



Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC) provides the standard safety guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) and Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois (GSNI)'s approved activities.

GSUSA, local councils, and other units holding a credential—including USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO)—shall be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these standard safety guidelines.

In this section, you will find GSUSA's standard safety guidelines, by topic, **which apply to all Girl Scout activities**. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section.

Throughout *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as grade level and skill progression information.

Standard Safety Guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the specific, individual activity's safety checkpoints along with reasonable common-sense adjustments to ensure a safe and positive experience for Girl Scout members. The intent of providing these standard safety guidelines is to establish a checklist for success and to foster confident leadership.

Adult Volunteer Supervision

Girl Scouts has a strict standard that **whenever Girl Scouts meet, whether in person or virtually, there are to be at least two unrelated, registered, trained, and Girl Scout-approved adults who have been background checked, and one of whom is female, supervising Girl Scout members**. A registered and approved adult volunteer is one who has passed a background check and has been through the council's volunteer onboarding and training process. The two adult volunteers must not be related to each other (for example, not a sibling, spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, or anyone who would be considered a family member) and who do not live in the same residence.

This requirement applies to every Girl Scout gathering including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep-away travel, special events, activities, and projects. Members should be advised of this policy so that they can report to the council if there is a violation.

Troop leaders must always be adults. Youth or youth members are not permitted to substitute for adult supervision. This rule applies to every Girl Scout gathering including troop meetings (in person and virtual), day trips, camp, sleep-away travel, events, activities, and projects. **There are no exceptions to this rule.**

There are different specific adult-to-youth ratio requirements for Girl Scout troop meetings as compared to events outside of the regular Girl Scout troop meeting such as outings, activities, camping, and travel. Activities and travel outside of the regular troop meeting space require more adult supervision.

For Troop Meetings

The volunteer-to-youth ratio means *a minimum* of two registered, trained, approved, adult volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, for up to this number of Girl Scouts:

- 12 Daisy Girl Scouts
- 20 Brownie Girl Scouts
- 25 Junior Girl Scouts

- 25 Cadette Girl Scouts
- 30 Senior Girl Scouts
- 30 Ambassador Girl Scouts

There should be one extra registered, approved, adult volunteer for every additional:

- 1–6 Daisy Girl Scouts
- 1–8 Brownie Girl Scouts
- 1–10 Junior Girl Scouts
- 1–12 Cadette Girl Scouts
- 1–15 Senior Girl Scouts
- 1–15 Ambassador Girl Scouts

Adult Volunteer-to-Youth Ratios

Girl Scout Volunteer-to-Youth Ratios	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, and Camping	
	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of youth:	One additional volunteer to each additional:	Two unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for up to this number of youths:	One additional volunteer to each additional:
Girl Scout Daises (Grades K–1)	12	1–6	6	1–4
Girl Scout Brownies (Grades 2–3)	20	1–8	12	1–6
Girl Scout Juniors (Grades 4–5)	25	1–10	16	1–8
Girl Scout Cadettes (Grades 6–8)	25	1–12	20	1–10
Girl Scout Seniors (Grades 9–10)	30	1–15	24	1–12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (Grades 11–12)	30	1–15	24	1–12

For Outings, Activities, Travel, and Camping

The volunteer-to-youth ratio means *a minimum* of two registered, trained, approved, adult volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, for up to this number of Girl Scouts:

- 6 Daisy Girl Scouts
- 12 Brownie Girl Scouts
- 16 Junior Girl Scouts
- 20 Cadette Girl Scouts

- 24 Senior Girl Scouts
- 24 Ambassador Girl Scouts

There should be one extra registered, approved, adult volunteer for every additional:

- 1–4 Daisy **Girl** Scouts
- 1–6 Brownie **Girl** Scouts
- 1–8 Junior Girl Scouts
- 1–10 Cadette **Girl** Scouts
- 1–12 Senior **Girl** Scouts
- 1–12 Ambassador **Girl** Scouts

Some high-adventure activities may require more volunteer-to-youth supervision than stated above. For those activities, the individual activity’s safety activity checkpoints will provide the specific volunteer-to-youth supervision ratios. Note: instructor-to-youth ratio is the requirement for teaching within a specific class size while volunteer-to-youth ratio is still required to be followed for overall group supervision while participating in the activity or class. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger members, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger Girl Scout members may not be permitted to participate based on their age, as appropriate, and this will be specified on the individual activity’s safety activity checkpoints. In cases where younger girl participation is an option, but only under certain conditions, this is indicated on the first page of the individual activity’s safety activity checkpoints.

Note: For mixed-grade level troops (*Multi-Level Troops*), use the adult-to-youth ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy adult-to-youth ratio should be followed.

Activity Council Approval Requirement. On the first page of each individual activity’s safety activity checkpoints, you will see a field indicating whether your Girl Scout council requires you to have prior council approval to perform the activity. Council approval does require a Certificate of Insurance from the venue, listing GSNI as the certificate holder. Certificates of Insurance are legal insurance documentation that is unique to each venue. Council prior approval is required for those activities that are rated as high risk by Girl Scouts’ national insurance carriers. A council may approve an activity once for the duration of the year or require individual approval each time the activity takes place. This is a council decision as local norms and laws vary from state to state. The three council approval requirement types are:

- **Required.** You must check with your Girl Scout council for prior approval.
- **Not Required.** You do not need to check with your Girl Scout council for prior approval.
- **May Be Required.** Your Girl Scout council will determine if prior approval is required.

Activities Not Listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it is only natural that Girl Scout members will sometimes want to take part in activities that are not specifically addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. If safety checkpoints are not provided for a specific activity in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*, the first step is always to contact your Girl Scout council to make sure your council approves of the activity.

Be sure to have a plan or process in place for addressing and handling requests for activities that are not specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. When considering activities not specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*:

- **Consult with your Girl Scout council for clarification and approval in advance.** Your Girl Scout council may or may not permit the activity. If your council does approve the activity, they

may direct you to a specific vendor or facility or advise you to stay away from other vendors or facilities.

