



Camping: GSGATL 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 that are appropriate for the weather, sleeping situation, and cooking meals. 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: Girls 12 years old and older must follow the Shooting Sports Safety Activity Checkpoints in order to use firearms, and must have both council and parent/guardian permission. 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 Daisy and Brownie Girl Scouts. Know where to camp. 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](#). **GSGATL strongly advises leaders of Girl Scout Daisies and other new troops to follow a progression beginning with short local trips and advancing to longer trips to allow the adults to monitor how the girls and adults interact and the readiness of the girls to travel without a parent along. This is especially important with overnight adventures such as camping. Start out with simple “sleep-over” type events indoors, progressing to backyard camping, followed by one, than two night overnights.**

Check our website for a list of pre-approved Camping Facilities. Camping is available year-round at all of our [Council Camp Facilities](#).

If you are interested in using a facility that is not pre-approved, contact the council risk management team riskmanagement@gsgatl.org for more information. Approval of a venue requires a visit from council staff and review of necessary documentation related to insurance, appropriateness and safety of the facility. This process can take several weeks and may not be possible during the summer when all outdoor staff are busy with resident camp.

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](#).

Camping Gear

Required 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 Gear

- Insect Repellent
- Waterproof sunscreen (SPF of at least 15)
- 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

- Obtain camping credentials. Ensure that the adult has completed appropriate camp training **GSGATL offers volunteer training for the following activities:**
 - **troop cabin camping**
 - **fire building and outdoor cooking**
 - **platform tent camping**
 - **backpacking & back country camping.**
 - **If you have any other training and/or documented experience that you wish to be considered for GSGATL credentials, please contact the Training Department (training@gsgatl.org) at the Council.**

- Communicate with council and parents.**

Advance written permission from GSGATL is required for this activity.

- **GSGATL permission for camping on COUNCIL campsites is obtained by completing the [Reservation Application for Troop Camping](#) located on our website.**
- **For camping on NON-COUNCIL campsites, GSGATL permission can be requested by use of the [Travel Approval Form](#) located on our website.**
- **Before any travel away from the normal meeting space:**
 - **Appropriate training as outlined in the Volunteer Position Description AND Trips & Overnights must be successfully completed**
 - **Leaders should have a current [Minor & Adult Health History](#) for each participant**
 - **Each girl must have a signed [Permission for Girl Scout Activity](#)**
 - **Each troop must have a currently approved volunteer adult with current First Aid/CPR certification in attendance.**
- Girls plan the activity.** 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.

- **Arrange for adult supervision & transportation.**
 - **For activities, travel, and camping trips, all adults attending must successfully pass the GSGATL volunteer approval process (reference Policy 4, page 24, in *Volunteer Essentials*) and be registered members of Girl Scouts before participating in trips with the troop (reference Policy 2, page 23, *Volunteer Essentials*). For events, travel, and camping trips, two unrelated female adults who do not live in the same household must be present at all times. Ensure that the skill level of the adults is higher than the difficulty of the intended activity. See *the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints* for adult/girl ratios.**
 - **When transporting girls to or from an activity, approved male volunteers must be accompanied in the vehicle by an unrelated female volunteer who does not share the same household. At no time may an approved male volunteer be alone with girls. An exception to this policy includes a limited number of GSGATL sponsored or approved events (with prior written consent).**
 - **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, 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. 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 and experience.** Ensure that at least one adult is trained or possesses knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas (also refer to paragraph called Obtain Camping Credentials earlier in this document:
 - Outdoor program activities and leadership
 - Progression and readiness including homesickness
 - Trip planning in a girl-led environment
 - Safety management
 - Judgment and maturity
 - 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 lead the group
 - Mode of transportation
 - Site orientation
 - Emergency procedures
 - Minor maintenance for equipment and vehicles, as appropriate
- **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. The Girl Scout council checks the operator's driving record.
 - No adult drives more than six hours in one day, with rest breaks every two hours. There is a relief driver for trips of more than six hours. The relief driver holds a valid operator's license for the vehicle operated, and her or his driving record is checked by the council. Plan to drive only in daylight 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 cell-phone numbers of other drivers.
- ☐ **Ensure the safety of sleeping areas***. Separate sleeping and bathroom facilities are provided for adult males; many councils make exceptions for girls' fathers. Ensure the following:
- Each participant has her own bed. Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
 - Adults and girls never share a bed.
 - It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (tent, cabin, or designated area) with the girls. If an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be two unrelated adult females present.
 - During family or "He and Me" events (in which girls share sleeping accommodations with males), ensure the details are clearly explained in parent/guardian permission slip.
- ☐ **Girls share resources.** Encourage girls to make a list of the 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.** On the morning of the activity, check weather.com or other reliable weather sources to determine if weather conditions are appropriate, and make sure that the ground is free of ice. If severe weather conditions prevent the activity, be prepared with a backup plan, alternative activity, or postpone the activity. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans for severe weather with girls. 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 heads between them.
- ☐ **Use the buddy system.** See *the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- ☐ **Respect the environment and keep campsite clean.** Use 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 it 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 that don't have 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 well away from tents and out of reach of animals. Where necessary, 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 caper chart.** Divvy up cooking duties and get creative about pre-planning [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.**