

Standup Paddle Boarding



About Standup Paddle Boarding

While standing, paddlers propel standup paddleboards (SUPs) across the water with long-handled paddles. Paddling is a full-body sport which uses core muscles and develops excellent balance and coordination. With instruction, beginners can quickly learn to paddle on flat water lakes and bays. Experienced paddlers can tackle ocean surf or rivers with a certified instructor's guidance.

With the right instruction, equipment, and preparation, almost any body of water is suitable for SUP. Start with flat water with little or no current, and progress to more advanced conditions like rivers or oceans.

The U.S. Coast Guard considers SUPs as vessels when they are used outside of designated swim areas or ocean surfing zones. Therefore, federal regulations about life jackets, sound devices, and lights apply.

Learn More:

- Interactive maps of places to go: [Paddling.com](https://www.paddling.com) and [American Whitewater](https://www.americanwhitewater.org)
- For river paddling: [International Scale of River Difficulty](https://www.international-scale-of-river-difficulty.com)
- About canoeing, kayaking, and SUP: [American Canoe Association](https://www.americancanoeassociation.org)
- [Stand Up Paddle World magazine](https://www.standuppaddle.com)

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities

Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the SUP instructor in advance to ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Council Approval: Required Activity

Permitted For: J C S A

Not Recommended For: Daisies and Brownies

Training: One adult with small watercraft and basic water rescue required for activity.

Certificate of Insurance (COI) is required from vendor providing this activity if renting or using a guide.

Visit <https://www.girlscoutsni.org/resource/#COI> to check list of the COIs on file or to request one.

Waiver required and attached to this Safety Activity Check point.

[Troop Trip Travel Form](#) may need to be completed.

Additional Resources:

- See [Abilities.com](https://abilities.com) and [Dream Adaptive](https://dreamadaptive.com) to find out about inclusion and adaptive equipment for paddlers.

Equity

In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members 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.

Ensure participants are able to swim. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conduct a swimming test in advance. See "Swimming" safety activity checkpoints for samples or ask your instructor for guidelines. SUP paddlers must be strong swimmers.

Ensure all paddlers wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket. Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Practice recovery procedures. The instructor demonstrates self-recovery and righting techniques. Girls learn and practice these skills. This will help prevent them from becoming disoriented or frightened if they end up in the water (likely with SUP).

Verifying instructor knowledge and experience:

- The skill level of the adults must be higher than the difficulty of the intended activity.
- The instructor or guide must be able to effectively communicate commands and instructions.
- The instructor or guide needs to review site-specific emergency techniques. For example, when paddling in shallow water, the instructor should remind girls how to fall from their boards.
- The lead instructor or guide needs to have firsthand knowledge of the hazards and conditions of the location being used.
- At least one adult instructor or guide should be currently certified by the American Canoe Association, completes Girl Scouts small craft safety training, or other sponsoring organization approved by your council. Certifications must be appropriate for the activity.

Check lifeguard qualifications. For lifeguards overseeing SUP, ensure they have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the body of water being used.

Arrange for watchers/helpers. An adult watcher or skilled helper is required for some group sizes. See the Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart. This person should have basic skills in the activity, and support the group by reinforcing instructions, watching for possible emergencies, and helping with rescues if needed. Basic water rescue, small craft safety, or similar training is the preferred preparation. Consult the instructor for specific watcher/helper qualifications.

Select a safe site. Do not paddle in unknown areas; know the locations of all shipping channels. Paddling is not permitted farther than one mile from the nearest shore. Make sure of the following:

- The launching area is free of glass and debris and has a gentle slope and good footing. Rocks should be avoided.
- Busy channels are avoided when possible and crossed carefully, when necessary, at a 90-degree angle to the channel traffic.
- Surf zones and areas with standing waves are avoided, except as part of planned ocean/surf or whitewater paddling.
- On long passages, boards are close enough together so that a group decision can be made if wind and water conditions change.
- You're aware of possible changes in water level, due to tides or dam releases, and how these affect water conditions.
- Avoid hazards such as strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences, and low power lines. Rapids must be avoided unless part of a planned whitewater route.

Research water conditions. Select the right boards for participant skill level and conditions.

Know universal signals. Whistle and visual signals are used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at [Paddle Education](#).

Prepare for emergencies. Pack a waterproof first aid kit if you will be away from shore. Follow other guidelines in "Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints*."

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify authorities should your group not return on time.

Get a weather and wind report. Check [Weather.com](https://www.weather.com) or other reliable weather sources, including the “boat and beach” forecast, which covers wind speed, water temperature, and wave height. Be prepared with a backup plan or postpone the activity if weather prevents the outing.

Review what to do in a storm. If thunder is heard, or lightning seen, get everyone off the water immediately. Do not return until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last evidence of the storm. If you cannot get to shore, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low.

Review self-rescue techniques. Ensure each person can get back on their board. When paddling in cold water, also review cold-water survival techniques and treatment for hypothermia.

Use the buddy system. Instruct girls to stay within sight of at least one other board.

Transport boats safely. Use car-top racks or trailers specifically designed for paddle boards. Secure them with two lines across the top (one at each end), and with lines at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.

Report accidents. Notify marine law enforcement or your council as appropriate.

Safety Gear

Some of the gear you will need depends on the type of paddling or on the water conditions. Check with your instructor.

- A U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket is worn, always, while paddling (Type III life jackets recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications)
- Paddle board sized appropriately for the participants and suitable for the type of water.
- Paddles the appropriate size and style for the activity and person using them (a good rule of thumb is 10 inches higher than the paddler’s height; keep extras on hand)
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle
- Rescue gear appropriate for conditions, such as throw bag or throw line or waist-mounted tow system.
- Leash to keep board close in case paddler falls off (no leashes in rivers, to avoid entrapment)
- Helmet, chest protector, arm protection, and leg protection for whitewater standup paddle boarding (inflatable board recommended)
- Any other items required by the boating jurisdiction in which girls will paddle.



Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Stand-up Paddle Boarding

- 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 – Stand-up Paddle Board activities may take place on just about any body of water (lake, stream, or river) so long as proper equipment, instruction, safety precautions are used and *Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints* are followed. Girl Scouts may do Stand-up Paddle Boarding on water that has been rated up to Class III difficulty, depending on the age and ability of the participants. Participants must be able to work as a team to lift, carry and paddle the board. Participants are required to wear approved life jackets and safety gear for the type of tripped planned.

Clothing - Participants should be wearing clothing that is appropriate for the type of trip that is planned. Basic gear would include:

- Layered clothing that is easily changeable, depending on temperatures and that protects participant from the sun.
- Appropriate footwear, such as boat shoes, closed-toed and nonslip hiking/sport sandals with heel strap, or water shoes (no flip-flops).
- Waterproof sunscreen (SPF of at least 15).
- Hat and sunglasses.

Additional Activity Information, if any: _____

I acknowledge that Stand-up Paddle Board activity 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 Stand-up Paddle Board activity. I acknowledge that this Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Stand-up Paddle Board 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 Stand-up Paddle Board 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; 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 Stand-up Paddle Board 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 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 _____