



Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints

When preparing for any activity with girls, always begin with the Safety Activity Checkpoints (SACs) written specifically for that particular activity, as well as this introduction. In this introduction you will find specific information for the checkpoints that are common to all activities, such as that for communicating with council and parents, as well as an overview of the format for all SACs. Additional information can also be found in Girl Scout Safety Guidelines, which is included at the end of this introduction.

Note: In addition to reading these checkpoints yourself, you can also email to or print them for girls, other volunteers, and parents and guardians.

Know where to do the activity. Brief summary of the most common places girls carry out the activity.

Include girls with disabilities. Information, including websites, on including girls with disabilities.

Gear

Required Gear includes clothing and equipment girls will need in order to take part in the activity.

Recommended Gear includes clothing and equipment girls may need, but are not required to have, in order to take part in the activity.

Prepare for the Activity

Communicate with council and parents. Inform 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 (see Required and Recommended Gear). Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and council guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Make arrangements in advance for all transportation and confirm plans before departure.

Girls plan the activity. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

Arrange for transportation and adult supervision. The recommended adult-to-girl ratios are two nonrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) to 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

Plus one adult to each 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

It should be noted that some high adventure activities may require a lower adult-to-girl ratio than stated above. If this is the case, the SACs for that activity will provide this ratio. Also, some activities are not appropriate for all levels of Girl Scouts, particularly Daisies and Brownies. For those activities, the adult-to-girl ratio can be ignored for girls not permitted to participate.

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.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure the volunteers or on-site instructors possess the proper skill set, knowledge, training/certification, and/or documented experience according to your council's guidelines, as outlined in *Volunteer Essentials*.

- **Compile key contacts.** Give an itinerary to a contact person at home, and call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list of girls' parents/guardian contact information, telephone numbers for emergency services and police, and council contacts—keep on hand or post in an easily accessible location.
- **Activity specific guidelines.** Guidelines covering such things as safety precautions, proper dress, routes and maps, and the like
 - Respect the environment. Review tips for ensuring environmental responsibility.
 - Prepare for emergencies. Know first-aid requirements and other emergency precautions.

On the Day of the Activity

These checkpoints include important final reminders on the day of the activity. Not every category is listed here, and not every activity includes these categories.

Get a weather report. Find ways to monitor the weather for any outdoor activity and/or activity requiring transportation.

Use the buddy system, which means girls are divided into teams of two. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help when the situation warrants it. Girls are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team of two, so in the event someone is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.

Safeguard valuables. Store equipment and other valuables in a locked storage area.

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Know precautions to take during outdoor activities in warm weather.

Links guide you to the activity-related websites.

Know-How for Girls offers ways to expand girls' knowledge of the activity.

Girl Scout Safety Guidelines

Every adult in Girl Scouting is responsible for the physical and emotional safety of girls, and we all demonstrate that by agreeing to follow these guidelines at all times.

Follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Instructions for staying safe while participating in activities are detailed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints, available from your council. Read the checkpoints, follow them, and share them with other volunteers, parents, and girls before engaging in activities with girls.

Points common to all Safety Activity Checkpoints include:

Girls plan the activity. Keeping their grade-level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

Arrange for proper adult supervision of girls. Your group must have at least two unrelated, approved adult volunteers present at all times, plus additional adult volunteers as necessary—this is dependent upon the size of the group and the ages and abilities of girls. Adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (or the age of majority defined by your state, if it is older than 18), and must be screened by your council before volunteering. One lead volunteer in every group must be female.

Get parent/guardian permission. When an activity takes place that is outside the normal time and place, advise each parent/guardian of the details of the activity and obtain permission for girls to participate.

Communicate with council and parents. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and council guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Make arrangements in advance for all transportation and confirm plans before departure.

Be prepared for emergencies and compile key contacts. Work with girls and other adults to establish and practice procedures for emergencies related to weather, fire, lost girls/adults, and site security. Give an itinerary to a contact person at home, and call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list of girls' parents/guardian contact information, telephone numbers for emergency services and police, and council contacts—keep on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Always keep handy a well-stocked first-aid kit, girl health histories and contact information for girls' families. Check Safety Activity Checkpoints to determine the type of first aider needed.

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 severe weather conditions prevent the activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternate activity, and/or postpone the activity. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans for severe weather with girls. In the event of a storm, 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.

Use the buddy system. Using the buddy system, girls are divided into teams of two. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help when the situation warrants it. Girls are encouraged to stay near the group or buddy with another team of two, so in the event someone is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.

Report abuse. Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members, as well as physical, verbal, and emotional abuse of girls is strictly forbidden. Follow your council's guidelines for reporting concerns about abuse or neglect that may be occurring inside or outside of Girl Scouting.

Travel safely. When transporting girls to planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities that are outside the normal time and place, every driver must be an approved adult volunteer and have a good driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle. Insist that everyone is in a legal seat and wears her seat belt at all times, and adhere to state laws regarding booster seats and requirements for children in rear seats.

Ensure safe overnight outings. Prepare 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. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in program areas. When parents are staffing events, daughters should remain in quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.

Model 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 group marksmanship activities.

Create an emotionally safe space. Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouting a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team agreement and coaching girls to honor it. Agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting a diversity of feelings and opinions, resolving conflicts constructively, and avoiding physical and verbal bullying, clique behavior, and discrimination.

Ensure that no girl is treated differently. 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.

Promote 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 have them commit to it.

Keep girls safe during money-earning activities. Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales are an integral part of the program. 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 be 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.

Understanding Which Activities Are Not Allowed

In an exciting, learning-by-doing environment like Girl Scouting, it's only natural that girls will sometimes want to take part in activities not covered in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). When activities involve unpredictable safety variables, they are not approved as Girl Scout program activities. These include but are not limited to:

- Hot air ballooning
- Bungee jumping
- Flying in small private planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Knife throwing
- Stunt skiing
- Motor biking
- Parachuting
- Riding all-terrain vehicles
- Riding motorized personal watercraft like jet-skis
- Outdoor trampolining
- Hunting
- Simulated skydiving and zero-gravity rooms (see note below on indoor skydiving)
- Parasailing
- Zorbing

Marksmanship activities require council permission, and volunteers need to transport weapons separately from girls. The minimum age for girls using firearms in highly supervised activities is 12 years of age. If your council expressly approves, indoor skydiving, because it is contained, low-impact, and adjustable to size and skill-level of participants, is the only freefall activity not prohibited by Girl Scouts. Indoor skydiving is not recommended for Girl Scout Daisies or Brownies. In addition, there are some activities in which girls and volunteers may not engage when representing Girl Scouts. 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

You'll want to have a process for handling requests for activities not covered by [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#). First, investigate whether the activity is similar to one for which [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) already exist. Then consider whether the proposed activity requires any expert supervision or special certification. Finally, consult the GSUSA Risk Management & Insurance Department before approving any activity not covered in the checkpoints.