- **Investigate** whether the activity is similar to another activity and if the safety activity checkpoints for that activity can easily translate and apply to an approved activity, then follow those checkpoints.
- **Consider** whether the proposed activity requires any additional expert supervision or special certification for the instructor.
- **Think about the quality of the experience** in terms of how participation ties to Girl Scouts' Five Outcomes, the long-term positive outcomes Girl Scout members receive in Girl Scouting.

Selecting an Activity to Do with Girl Scout Members. When considering what types of activities to do, whether specifically listed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* or not, be thoughtful and intentional when selecting the activity and be mindful of the long-term positive outcomes that Girl Scout members receive through Girl Scouting. Think about how participating in the activity ties to at least one of the Girl Scouts Five Outcomes. Girl Scouts has proven to help girls thrive in five ways:

Strong sense of self. Girls have confidence in themselves and their abilities and form positive identities.

Positive values. Girls act ethically, honestly, and responsibly and show concern for others.

Challenge seeking. Girls take appropriate risks, try things even though they might fail, and learn from their mistakes.

Healthy relationships. Girls develop and maintain healthy relationships by communicating their feelings directly and resolving conflict constructively.

Community problem solving. Girls contribute to the world in purposeful and meaningful ways, learn how to identify problems in the community, and create “action plans” to solve them.

Activities chosen should work towards intentionally helping Girl Scout members be successful in these key areas. As part of the planning process, consider how and why the activity selected connects to Girl Scouts Five Outcomes. Make it girl-led by sharing these outcomes with them and engaging them in the activity selection and planning process.

Infectious Disease Safety in Girl Scouts

The health and safety of our members is always Girl Scouts' highest priority. Recognize that communicable diseases, including COVID-19, have always presented risks for Girl Scout members to handle. Following Centers for Disease Control standards along with guidance from local jurisdictions is expected. Be prepared to monitor evolving health matters.

Have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

Keeping to the Girl Scout motto, “Be Prepared,” proper preparation is the key to success. An important thing to consider, before heading out on a trip or to an activity, is an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Volunteers can review their troop's EAP with participants as a learning experience for them, to the extent it makes sense according to their age and maturity. Please ensure you print and carry the [GSNI Emergency Card](#) with you on all outings and trips.

For the adult volunteer, it is important to think about and document an EAP for troop meetings and activities to ensure you are prepared in the event of an accident or injury. When creating an EAP, think through scenarios of what can go wrong, such as physical injury, severe weather, fire, intruders, missing persons, or sudden illness. This basic step is invaluable. The key elements included in an effective risk management plan are:

Identify the type of emergency:

- **Medical:** A member becomes suddenly ill.
- **Accidental injury:** A member is hurt during an activity.
- **Weather-related crisis or challenging environment:** As with backpacking. Always pay attention to weather so that the activity can be rescheduled if there is a severe storm or weather-related risk.
- **Fire:** Become aware of all entrances and exits, and alternative exit routes.
- **Missing or lost member.**
- **Mitigate and minimize the damage, injury, or time element in seeking help:** Know how far the activity is from the nearest Emergency Medical Service (EMS).
 - If EMS is **more than 30 minutes away**, an Advanced First Aider should always be present, preferably with Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) credentials.
 - If EMS is **less than 30 minutes away**, a General First Aider should be present with Girl Scout members.
- **If more than 200 people at an event**, an Advanced First Aider should be added to the General First Aider for every 200 people.
- **Make sure emergency response vehicles can access the area where the activity is being held.** If an emergency vehicle cannot access the site, notify either local EMS, park services, or other authorities ahead of time and tell them where you will be, what you will be doing, and how many members are with you.

Respond once having confirmed the properly trained first aiders are present:

- **Immediately engage the first aider** to the accident scene involving an illness, accident, or injury.
- **Notify and coordinate the arrival of emergency medical services or law enforcement.**
- **Contact all relevant parties:**
 - Parents or legal guardians
 - Council staff (Emergency contact number found on the [GSNI Emergency Card](#))
 - Law enforcement
 - Property owner or facility manager

Key Components of an Effective Emergency Action Plan

- **Contact list.** Create a chart, table, or simple list for all participants, including adults, with parent and legal guardian contact phone numbers as well as key emergency phone numbers in addition to 911, such as the nearest hospital, medical center, law enforcement office, or emergency transportation. Share this information with a trusted individual, so that all information does not rest with one person. Consider a hard copy for quick reference in an emergency. Please ensure you print and carry the [GSNI Emergency Card](#) with you on all outings and trips.
- **Roles and responsibilities.** Keep predetermined and established emergency role assignments showing who does what in the event of an emergency. For example, the leader stays with Girl Scout members while the co-leader calls for help and coordinates the arrival of emergency services and notifies the parents, or vice versa. Agree on this ahead of time so that you are calm and prepared if the worst occurs. Also think through what you will do if the injured person is one of the adults.
- **Exit strategy.** Be aware of all emergency exits and/or evacuation plans beforehand. Identify and communicate alternative exit routes with all present.
- **Meeting place.** Determine and communicate a prearranged meeting place (designated spot) in the event the group becomes separated, or a Girl Scout member should become lost.

- **Communication method.** Have a method of emergency communication that works. If camping or backpacking, consider a whistle or horn as an emergency call-out. Make sure to inform Girl Scout members that this is the sound of an emergency. When they hear this sound, they know to go to the designated spot. If there is cell service at the activity site, save all contact names and numbers, including those for the appropriate authorities, in your mobile phones before the activity takes place.

Activity Preparation. Communicate with your Girl Scout council and caregivers about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and guidelines about general health examinations. Girl Scouts are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage them to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

Review Safety Activity Checkpoints with Instructors. Standard Safety Guidelines and the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, camp, or your Girl Scout council as appropriate to determine if the safety checkpoints can be complied. Take any questions or issues with safety compliance to your Girl Scout council for guidance and next steps.

Itinerary and Key Contacts. Give an itinerary to a contact person at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list that includes Girl Scout members' parent/caregiver contact information, council contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact information should be saved to an adult's mobile phone on the trip and be provided to the contact person at home.

