

Sailing: Safety Activity Checkpoints



The sport of sailing has become very high-tech and competitive since its humble beginnings, but sailors and racers still must rely on the force of wind to propel their boats. There are a wide variety of [sailboats](#), including small and large sailboats, keelboats, and multihulls. Sailing is not recommended for Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies.

Caution: Girls are not allowed to operate motorized boats without council permission and girls are never allowed to parasail.

Know where to sail. The ocean and lakes are ideal for sailing, but many sailing or yacht clubs offer instructions on reservoirs, rivers and ponds. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. Also, the [U.S. Sailing Web site](#) provides a list of U.S. sailing camps, clubs, and associations.

Include girls with disabilities. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that the [International Sailing Federation](#) and [Disabled Sports USA](#) provide to people with disabilities.

Sailing Gear

Required Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears. Read about Coast Guard life jackets [here](#).
- Boat shoes, closed-toe and nonslip hiking/sport sandals with heel strap, or water socks or shoes (no flip-flops)
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, fog horn or sounding flares

Recommended Gear

- Layered clothing that's easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended)
- Waterproof sunscreen (SPF of at least 15), apply every two hours, and lip balm
- Sunglasses or sunhat
- Boat shoes, closed-toe and nonslip hiking/sport sandals with heel strap, or water socks or shoes (no flip-flops)
- Sailing gloves (help save tender hands and improve grip)

- Rigging knife
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- [Emergency repair kit](#) (duct tape or electrical tape, screwdriver, pliers, shackles, extra line, sewing kit, a spare [drain plug](#), extra cotter rings/pins, and a short piece of light line/rope)
- Emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, raincoat, pocket knife, minimum of 10 X 10 tarp, rope, drinking cup, food and appropriate liquids. Food and water bottles should be secured in the sailboat
- Paddle (as second means of propulsion)
- Bailer (a bucket used to remove water from a boat)
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) is immediately available for each group on the water

Prepare for Sailing

- Communicate with council and parents.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Girls plan the activity.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Ensure participants are able to swim.** Participants' swimming abilities are classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, etc.) at council-approved sites, or participants provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test is conducted before or on the day of the activity. If this is not possible, presume all participants are non-swimmers. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.
- Arrange for transportation and adult supervision.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints for the recommended adult-to-girl ratios.
- *Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Ensure that the adult or sailing instructor is certified as a Sailing Instructor or Sailing Counselor by [U.S. Sailing](#), holds an American Red Cross Small Craft Safety certification, or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines, as outlined in [Volunteer Essentials](#).
- Compile key contacts.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- *Select appropriate sailboats for water and passengers.** Make sure craft weight and passenger capacities are not exceeded (some crafts clearly display maximum capacity). Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment.
- File a float plan.** If participating in a long-distance sailing trip, it is recommended that a float plan be completed and filed (left) with a person knowledgeable about the trip and when to expect the party back. Float plans cannot be filed with the U.S. Coast Guard. The USCG float plan is available [here](#) and should be used for all float plans.
- Transport sailboats safely.** Sailboats are transported on car-top racks or trailers designed to haul sailboats. Sailboats are secured with two lines across the top and a line at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.
- Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in First Aid, including Adult and Child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from Emergency Medical Services response time, ensure the presence of a first-aider with Wilderness First Aid. See [Volunteer Essentials](#) for information about first-aid standards and training.

On the Day of Sailing

- **Get a weather and wind report.** Never sail on a stormy or excessively windy day. On the day of the sailing trip or lesson, visit weather.com (which includes marine forecasts, including water temperature and wave height) to determine if conditions are appropriate. [Intellicast](#) also reports on sailing conditions. If weather conditions prevent the sailing activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternate activity.
- **Review rescue tips.** U.S. Sailing provides instructions on [small-boat capsize recovery](#).
- **Use the buddy system.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.

- **Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning.** Exit water immediately and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them. During storms, if shore cannot be reached, secure all loose gear, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low.
- **Ensure docking safety*.** Ensure that docking lines are in good condition. Follow general safety guidelines provided by boating facility for docking the craft, and ensure the boat is securely connected to the dock before participants exit.

Sailing Links

- American Sail Training Association: www.tallships.sailtraining.org
- International Sailing Federation: www.sailing.org
- U.S. Sailing: www.ussailing.org
- U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division: www.uscgboating.org

Sailing Know-How for Girls

- Get ready to race. Read racing [rules set by U.S. Sailing](#) and [International Sailing Federation](#).
- Know the ropes. Sailing uses a number of special [knot-tying](#) techniques.

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