

## Recreational Tree Climbing



**Council Approval:** Required.  
**Activity Permitted for:** J C S A  
**Certificate of Insurance (COI)** is required from vendor providing this activity. Visit <https://www.girlscoutsni.org/resources#COI> to check list of the COIs on file or to request one.

**Waiver: Required.**

Attached to this Safety Activity Checkpoint

### About Recreational Tree Climbing

In recreational tree climbing, girls explore the beauty of living trees with guided facilitator support. Recreational tree climbers use ropes, harnesses, saddles, and climbing techniques to ascend into the crowns of trees and the canopies of forests. Care should be taken to keep climbers and trees safe.

Climbing may be done on branches that have at least 6 inches of living tissue. A full inspection of the health of the tree and surrounding area must be made.

### Leave No Trace

While climbing in natural areas, it's important to respect the environment. Read tips from the [Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics](#).

The Global Organization of Tree Climbers has an [interactive map](#) to help you find tree-climbing programs.

### Learn More:

- Tree Climbing USA: [TreeClimbingUSA.com](https://www.treeclimbingusa.com)
- [Leave No Trace](#)

### Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. If visiting a national park, contact the park in advance. Ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

### Additional Resources:

Check out [Disabled Sports USA](#) to learn about adaptive climbing.

### Equity

In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the girls in your troop that could affect a girl's ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with girls

and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all girls and their families feel comfortable that they have access to whatever is needed to fully participate such as the proper equipment, prior experiences and skills needed to enjoy the activity.

### Safety Activity Checkpoints

- **Standard Safety Guidelines.** Refer to the “Standard Safety Guidelines” section (p. 4 – 22) at the top of Safety Activity Checkpoints. These standard safety guidelines apply to all Girl Scout gatherings and activities. When the adult-to-girl ratio, or other safety parameters, are stricter for a specific activity than in the Standard Safety Guidelines always follow the stricter parameters in the activity chapter.
- **COVID-19 Guidelines.** Review the “Coronavirus Safety in Girl Scouts” section under the “Standard Safety Guidelines” (p. 4 – 22) section and be certain to consult your council’s specific COVID-19 guidance [here](#). When applicable, always call ahead to the vendor, property or facility involved to check for their COVID-19 safety requirements as you prepare to take girls for this activity.
- **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.
- **Choose a certified instructor.** The facilitator needs to have documented experience in leading and teaching tree climbing.
- **File required permits.**
- **Inspect equipment.** The instructor will inspect all equipment before each use. Equipment will be well-maintained. A use log will track wear, stress, and deterioration of gear. Outside professionals should periodically inspect all trees and equipment. A written process for equipment monitoring and retirement needs to be followed.
- **Ensure the instructor climbs all routes** before participants begin.
- **Ensure only instructors clip participants** in and out of the tie-in system.
- **Ensure a process for managing safety and performing rescues** is in place.
- **Ensure helmet-only areas are clearly designated** to protect participants and passersby from falling debris.
- **Get a weather report.** On the morning of the activity, check a reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. Be prepared to alter the activity plan if weather conditions change. Participants must not climb when trees or gear are wet. In the event of a storm, take shelter away from all trees and other tall objects. 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.
- **Participants should receive instruction.** Instructors must describe the climb’s objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants. Climbers learn:
  - Readiness and action commands
  - Muscle warmup and stretching techniques.
  - Safety procedures and site-specific hazards

### **Safety Gear**

- Climbing equipment—such as ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets—designed for this purpose and appropriate for the size of the user.
- Climbing helmets worn by all participants who will be more than 6 feet off the ground or on belay; helmets must be approved by the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA)
- Sturdy shoes.



## Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Recreational Tree Climbing

- This two page form is a waiver and release of liability contract between Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois and the participants. Please read it carefully.
- This two page form must be read and signed by the parent or legal guardian of the participant in order for the participant to participate in the activity listed. The form is to be turned in to the troop leader or he/her designee.
- Participants must be old enough to understand the safety procedures so as not to endanger themselves or others.