Organizing Gear

- **Safety Gear** includes clothing and equipment members will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary to ensure safety. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is not specifically listed in the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints. If the facility offers helmets, always accept the use of helmets, and have members wear them.
- **Required Gear** simply means activity-specific gear necessary to participate in the activity. For example, for skiing, members will need skis, boots, and poles, or otherwise plan for rental equipment.
- **Additional Gear** may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. Always take additional gear into consideration when planning an outdoor activity or trip in addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity. These are items that often make the experience more comfortable. Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:
 - Layers of clothing for wintertime or activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time
 - Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, and lip balm
 - Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as spelunking
 - Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside in order to prevent ticks and blisters
 - Watch, compass, and map(s)
 - Insect repellent
 - Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities
 - Bottle of drinking water and healthy snacks
 - Backpacks (Girl Scout members carry their own gear and supplies)

Instructor Credibility. Verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or onsite instructors possess the proper skills, knowledge, training, and certification, or documented

experience required to meet your council's guidelines and as outlined in the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints for the approved activity.

With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level and years of experience can positively impact the support needed for volunteers to safeguard Girl Scout members. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard is 18, qualified lifeguards of 21 years of age or over are preferred whenever possible.

Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors may qualify to attend facilitated activity training based on age, maturity, and available room in training sessions. While youth receive certifications from the American Red Cross or USA Archery, rules and procedures from the Girl Scouts of the USA and Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois require at least 1 adult over the age of 18 who is certified in the activity to be present for facilitation and activity rental. Older Girl Scout youth are welcome to work with adult facilitators to lead lessons and instruct younger youth participants, but the certified adult must be present. Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors can also aid their troops, service unit, or camporees by providing a second facilitator support.

Visiting and Participating Adults. Occasionally, friends and family members join Girl Scout outings or trips, or experts in a subject may be invited to troop meetings to help work on badges. Verify with your Girl Scout council any specific requirements when adults attend Girl Scout gatherings. Arrange for background checks for participating adults or episodic volunteers. Depending on your jurisdiction, there may be specific background check, fingerprinting, or child abuse prevention training requirements for adults who will regularly or periodically attend Girl Scout gatherings, have shared oversight over members, participate in an overnight stay, handle money, or drive youth members.

All Girl Scout Volunteers with GSNI must be a registered Girl Scout Member, complete a background check, and complete the child abuse prevention training requirements. These requirements are for adults who will regularly or periodically attend Girl Scout gatherings, have shared oversight over members, participate in an overnight stay, handle money, or drive youth members.

Facility General Insurance. Commercial general liability insurance protects the Girl Scout organization. The facility or vendor that hosts your troop event (for example, a riding stable, a hotel, or a bus company) should carry general liability insurance and auto liability insurance when motor vehicles are involved. A facility that carries valid general liability insurance has almost always been examined for risk by its insurance carrier. If a facility or vendor does not carry general liability insurance, it's a red flag. It may not be safe, so it would be best to select another facility or vendor.

When your Girl Scout council requires you to provide documented evidence of insurance, ask the facility for a certificate of insurance for your records. Be aware that some places either do not or cannot provide a certificate of insurance to all customers, only provide a certificate of insurance when a group is very large, or if the group plans to pay a certain amount in advance. Still, the conversation will give you an idea of whether the facility is adequately insured, and you can consult your council representative for next steps.

When planning to use a written contract with a facility or when considering a new vendor, remember to consult with your Girl Scout council for the proper insurance requirements and to see if your council uses an approved vendor list. Check to confirm the certificate of insurance you will be obtaining validates the insurance limits outlined in your contract or agreement before submitting a contract to your council for signature. To learn more about Certificates of Insurance, you can find more information on the [GSNI Website](#).

Activity Accident Insurance. Activity accident insurance is supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Registered members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities. Invited non-member

participants are also covered. When planning extended trips, always consult with your Girl Scout council to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed. International trips always require Activity Accident Insurance Plan 3PI. Please contact us at CustomerCare@girlscoutsni.org if you need to purchase additional insurance for international trips.

Leave No Trace. Girl Scouts has a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility and remember our principle of [Leave No Trace](#). Doing so will teach Girl Scout members responsibility and safeguard your troop and local Girl Scout council from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

Weather Conditions. Always monitor the weather in the days preceding an activity or trip. Check the local weather report on the day of the trip. For circumstances in which forecasted weather could be a risk to safety, consider scheduling alternatives and options. In the case of severe wind, lightning, hail, ice, snowstorm, flood warnings due to heavy rain, or a hurricane or tropical storm, make contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Reschedule the event if the weather report is severe. Adhere to public safety announcements concerning staying indoors or evacuating the area. In extremely hot weather, do outdoor activities in the morning and late afternoon hours and, during the hottest time of day, stay in a shaded area or inside with air conditioning. On extremely hot days, it is important to plan for easy access to plenty of drinking water to prevent heat exhaustion and dehydration. If extreme weather or temperature conditions prevent a trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Buddy System. For trips and activities, it is helpful for members of similar age to pair up as partners. Each Girl Scout member is responsible for staying with their buddy throughout a trip or activity. A buddy can warn their partner of danger, lend a helping hand, or get immediate assistance when the situation warrants it. All Girl Scout members are encouraged to stay near the group so if someone is injured or not feeling well, there are others, including an adult, close by to seek help.

Annual Permission Slips. Annual permission slips are parental or legal guardian consent forms for attendance at regular troop meetings throughout the year. If annual permissions are practiced in your council, in addition to specific activity permission slips, volunteers should keep copies of all permission forms for all Girl Scout members.

Permission Slips for Day Trips and Activities. It is imperative to secure a signed permission slip from a child's parent or guardian for any trip or special activity outside the troop meeting space. This applies to all Girl Scout youth members up to the age of 18 whom are still in high school. Always keep a copy of these permissions. In most cases, one parental consent or one legal guardian is legally acceptable. However, there may be circumstances regarding a custody situation or a standard in your council where dual parental consent is required. For international trips, written consent is generally required from both parents/legal guardians. If there is a question about single versus dual parental or dual guardian consent, consult your Girl Scout council and they can consult local or state laws for specific local guidance. International Trips must complete International Travel Permission for Minors with notarization and both guardian's signatures.

