

2020 SAFETY ACTIVITY CHECKPOINTS

Condensed 2020 edition
GSBDC

girl scouts



Girl Scout Activity Safety Standards & Guidelines

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) – 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.

This section provides general safety standards & guidelines by topic that will apply to all activities. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section. These standards and guidelines are to be used together with the specific safety checkpoints for an individual activity along with reasonable common-sense adjustments to ensure a safe positive experience for girls. The intent of providing these guidelines is to establish a checklist for success and develop confident leaders.

Throughout *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as the grade level and skill progression.

Adult Supervision. There are different adult supervision requirements for Girl Scout troop meetings as compared to events outside of the regular Girl Scout troop meeting such as outings, activities, camping and travel. Activities and travel outside of the regular troop meeting space require more adult supervision.

For Troop Meetings

The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:

- 12 Girl Scout Daisies
- 20 Girl Scout Brownies
- 25 Girl Scout Juniors
- 25 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 30 Girl Scout Seniors
- 30 Girl Scout Ambassadors

There should be one extra adult for every additional:

- 1–6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1–8 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1–10 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1–12 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1–15 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1–15 Girl Scout Ambassadors

For Outings, Activities, Travel and Camping

The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:

- 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 checkpoints 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, and this will be specified on the individual activity. 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.

Council Approval Requirement. At the top of each activity page you will see a field indicating whether your council's prior approval is required to perform the activity. Council prior approval is required for those activities that are rated as high risk by Girl Scouts' national insurance carriers. A council may approve an activity one time for the duration of the year or require more frequent approvals each time the activity takes place. This is a council decision as local norms and laws vary from state to state.

- **Required.** You must check in with your council for prior approval before taking girls.
- **Not Required.** You do not need to check in with your council for prior approval.
- **May Be Required.** Your council will determine if prior approval is required.

Activities Not Listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. 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*.

Remember to have a plan or process in place for addressing and handling requests for activities that that are not specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

- First, investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity and if the safety checkpoints can easily translate and apply to a covered activity.
- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any additional expert supervision or special certification for the instructor.
- Consult your council for clarification when needed and for approval before taking girls

Coronavirus Safety in Girl Scouts

The health and safety in Girl Scouts is always our highest priority. Returning from back to what is likely the new normal, after months of shelter in place in most communities, is a long awaited development that everyone in Girl Scouts will want to manage carefully. Recognize that health and safety guidance will continue to adjust as the situation and coronavirus risk changes over time and stay current with respect to all health precautions.

Also, the degree of coronavirus risk will vary from community to community or from state to state. In addition to the Center of Disease Control (CDC) guidance and the American Camp Association (ACA) guidance provided in Safety Activity Checkpoints, always become familiar with and practice the precautions as provided by your local health and governmental authorities. A good way to ensure you are doing this is to follow the practices as established in your local public schools.

Adults should be very mindful to abide by the guidance that has been issued by the [Center of Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) for integrating back into regular life, which is to practice the basics:

- Make sure girls and adults know and practice good hygiene by washing or disinfecting hands frequently
- Remind girls and adults about social distancing and when out in public and with each other
- If a girl or adult is exhibiting symptoms of being sick, as always, suggest that she return when she is no longer sick
- If a girl or adult knows that they have been in close and sustained contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, make sure that they comply with the 14 day period of not attending Girl Scout meetings or activities

Other topic specific links from the [Center of Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) that offer Links to these resources can be found here:

Another excellent source of guidance to follow when planning Girl Scout activities is the [COVID-19 Resource Center for Camps](#) which has been developed by the American Camp Association.

There is more on coronavirus safety under the [Camping](#) activity chapter.

Have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP).

The Girl Scout motto is "Be prepared.", and proper preparation is the key to success. An important thing to consider ahead of time, before taking girls out on a trip or to an activity, is an Emergency Action Plan. Volunteers can review their troop's Emergency Action Plan with girls as a learning experience for them, to the extent it makes sense according to their age and maturity.

For the adult volunteer, however, it is important to think about and document an emergency action plan in the event of an emergency or injury. Think through scenario of what can go wrong such as physical injury to a girl, severe weather, fire, intruder, missing girl or sudden illness. This simple step is invaluable. The key elements included in an effective risk management plan are:

- **Identify** – the type of emergency
 - Medical, a member becomes suddenly ill
 - Accidental injury, a member is hurt during an activity
 - Weather related crisis or challenging environment as with backpacking
 - Pay attention to weather so that the activity can be rescheduled if there is a severe storm or weather-related risk
 - Fire, become aware of all entrances and exits, and alternative routes out
 - Missing or lost member

- **Mitigate** – minimize the damage, injury or time element in seeking help. Make sure to know how far the activity is from the closest Emergency Medical Service (EMS).
 - If EMS is more than 30 minutes away, an Advanced First Aider should always be present with girls, preferably with Wilderness First aide (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) credentials.
 - If EMS is less than 30 minutes away, a General First Aider should be present with girls.
 - If more than 200 people at an event, an Advanced First Aider should be added to the General First Aider for every 200 girls.
 - Make sure that emergency response vehicles can access the area where you are practicing an activity with girls. If an emergency vehicle cannot access the site, notify either local EMS or parks services or other authorities ahead of time of where you will be, what you will be doing and how many members are with you.

