

Council Approval: Required. This is a vendor provided activity. Visit or COI list for current venues.



A Certificate of Insurance from the venue is required for Council approval, which covers a minimum of \$5,000,000 of general liability. Visit [GSNI's webpage](#) for information on requesting a COI from the venue.

Waiver is found in the [Horseback Riding SAC](#).

Activity Permitted for: *D B J C S A

*Daisies are only permitted for pony rides and hand-led horseback walks.

About Horseback Riding

Horseback riding teaches responsibility, patience, discipline, understanding, empathy, compassion, problem solving, and self-control. It allows Girl Scouts to see the world from a different perspective (on top of a horse!) and can build their confidence and self-esteem. Important aspects of horseback riding include showing respect for horses and learning to better understand

communication between humans and animals.

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](#)
- [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. 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. All Troops must provide one adult certified in Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED.

Horseback 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 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 riders, 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. Riders 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. 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.

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 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