Overnight Trips. Prepare Girl Scout members to be away from home by involving them in planning the activity or event so they know what to expect. On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as Girl Scout youth members. Always support and maintain a single-sex atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. Men should not be in a situation where they must walk through Girl Scouts' sleeping quarters to enter or exit their sleeping quarters or access restrooms. In some circumstances, such as a museum or mall overnight, with hundreds of Girl Scouts, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, men do not supervise Girl Scout youth members in the sleeping area of the event and the adult-to-youth ratio is adjusted accordingly.

An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights, where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also please make note of the following:

- Each participant has their own bed.
- Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if youth members are to share a bed. Permission can be granted through the [GSNI Youth Sleeping Arrangement Permission Slip](#).
- Youth members and adults do not share a bed; some councils make exceptions for family members.
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area with youth members.
- If an adult female does share the sleeping area, there must always be at least two unrelated adult females present.

All overnight trips off GSNI Camp Properties must be reported and approved by GSNI. You can submit a [Troop Trip Travel application here](#).

Vacation Rentals. See [About Travel/Trips](#) for specific safety checkpoints when utilizing Airbnb, VRBO, and HomeAway. There are specific steps that must be followed when utilizing these privately owned property rentals, steps that are not necessarily taken with traditional commercially owned and operated properties such as hotels.

Modeling the Right Behavior. Adult volunteers should adhere to the Girl Scout Promise and Law. When spending time with Girl Scout members or representing Girl Scouts, do not consume alcohol, smoke, vape, or use foul language. Always obey the law, for example, by not texting while driving or jaywalking.

Drugs and Alcohol. Volunteers and adults may not purchase, consume, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol, recreational drugs/substances, prescription drugs, or over-the-counter medications which impair performance or judgment while participating in Girl Scout-sanctioned activities, in the presence of Girl Scout members, while conducting Girl Scout business, or in Girl Scout branded clothing. Alcohol or any substance which may impair one's judgment must never be used by volunteers, adult members, or any other adult in the presence of a youth member, or immediately prior to a Girl Scout activity.

Alcoholic beverages may be served to and consumed by adults of legal age at Girl Scout events, when youth members are not present, and when approved by the council's Board of Directors or the council's Chief Executive Officer.

Youth members are not permitted to attend events where alcohol is being served and consumed. However, with prior council approval, youth members may be permitted to attend functions at locations where alcohol is incidentally being purchased by adults and then taken away to be consumed elsewhere, away from youth members. For example, a council may approve an event taking place at an arena, stadium, theme park, movie theater, or places where alcoholic beverages are sold at a concession stand and taken away to be consumed.

Firearms. Firearms and/or weapons are prohibited at any Girl Scout activity and on Girl Scout owned or leased property except when in the possession of a sworn officer of the law, council-authorized property staff, a certified instructor, licensed wildlife control personnel, and/or trained adult while conducting a council-approved Girl Scout program activity. Volunteers and adults do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of Girl Scout members, unless given special permission by your council for target sport activities.

Online Safety. Instruct all Girl Scout members never to put their full names, location, or contact information online, engage in virtual conversations with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On group websites, publish first names only and never divulge members' location or

contact information. Teach members the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#) and ask them to read it, understand it, discuss it, and commit to following it.

Money Earning Activities. Safety is an important consideration during money earning activities, including Girl Scout Cookie Program sales and other council-sponsored product sales. During Girl Scout product programs, you are responsible for the safety of Girl Scout members, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to serve as their labor force. GSNI Troops and members can request a [Money-Earning Activity here](#). When representing Girl Scouts, members cannot raise money for other organizations, participate in money earning activities that represent partisan politics, or are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts. It is imperative that Girl Scouts do not partake in anything that can be construed as unrelated business income. This is essential to protect our organization's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If there is a questionable circumstance, consult your Girl Scout council. More information about GSNI's Money-Earning Activities can be found in the [GSNI Volunteer Essentials Guide](#).

Volunteer Essentials. A key resource for volunteers in Girl Scouting is *Volunteer Essentials*. While *Safety Activity Checkpoints* focuses on safety guidance and parameters, *Volunteer Essentials* addresses an array of topics such as Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and the Leader's Guide to Success. All Girl Scout volunteers are instructed to review, understand, and practice the principles and standards in both *Volunteer Essentials* and *Safety Activity Checkpoints*.

Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

After being thoroughly investigated by Girl Scouts leadership, some activities are clearly classified as "not permitted." Each sport or activity on the "not permitted" list is evaluated annually with respect to safety factors, council feedback, insurability, and accident history. These activities pose a high risk of bodily injury, require extensive prior experience to safely participate, or may require a driver's license, such as ATVs. Activities with a poor accident history based on loss data gathered from various industries are not approved and therefore "not permitted." The purpose of prohibiting certain activities is first and foremost to protect Girl Scout members, but also to safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of your council and the Girl Scout organization.

GSUSA does not approve, endorse, or provide safety checkpoints for "not permitted" activities.

The following activities are in the not permitted category:

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Untethered hot air ballooning
- Hunting
- Snowmobiling
- Riding a motorbike
- Riding electric scooters
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting or skydiving
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)
- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

Bungee Jumping. Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous.

Hang Gliding, Parasailing, Zorbing, Parachuting/Skydiving, and Untethered Hot Air Ballooning. These sports also have inconsistent safety regulations, inconsistency of facilitation, and specific insurance implications or exclusions. These are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities, from a loss experience perspective, view them as a high safety risk, meaning they see frequent and/or severe accidents associated with these sports.

Privately Owned Aircraft. Flying in a privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and (most) councils' commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, your council would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy (if your council purchases this type of policy, which it may not), a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are often excluded.