- **Respond** – having confirmed the properly trained first aiders are present:
 - Immediately engage the first aider to the accident scene involving an illness or injury
 - Notify and coordinate the arrival of emergency medical services or law enforcement.
 - Contact all relevant parties:
 - Parents or legal guardians
 - Council staff
 - Law enforcement
 - Property owner or facility manager

Some key components of an effective Emergency Action Plan include:

- **Contact List.** A chart, table or simple list for all participants, including adults, with parent and legal guardian contact phone #s as well as key emergency phone #s, in addition to 911, such as the nearest hospital, medical center, law enforcement or emergency transportation
- **Roles and Responsibilities.** A pre-determined and established emergency role assignment, who does what. For example, the leader stays with girls or the injured girl(s) while the co-leader calls for help and coordinates the arrival of emergency help and notifies the parents, or vice versa. Agree on this ahead of time so that you are calm and prepared if the worst occurs. Also think through what you will do if the injured person is one of the adults.
- **Exit Strategy.** Become aware of all emergency exits and/or evacuate plans ahead of time. Identify and communicate alternative exit routes.
- **Evacuation Meeting Place.** Determine and communicate a pre-agreed meeting place should the group become separated or a girl should become lost.
- **Communication Method.** Have a method of emergency communication that works. If camping or backpacking, consider a whistle or horn as an emergency call out. Make sure to inform girls that this is the sound of an emergency. When girls hear this sound, they know to gather to designated spot. If there is cell service at the activity site, save all contact names and numbers, including those for the appropriate authorities, in your mobile phones ahead of time before the activity takes place.

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. 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.

Review Safety Checkpoints with Instructors. These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, camp or your council as appropriate to determine if the safety checkpoints can be complied with. Take any questions or issues with safety compliance to your council for guidance and next steps.

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 should be saved to an adult's mobile phone on the trip and be provided to the contact person at home.

Safety Gear. Safety gear includes clothing and equipment girls will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary to ensure safety. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is not specifically listed here. If the facility offers helmets, always accept the use of helmets for girls.

Required Gear. Required gear simply means the activity-specific gear that girls must have to participate in the activity. For example, skiing – a girl will need to bring or rent skis and poles.

Additional Gear. Additional gear may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. These are items that often make the experience with girls 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 is 18, qualified lifeguards 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 and see if they use an approved vendor list. 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. Registered members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities including trips that involve two (or less) overnight stays. The Basic Plan does not cover trips of more than two overnight stays.

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

So, you will *need to purchase extra activity accident insurance* for outings and events that:

- Involve three or more overnight stays
- 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.

Leave No Trace. 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 and where 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.

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, make contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Reschedule 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 do 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. Always use the buddy system with all ages of girls, 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.

Permission Slips.

Annual permission slips are parental or legal guardian consent forms for girls’ attendance at regular troop meetings throughout the year. If annual permissions are practiced in your council, in addition to the specific activity permission slips, volunteers should keep copies for all their girls.

Day trips and activities – It is imperative to secure a signed permission slip from a girl’s parent or guardian for any trip or special activity outside the troop meeting space. This applies to all girls under the age of 18. Always keep a copy of these permissions.

In most cases, one parental consent or one legal guardian is legally acceptable. However, there may be circumstances regarding a custody situation or a standard in your council where dual parental consent is required. For international trips, written consent is generally required from both parents, care givers or legal

guardians. If there is a question about single versus dual parental consent, please consult your council and they can consult local or state laws for specific local guidance.

Overnight Trips. Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in the planning so they know what to expect. On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Always support and maintain an all-girl atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. Men should not be in situation to walk through girls' sleeping quarters for entrance, exit or to access restrooms. In some circumstances, such as a museum or mall overnight with hundreds of girls, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, men do not supervise girls in the sleeping area of the event and the adult volunteer-to-girl ratio is adjusted accordingly.

An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also please make note of the following:

- Each participant has her own bed.
- Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
- Girls and adults do not share a bed; however, some councils make exceptions for mothers and daughters.
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (tent, cabin, or designated area) with the girls, but if an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be *two unrelated adult females* present.

Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. See the [Travel/Trip](#) chapter for specific safety checkpoints when utilizing Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. There are specific steps that must be followed when utilizing these privately owned property rentals, steps that are not necessarily taken with every traditional commercially owned and operated property such as hotels.

Modeling the Right Behavior. Adult volunteers should adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law. When spending time with girls or representing Girl Scouts do not consume alcohol, smoke, vape or use foul language. Always obey the law, for example, by not talking on a phone or texting while driving.

Drugs and alcohol. Volunteers and adults may not purchase, consume, possess or be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs/substances, or prescription or over-the-counter medications which impair performance or judgment while participating in Girl Scout sanctioned activities, in the presence of girls, while conducting Girl Scout business, or in Girl Scout branded clothing. Alcohol or any substance which may impair one's judgment must never be used by volunteers, adult members, or any other adult in the presence of a girl member, immediately prior to, or during a girl member activity. Alcoholic beverages may be served to/consumed by adults of legal age at Girl Scout events when girls are not present only when previously approved by the Council Board of Directors or Chief Executive Officer.

Firearms. Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited at any Girl Scout activity and on Girl Scout-owned or leased property except when in the possession of a sworn officer of the law, council-authorized property staff, a certified instructor, licensed wildlife control personnel, and/or trained adult while conducting a Council-approved Girl Scout program activity. Volunteers and adults do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls, unless given special permission by your council for target sport activities.

Online Safety. Instruct girls never to put their full names, location 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 location or contact information. Teach girls the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge and ask them to read, understand, discuss and commit to following 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 raise money for other organizations, 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.

