

# Horseback Riding



**Council Approval:** Required  
Certificate of Insurance (COI) is required from vendor providing this activity. Visit <https://www.girlscoutsni.org/resources#COI> for information on requesting a COI from the venue.  
**Activity Permitted for: \*D B J C S A**  
**\*Daisies are only permitted for pony rides and hand-led horseback walks.**  
Waiver: Required. Attached to this Safety Activity Checkpoint

## About Horseback Riding

Horseback riding teaches girls responsibility, patience, discipline, understanding, empathy, compassion, problem solving, and self-control. It allows girls to see the world from a different perspective (on top of a horse!) and can build their confidence and self-esteem.

One of the most important aspects of horseback riding is showing respect for horses. The purpose of these checkpoints is to provide tips for trail riding and ring or corral riding. Some activities, such as vaulting, pack trips, driving, and games, may require special equipment, as well as horses and instructors with specialized training.

### Learn More

- [American Camp Association](#)
- [Certified Horsemanship Association](#)
- [United States Pony Clubs](#)
- [Horse Illustrated](#)

### Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities

Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location and/or the instructor in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities. For more information visit [Move United](#) to learn more about equipment, adaptations, and finding a program near you.

**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 and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity.

**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 their COVID-19 safety requirements as you prepare girls for this activity.

**Emergency Action Plan (EAP).** Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before taking girls out for any activity and review it with the girls so they too are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

## Horse Back Riding Checkpoints

**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Riding instructors are adults (at least 18 years old) who have current certification from an accredited horsemanship instructor training

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organization, such as the Certified Horsemanship Association and American Association for Horsemanship Safety, or documented proof of a minimum of three years' experience successfully instructing in a general horseback riding program. Assistant riding instructors are at least 16 years old and are certified by an accredited horsemanship instructor training organization or have documented proof of at least one year experience successfully instructing in a general horseback riding program.

**Instructors or assistant instructors supervise riders** when in the proximity of horses, whether mounted or not. For ring or corral riding and trail riding, at least one instructor and one assistant instructor supervise a group of ten or fewer riders. For ring and corral riding, one additional instructor is required for every five additional riders. For beginners and younger girls or for difficult trails more instructors may be needed.

**Connect with your Girl Scout council for approved sites or site suggestions.** The stable operator should be able to confirm one million dollars general liability insurance and instructor certifications upon request. It is recommended that you request a certificate of insurance to document evidence of insurance coverage; most facilities will accommodate this request if they are able to administratively.

**Assess participants' maturity level.** Girls must possess sufficient physical coordination and balance to participate in riding. They need to be old enough to understand and practice safety procedures, to use good judgment in reacting to situations, and to take responsibility for themselves and their horses. Stables may have weight limits for rider eligibility, so check with the stable when making reservations.

**Select a safe site.** Check with council staff to see if an approved vendor list is offered. If the council does not have an approved vendor list, call the facility to determine the following safety information in order to select a safe site.

- **Check the condition of the facility.** For both Girl Scout council-owned and non-Girl Scout riding facilities, the riding area is away from outside distractions and free of debris; the barn and riding areas do not have exposed barbed wire fencing; the instructional rings, corrals, paddocks, and stables have clearly posted rules and regulations; the horses are properly cared for, and the stables, corrals, and barns are clean and uncluttered. Tack (e.g., saddles, bridles, stirrups, girth) is clean and in good condition.
- **Talk to the staff.** Communicate with the horseback riding organization about any specifics such as experience levels, age, height, and weight. Ask questions so that the stable manager can help choose the best horses for your group.

**Dress appropriately for the activity.** Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces. Riders may not ride barefoot, or in sandals. They should wear boots or closed-toe shoes with a smooth sole and at least a half-inch heel to prevent feet from sliding through stirrups. Riders should not wear backpacks, day packs, or fanny packs.

**Ensure girls learn about safe horseback riding.** A pre-ride demonstration should be given to first-time riders, including mounting, dismounting, starting, stopping, steering, and maintaining a balanced body position. Avoid changing clothing, such as putting on raingear, while mounted on the horse, because it may scare the horse; instead, dismount for clothing changes or adjustments.

**Test and classify riders according to riding ability.** The horse and the riding area are assigned according to the rider's ability. Beginning riders should attend an introductory safety lesson, including information on horse psychology and behavior and approaching, handling, and leading a horse. Before trail riding, all riders should warm up in a ring or corral to ensure that they are well suited to their horses and can control the gait and function required during the trail

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ride. Ensure that riders feel confident and demonstrate basic skills in controlling the horse (stop, start, steer) and maintaining proper distance.

