



## Swimming

**Council Approval:** Required

**Activity Permitted For:** D B J C S A

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

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

Proof of homeowners insurance is needed for Girl Scout troops swimming in private/home pools.

**Training:** A certified lifeguard over the age of 18 needed to rent swimming pools at GSNI

camp or private/home pools.

Troop Trip Travel Form may need to be completed.

### About Swimming

Swimming is a Girl Scout tradition that builds fitness, leadership, and team-building skills. Your troop can swim in pools, water parks, or natural bodies of water like oceans, rivers, or lakes. Safety is one of the keys to having fun in the water. Consult a local parks and recreation department, YMCA, or American Red Cross for swimming lessons. There is a swim test form provided below at the end of this Swimming chapter to document a girl's successful completion of swimming test and to categorize her swimming ability level.

### Learn more:

- Learn swimming strokes. What's the difference between butterfly and breaststroke? How do you do a flip turn? Get some ideas at [Enjoy Swimming](#)
- Create swimming games. Marco Polo and Find the Penny are popular swimming games, but you can make up your own, too. Get more ideas at [Pool Games](#).

### Also see:

- Swimming World Magazine: [Pool Games](#)
- YMCA Safety Around Water: [The Y: Safety Around Water](#)
- American Red Cross lifeguard training: [Lifeguard and Water Safety Training](#)
- USA Swimming: [USA Swimming](#)

Including Girl Scout Members with Disabilities.

Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the pool operator in advance. Ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

## **Additional resources:**

See [Disabled Sports USA](#) to find out about swimming inclusion.

Check out [World Para Swimming](#) to learn about inspiring swimmers of all abilities.

## **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 or adult, missing girl, or sudden illness.

**Identify lifeguard(s).** When using a staffed public facility, lifeguards will be provided. At beaches or waterfronts, make sure a lifeguard will be on duty. For swimming on your own, you'll need to recruit a lifeguard who is over 18 years old and not a youth Girl Scout member. At least one lifeguard, certified in American Red Cross Lifeguard Training, and one watcher is present, always. When using more than one lifeguard, additional lifeguards under 18 may be included in the total when there is at least one adult lifeguard also present. Additional lifeguards and watchers may be needed; see the table below.

*Exception for lake, rivers, streams:* At least one lifeguard, certified in American Red Cross Waterfront Lifeguard course or the equivalent, is present for every 25 swimmers, plus one watcher for every 10 swimmers.

*Exception for pools:* For swimming activities in public pools, hotel and cruise-ship pools, and backyard pools, the lifeguards are at least 16 years old and have American Red Cross Lifeguard Training certification or the equivalent. When girls are wading in water more than knee-deep, an adult with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification or with documented experience according to your council's guidelines.

**Identify watchers.** One adult watcher is needed for every ten swimmers. This person assists the group by watching for possible emergencies. Lifeguards and watchers are stationed at separate posts. They stay out of the water, except in emergencies. American Red Cross (ARC) Basic Water Rescue, YMCA Aquatics Safety Assistant, or similar training is the preferred preparation. Alternately, the lifeguard may be able to give watchers an orientation. Again, check with your council in advance.

These numbers are a minimum. The ratio of lifeguards and watchers to swimmers may need to be increased depending on the number of girls in one area, swimming level and ability, Girl Scout members with disabilities, age level and ability to follow instructions, type of swimming activity (instruction, recreation), type of swimming area, weather / water conditions, and rescue equipment available.

### Swimming Lifeguards and Watchers Ratios

Number of Swimmers	Lifeguards	Watchers (1:10 ratio)
1–10	1 adult (see exception for pools above)	1*
11–25	1 adult (see exception for pools above)	2-3*
26–35	2 persons, at least 1 is an adult; others may be 16 years of age or older.	3-4*
36–50	2 persons, at least 1 is an adult; others may be 16 years of age or older.	4-5*

*\*Some states allow watchers to be under the age of 18, but in all states, they must be at least 16 years of age.*

**Clearly identify swimming abilities.** These could be indicated, for example, with different colored wristbands to signify beginners, intermediate, and advanced swimmers. Swim tests can be conducted in advance, or on the day of swimming. The pool operator or lifeguard may determine the type of swim test, based on the skills needed. Some examples:

- In pools, the lifeguard can ask each participant to enter the water slowly, stay close to the edge of the pool, swim from one end to the other, and then float for 30 seconds.
- In lakes, the lifeguard can ask each participant to jump into the water, swim for 50 yards, then float or tread water for one minute.
- In surf, the swimming test should be held in advance. The lifeguard asks each participant to jump into water over her head, swim 100 yards using a combination of freestyle and elementary backstroke, and then tread water for two minutes.