Volunteer Essentials. A key resource for Volunteers in Girl Scouting is Volunteer Essentials. While Safety Activity Checkpoints focuses on safety guidance and parameters, Volunteer Essentials will address an array of topics such as Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and Leader’s Guide to Success. All Girl Scout Volunteers are instructed to review, understand and practice the principles and standards in both Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

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

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

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

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Untethered hot-air ballooning
- Hunting
- Snowmobiling
- Riding a motorbike
- Riding electric Scooters
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting or 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.

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. Insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities from a claims perspective view them as a high safety risk, meaning they see frequent and/or severe accidents associated with these sports.

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.

Outdoor Trampolines. Outdoor trampolines, particularly those with stilted metal frames, pose a high risk of injury. 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 high in the case of children 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 recommended for children under six years old. See for reference: [AAOS](#)

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 Skis, Motor Bikes, ATVs, Snow Mobiles and Electric Scooters. Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding snow mobiles, ATVs and electronic scooters 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.

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

First Aid

Make sure at least one adult member who is certified in first aid / CPR accompanies the troop / group on activities.

What To Do If There Is An Accident

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the injured person. Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of council staff, parents/guardians and emergency services such as the police, fire department or hospital. Check with your council for emergency contact information and keep you Emergency Action Plan current with the appropriate contacts.

Your council may either have specific emergency contact information or a 24- hour emergency number or both. You should reach out to them for assistance. If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents. You will need the exact time and location of the incident, a description of the incident and also the names of the people involved and any witnesses. After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will contact parents/guardians, as appropriate. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with respect to notifying parents or legal guardians. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, the police must be immediately notified. A responsible volunteer must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, your council and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.

When Someone Needs Emergency Care

Girls need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to volunteers any accidents, illnesses or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. You can help girls by keeping in mind the following:

- Know what to report.
- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.
- Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (e.g. tornadoes, hurricanes and lightning). Please consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons and building-security issues. Every girl and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
- Assemble a well-stocked first aid kit that is always accessible. First aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer first aid, if appropriately trained.

First Aid/CPR

For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first aid/CPR-certified. You can take advantage of first aid/ CPR training offered by organizations such as:

- American Red Cross
- National Safety Council
- EMP America
- American Heart Association

- American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI)
- Medic
- Other sponsoring organizations approved by your council.

Caution: Internet first aid / CPR training that is offered online may be necessary due to COVID-19 restrictions. Whenever in person training is safely authorized in your jurisdiction, opt for in-person training for in-person opportunities to practice and receive feedback on life saving technique. If taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or taking any course that has online components, get approval from your support team or council prior to enrolling in the course to ensure you are using a council approved vendor and that an online training is acceptable.

First-Aider

General First Aider. A general first-aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout approved first aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for adult and pediatric CPR, first aid, and AED as well as AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training that, minimally, includes face to face, hands-on skills check for:

- Checking a conscious victim
- Checking an unconscious victim
- Adult & Pediatric CPR
- Adult & Pediatric Conscious choking
- Controlling bleeding
- Sudden illness

If, through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association, you have a chance to be fully trained in first aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly.

Advanced First Aider. An advanced first aider is an adult with general first aid certification with additional health, safety or emergency response expertise such as, for example, a physician; physician’s assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; wilderness training, certified lifeguard or emergency medical technician(EMT).

The Safety Activity Checkpoints always tell you when a first-aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a first-aider and the qualifications they need to have are based on the remoteness and scope of the activity. For example, if you take a two-mile hike in an area that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is no more than 30 minutes away at all times the first-aider will not need to have knowledge of wilderness first aid. If, on the other hand, you take the same two-mile hike in a more remote area with no cell phone service and where EMS is more than 30 minutes away, the advanced first-aider must have knowledge of wilderness first aid (see the chart below).

Access to EMS Minimum Level of First Aid Required	Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	General First Aid
More than 30 minutes	Advanced First Aid or Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

First-Aid Kit

Make sure a general first aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its Anatomy of a First Aid Kit (note that the Red Cross's suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to give to girls without direct parent/guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites and the like.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain your council and emergency telephone numbers (which you can get from your council contact). Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms and health histories may also be included.

Overall Health, Well Being and Inclusivity

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, controlled 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. Therefore, it is best to obtain local state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance. 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 a girl's non-immunization with other troop parents, contact your local Girl Scout council for legal guidance as privacy laws may apply. Absent state laws that speak directly to vaccines and communicating non-immunization with parents of youth groups, the guidance is to follow the standard and protocol as it pertains to school attendance.

Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme's 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, guardians and girls of this risk and the safety precautions they should take. The understanding that your troop or council cannot be held responsible for tick bites which 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 Up To Date](#)

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](#).

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-agreement and coaching girls to honor this agreement. Team agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse feelings and opinions, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying or clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive, respectful and helpful communication with others.

Physical or Sexual Abuse. Physical, verbal or sexual abuse of girls is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication such as text messaging and sexual activity of any kind with girl members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate council staff immediately. Volunteers are responsible for following their council's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal or sexual abuse with respect to girls.

Child Abuse. All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have specific laws which identify persons who are required to report suspected child abuse to an appropriate agency. Therefore, if you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, whether inside or outside of Girl Scouting, always notify your council immediately and follow your council's guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state.

For additional information please check the following resources:

- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: [Child Welfare](#)
- How to Report Suspected Child Maltreatment: [Reporting Abuse](#)
- Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect: [Mandatory Reporters](#)

Mental Health and Safety. As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young girls, and similar to child abuse, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies such as self-harm. Self-harm can take a physical form such as cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling or poisoning or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member immediately and follow your council guidelines with respect to next steps.

Equal Treatment. Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity 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.