**Follow basic horseback safety standards.** To ensure gear fits properly and/or is properly adjusted, an instructor should make a safety check of each rider's clothing, footwear, helmet, and saddle. He or she needs to check stirrup length to ensure that riders can raise their behinds off the saddle about one hand's depth. Front and rear cinches are checked for tightness, twigs, folds, and bends. The instructor should also check the safety of the riding area before each session. Only one rider is allowed on a horse at any time, and there should be no eating or drinking while riding. Riders should dismount before going through small gates.

**Respect ring and corral standards.** The trainer should continuously watch each horse and rider, always. The ring has good footing for the horses and is free of dangerous obstructions. The fencing must be at least 42 inches high, visible, and well maintained. Gates to the ring should remain shut.

**Inspect and do not spook horses.** Horses displaying uncomfortable or abnormal behaviors should be dismounted and checked for injuries and poor equipment fitting and may need to be walked back to the stable on foot. If a horse gets loose, do not chase it; instead, have an adult calmly attempt to retrieve the horse.

**Respect trail-riding standards.** The length of the trail ride and the gait of the horses should be geared to the ability of the least experienced rider. Riding trails should have good footing and be free of dangerous obstructions, such as low hanging branches. Trails are marked, mapped, regularly inspected, and maintained. The participants should ride single file, one full-horse length apart, with an instructor at the head and at the rear of the group. Riders must have control of horses, maintain the spacing between horses, and increase distances between horses when the horses' speed increases. Horses are to be walked (not ridden) up and down hills and should be walked for the final ten minutes of any riding period to cool down.

**Avoid public roads and highways whenever possible.** If a group must cross a road, the instructor should first halt the group in a line well before the road, check for traffic, and then signal the group to cross. At the signal, all horses are to be turned to face the highway and all cross at the same time.

## Safety Gear

- Protective headgear with a properly fitting safety harness that meets the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F1163-88 requirements, displaying the Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) seal.
- Long pants and appropriate protective clothing that is not too loose to prevent tangling with the saddle.
- Boots or closed-toe shoes with a smooth sole and at least a half-inch heel to prevent feet from sliding through stirrups (no steel-toe shoes, which could bend in stirrups).
- A saddle (sized appropriately for each rider), which the facility will provide.
- Extra halter/lead ropes carried by instructor, which the facility will provide.
- Cell phone or walkie-talkies to communicate need for emergency services.
- Tapaderos (pieces of heavy leather around the front of the stirrup of a stock or range saddle to protect the rider's foot and to keep the foot from sliding through the stirrup). If the saddle does not have tapaderos, the rider should have riding boots with at least a 1-inch heel to prevent the foot from slipping.
- Well-fitting gloves to protect hands from blisters, rope burns, and cuts.
- Saddlebag for lengthy trail rides, to carry items such as a water bottle, clothing layers, and lunch.



Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois
Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Horseback Riding Activities

- 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.
Horseback Riding is not permitted for Girl Scout Daisies.

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. \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF GSNI APPROVED HORSEBACK RIDING STABLE

Activity: These facilities are NOT owned or operated by Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois.

Clothing - Participants MUST follow the clothing guidelines:

- Long pants and appropriate protective clothing must be worn.
Clothing must be snug to prevent becoming tangled with the saddle.
Jewelry must not be worn.
Boots or shoes with at least a half-inch heel must be worn to prevent feet from sliding through the stirrups.
If tappaderos (a covering across the front of the stirrups that hold in the feet) are used, then athletic shoes with ties and non-skid soles may be worn.
Riders may not ride in hiking boots with lug soles, tennis shoes, sandals or barefoot.
Riders may wear well-fitting gloves to protect hands from blisters, rope burns and cuts.
Protective headgear with a properly-fitting safety harness that meets the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F-1163-88 requirements, displaying the Safety Equipment Institute (ESI) seal, must be worn by girls and adults when around horse, whether mounted or not.

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

I acknowledge that this Horseback Riding 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 Horseback Riding activity. I acknowledge that this Permission, Waiver and Release of Liability for Horseback Riding Activities 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 Horseback Riding Activities 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; the GSUSA Horseback Riding 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 Horseback Riding 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 Horseback Riding 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 \_\_\_\_\_