

## Shooting Sports: Safety Activity Checkpoints



Why teach shooting sports? Good shooting requires learning positive traits such as patience, determination, focus, attention to detail, and persistence. Since these skills are likewise key elements of leadership, we encourage our girls to take what they learn from any sport or activity in Girl Scouting and apply it to their participation in their communities and the world. There are a variety of styles and sizes of firearms. The ones the girls will be learning about are expressly purposed to hit a target.

**Caution:** Girls are not allowed to use firearms unless 12 years old and older and only with council permission; girls are never allowed to hunt. Written permission **MUST** be obtained from your council in advance of the activity. Once approved, you must have written permission from each girl's parent/guardian before a girl is allowed to participate in sport shooting.

**Lead Caution\*:** Be aware of possible lead contamination at both indoor and outdoor ranges. Be sure that the Range Safety Officer and/or the instructor provide wet wipes for the girls to wipe their hands and faces immediately after shooting. In addition, the girls must return to a restroom facility and wash their hands and faces with soap and cold water. Cold water keeps the pores closed so less lead is absorbed into the blood stream. Also ensure that the instructor collects and counts all the casings at the end of each session to ensure that the girls do not take home any as souvenirs.

**Know where to participate in shooting sports.** Groups are required to use council approved indoor and outdoor firing ranges. Council must approve all sites in advance.

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

### Shooting Sports Gear

#### Required Gear

- Firearm (automatic firearms are NOT permitted at any time)
- Ammunition

Targets  
Safety Glasses  
Ear protection

### Recommended Gear

Sunscreen (SPF of at least 15) and lip balm  
Sunglasses  
Hat or Bandana or hair tie

### Prepare for Shooting Sports

**Communicate with council and parents.** Permission must be received in advance from your Girl Scout council, and from the parent/guardian of any participant, prior to any sport shooting activity. See also the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.

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

**Arrange for adult supervision.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints for adult-to-girl ratios for Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors. In addition, make provisions for safe handling of firearms, ammunition and any other equipment to and from the shooting range. For sport shooting, the ratio of instructors to participants is given in the table below. In addition, a Range Safety Officer (RSO) must be on site at all times.

Shooting Sport	Required Minimum Age Level	Number of instructors required per number of participants
BB Guns	12 years and older	1 instructor to 10 participants
Rifle	12 years and older	1 instructor to 8 participants
Muzzle loading	12 years and older	1 instructor to 2 participants
Shotgun (Trap/Skeet/Sporting Clays)	12 years and older	1 instructor to 5 participants
Pistols	14 years and older	1 instructor to 4 participants

**NOTE:** The instructor to participant ratio is NOT the same as the adult to girl ratio that is found in the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints. Both ratios MUST be complied with when girls are participating in sport shooting. For example, if there are 15 Cadettes participating in a shooting activity, there must be 3 instructors plus 2 adult Girl Scout volunteers (who are not instructors).

**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** One adult is a certified [National Rifle Association](#) Range Safety Officer or USA Shooting Sports instructor or has equivalent certification. Documented experience and skill teaching/supervising firearm safety or shooting sports according to your council's guidelines, as outlined in *Volunteer Essentials*. The instructor reviews the rules and operating procedures with girls beforehand, and posts safety rules at the site. Shooting

sports are well supervised and appropriate to age, skill level, and type of shooting.

**Compile key contacts.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.

**Girls learn about firearms & shooting sports\*.** Girls develop skills based on proper procedures and form, such as handling the firearm, loading the ammunition, getting the right stance, sighting, and observing safety practices. Before firearm activities, girls learn the following:

**ALWAYS keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.** This is the primary rule of gun safety. A safe direction means that the gun is pointed so that even if it were to go off it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control where the muzzle or front end of the barrel is pointed at all times.

Shooters stand or lay behind the shooting line to shoot as instructed.

- Girls waiting to shoot stay well behind the firing range boundary. A table or shelf for holding extra ammunition is provided for all shooters.
- Never point a gun at a person, even when not loaded.
- Ammunition is not picked up until the “load” command is given.
- Never shoot the firearm until the “fire when ready” command is given.
- Never pull the trigger when the firearm is not loaded; this is called dry firing and can cause damage to the firearm.
- When aiming the firearm, keep the barrel pointed toward the target. Shoot only at the target and never at anything else, including human images, trees and animals. Never shoot a firearm straight up into the air.
- Wait until the all-clear command is given before retrieving targets.
- Shooter should keep finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
- When holding a gun, shooters should rest their finger on the trigger guard or along the side of the gun. Until the command is given to fire, do not touch the trigger.
- Keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.
- Whenever a firearm is picked up, the safety device should be immediately engaged if possible.
- If shooter does not know how to open the action or inspect the chamber(s), they should leave the gun alone and get help from someone who does.

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

**Ensure that equipment is in good condition.** Make sure that firearm is clean and in good working order. Ammunition, backstops for targets and targets are in good repair.

**Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a first-aid kit and a first-aider with certificates in First Aid, including Adult and Child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of sunburn, puncture and bullet wounds. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a Wilderness First Aider. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

## On the Day of the Shooting Sports Activity

**Get a weather report.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.

**Use the buddy system.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.

**Safeguard valuables.** Firearms and ammunition are stored in separate and proper storage containers and locked with separate locks/combinations when not in use.

Note: BB Guns do not need a trigger lock, but all other calibers firearms should have working trigger locks for storage.

**Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning.** 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.

## Practice safe shooting sports

### Follow all facility safety instructions\*.

At an outdoor range:

- Use approved designated ranges, which must include:
  - Targets placed away from houses, roads, and trails.
  - Avoid areas with pedestrian traffic.
  - Areas of brush are cleared; a hillside backstop is recommended.
- Ensure the shooting area and spectator area (behind the shooting area) are clearly marked.
- In the shooting area, ensure a safe distance of at least 100 yards behind the targets and 30 yards on each side of the range. An outdoor range is not used after nightfall.
- Ammunition and guns must be stored separately in a locked cabinet when not in use.

At an indoor range:

- Targets are well-lit, and doors or entries onto the range are locked or blocked from the inside.
- Do not block fire exits.

## Shooting Sports Links

USA Shooting Sports: [www.usashooting.org](http://www.usashooting.org)

Youth Videos and Resources from USA Shooting Sports:

<http://www.usashooting.org/membership/youth-programs>

National Rifle Association: <http://www.training.nra.org/nra-gun-safety-rules.aspx>

National Shooting Sports Foundation: <http://www.nssf.org/safety/basics/>

Revolutionary War Veterans Association: <http://www.appleseedinfo.org/>

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