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](#). Whenever possible, the individual activity chapter will provide resources specific to that sport or activity so always check when planning to include a girl with a disability, our goal is to include all girls with a desire to participate.

Transporting Girls

How parents decide to transport girls between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities, in which a group will be transported in privately-owned vehicles, arrange qualified drivers:

- Every driver must be a registered, background-checked member (approved volunteer) at least 21 years old, and have a good driving record, (more specific, without not driving restrictions) a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle. Troop drivers work directly with the troop leader to coordinate troop transportation when needed. Troop drivers work with a group of girls and mentor them as they make new friends and build courage, confidence, and character to make the world a better place.
- Girls never drive other girls during activities or field trips.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, registered background checked members (approved adult volunteers) in the vehicle, one of whom is female.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, registered background checked members (approved adult volunteers), one of whom is female.

Plan for safe driving:

- Review and implement the standards in the Checklist for Drivers, below.
- Share the Checklist for Drivers with all drivers, in advance.
- Build possible delays into your schedule. Allowing time for traffic or other delays will help prevent urgency and stress, which can be dangerous when driving.
- Provide directions for each vehicle.
- For driving trips of more than a few hours, plan a stop where all cars can gather up. This will avoid having drivers follow too closely, or worry about being separated from the group.
- Anticipate stops every couple of hours, for drivers to rest and refresh. Let drivers know they can stop more often, if needed.
- Arrange for relief drivers if trips will last 6 hours or more.
- In each vehicle, there should be a first aid kit, and the permission and health history forms for each person in that car.

When borrowing or renting vehicles, drivers may rent cars or minivans in their own names, without council staff signature. Make sure the car is adequately insured; consult the driver's auto insurance company. Know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the vehicle. Be sure the vehicle is used only for Girl Scout purposes, as non-related use can compromise coverage.

Read rental agreements to be familiar with the terms of the agreement, to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70.

Chartered vehicles—such as buses—are contracted, usually with the driver or operator, for a group's exclusive use. Volunteers may not sign contracts for charters, even if there is no cost. Contact the council office at 304-345-7722 to request approval and signature.

Taxis and ride-sharing services, including Uber and Lyft, may be used with these guidelines:

- An adult rides in each vehicle with girls when multiple vehicles are being used.
- Wait for your ride in a safe place. For taxis, when possible, call (or ask your hotel to call), rather than hailing from the street. Use a taxi stand at airports. Stand away from traffic while waiting.
- For taxis: Check that the taxi is appropriately marked.
- For ride-sharing services:

- Check that the vehicle's license plate, make and model match what is shown in the app.
- Compare the app's photo with the driver. Ask for their name and be sure it matches the app.
- Ask, "who are you here to pick up?" They should have your first name, but not other info about you.
- If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not get in the vehicle. If you become uncomfortable, end the ride. Report your experience to the taxi service or ride-sharing app.
- Send your in-town contact the name of the driver and your destination. Most apps have a sharing feature for this purpose.
- Don't share information about the group or where you are staying to any stranger.
- Each passenger must wear a seat belt. Enter and exit curbside.
- In foreign countries, consult a local expert about how to best call for taxis or rides. Reputable practices vary.

Recreational vehicles, campers, and trailers—whether privately-owned or rented—may be used if the driver has the appropriate training and license for the vehicle. Passengers must use seat belts when the vehicle is in motion, and may not ride in a trailer or in the bed of a truck.

Vans up to 15 passengers may be driven if:

- The van was built in 2013 or later
- Insurance is valid. Check with the auto insurance company to confirm.
- All other safety measures are in place; see the Checklist for Drivers, below.
- No gear is loaded on top or in the back of the van.
- The driver has the appropriate license in the state(s) where the van will be driven. This type of van may need a commercial driver's license.

Commercial and common-carrier transportation is available to the general public. They include buses, trains, airlines, ferries, and similar modes of transportation. In the United States, these are regulated and can be considered safe. Girls can compare fares and schedules and make decisions with adult support.

When traveling internationally, consider the transportation options available in the host country and determine safety and accessibility specific to the location.

Checklist for Drivers:

When driving a car, RV or camper, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are volunteers at least 21 years old
- Girls should not transport other girls.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first-aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns and fluid levels before each trip, and recheck them periodically on long trips.
- Load gear appropriately. Heavy objects and luggage can affect vehicle stability and handling. Avoid overloading, especially on the top or back of any vehicle.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date including, but not limited to: your driver's license; vehicle registration; any state or local inspections; and insurance coverage.
- Wear seat belts and insist that all passengers do the same. Each person must have their own, fixed seatbelt.
- Girls under 12 must ride in the back seats. Use car seats and boosters as required in your state.
- Follow best driving safety practices:
 - Keep at least a two-car-length distance between you and the car ahead of you
 - Do not talk or text on a cell phone or other device
 - Do not use ear buds or headphones
 - Turn your lights on when your windshield wipers are on
- Know what to do in case of breakdown or accident. It's smart to have reflectors, a flashlight, a few tools

and a good spare tire.

- Take time to familiarize yourself with any new or rented vehicle.
- Take a break when you need it. The volunteer in charge of your trip will plan occasional stops, but it's ok to pull over to a safe place whenever you are too tired to continue. Relief drivers are planned for long drives.
- Do NOT drive when you are tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy.

Check with your council for any other specific guidelines or requirements they have.

Troop Meeting Space

Always choose a safe meeting space. Careful considerations should be used to find appropriate facilities for the age of the girls to be served and the activities to be conducted. A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all girls. You might consider using meeting rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places girls enjoy spending time.