**Ensure swimming site safety.** Check for the following:

- A posting indicates water quality passes health department tests and sanitation standards.

- Shallow areas are marked “No Diving.”
- Diving areas are separate from other swim areas.
- Chlorine levels are tested and maintained. Water should be clear.
- The area around the pool is free of clutter.
- No electrical appliances are anywhere near the pool.
- The swimming area should be free from dangerous marine life and clearly marked.
- No sharp, rocky, or heavily shelled beach waters should be chosen, if possible.
- At water parks, do not dive or run. Most water park injuries are from slips and falls.
- Participants should know their physical limits. Observe a water ride before going on. Use extra care on water slides.
- Monitor time in the water. How long should participants swim? Swimmers’ ability, weather conditions, and water temperature should be considered. Often, 30-minute time periods are plenty.
- Swim only during daylight or in well-lit pools.
- Diving is prohibited in waters of unknown depth or conditions. For all diving, the required water depth extends 10 feet on each side of the board or jumping point. If tides, drought, or other forces affect the water depth, it is checked each time before diving is permitted. Never dive off the side of the diving board.

**Safety Gear.**

Ask the pool operator or lifeguard what’s available:

- Reaching pole
- Rescue tube
- Backboard
- Ring buoy
- Throw bag with line (typically 30 feet)

For open water:

- Paddle board
- Rescue can
- Kayak
- Rescue gear

**Additional Gear.**

- Goggles
- Swim cap
- Nose and ear plugs, for girls who need them.

**Swimming Test.** The next page provides an example of the documentation which demonstrates that a girl has passed the requirement of swim test. Please note that the level of swimming ability is distinguished. Girls should swim only up to their ability, as certified by an adult lifeguard or swim instructor.

## Swimming Test – Documented Verification of Completion

Swim tests are required for each Girl Scout every year if they are participating in any type of aquatic activities including, but not limited to pool activity, canoes, stand up paddleboards, etc. During resident camp, swim tests are conducted at the beginning of each week to assess a camper's swimming ability even if they have participated in one throughout the year. This test will be used when completing any paperwork asking for a swim level. Please keep in mind girls participating in summer resident camp will still need to complete a swim test upon arrival.

Participants will complete the following requirements to the best of their ability, instructor please circle appropriate level and complete information below:

- Tread water for 2 minutes while keeping their head above water.
- Swim a minimum of 20 yards in one direction without stopping. Using front crawl (freestyle) while keeping their face in the water and without touching the ground or holding onto the wall.
- Beginner/Non-Swimmer: This swimmer cannot successfully demonstrate or complete the above requirements. A beginner swimmer is only permitted in shallow water or where they can stand comfortably. Non swimmers must wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD/lifejacket), always.
- Intermediate Swimmer: This swimmer can successfully demonstrate the above requirements in shallow or calm deep water but is considered a cautious swimmer or a swimmer who is not very strong. Coast Guard approved flotation devices (PFD/lifejacket) are optional (unless required by activity), but it is not recommended that anyone at this level participate in high-risk swimming/aquatic activities.
- Proficient Swimmer: This swimmer can successfully demonstrate the above requirements in shallow or deep water, they display strong swimming skills and may participate in most high-risk swimming/aquatic activities. Coast Guard approved flotation devices (PFD/lifejacket) are not required (unless required by activity).
  
- Please note that some activities may require a more advanced test.

The following participant \_\_\_\_\_ has earned the above checked swim level on the following date: \_\_\_\_\_. This is valid for one year for the date of the test.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Signature Instructor Title