

Camping: Safety Activity Checkpoints



Camping, a great Girl Scout tradition, is one of the very first activities that Girl Scouts' founder Juliette Gordon Low encouraged for girls. The key to an enjoyable camping experience is being prepared by packing just enough gear, supplies, and clothing appropriate for the weather, sleeping situation, and cooking. Girl Scouts advocate for the [Leave No Trace](#) method of camping, which involves leaving a campground the way it exists in nature, free of garbage and human impact. *For travel camping, where you camp as you travel, note the additional safety precautions listed.*

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

Camping with Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies: A Daisy troop may participate in an occasional overnight camping experience. Daisies who have completed kindergarten may independently participate at day camp and in resident camp experiences lasting up to three nights. Daisies who have completed first grade may independently participate in resident camp experiences lasting four or more nights. Travel camping is not recommended for Girl Scouts Daisies and Brownies. Know where to camp—at Girl Scout camps, public, private, state, and national parks and sites deemed appropriate by local and state authorities. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions and for information on using a non-council-owned site. Search for campground locations at [Reserve America](#).

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

Required Camping Gear

- Clothing and rain jacket or poncho that can be layered and is appropriate for the weather
- Socks with sturdy shoes, hiking boots, or sneakers (no sandals, clogs, flip-flops, or bare feet)
- Sleeping bag (rated for the anticipated temperature)
- Towels and basic personal hygiene supplies (shampoo, soap, comb, and so on)
- Flashlight and other battery-powered lights (no candles, kerosene lamps, portable cook stoves, heaters, or other open-flame devices are used inside tents)
- First-aid kit

Recommended Camping Gear

- Insect repellent
- Waterproof sunscreen (SPF of at least 15), reapply every two hours.
- Hat or bandana
- Hat, gloves, and thermal underwear for cool temperature
- Flame-resistant tents or tarp (no plastic tents)
- Compass and map or map and global positioning system (GPS)
- Mosquito netting where necessary
- Cooking supplies (pots, pans, utensils, mess kit and dunk bag, and so on)
- Cooler for food storage
- Portable cook stoves and fuel whenever possible (to reduce the use of firewood)
- Lantern fueled by propane, butane, kerosene, or gas (for outdoor use)
- Water purification kit

Prepare for Camping

- Communicate with council and parents.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Girls plan the activity.** Again, see the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints. In addition, keeping their program-level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activities, planning routes, menus, and rules for group living.
- Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases from extremes of temperature, such as heat exhaustion, heat stroke, frostbite, cold exposure, and hypothermia, as well as sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first-aid training. When possible a vehicle is available or an ambulance is on call at all times to transport an injured or sick person. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.
- Verify leader/instructor knowledge, experience, judgment, and maturity.** Ensure that at least one adult is trained or possesses knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas:
 - Outdoor program activities and leadership
 - 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
 - Outdoor cooking (if doing so)
 - For travel camping ensure that at least two adults are additionally trained or have documented experience, in the following areas:
 - Participation in similar trips
 - Familiarity with the area in which the trip is conducted
 - Physical fitness and skills necessary to support the group
 - Mode of transportation
 - Site orientation
 - Emergency procedures
 - Minor maintenance for equipment and vehicles, as appropriate
- Arrange for transportation and adult supervision. See the Introduction to Safety Activity

Checkpoints for the recommended adult-to-girl ratios. In addition, see “Camping with Girl Scout Daisies” in this checkpoint’s introduction for additional information.

- Compile key contacts. See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints. In addition, if camping in backcountry or traveling while camping, girls and adult participants carry a card and wear an identifying bracelet or similar device that contains name, council name, and emergency contact phone number.
- If travel camping (using campsites as a means of accommodations),*verify the following adult certifications and standards:

- For trips by small craft, one adult is currently certified as required by the Safety Activity Checkpoints for the particular mode of transportation being used (canoe, kayak, etc.).
- For trips that involve swimming, an adult currently certified in basic lifeguarding or the equivalent is present.
- Each driver of motorized transportation is at least 21 years old and holds a valid operator’s license appropriate to the vehicle.
- No adult drives more than six hours in one day, with rest breaks every two hours.
- If a trailer is used, it is in compliance with all state, local, and federal regulations for the areas of travel. The assigned driver is experienced in pulling a trailer. No girls or adult leaders ride in the trailer.
- No caravanning (cars following closely together, with the lead vehicle in charge) is allowed. Each driver must have information about route and destination in addition to the cell phone numbers of other drivers.