Here are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

- **Accessibility:** Be sure the space can accommodate girls with disabilities, as well as parents with disabilities who may come to meetings.
- **Allergen-free:** Ensure that pet dander, smoke, and other common allergens won't bother susceptible girls during meetings.
- **Availability:** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time you want to meet.
- **Communication-friendly:** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space or there is a land line for emergencies. Internet accessibility is also helpful.
- **Cost:** The space should be free to use. However, you may wish to develop a partnership to provide service or offer a donation toward maintenance or utilities.
- **Facilities:** Sanitary and accessible toilets are critical.
- **Resources:** Determine what types of furnishings come with the room and ensure that the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby or closet of some sort, where you can store supplies.
- **Safety:** Ensure that the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on your location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also be sure a first-aid equipment, smoke detectors and fire extinguisher are on hand.
- **Size:** Make sure the space is large enough accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.

Can we meet in a private home? It is not recommended to hold troop meetings in a private home. If you are considering meeting in a private home, please check with your council to make sure it is permitted based on council policy. In addition to the above, please remember to ensure these standards:

- The private home must be the home of a registered, council approved Volunteer.
- Girls may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender lives.
- Some councils may require membership and background checks for all adults living in the home.
- The troop needs to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Homeowners should consider any personal insurance implications. The Homeowner should ask their personal Homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with troop meetings at the home. Also, volunteers should confirm with the council that troop meetings in the home are covered by council's liability insurance carrier.
- Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space. Medication, cleaning products, or any poisonous substance must be stored in a secure space out of sight, preferably locked.



Virtual Troop Meetings

Council Approval: May Be Required

Activity Permitted for: D, B, J, C, S, A

Includes:

- About Virtual Troop Meetings
- Tips for a successful Troop Meeting
- Privacy and Safety

About Virtual Troop Meetings

Holding virtual troop meetings creates an array of new challenges and exciting opportunities to deliver a powerful Girl Scout experience into the lives of girls. As with all the special experiences that Girl Scouts offers, meeting virtually creates not only the ability for girls to get comfortable and tech savvy but to gain character, confidence and courage by expressing themselves and learning leadership skills to take them into the virtual world.

There are so many ways to encourage girls to learn and grow and experience life virtually. For every adventure that can be done in-person, there is another that can be shared and taught and experienced virtually. Adult volunteers will find it exciting and challenging to bring new experiences to girls through video troop meetings. Whether it be community service projects, outdoor adventures, cookie sales, badge work or STEM – there is a way for Girl Scouts to meet girls where they are and keep them connected.

Tips for a Successful Troop Meeting

You may have girls in your troop or group who are facing unique issues due to living in remote areas without internet access, or with limited access to technology, or other economic circumstances. Make certain you are able to accommodate and include all girls, regardless of their issues, before moving forward with plans to go virtual.

Ensure that your troop utilizes a video conferencing service that is accessible on all types of devices. For example, you may need to stay away from Face Time because not everyone has an Apple brand phone (Face Time is only available on IOS). Also, the video program should work the same on a cell phone as it does on a laptop or tablet considering that girls may or may not have the same devices.

You may wish to prepare some fun and respectful protocols for girls to agree upon for their virtual meeting, and this is encouraged. For example, to speak in turn and not speak over each other. Think through your meeting and make some notes for the agenda with what you aim to accomplish during the time, a virtual meeting may flow differently than an in-person meeting.

Consider if your girls would like to dress a certain way to encourage and strengthen their sense of belonging. Some troops wear uniforms to their meetings and others may not. You may want to suggest having girls wear their vests for the virtual meeting to reinforce their camaraderie or have the girls vote on how they would like to show their Girl Scout pride when meeting online.

Consider the grade level and age groups of the girls when planning virtual meetings. Be mindful of the meeting time(s) that are set or any other factors that may differentiate the context of a virtual meeting between younger and older girls.

Privacy and Safety

As with all aspects of technology, it is important to keep in mind that virtual troop meetings can be the target of unwanted intruders. This can mean either directly by interrupting or lurking in a live virtual meeting or, more covertly, using data behind the scenes in a manner that has not been authorized or made transparent. Do all that is possible to learn about the platforms being used to host virtual troop meetings. Choose platforms that are publicly recognized, reported about by others as favorable or transparent about the issues they may have experienced and the steps a company may be taking to protect users. Become knowledgeable about the terms of use and do not choose a company that you are unsure about, for any reason, without consulting your council for advice.

It is imperative to personally protect both adult volunteers and girls while holding virtual meetings and communications online. This can mean keeping personal background space invisible or obscured, keeping photos and images of girls secured from public viewing, keeping meeting lines set to private and making sure to protect personal email addresses or passwords and other situations that could compromise girl privacy or safety. Operate in a manner and with the knowledge that anything recorded or photographed or “saved” to a particular site may be misused in the future and stay away from that sort of situation by making educated choices. There is more on specific safety steps to follow below under Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Learn More:

There are many choices when it comes to free video conferencing services and countless skills one can learn online ranging from protecting your troop meeting to creating fun ways to interact with girls. Explore blogs and news articles to stay current and to enable you to make the best and safest selections for your virtual troop meetings. If you are unsure about something, always consult your council. Some examples are below:

- [Protect Your Zoom Meeting from Hackers](#)
- [10 Best Video Conferencing Tools to Choose From](#)
- [Tips for Chatting with Young Children Online](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Hosting or leading virtual meetings provides a unique opportunity to increase inclusion in new ways. Communicate with girls with disabilities and their caregivers on how to best manage their participation in virtual meetings. Once underway, virtual meetings can provide a new way for all girls to have a voice and input in the meeting, potentially drawing in those girls who are shy or hesitant or less apt to either attend in person or speak up in a face-to-face meeting. Some girls may enjoy the chat feature, for example, where they can become more comfortable expressing themselves.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Have girls to take the [Internet Safety Pledge](#) to teach, encourage and support web safety and respectful “net-iquette” while on line. Review the Computer and Internet Use safety activity checkpoints [Computer and Internet Use](#) with girls.