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ GS Level \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Participation Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any allergies the participant has (food, nature, medications, etc.). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please list any restrictions of participant that we should be aware of as she participates in this activity. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please list any medications the participant will have with her. \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity** – Recreational Tree Climbing uses ropes, saddles, and techniques proven safe for both climber and tree, to ascend into the crowns of trees and the canopies of forests for recreation, exploration, exhilaration, education, research, exercise and fun! Please see *Safety Activity Checkpoints* for full descriptions.

### Clothing

- Sturdy Shoes
- All equipment used for climbing – ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware and helmets – is designed, tested, and manufactured for the purpose of this type of activity and appropriate for the size of the user.
- Climbing helmets that have the UIAA-approved (Union of International Alpine Association) must be worn for all climbing situations where the participant is more than 6 feet off the ground or on belay.

Additional Activity Information, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that recreational tree climbing is a test of a person’s physical and mental limits and carries with it the potential for death, serious injury and property loss. The risks include, but are not limited to, those caused by terrain, facilities, temperature, acts of God, weather, condition of participants, equipment, vehicular traffic, actions of other people including, but not limited to, participants, facilitators, volunteers and spectators. These risks are not only inherent to the participants, but also present for volunteers. I hereby assume all of the risks of participating and/or volunteering in this activity. I realize that liability may arise from negligence or carelessness on the part of the person or entities being release, from dangerous or defective equipment or property owned, maintained or controlled by them or because of their possible liability without fault.

I certify that I am physically and mentally fit to participate in this recreational tree climbing activity. I acknowledge that this Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Recreational Tree Climbing will be used by Girl Scout staff, activity facilitators or their assignees of the activity and it will govern my daughter’s actions and responsibilities at the activity. I acknowledge that I must follow the directions and safety rules of the activity and the activity may be cancelled if I do not follow the safety instructions and policies or if my behavior endangers myself or the group.

In consideration of my participation in this program, I hereby take action for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, next of kin, successors, and assigns as follows: (A) Waive, Release and Discharge from any and all liability for my death, disability, personal injury, property damage, property theft or actions of any kind which may hereafter occur to me including my traveling to and from this program, THE FOLLOWING ENTITIES OR PERSONS: \_\_\_\_\_; their directors, officers, employees, volunteers, facilitators, representative, and agents. (B) Indemnify and Hold Harmless, and Agree Not To Sue the entities or persons mentioned in this paragraph from any and all liabilities or claims made as a result of participation in this program, whether caused by the negligence of releases or otherwise. I hereby consent to receive medical treatment that may be deemed advisable in the event of injury, accident and/or illness during this program.

The Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Recreational Tree Climbing shall be construed broadly to provide a release and waiver to the maximum extent permissible under applicable law. I acknowledge that this Accident Waiver and Release of Liability form will be used by the persons or entities being release in the activity listed above and that it will govern my actions and responsibilities in said activity.

I hereby certify that I have read this document; read the GSUSA Recreational Tree Climbing Safety Activity Checkpoints; and, I, understand its content. I am aware that this is a release of liability as well as a contract and I sign it of my own free will.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Participant's Name                      Age                      Signature (if under 18 years old,  
Parent/Guardian must also sign)                      Date

Parent/Guardian Waiver for Minors (Under 18 years old)

I give permission for my daughter to participate in this Recreational tree climbing activity. I understand that there are inherent risks of injury or disability in this activity. I further understand that my daughter must follow the directions and safety rules of the activity. I have reviewed the GSUSA Recreational Tree Climbing Safety Activity Checkpoints. I also understand that the activity may be cancelled if my daughter does not follow safety instructions and policies and/or my daughter's behavior endangers herself or the group.

The undersigned parent and/or legal guardian does hereby represent that he/she is, in fact, acting in such capacity and is fully responsible and agrees to save and hold harmless and indemnify each and all of the parties referred to above from all liability, loss, cost, claim or damage whatsoever which may be imposed upon said parties because of any defect in or lack of such capacity to so act and release said parties on behalf of the minor and the parents or legal guardian.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Participant's Name                      Age                      Signature of Parent/Guardian                      Date

If you have any questions, please contact \_\_\_\_\_

For girls not currently registered as Girl Scouts: I understand my daughter is not covered by Girl Scouts of the USA Activity Insurance, but she has my permission to participate in this activity.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_