Outdoor Trampolines. Outdoor trampolines, particularly those with stilted metal frames, pose a high risk of injury. The activity can result in sprains and fractures of the arms or legs—as well as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is so high in the case of children that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor trampoline park injuries also are an area of emerging concern. *Indoor trampolines in a confined, padded indoor facility with higher supervision are safer, but still not recommended for children under six years old.* For reference see: [AAOS: American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons](#).

Paintball Tag. Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a person is certain to experience some pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting someone with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury but has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited. Target paintball shooting, however, is permitted.

Hunting. Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are common during hunting trips.

Jet Skis, Motorbikes, ATVs, Snowmobiles, and Electric Scooters. Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding snowmobiles, ATVs, and electronic scooters are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to poor accident history. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motorbikes and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

Chartered Aircraft Trips and Aviation

Chartered small aircraft trips require prior council approval for every flight. This activity is permitted only with trip-specific council prior approval. The safety factors involving chartered aircraft, equipment, and pilots are transparent and readily verifiable, unlike private aircraft. Confirm with your council ahead of time that chartered aviation participation is covered under your council's general liability policy or non-owned aviation liability insurance policy. Again, these policies will almost always exclude privately owned aircraft.

Your council will confirm that the aviation company has evidenced proper insurance showing at least one million dollars aviation liability insurance and five million dollars umbrella. It is strongly

recommended that your council consult with their insurance broker and/or GSUSA Risk & Insurance for assistance when vetting insurance issues and implications.

Tethered Hot Air Ballooning. Some outdoor parks may offer the opportunity to learn the skill of hot air ballooning in a relatively safe and controlled environment utilizing a tethered hot air balloon. Consult with your council so they can check their general liability insurance or non-owned aviation liability policy to determine if this activity is covered. A hot air balloon is an aircraft and viewed the same as small planes or helicopters from an aviation risk perspective. Therefore, the same standard applies—professionally chartered and tethered hot air balloon rides will be considered. Private rides and untethered balloon rides are not permitted.

Other Actions Girl Scouts and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, there are other activities that Girl Scout members and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts. Avoiding these will preserve the integrity of our organization. These include:

- Endorsement of commercial products or services.
- Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting.
- Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities unless the legislative activity has been specifically council approved.

First Aid

Make sure at least one adult who is certified in Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED accompanies the troop/group to all activities. See required qualifications below.

What to Do if There Is an Accident

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents.

At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the injured person(s). Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of council staff, parents/caregivers, and emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital. Check with your council for emergency contact information and keep your emergency action plan current with the appropriate contact information.

Your council may either have specific emergency contact information, a 24-hour emergency number, or both. Be sure to reach out to them for their preferred method of contact. You will need:

- The exact time and location of the incident
- A description of the incident
- The names of the people involved
- The names of any witnesses

After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will contact parents/caregivers, as appropriate. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with respect to notifying parents or legal guardians. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, **the police must be immediately notified. A responsible volunteer must remain at the scene the entire time.** In the case of a fatality, do not

disturb the victim or surroundings and follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, your council, and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.

When Someone Needs Emergency Care

Girl Scout members need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting any accidents, illnesses, or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities to adult volunteers.

- For all physical injuries and accidents, GSNI leaders and volunteers can complete the [GSNI Youth and Adult Accident Report Form \(Form A\)](#).
- For all behavioral incidents, GSNI volunteers can complete the [GSNI Incident Report Form \(Form B\)](#).

Be Prepared

Follow these steps (and any others specific to your region or circumstances) to be prepared in case accidents or emergencies occur:

- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.
- Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (tornadoes, hurricanes, and lightning). Consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with Girl Scout members.
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building security issues. Every Girl Scout member and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and your Girl Scout members, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
- Assemble a well-stocked first aid kit that is always accessible. First aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer first aid, if appropriately trained.

First Aid/CPR

For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be CPR/First Aid/AED certified for adult, youth, and infant. CPR/First Aid/AED for Adult and Pediatric/Infants must be included in your training and written on the certification card.. You can take advantage of first aid/CPR training offered by organizations such as:

- American Red Cross's Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED
- National Safety Council
- EMP America
- American Heart Association's Heartsaver First Aid/CPR/AED for Adults **AND** the Child CPR/AED, Infant CPR/AED, and Child First Aid modules.
- American Safety and Health Institute (ASHI)
- Medic
- Other sponsoring organizations approved by your council

If through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association you have a chance to be fully trained in first aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly. Note that all Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED certification classes must have an in-person component, either through full in-person or blended learning options.

First Aiders

General First Aider. A general first aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout–approved first aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for adult and pediatric CPR, first aid, and AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training that, minimally, includes face-to-face, hands-on skill checks for:

- Checking a conscious victim
- Checking an unconscious victim
- Adult and pediatric CPR
- Adult and pediatric conscious choking
- Controlling bleeding
- Sudden illness

Advanced First Aider. An advanced first aider is an adult with general first aid certification and additional health, safety, or emergency response expertise. For example, a physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic, person with wilderness training, certified lifeguard, or emergency medical technician (EMT) meets these requirements.

The individual activity’s safety activity checkpoints will always tell you when a first aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a first aider and the qualifications they must have are based on the remoteness and scope of the activity, as specified in the following chart:

Access to EMS	Minimum Level of First Aid Required
Less than 30 minutes	General First Aid
More than 30 minutes*	Advanced First Aid or Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)

Although a Wilderness First Responder is not the sole required training, it is strongly recommended as an additional certification when traveling with groups in areas that are greater than 30 minutes from EMS.

It is important to understand the differences between a first aid course and a wilderness rated course. Although standard first aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness rated courses include training on remote assessment skills, as well as emergency first aid response, including evacuation techniques to use when EMS is not readily available.

Note: *The presence of an advanced first aider is required at sleepaway camp and other large gatherings. For large events—200 people or more—there should be, in addition to a regular first aider(s), one advanced first aider for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as advanced first aiders for large groups: physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, paramedic, military medic, and emergency medical technician.*

First Aid Kit

Make sure a general first aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies Girl Scout members on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the Girl Scouts can assemble a kit yourselves. The American Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First Aid Kit](#) (note that the American Red Cross’s suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to provide without direct parent or guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs by

including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites, and the like. Want to get the troop involved? There's a [First Aid badge](#) for all but the Daisy program level.

