

Challenge Course



Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: D* B* J C S A
Progression chart attached to Safety Activity
Checkpoint

Certificate of Insurance (COI): 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 Safety Activity
Checkpoint

About Challenge Courses

A challenge course is a set of structures that provide a setting for physical challenges designed to increase participants' self-confidence and physical coordination, to increase group cooperation, and to be fun.

Initiative games and low elements require the group to work together to accomplish mental or physical challenges; spotters safeguard the movements of each member of the group. High ropes challenge courses involve components for individual or group challenges that are six feet or more off the ground. A safety belay (a rope to secure a person to an anchor point) is used with a harness, and participants wear helmets unless the hosting facility or instructor indicates the use of helmets is hazardous for belay. Spotters (participants who safeguard the movements of a member of the group) provide support and protect the head and upper body of a climber in case of a fall.

Each participant must possess the physical strength and technical skills to use the equipment and understand the safety procedures and consequences of her actions. Connect with your council for suggestions and site approval.

Note that Daisies and Brownies may participate only in activities designed for their ages, with equipment suitable to the size and ability of each girl. Outdoor high ropes, and high elements are only permitted for Juniors and older.

Learn More:

- [Association for Experiential Education](#)
- [Association for Challenge Course Technology](#)
- List of accredited vendors: [Professional Ropes Course Association](#)

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities

Communicate with Girl Scout members with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](#) provides for people with disabilities.

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 at the beginning of Safety Activity Checkpoints which 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. Be certain to consult your council's specific COVID-19 guidance which can be accessed under the same section. 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.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. High ropes courses require an instructor trained and certified by a verified agency. The instructor must demonstrate competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training. Initiative games and low ropes courses require a trained and certified instructor or an instructor with training and documented experience, according to your council guidelines.

Qualified instructors will have competence in equipment maintenance, safety techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training. Ensure that the instructor has provided written documentation of the completed training as well as proof of participation in routine instructor review and updates. Instructors need to be skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching, and supervising spotting and belaying techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group. Before use, instructors should inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas. A minimum of two instructors must be present.

Ensure that equipment is well-maintained. There needs to be a documented maintenance schedule and periodic inspection by instructors and outside professionals of all artificial structures and equipment used in the activities. A use log should be kept on all equipment that is subject to stress, wear, and deterioration. A written equipment process for monitoring and retirement should be established and followed by the facility.

Girls learn about and prepare for challenge courses. Instructors teach a set of readiness and action commands to all participants for climbing, spotting, and belaying. All participants should use gentle muscle warm-up and stretching activities before beginning physical activities. Instructors must describe the objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants before beginning an activity.

Girls practice safe challenge course techniques. Spotting techniques are taught, demonstrated, and practiced by participants prior to any challenge course activity. All activities are appropriately spotted. For activities where partners are needed, instructors should match participants according to size and skill level, if appropriate. Instructors must supervise all tie-ins, belays, and climbs on high ropes courses and spotting on low elements courses. Participants must not be stacked more than three levels high vertically (in a pyramid, for example) at any time. No one should stand on the middle of someone else's back.

Instructor-to-participant ratios must meet the standard as identified by the course manufacturer or installer and need to comply with industry best practice standards.

Safety Gear

- Sturdy shoes
- Climbing helmets (with Union of International Alpine Association–approved label) must be worn for all climbing activities in which the participant is more than six feet off the ground and by participants standing in the “fall zone” beneath a climbing element. Helmets are also required for belay, unless the hosting facility or instructor indicates the use of helmets is hazardous for belay.
- Disposable shower cap liner, for use with public rental helmets
- Belaying equipment—including ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets—designed and tested for this type of activity and appropriate for the size of the user.
- Long pants or bike pants for activities that may lead to skin abrasions on legs.
- Close-fitting clothing (avoid wearing loose clothing, especially around the head and neck)
- A chest harness with seat harness or full-body harness for small -framed girls when climbing.

Climbing and Adventure Sports—Master Progression Chart

	Grade Levels	Safety Standards and Gear	Additional Information
Slacklining	D, B, J, C, S, A	Sneakers Comfortable clothing Specific uniform or costume Slackline Check anchors	Baseline for Beginners Slacklining Outdoor Slacklining
Initiatives and Low Elements (any element that has a fall distance of 6 feet or less)	D, B, J, C, S, A	Sneakers Comfortable clothing appropriate for weather Activity elements and supplies	Ultimate Campsource Team Building Team Building and Low Challenge Elements
High Elements (any element that has a fall distance of 6 feet or more)	B, J, C, S, A Brownies can participate only with indoor high elements specifically designed for small children.	Climbing helmets (Union of International Alpine Association–approved) Belaying equipment: ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets that are designed, tested, and manufactured for the purpose of climbing and size appropriate for user.	Association Challenge Course Technology. <i>Note:</i> if the hosting facility or instructor indicates the use of helmets is hazardous for belay – follow those instructions. They may not offer helmets for this reason. When the hosting facility or instructor indicates a helmet is required, always opt for the helmet.
Bouldering (any element that has a fall distance of 6 feet or less)	D, B, J, C, S, A	Comfortable clothing Sneakers Spotters	Bouldering Low Elements
Artificial Climbing Walls (indoor and outdoor)	B, J, C, S, A No free climbing above 6 feet, Brownies on indoor walls designed specifically for small children only.	Auto belay/harnessed indoor ropes Belaying equipment: ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets that are designed, tested, and manufactured for the purpose of climbing and size appropriate for user.	Expert Advice Indoor Climbing <i>Note:</i> if the hosting facility or instructor indicates the use of helmets is hazardous for belay – follow those instructions. They may not offer helmets for this reason. When the hosting facility or instructor indicates a helmet is required, always opt for the helmet.

Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Low Ropes Course at MABC

- *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.*
- *The Low Ropes Course at Mary Ann Beebe Center is for Girl Scout Juniors and above.*

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 - The Adventure Walk Low Ropes program is a series of team-building, cooperative games and low-rope elements that create a sense of trust and support in the group. The low-ropes elements are approximately two to three feet off the ground, and each participant has two spotters as she participates. The program is designed to encourage cooperation within a group in a fun and safe environment.

Clothing - Participants should be wearing appropriate clothing:

- Long pants (NOT below the shoes)
- Closed shoes, boots or tennis shoes (NO sandals)
- Bring bug spray and/or sunscreen as weather dictates
- DO NOT wear jewelry or watches.



Additional Activity Information, if any: _____

I acknowledge that this Low Ropes Program 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 a Girl Scout Junior or above and am physically and mentally fit to participate in this Low Ropes Program activity. I acknowledge that this Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Low Ropes Course at Mary Ann Beebe Center 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 Low Ropes Course at Mary Ann Beebe Center 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 from 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 GSNI Challenge Courses Safety Activity Checkpoint; 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 Low Ropes Program 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 GSNI Challenge Courses Safety Activity Checkpoint 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 _____