroll and purchase a specific policy from Mutual of Omaha to cover trips longer than two nights; trips longer than two nights are not covered on the basic plan.

When planning to travel internationally, discuss liability insurance and accident activity insurance for it with your council. You'll want to ensure that your council's liability policy does not have any specific exceptions or exclusion for international travel. For accident activity insurance, you must enroll and purchase a specific policy from Mutual of Omaha to cover international trips; international trips are not covered on the basic plan.

Verify leader/instructor knowledge, experience, judgment, and maturity. Ensure that at least one adult is trained or possesses knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas:

- Travel progression and readiness, including homesickness
- Trip planning in a girl-led environment
- Safety management
- Program activities specific to the trip
- Group dynamics and management
- Supervision of girls and adults
- If the trip is international, leader must have international travel experience

Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in designated program areas. When parents are staffing an event, daughters should remain in sleeping quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas. Girls have a clear and separate bathroom facility from men.

Prepare a pre-trip orientation. Ensure that girl and adult participants, and girls' parents, receive information about first-aid procedures and health issues, emergency procedures, plans for transportation and the geographic/environmental area, operational procedures (e.g., using the buddy system at all times), and behavior expectations. Make sure girls and parents have a detailed itinerary, but do not post the itinerary on a publicly-accessible website, where others may be able to see it.

International Travel:

International travel has increased requirements compared to domestic travel.

Register your trip with the U.S. government's Smart Traveler Alert Program, so that you will get updates about safety, and that the State Department knows where you are traveling.

Read on the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention website about health concerns for the country. Make sure girls and parents/guardians review this information, and that they visit their doctor to discuss their travel health requirements and any vaccinations or medications necessary.

Confirm the travel advisory level for the country via the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. Note that the State Department now classifies travel advisories with travel alert levels as follows:

- Exercise Normal Precautions
- Exercise Increased Precautions

- Reconsider Travel
- Do Not Travel

Confirm that both girls and their parents/guardians have the advisory information and are aware of the travel alert level in the region you plan to visit. This can be reflected on a permission slip if your council chooses to handle it that way.

Read information about safety issues and concerns, and also the in-country travel alerts for the particular region you are interested in. For example, a certain country may be classified as a level 2, but a particular state or region within that level 2 country may be categorized as level 3.

Check the travel alert status periodically in the months/weeks/days leading up to your trip for any changes. For situations where there is a travel alert level of 1 or 2, take every safety precaution to safeguard girls.

For situations where the travel alert is a 3 (“reconsider travel”), there are several steps that should be taken before moving forward:

- Strongly consider selecting a different location.
- If interest is high, have a conversation with your local safety or risk representative to fully understand the specific risk factors in play.
- Contact the host destination facility and ask if they’re aware of the travel alert level and what extra security measures are in place, if any.
- Have a conversation with your council and get approval from a legal perspective, from in-house legal or outside legal counsel.
- Confirm senior management approval within your council prior to moving forward with your plans.
- Inform girls and parents/guardians and determine if there is still a compelling interest to travel to this location, considering the travel alert level.
- Get parents’/guardians’ explicit approval to travel to the location, in light of specific risk, in writing.

When the travel alert level is 4 (“do not travel”), girls are not to travel to a location under any circumstances.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the travel vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.



Tubing

Council Approval: Required

Activity permitted for: J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies and Brownies.

About Tubing

Tubing involves floating down a river or other body of water in a doughnut-shaped inner tube. Tubing is popular both as a relaxing leisurely activity (in slow-moving waters) and as an adventurous recreational activity in faster-paced rivers. A fun thing to do on a tubing adventure is to create exploration games to see who can locate the most interesting nature gems, such as caves and peculiar plants or birds.

As a safety precaution, keep in mind that tubes occasionally flip, causing tubers to sometimes fall out of their tubes as they travel over rapids and through rough patches of water. Tubing can be done on lakes or rivers. As river tubing is often a one-way trip, be sure to arrange transportation from the tubing final destination.

If participating in speedboat tubing, be sure to take safety precautions that comply with American Red Cross small craft safety guidelines.

Learn More:

- [American Whitewater](#)
- Tubing sites: [River Tubing USA](#) [River Tubing](#)
- [Whitewater Rescue Institute](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn about the resources and information that the [National Center on Physical Activity and Disability](#) provides for people with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

For recommended adult-to-girl ratios, see “Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.” In addition, one adult will be the lead tuber, while another adult will be the sweep tuber. The lead adult knows firsthand the hazards and rapids on any river to be tubed.