In addition to standard contents, all kits should contain council and emergency telephone numbers (which you can get from your council contact). Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms, and health histories may also be included.

Overall Health, Well-Being, and Inclusivity

Health History Form. An annual health history form must be completed and signed by one parent/guardian for every Girl Scout and kept on file with the troop leader.

Follow council guidelines to comply with this requirement. The form should reflect any significant medical conditions, health issues, or allergies, and be updated each year. The form can also reflect any over-the-counter medication that a Girl Scout is not permitted to take, if there are any.

If parents send medication on trips or activities, it should be in its original labeled container and controlled and administered by one designated adult. Health history forms can be shared with the site camp physician or nurse ahead of time.

Always keep a current and signed health history form for each Girl Scout member with you when traveling. Your council may require an updated mid-year health history for overnight trips. For physically demanding activities, such as water sports, horseback riding, or skiing, an additional current health history form may be obtained to make sure all adults are aware of any current medical conditions or special needs. Councils will retain all health history forms in accordance with state record retention requirements and laws.

Health Exams and Health Exam Forms. Some councils also require a health exam for any activity that is three overnights or longer, which may include sleepaway camp. Again, follow your council's guidelines with respect to health exams. In most cases, the health exam needs to have been completed within one year of the last date of the trip in order for Girl Scout members to participate. Your council may require a current health exam for adult volunteers who participate in trips of three nights or more as well; be sure to ask your council about their health exam policy. A health exam can be given by a licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant, or a registered nurse. The medical provider must sign the health exam form.

For large events or trips longer in duration, such as sleepaway camp or a weeklong trip to a ranch, the designated health professional at the trip location is responsible for collecting all health exam forms and health history forms for members and adults.

Health exam forms and health history forms are to be shared only with designated health professionals and council staff responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information are private (by law) and must not be shared or publicly available, so keep forms safe and secure. Only share information on a need-to-know basis.

Councils will retain all health exam forms in accordance with individual state record retention requirements and laws.

Vaccination and Immunization. Issues or questions with respect to vaccination exemption periodically arise with activity and trip participation. Vaccine exemption laws vary by state and focus on public and private school attendance more directly than they do for youth organizations. Therefore, it is best to obtain local and state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance. A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the [Centers for Disease Control's website](#).

If you have any questions about your obligation to communicate a Girl Scout member's non-immunization with other troop parents, contact your Girl Scout council for legal guidance as privacy laws may apply. Absent state laws that speak directly to vaccines and communicating non-immunization with parents of youth groups, the guidance is to follow the standard and protocol as it pertains to school attendance.

Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme Disease Prevention. Mosquitoes, ticks, and insect bites are an inherent risk to any warm weather outdoor activity. Ensure parents and caregivers are aware of the need to have their children properly covered, preferably with closed shoes and light-colored clothing and socks. It is important to advise families of this risk and the safety precautions they should take. The understanding that your troop or council cannot be held responsible for tick bites can be reinforced with a waiver reference on a permission slip.

An excellent source for learning more is the [CDC's Lyme Disease web page](#).

To learn more about using insect repellent safely, visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at [Repellents: Protection against Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Other Arthropods](#). To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out [EPA DEET](#).

Emotional Safety. In Girl Scouts, emotional safety is just as important as physical safety. Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouts a place where members feel comfortable, seen, and are able to be who they are. Protect their emotional safety by creating a team agreement and coaching everyone to honor this agreement. Team agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse opinions and feelings, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying or clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive, respectful, and helpful communication with others.

Physical or Sexual Abuse. Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of youth is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication, including text messaging, and sexual activity of any kind with Girl Scout members is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, including between youth, notify appropriate council staff immediately. Incidences of abuse of any kind will result in immediate council intervention. Volunteers are responsible for following their council's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse with respect to members. All GSNI adult volunteers are **required** to complete the [Girl Scout Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Training](#).

Youth Violence and Bullying. Youth violence or bullying is also not tolerated in Girl Scouts. Youth violence occurs when young people intentionally use physical force or power to threaten or harm others. Bullying is a form of youth violence. Volunteers should become familiar with the signs, risk factors, and preventive measures against this type of behavior. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the appropriate council staff for guidance. The CDC provides excellent resources on this topic, including:

- [CDC Youth Violence](#)
- [CDC Bullying](#)
- [CDC Youth Violence Prevention](#)

Child Abuse. All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have specific laws which identify persons who are required to report suspected child abuse to an appropriate agency. Therefore, if you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, whether inside or outside of Girl Scouting, always notify the appropriate council staff immediately and follow your council's guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state. All GSNI adult volunteers are **required** to complete the [Girl Scout Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Training](#). For more information, please review these available resources:

- Child Welfare Information Gateway about [Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

- How to Report [Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- [CDC Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention](#)

Mental Health and Safety. As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young people, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies such as self-harm. Self-harm can take a physical form such as cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling, poisoning, or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member immediately and follow your council guidelines with respect to next steps. The CDC provides informative guidance around identifying and responding to harmful behaviors: [Self-Directed Violence and Other Forms of Self-Injury](#) and also a section on at-risk youth, [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) Youth at Risk](#). Encourage Girl Scouts to consider earning mental wellness badges, found on the [Mental Wellness and Inclusion](#) page and [GSNI's Mental Health Awareness](#) webpage.

Accommodate All Members. Girl Scouts is committed to making reasonable accommodations for any physical or cognitive conditions. Talk to Girl Scout members of all abilities and their caregivers; ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location, facility, and/or instructors to ensure they are able to accommodate all participants. For more information, visit [Disabled World](#). Whenever possible, the individual activity's safety activity checkpoints will provide additional resources specific to that sport or activity. Our goal is to include all who have a desire to participate.