Make sure that the adult volunteer troop leader(s) are still co-leading the virtual meeting and are the person(s) initiating and doing the inviting to the virtual troop meeting. This is especially important for girls under the age of 13 however should be practiced always, with all girls in Girl Scouts.

Be sure to research the video conference service prior to selecting and implementing an appropriate video conference service provider as a virtual troop meeting host. Be sure use to read and understand the terms of use of the selected platform. Also learn about the privacy guidelines and precautions that are available concerning the platform prior to implementing your virtual troop meeting.

Make sure the virtual lines are set to private so that only invitees can attend (not a public meeting space). Do not share signup links so that anyone can join. Instead, invite people individually.

Make sure that there is nothing on the virtual stream that identifies a girl or volunteer personally or reveals a personal address, home address, or a person's physical location. To further protect privacy of personal space, there is typically an option to obscure the background in the room, if that is helpful. Girls can also pick fun nicknames to identify themselves on the meeting attendee list or use their first name only. Let girls know about these options so that they can learn about them.

Continue to adhere to the two unrelated adult volunteer rule when gathering with girls virtually, whenever possible. It's important that girls understand they are in the same safe Girl Scout space as they are with in-person meetings. They are cared for and they still have two dedicated unrelated adults who they can count on.

Maintain control of images shared. Set meeting controls so that you can mute or disable screen sharing by any participant. Make sure your co-leader knows how to do the same. If an unauthorized person enters your meeting space, take action to remove them immediately.

Do not record troop meetings and ask that girls do not record troop meetings. Some virtual meeting platforms offer a consent option for all participating members prior to activating the recording feature; however, the majority of girls are minors and are not of the age to legally consent, so recording of regular recurring troop meetings is not permitted. If girls want to prepare a special recording session, make sure to obtain permission slips from each girl's legal guardian, as with any special activity, as well as council staff approval to record the session. Also please be aware that some virtual meeting platforms have the capability to save, store, and can potentially re-use, recordings on their technology.

Make sure that girls know that screen shots taken of the group, particularly when all the girls involved are not aware that it is happening, are strongly discouraged. Girls love to take pictures and share them on social media. When done in the right manner, this is a fun and safe thing to do. However, parents, guardians and caregivers have their own feelings and personal rules in their homes about photographs and social media, particularly with younger girls, so it's very important to be respectful of that. Also similar to recording meetings, note that some virtual meeting applications will save, and can potentially re-use, photographs taken on their technology.

When sharing any material developed by a third party, be mindful that third party products and services may have their own terms of use and privacy policy. The user should always read through, understand abide by third party terms of use. Be sure that any girl emails are not available to anyone but the Troop leader. It is important to protect against unauthorized, un-cleared individuals having access to a girl's email or be able to contact her outside of the meeting in any manner.

Keep up with developments on online meeting safety.



Computer and Internet Use

Council Approval: Not Required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Computer and Internet Use

Girl Scouts use the internet for a variety of reasons such 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.
- **Sales.** Participate in online Scout product sales programs

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 conduct money-earning activities online with one exception: The GSUSA approved product sales programs. For more information, please see the safety activity checkpoints for [Cookie and 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 chapter. 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 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 can 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.

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 or hack 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](#).

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.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) ahead of time before taking girls out for this activity. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, or sudden illness.

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 or vehicle pulling the hay wagon 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 21 years of age. Legally adult age is 18, however based on the experience and maturity level needed for this activity, 21 years of age is required in order to provide enough years of experience controlling the vehicle while hauling a trailer with child passengers.

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 with no leaning over the edges, and legs and arms do not hang over the trailer. Girls are to remain securely seated.

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

Make sure the farm has adequate commercial insurance that covers the hayrides for hire in the amount of no less than one million dollars Auto Liability insurance.



Parades and Other Large Gatherings

Council Approval Required: Not Required

Activity Permitted for: D, B, J, C, S, A

About Parades

Whether you're participating in a parade or planning a Girl Scout event, series, or other large group gathering, it's important to represent Girl Scouts in the best possible way and encourage girls to plan the festivities.

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

Gear for Parades and Other Large Group Gatherings

- Girl Scout uniform, pin, or some other means of group identification
- Comfortable walking shoes

Recommended Gear

- Sunscreen (SPF of at least 15) and lip balm
- Sunglasses
- Reusable water bottle and water for filling bottles

Safety Activity Checkpoints

- **Emergency Action Plan (EAP).** Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) ahead of time before taking girls out for this activity. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, or sudden illness.
- **Consider the following:**
 - Need, interest and readiness of the girls
 - The sponsor of the event or activity
 - The needs of the community to be served
 - Scheduling issues
 - GSUSA and council guidelines on fund-raising, endorsements, collaborating with other organizations and maintaining nonprofit status.
- **Respect parade and large-group gathering standards.** Local regulations and permit procedures are observed for public gatherings, facility use, food handling, certificates of insurance and sales or excise tax. Guidelines for personal protection are observed. Local authorities are contacted for safety and security suggestions and assistance applicable to the parade or event. For safety reasons, name tags or other personal identification are not worn in public places. GSUSA and council guidelines on publicity, photo releases, and interviews are observed.