Know the river flow. Be careful about where you roll out of a tube. If tubing in fast-moving water, the undersurface current may catch you off guard. Do not get out of a tube where the flow of water is fastest—just above the riverbed, where there is little resistance to flow.

If towing behind a motor boat, the operator must be an adult driver with a valid license to operate the motorboat. There must be a spotter at the stern watching a girl while towing at all times. Girls are not permitted to be towed by jet skis or wave runners.

Girls are not permitted to drive or operate motorized boats.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. One adult must be certified in American Red Cross Small Craft Safety, Moving Water Module from the American Red Cross, have experience in teaching and/or supervising tubing activities, or have documented experience according to your council's guidelines, as outlined in *Volunteer Essentials*.

Ensure participants are able to swim. Participants' swimming abilities should be classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, and so on) at council-approved sites, or participants provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test is conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

Prior to tubing, girls receive verbal instruction. This should include how to float through rapids, how to breathe while swimming in rapids, and how to swim to shore. There is only one person to a tube, and tubes that are tied together are secured very snugly, with no slack between the tubes. Avoid long, dangling ropes that can get snagged on various obstructions.

Research river condition. Never go whitewater tubing on water that has not been run and rated. No tubing is taken on whitewater more difficult than Class II, as defined by the American version of the [International Scale of River Difficulty](#). Be aware of possible changes in river level and its effects on the run's level of difficulty.

Make sure tubing on whitewater or semi-protected waters meets the [Safety Code of American Whitewater](#).

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid.

Safeguard valuables. Don't leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place.

Get a weather report. Never go tubing on a stormy day. On the day of the activity, consult [Weather.com](#) or other reliable sources to assess weather and river conditions and water and air temperature. If weather conditions prevent the trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them. During storms, if shore cannot be reached, keep a sharp lookout for boats and other obstructions.

Safety Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.
- Tube
- Closed-toe sport sandals with heel strap, water socks, or shoes (no flip-flops)
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Waterskiing and Wakeboarding

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

About Waterskiing and Wakeboarding

Similar to surfing, learning to stand up on water skis or a wakeboard (a single board resembling a snowboard) is one of the sport's primary challenges, especially for beginners. Waterskiing requires thorough instruction and practice; key elements of successful waterskiing include balance, a strong grip, and proper-fitting skis/board and bindings. Skiers either wear one board (called slalom) or two skis (called combo); barefoot waterskiing is an advanced skill.

Beginners must learn the waterski position: knees bent and together, leaning back with weight on the balls of the feet, head up, arms straight, and skis pointing forward. Girls will learn technique and safety to prevent injuries such as water skiers must learn (contrary to instinct) to release the towline as soon as they begin to lose their balance.

Girls can start the learning process on land. Before entering the water, it helpful to simulate the waterskiing process on a sandy beach and learn how to wear the skis and hold onto a water-ski handle properly. They can and should also learn to communicate with the spotter (the person on the back of the boat watching the skier) with specific and agreed-upon hand signals. This way the spotter can then shout out to the driver when necessary.

Another fun technique is to learn by watching others—videotape other Girl Scouts who are learning to waterski and have girls watch it to find out how to improve their performance.

Open bodies of water, such as a lakes and bays, are ideal. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions and search online for lakes nearby.

Learn More:

- [USA Water Ski](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Visit [USA Water Ski](#) for information about amenities for water skiers with disabilities.

Safety Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Life raft and/or towing boat
- Ski lines (tow lines) at least 75 feet long; a single handle is used on the ski line
- Wakeboard or rounded (not pointed) skis that are appropriate to the skill and size of the skier
- Water skis
- Foot bindings appropriate for skier's weight and skiing speed
- Waterproof sunscreen (SPF of at least 15), applied every two hours, and lip balm
- Goggles for girls who require glasses or contact lenses (available at sporting-goods stores; if prescription goggles are too expensive for girls to purchase, make sure girls test non-prescription goggles to assure proper fit over prescriptive eyewear)
- Beach towel
- Dry clothing and sunglasses to wear after surfing
- Wet suit if water temperatures are cold, below 70 degrees Fahrenheit

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure that girls don't operate motorized boats.

Ensure no tricks. Girls are not permitted to attempt aerial tricks on water skis or wakeboards.