Equity. Girl Scouts has a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we welcome and embrace individuals of all abilities and backgrounds into our sisterhood. For Girl Scouts, equity means that we ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate in Girl Scouts. Follow the general guidance below, as well as any activity-specific recommendations in those chapters.

Consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop. What might affect their participation in an activity, or how comfortable they feel on a field trip? What might get in the way of family communications, or a troop member's ability to access information? 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.

- Some activities addressed here—from indoor skydiving to horseback riding to sailing—can be expensive and out of reach for families. Girl Scouting—and the opportunity for participants to set goals, earn funds, and make decisions—means that expensive or exclusive activities can be within reach. Make sure budget plans include ways for all to participate. Clearly communicate any costs the family is expected to bear, and identify tactics to discreetly support them. Has the troop budgeted funds for this? How about your council?
- Consider body size and ability as potential barriers to participation. Ask vendors such as horseback or kayak outfitters about any weight or similar restrictions before booking to ensure that all can join in. If not, choose a vendor with more inclusive equipment and resources.
- Identify and communicate what gear is provided by the vendor, what is shared by all members of the troop, and what must be brought by each individual.
- Required or recommended gear for many activities can be expensive or unfamiliar to families. Help Girl Scouts find appropriate gear by borrowing, thrifting, or renting. Check your council office for items your troop may be able to check out, or ask the vendor if they have extras. Show participants how to use any equipment they are expected to bring. Make needs clear to parents/caregivers to ensure everyone is prepared and confident.

- Provide progressive opportunities to build skills and confidence in new sports—especially aquatics. Water sports are often accessible only to privileged communities. Contact your local YMCA or public pool for swim lessons that will build comfort and success not only *in* the water, but *on* it.
- Meet *all* participants where they are. If your troop has different levels of experience, teach to the level of the least experienced so no one gets left behind.

Transporting Girl Scouts

How parents decide to transport Girl Scouts between their homes and Girl Scout meeting places is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

For planned Girl Scout field trips and other activities, in which a group will be transported in privately owned vehicles, arrange qualified drivers and ensure:

- Every driver must be a registered, trained, background-checked member (approved adult volunteer) at least 21 years old, and have a safe driving record, a valid license, and a registered/insured vehicle, and meets council standards and policies for driving and transportation.
- Girl Scout youth members never drive other members to, from, or during activities or field trips.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be at least two unrelated, registered, trained, and background-checked members (approved adult volunteers) in the vehicle, one of whom is female.
- If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, the entire group must consist of at least two unrelated, registered, trained, and background-checked members (approved adult volunteers), one of whom is female. If a vehicle is transporting a male adult volunteer, a female volunteer who is registered, background checked and trained must be present in the vehicle.

Plan for Safe Driving

- Review and implement the standards in the [Checklist for Drivers](#), later in this section. Share it with all drivers, in advance. Build possible delays into your schedule. Allowing time for traffic or other delays will help prevent urgency and stress, which can be dangerous when driving.
- Provide directions for each vehicle.
- For driving trips of more than a few hours, plan a stop where all cars can meet and gather. This will avoid having drivers follow too closely or worry about being separated from the group.
- Anticipate stops every couple of hours for drivers to rest and refresh. Let drivers know they can stop more often if needed.
- Arrange for relief drivers if drive time will last six hours or more.
- In each vehicle, there should be a first aid kit, and permission and health history forms for each person in that car.
- All drivers must be registered as Troop Volunteers with a background check and complete the [415 Learn the Basics: Troop Volunteer Training](#) path that includes Troop Safety and Girl Scout Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention training.

Borrowing or Renting Vehicles. When borrowing or renting vehicles, drivers may rent cars or minivans in their own names without council staff signature. Make sure the car is adequately insured; consult the driver's auto insurance company. Know who is responsible for damage to, or loss of, the vehicle. Be sure the vehicle is used only for Girl Scout purposes, as non-related use can compromise coverage. When renting a vehicle for a Girl Scout-sanctioned trip, the Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois requires individual renters and designated drivers to provide their own vehicle insurance to the rental venue. Vehicle rental companies will need to provide their Certificate of Insurance (COI) with the Girl

Scouts of Northern Illinois listed as Certificate Holder. [More information about obtaining Certificates of Insurance from venues can be found here.](#)

To avoid surprises, read rental agreements to be familiar with the terms of the agreement and to be sure you comply with the terms. For example, in many cases the minimum age of drivers is 25, and the maximum age is often under 70.

Chartered Vehicles. Chartered vehicles, such as buses, are contracted, usually with the driver or operator, for a group's exclusive use. Volunteers may not sign contracts for charters even if there is no cost. Contact your council to request approval and signature. Please send all charter vehicle contracts to customercare@girlscoutsni.org.

Taxis and ride-sharing services, including Uber and Lyft, may be used with these guidelines:

- **An adult should ride in each vehicle** with Girl Scouts when multiple vehicles are being used.
- **Wait for your ride in a safe place.** For taxis, when possible, call (or ask your hotel to call), rather than hailing from the street. Use a taxi stand at airports. Stand away from traffic while waiting.
- **For taxis**, check that the taxi is appropriately marked.
- **For ride-sharing services:**
 - Check that the vehicle's license plate, make, and model match what is shown in the app.
 - Compare the app's photo with the driver. Ask for their name and be sure it matches the app.
 - Ask, "Who are you here to pick up?" They should have your first name, but no other information about you.
- **If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not get into the vehicle.** If you become uncomfortable, end the ride. Report your experience to the taxi service or ride-sharing app.
- **Send your in-town trip contact the name of the driver and your destination.** Most apps have a sharing feature for this purpose.
- **Do not share information about the group or where you are staying with any strangers.**
- **Each passenger must wear a seat belt.**
- **Enter and exit curbside.**
- **In foreign countries**, consult a local expert about how best to call for taxis or rides. Reputable practices vary.

Recreational Vehicles, Campers, and Trailers. Whether privately owned or rented, these may be used if the driver has the appropriate training and license for the vehicle. Passengers must use seat belts when the vehicle is in motion and may not ride in a trailer or in the bed of a truck.