- **Select a safe location.** The location for any community event, large group gathering, or parade is inspected in advance, with consideration for the following, as appropriate:
 - Accessibility to the group and to the public
 - Suitability to event size, age groups, and kinds of activities
 - Parking availability
 - Availability of restrooms
 - Security arrangements, including availability of police protection
 - Lighting for evening and indoor events
 - Vulnerability to inclement weather
 - Proximity to medical facilities
 - Fire safety, which includes: not exceeding the occupancy limits for indoor activities or events; sufficient emergency exits, which are well marked and operational; and having an emergency evacuation plan in place.
 - A food-preparation area used for large groups of people meets state and local standards, and includes sufficient potable water and restrooms for participants.
 - Provisions are made for garbage removal and site cleanup.
- **Make appropriate plans for parade floats.** Floats drawn by trucks and automobiles must be covered by automobile insurance in the name of the vehicle owners. Float construction is safe, using non-toxic or flame retardant materials, and secured to the body of the float and the vehicle. Floats are equipped with portable ABC fire extinguishers.
- Adults and girls pick a place to meet in case of separation from the supervising adult or the group.
- No leaning over the edges and legs and arms do not hang outside of the float. When sitting on a moving float, girls are to remain securely seated with no legs dangling over the side.
- Riders on floats have secure seating, or a secure handhold or safety harness is used if standing. Floats are not overcrowded. Participants do not walk close to moving floats. An adult accompanies girls on any moving float.
- Any coupling of a trailer to a vehicle is appropriate to the load and has a safety chain.
- Nothing is distributed to onlookers from a moving vehicle or a float.
- **Prepare for emergencies.** 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. 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 and plan for emergency medical routes, consider heavily trafficked routes depending on the day and time.
- **Take safety precautions.** Instruction is given on safe pedestrian practices, when applicable. Adults know girls' location at all times. Advance arrangements are made for picking up the girls after the event and parents and girls understand the arrangements.



Travel / Trips

Council Approval: Required for overnight trips

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

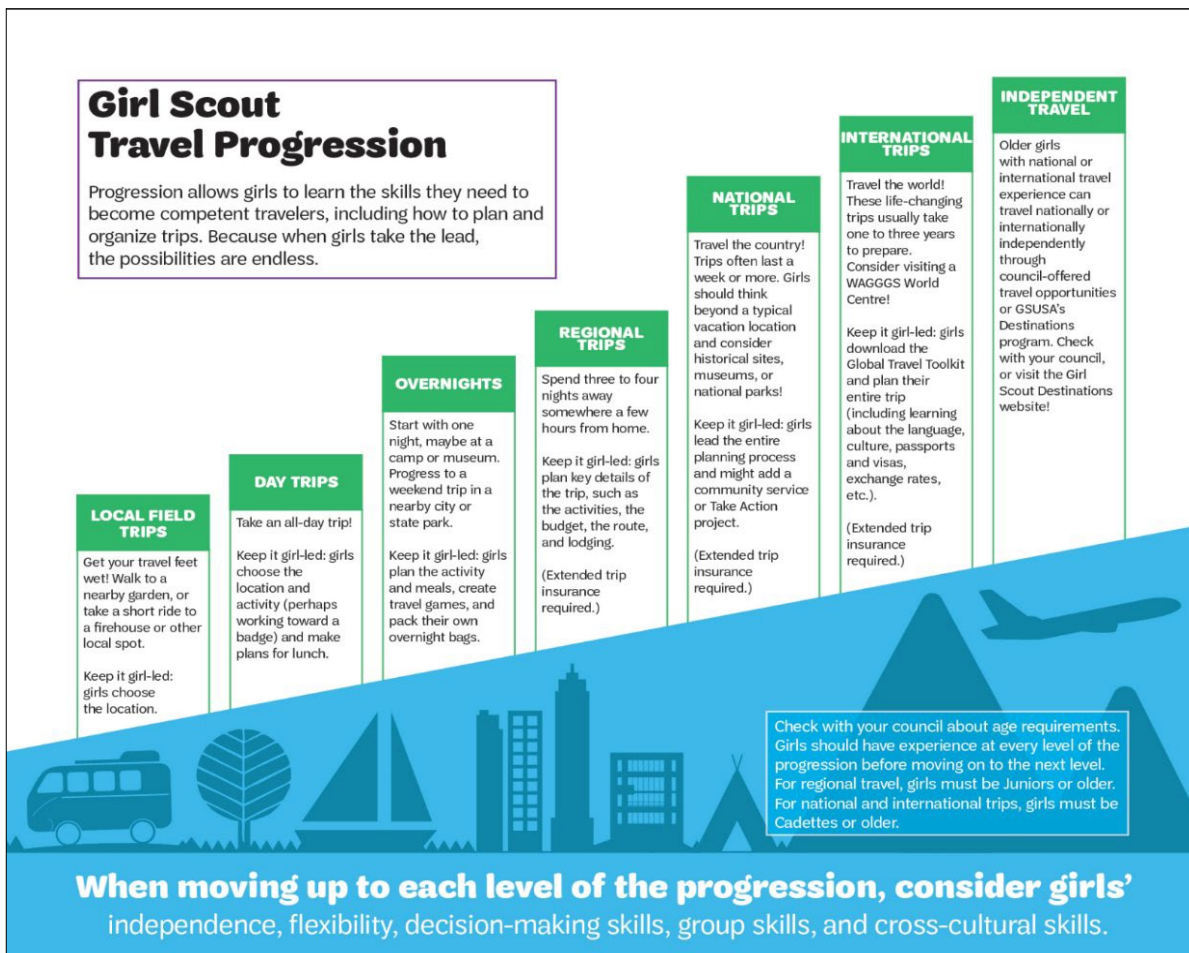
Some of the most memorable moments in a Girl Scout's life happen while taking trips. Travel offers a wealth of opportunities for girls to develop leadership, confidence, and practical life skills. The following information can help you and girls prepare for local, regional, or international travel.