- Adhere to the following sleeping arrangements:

- Male volunteers may not sleep in the same space as girls. Men may participate in overnight trips only if separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use.
- During indoor camping overnights, men (including fathers) must sleep alone in another activity area or room (e.g., basement, kitchen, etc.) separate from girls, or if the weather permits, outside in a tent. Men must have their own designated bathroom. Ensure that access to the male bathroom does not require men to walk through the girls’ sleeping area. When camping in tents or small cabins, men must stay in a tent or cabin by themselves located at the end of the girls’ tents or cabins so men are farthest from the girls. If multiple latrines are available, designate one for men.
- During family or “he and me” events (in which girls share sleeping accommodations with men), ensure the sleeping arrangement details are clearly explained in a parent/guardian permission slip. More than one family may use a tent or small cabin during these events only if both families agree.
- In public venue overnights, such as at museums or at malls with hundreds of girls, ask if there is a separate area and bathroom for men specifically during sleeping hours. Instruct girls to not enter that area during sleep time. If separate accommodations are not possible, men may participate in events up until sleep time, at which point they must leave and return in the morning. Be sure the overnight adult-to-girl ratio requirement is still met.
- For long-distance travel, men must have separate sleeping quarters and bathroom away from girls.
- Also ensure the following:
 - Each participant has 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, some councils may make exceptions for mothers and daughters.
 - Women are not required to sleep in the sleeping area (e.g., tent, cabin, etc.) with girls, but if a woman does share the sleeping area, two unrelated women must always be present.

- Girls share resources. Encourage girls to make a list of gear and supplies, and determine what can be shared. Support girls in creating a checklist of group and personal equipment and distribute to group members.

- For travel camping arrange a pre-trip orientation. Ensure that girl and adult participants receive information about first-aid procedures, emergency and rescue procedures, environmental

awareness, program plans for mode of travel and geographic area, and operational procedures (water purification, food preparation, camping equipment, sanitation, and food storage procedures).

On the Day of Camping

- ☐ **Get a weather report.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints
- ☐ **Use the buddy system.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- ☐ **Respect the environment and keep campsite clean.** Follow the principles of minimal-impact camping described by [Leave No Trace](#). Store garbage in insect- and animal-proof containers with plastic inner linings, and cover them securely when there is a campsite garbage-pickup service. When there is no garbage-pickup service, remove garbage from campsite in plastic bags and discard, as appropriate. Recycle whenever possible. Do not bury food; carry out garbage, grease, and fuel canisters. Do not remove natural materials such as leaves or branches.
- ☐ **Be prepared for primitive campsites.** For sites without electric lights and toilet facilities, observe these standards:
 - Choose and set up campsite well before dark.
 - Use a previously established campsite if available.
 - Make sure the campsite is level and located at least 200 feet from all water sources and below tree line.
 - Avoid fragile mountain meadows and areas of wet soil.
 - Avoid camping under dead tree limbs.
 - Use existing fire rings if a fire is necessary.
 - If a latrine is not available, use individual cat holes—holes for human waste that are at least 200 feet away from the trail and known water sources—to dispose of human waste (visit www.lnt.org for more information). Note: cat holes are not permitted in some areas, so follow local sanitary codes in those areas.
 - Do dishwashing and personal bathing at least 200 feet away from water sources.
 - Store food in a secure location away from tents and out of reach of animals. Where necessary, use a bear-proof container to store food or if allowed or appropriate, hang food at least 10 feet high from a rope stretched between two trees. If the site is in bear country, check with local authorities on precautions to take.
 - See that garbage, tampons, sanitary supplies, and toilet paper are carried out.

Group Camping Links

- American Camp Association: www.acacamps.org
- Go Camping America: www.gocampingamerica.com
- Leave No Trace: <http://www.lnt.org>
- Recreational Equipment Inc.: www.rei.com/learn

Camping Know-How for Girls

- **Create a camp kaper chart.** Divide up cooking duties and get creative about preplanning [outdoor meals](#).
- **Be ready with camp entertainment.** Before you go camping, read about camping stories, [songs](#), activities, and [games](#).

*These checkpoints must be reviewed with the vendor and/or facility, when appropriate.