Vans Designed for 15 Passengers. Volunteers are not encouraged to operate 15-passenger vans as the design of the vehicles makes them inherently unsafe for the average non-professional driver. School buses, minibuses, and minivans are preferred. For atypical circumstances, when another option is impossible, make sure to follow this checklist before driving Girl Scout members in a van designed for 15 passengers:

- Prior council approval must be obtained, which will require a Certificate of Insurance (COI) from the vehicle rental venue.
- The van was built in 2011 or later.
- Driver assistance technology has been installed:
 - Electronic stability control
 - Tire pressure monitoring
 - Side curtain airbags
 - Center aisle

- Insurance is valid. Check with the auto insurance company to confirm.
- All other safety measures are in place; see the [Checklist for Drivers](#).
- No gear is loaded on top, or heavy gear in the back of the van.
- Van is not overloaded.
- Drive with headlights on, in the right-hand lane when possible.
- Inspect tire conditions and pressure before each trip.
- The driver has the appropriate license in the state(s) where the van will be driven. This type of van may need a commercial driver's license.

Note: *These rules do not apply to commercial or professionally operated services such as airport shuttles. Professionally operated commercial vans designed for 15 passengers are permitted.*

Commercial and common-carrier transportation is available to the public. They include buses, trains, airlines, ferries, and similar modes of transportation. In the United States, these are regulated and can be considered safe. Keep it girl-led; members can compare fares and schedules and make decisions with adult support.

When traveling internationally, consider the transportation options available in the host country and determine safety and accessibility specific to the location.

Checklist for Drivers

When driving a car, RV, or camper, take the following precautions and ask all other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all volunteer drivers are at least 21 years old.
- Only adult volunteers who are registered, background checked and trained can transport Girl Scout members.
- Wear seat belts and insist that all passengers do the same. Each person must have their own, fixed seat belt.
- Anyone under 12 must ride in the back seats. Use car seats and boosters as required by your state.
- Never transport Girl Scout members in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip, and recheck them periodically on long trips.
- Load gear appropriately. Heavy objects and luggage can affect vehicle stability and handling. Avoid overloading, especially on the top or back of any vehicle.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date including, but not limited to, your driver's license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, and insurance coverage.
- Follow the best driving safety practices:
 - Keep at least a two-car-length distance between you and the car ahead of you.
 - Do not talk or text on a cell phone or other device.
 - Do not use ear buds or headphones.
 - Turn your lights on when your windshield wipers are on.
- No caravanning (cars following closely together with the lead vehicle in charge) is allowed. Each driver must have information about the route and destination in addition to the cell phone numbers of other drivers.
- Know what to do in case of breakdown or accident. It is smart to have reflectors, a flashlight, a few tools, and a good spare tire.
- Take time to familiarize yourself with any new or rented vehicle.

- Take a break when you need it. The volunteer in charge of your trip will plan occasional stops, but it is okay to pull over to a safe place whenever you are too tired to continue. Relief drivers should be planned for long drives of six hours or more.
- Do NOT drive when you are tired or taking medication that makes you drowsy.

Troop Meeting Space

Always Choose a Safe Meeting Space. Consider the age range and the type of activities you want to engage in when selecting a location or facility for your troop meetings. A meeting place needs to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment that allows for the participation of all Girl Scout members. You might consider rooms at schools, libraries, houses of worship, community buildings, childcare facilities, and local businesses for your meeting location. For teens, you can also rotate meetings at coffee shops, bookstores, and other places they enjoy spending time. Below are a few points to keep in mind as you consider meeting locations:

- **Accessibility.** Be sure the space can accommodate those with disabilities, including parents/caregivers. Also consider transportation access, based on your troop's needs: Is the meeting site close to public transportation? Is there a safe place for Girl Scouts to get dropped off? Is there parking on site?
- **Allergen-free.** Ensure pet dander, smoke, and other common allergens will not bother susceptible members during meetings.
- **Availability.** Be sure the space is available for the day and the entire length of time of your troop meetings.
- **Communication friendly.** Be sure your cell phone works in the meeting space or there is a land line for emergencies. Internet access is helpful.
- **Cost.** The space should be free to use. However, you may wish to develop a partnership with the facility and provide them community service (e.g., flower planting in the spring at the entrance, or a clean-up day for the grounds) or offer a donation toward maintenance or utilities.
- **Facilities.** Sanitary and accessible restrooms and toilets are critical.
- **Resources.** Determine what types of furnishings come with the room and ensure the lighting is adequate. A bonus would be a cubby or closet where you can store supplies.
- **Safety.** Ensure the space is safe, secure, clean, properly ventilated, heated (or cooled, depending on location), free from hazards, and has at least two exits that are well-marked and fully functional. Also check to see if a first aid kit and equipment (e.g., portable defibrillator), smoke detectors, and a fire extinguisher are on site.
- **Size.** Make sure the space is large enough to accommodate the whole group and all planned activities.

Can We Meet in a Private Home? Girl Scouts does not recommend holding troop meetings in private homes. If you are considering meeting in a private home, check with your council to make sure it is permitted based on their council policy. In addition to the above, remember to ensure these standards:

- Always obtain prior approval from your council, which involves a copy of your homeowner's insurance. For more information, visit the [GSNI's Volunteer Policies and Procedures](#).
- The private home must be the home of a registered, council-approved volunteer.
- Girl Scout members may not meet in a home where a registered sex offender resides.
- Some councils require membership and background checks for all adults living in the home. Contact your council for specific guidelines.
- Troop members need to be able to focus without disruptions from other household members.
- Animals should be kept in a place that is separate from the meeting space.
- Homeowners should consider any personal insurance implications. The homeowner should ask their personal homeowner's insurance carrier if there are any insurance concerns with troop

meetings in the home. Also, volunteers should confirm with the council that troop meetings in the home are covered by the council's liability insurance carrier.

- Weapons must be out of view and in a locked space. Medication, cleaning products, or any poisonous substances must be stored in a secure space, out of sight, and preferably locked.