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 are working on. For Seniors or Ambassadors, it might mean whitewater rafting in Costa Rica or exploring the Our Chalet World Center in Switzerland. Please see the [Girl Scout Guide to U.S. Travel](#).

Although many troops decide to travel together, Girl Scouts 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 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 recommended progression of trips and travel for Girl Scouts are:



Local Field Trips (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. Keep it girl-led: girls can choose the location!

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. Keep it girl-led: girls can choose the location and an activity (maybe a badge activity?) and help make plans for lunch.

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 & Weekend 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. Keep it girl-led: girls plan the activity and meals, create travel games, and pack their own bags.

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.

Regional 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. Keep it girl-led: girls plan key details of the trip such as activities, the budget, the route, and lodging.

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. Keep it girl-led: girls lead the entire planning process and might plan to add a community service or Take Action project.

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. Keep it girl-led: girls download the [Global Travel Toolkit](#), and plan their entire trip – including learning about language, culture, passports & visas, exchange rates, etc.

Independent Travel (Cadettes and older): Older girls who already have national or international travel experience can travel independently through council-offered travel opportunities or GSUSA's Destinations program. For opportunities, check with your council and visit the [Destinations website](#).

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](#)
- [Girl Scout Guide to U.S. Travel](#)
- [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](#)
- [Girl Scout Global Travel Toolkit](#)

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

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) ahead of time before taking girls out for this activity. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl or adult, missing girl, or sudden illness.

Plan Transportation in Advance. When planning transportation, keep in mind that large 15-passenger vans had been flagged as unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and should therefore be avoided. If the van is being used professionally by a commercial shuttle service, this is acceptable. For chartered buses or rented vehicles always verify safety credentials and commercial driving licenses, check the availability of seatbelts and request a certificate of insurance showing a minimum of one million dollars Auto Liability insurance.

Choose accommodations wisely. Girl Scout groups may stay in a variety of overnight accommodations. Evaluate all options with a view to safety, cost, amenities, distance to planned sights or transportation, parking, and insurance. Consider:

- Girl Scout [camps](#) and facilities, or [WAGGGS World Centers](#).
- National, state, or local campgrounds, many of which offer cabins to rent. Try [reserveamerica.com](#).

- Hostels. [HI USA](#) offers Girl Scout-ready hostels in the U.S.
- Hotels. Consider suites and adjoining rooms to enhance supervision.

Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway. These are permitted however because these are privately owned properties, it can be difficult to qualify safety and credibility. For these reasons, additional steps for Airbnb, VRBO and Homeaway are required. Confirm the following ahead of time:

- The rental is for exclusive use of the home. No other renters will have access to the home during the rental period.
- The space has smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers (these are noted as amenities on booking sites).
- The home and host have substantial, positive visitor reviews. Don't book places with negative, few or no reviews. Look for superhost status on Airbnb.
- The liability insurance from the host covers premises for commercial use, with a minimum of one million dollars General Liability insurance.
- Check the host's profile or identity verification. You may be asked to do the same, as a renter.
- The local host or manager contact info is available for immediate needs. Share this information with an in-town contact (a person not on the trip).
- Check state laws to see if Airbnb, VRBO and Homeaway are mandated to meet hotel laws and standards so that you know there is an extra layer of protection.

Check accommodations on arrival. No matter what housing you book, inspect premises with the group immediately on arrival. Let the front desk or host know if you find any deficiencies.

Maintain a budget margin so that you can move to another location if you find a property unsafe. Here are several points to check upon arrival:

- All points of entry are secure and lockable.
- Stairs or fire escapes are identified and shown to girls
- Evacuation routes are clear and known to all.
- Basic safety systems are in place (as appropriate to the building and jurisdiction such as a fire extinguisher and smoke alarm).
- Location of local emergency services and how to reach them.
- Confirm any communication services (mobile carrier, wifi) are running and reliable.

Sleeping Arrangements

On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Always support and maintain an all-girl atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use.

Always avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also please note the following:

- Each participant has her own bed. Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
- Girls and adults do not share a bed; however, some councils make exceptions for mothers and daughters.

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.

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.

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.

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:

- First aid
- 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

Prepare a pre-trip orientation. Make sure girls have a detailed itinerary, but do not post the itinerary on a publicly accessible website where others may be able to see it. Ensure that girl and adult participants, and girls' parents, receive information about health, first aid and emergency procedures, plans for transportation and any geographic detail such as the terrain or environment. Also share basic operational procedures (e.g. using the buddy system at all times) and behavior expectations. You may want to work with your girls to create a group behavior contract, and have girls sign it. Another suggestion is to create a personal emergency action plan that each girl can write out herself and keep with her. Make sure to discuss topics like:

- Who her buddy is—and how the buddy system works

- What to do if she is separated from the group, whether by accident or due to a crime
- What to do if she loses something significant: money, passport, luggage
- What to do if emergency help is needed
- How to perform basic first aid procedures
- How to deal with a large crowd, if applicable
- What positive behaviors are expected of her and the consequences to self or others by not living up to those behaviors