



## Climbing and Rappelling

Includes bouldering and slacklining

**Council Approval:** Required

**Certificate of Insurance (COI):** Required from vendor providing this activity for Council Approval. Visit [GSNI's webpage](#) for information on requesting a COI from the venue. Instructor must have certification from verified organizations.

A waiver for GSNI is found on the [Climbing and Rappelling SAC file](#).

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

### Notes:

- *Daisies and Brownies can do bouldering, slacklining, and low-challenge elements.*
- *Daisies and Brownies may participate only in activities that are designed for their ages, with equipment suitable to the size and ability of each girl.*
- *Outdoor high ropes, high elements, and rappelling are only permitted for Girl Scout Juniors and older.*

### Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois' Property Specifications:

Troops must hire a trained GSNI facilitator for crate stacking, rock climbing, or rappelling activities at GSNI camp properties.

**Cratestacking:** For crate stacking at one of GSNI's camps, climbers must be Girl Scout Juniors and above (4<sup>th</sup> grade) and weigh a maximum of 250 pounds.

**GSNI's Mobile Rock-Climbing Wall:** For rock climbing with GSNI's mobile rock-climbing wall, climbers must be at least 7 years old, 40 inches tall, and weigh between 40-250 pounds.

## About Climbing and Rappelling

Girl Scouts may participate in various types of climbing, rappelling, and rope adventures.

**Bouldering.** This sport involves climbing without a rope but at a height not greater than 6 feet off the ground. 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. Spotting is used when descending and ascending high elements or climbing routes.

**Top Roping.** In this climbing method, the rope is anchored from the top of the climbing route, using belays (safety ropes to secure a person to an anchor point). The belayer (person who controls the belay/safety line to prevent long and dangerous falls) is set up at the bottom of the route with the other end of the rope tied to the climber.

**Multi-Pitch Climbing.** For experienced climbers only, this is a climb on a long route that requires several pitches the length of a rope or less. (A "pitch" is the rope-length between belay stations). The group climbs to the top of the first pitch; the lead climber climbs the next pitch, anchors in, and belays each remaining climber individually to the anchor.

**Free Climbing.** This method, which involves climbing on rocks or walls without a belay system in place, is not approved.

**Slacklining.** A sport and an art that can involve balance training, recreation, and moving meditation. It is similar, at first glance, to tightrope walking and is accomplished by stretching and tensioning a 1-inch to 2-inch length of nylon/polyester webbing between two anchor points, most often trees. It is a way of passing time while maintaining concentration, fitness, core strength, and balance. It can be used as a team-building activity in which

spotters safeguard the movements of each member of the group. Slackliners must be belayed when the line is 6 feet or higher.

**Artificial climbing walls** and **harnessed indoor ropes** are great learning options too.

### Learn More

- [International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation](#)
- [Climbing Magazine](#)
- [Indoor Climbing Basics—REI](#)

**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 [Adaptive Sports at Move United](#).

**Equity.** 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. See the Equity section of the [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for general advice about expense,

**Emergency Action Plan (EAP).** Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before starting any activity and review it so all are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury, missing person, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

## Climbing and Rappelling Checkpoints

### Verify instructor knowledge and experience.

*For bouldering, top roping, and multi-pitch climbing:*

- An instructor with documented experience—indicating competence in equipment use, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training (must provide certification by a verified vendor) or documented experience according to your council’s specific guidelines—directly supervises the group.
- Ensure that there is a regular process of review and update for all instructors.
- A minimum of two instructors needs to be present and instructors should 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 must inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas.

*For indoor or outdoor artificial climbing walls and auto belay or harnessed indoor ropes courses:*

- An instructor with documented experience—indicating competence in equipment use, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training (must provide certification by a verified vendor) or documented experience according to your council’s specific guidelines—directly supervises the group.
- Facilitators should have experience, indicating competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training.
- A minimum of two adult facilitator and an additional adult volunteer support to cover youth-to-volunteer ratios must be present.

- Facilitators need to be skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching and supervising spotting and lowering techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group.
- Before use, facilitators should inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas.

*Indoor or outdoor artificial climbing walls and auto belay or harnessed indoor ropes courses:*

- These activities do not incorporate an element of high risk and can be done by Brownies through Ambassadors. However, all ages must have appropriately sized harnesses.
- If no harness properly fits a Girl Scout member, that person may not participate in climbing and/or rappelling.
- Daisies are not permitted to participate in climbing and rappelling.

The instructor-to-participant ratios are:

- **Bouldering and Top Roping:** One instructor to ten participants.
- **Multi-Pitch Climbing:** One instructor (qualified lead climber) to three participants.

For Girl Scout Activities, you must always have a minimum of 2 adult instructors.

Climbing Type	Grade Levels	Safety Standards and Gear	Additional Information
Slacklining <i>See Climbing and Rappelling Safety Activity Checkpoints.</i>	D, B, J, C, S, A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sneakers</li> <li>• Comfortable clothing</li> <li>• Specific uniform or costume</li> <li>• Slackline</li> <li>• Check anchors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Slackline U.S.</a></li> </ul>
Bouldering <i>Permissible on elements that have a fall distance of 6 feet or less.</i>	D, B, J, C, S, A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfortable clothing</li> <li>• Sneakers</li> <li>• Spotters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">What is Bouldering?</a></li> </ul>
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auto belay/ harnessed indoor ropes</li> <li>• Belaying equipment: ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets that are designed, tested, and manufactured for the purpose of climbing and size appropriate for user.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Indoor Climbing Basics—REI</a></li> <li>• Instructor must have certification from verified organizations such as Professional Rope Course Association or <a href="#">Experiential Systems</a>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Notes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <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.</i></li> <li>• <i>When the hosting facility or instructor indicates a helmet is required, always opt for the helmet.</i></li> </ul>

**Select a safe site.** Permits and permission requests are filed as required for outdoor natural climbing sites and facilities. All permanent structures and the belaying system are planned and constructed by experienced

individuals. Plans and procedures are established to avoid unauthorized use of the site, structures, and equipment. The artificial climbing site must be posted to warn against unauthorized use.

**Participants learn about and prepare for climbing and rappelling.** Instructors teach a set of readiness and action commands to all participants for climbing, spotting, and belaying. All participants take part in muscle warm-up and stretching activities before beginning physical activities. Instructors describe the objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants before beginning an activity.

**Participants practice safe climbing and rappelling techniques.** Spotting techniques (if necessary) are taught, demonstrated, and practiced by participants prior to any climbing or rappelling activity. All activities should be appropriately spotted. For activities where partners are needed, instructors must match participants according to size and skill level, if appropriate. Instructors should supervise all tie-ins, belays, and climbs on climbing sites and spotting on bouldering sites.

### **Safety Gear**

- Climbing helmets (with International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (IAA)-approved label) worn for all outdoor natural climbing situations where the participant is more than 6 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.
- A chest harness with a seat harness or a full-body harness, required for specific climbing or ropes activities
- Sturdy shoes
- Close-fitting clothing—loose clothing should be avoided, especially around the head and neck
- Potable drinking water
- Raingear, as necessary
- Long pants or athletic leggings are strongly recommended for activities involving potential skin abrasions on legs

*All equipment used for belaying, such as ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets, should be designed and tested for this type of activity and appropriate for the user’s size.*