Protect hands. Water skiers can get blisters from the pressure of holding onto the rope handle; wearing gloves or taping hands can help. Learn how on [Waterski Magazine](#).

No ocean skiing. Skiers stay in bays, inlets, lakes, and gulfs and do not ski in the ocean without explicit council approval.

Learn skiing safety. Girls will learn basics like staying behind the boat, as it is dangerous to curve around the boat. Also, skiing outside the wake is an advanced technique for experienced skiers only.

Verify instructor and boat driver knowledge and experience. Ensure that the adult or instructor is certified by USA Water Ski or possesses equivalent certification or documented

experience according to your council's guidelines. Confirm that the boat driver is an adult, has an appropriate license, and is skilled in operating the watercraft.

Ensure participants are able to swim. Participants' swimming abilities are confirmed and should be clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, and so on) at council-approved sites, or participants provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test should be conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

Check the boat safety features. Make sure the boat has sufficient power to tow the skier(s) and is equipped with a side-angle rearview mirror, fire extinguisher, flags, paddle, horn, bailing device, two gas tanks (for outboard motors), mooring ropes (extra line), boarding ladder, and throw bag.

Prepare for emergencies. If a lifeguard is not on duty, an adult with rescue and resuscitation experience and/or certification is present. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, and who is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid.

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately, and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them. During storms, if shore cannot be reached, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions.

Review rescue tips. Paddling.net has instructions on small boat capsize recovery.

Keep track of water skiers. Use a list or checkboard system to stay aware of water skiers' whereabouts.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.

Windsurfing



Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies and Brownies

About Windsurfing

Windsurfing is an exciting surface water sport that combines the elements of surfing and sailing by using a standing board and sailing rig. It consists of a board usually 8 to 10 feet long, powered by the wind. The rig is connected to the board and consists of a mast, boom, and sail.

Learning to windsurf entails learning the concepts of wind and balance. It can be experienced both inland and at the coast, from cruising across flat water in a lake to riding waves at the beach.

To fully enjoy the sport, windsurfers should be comfortable in the water, have the ability to swim, and possess a certain measure of strength, balance, coordination, and attention.

It is best for beginners and intermediate-level windsurfers to learn and practice in standing-level water surrounded by land, such as a lake or salt water bay or alcove. Advanced to expert windsurfers can ride waves in the ocean. Windsurfing instructors usually begin the instructional process on land to guide students through a start-up sequence so girls can orient themselves to the equipment and know what to do when they get in the water.

Learn More:

- [Windsurfing information Sailing and Classes Index](#)
- [Royal Yachting Association \(RYA\)](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations with respect to water sports.

If visiting a waterfront such as a lake or beach area, contact the parks office in advance. Also contact the instructor or facility teaching or hosting the windsurfing event. Ask about accommodating people with disabilities and make any possible accommodations to include girls with disabilities.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Check swimming ability. Participants' swimming abilities should be confirmed and clearly identified (for instance, with colored wristbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, and so on) at council-approved sites, or participants can provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test should be conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

All windsurfers must wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket. Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Size up sailboards. Communicate girls' ages, heights, and weights with windsurfing instructors to ensure the appropriate size equipment is available. Request that sails be the appropriate size (according to weight, height, and ability level) for windsurfers; the larger the sail, the more powerful the sailing capacity. Sailboard decks should be textured (not smooth) to provide traction.

Select a safe location with a soft, sandy, or muddy bottom. Choose a location that does not have a sharp-edged or rocky bottom, which can be dangerous and cut feet and limbs. The launching area should be easily accessible and clear of overhead power lines.

Safeguard valuables. Don't leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a windsurfing school or camp, call to inquire about the organization's storage amenities.

Prepare for emergencies. In addition to a lifeguard, at least one adult present should have small craft safety certification or equivalent experience. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, and is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

Stay with the board. If remaining in the water while taking a break from windsurfing, stay near the board. Lifeguards become concerned if they see a windsurf board "missing" a windsurfer.

Troubleshoot exhaustion. In the case of fatigue while in the water (and in light winds), raise the sail down over the back of the board, position leg on top of the sail to prevent it from falling off the board, and paddle (or walk, if water is shallow enough) back to shore. [U.S. Sailing](#) provides instructions.

Safety Gear

- The facility will provide the windsurfing board, sail, and life jackets.
- Girls bring waterfront/beach essentials, blankets for the sand, towels, and a change of clothes.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.