



## Row Boating

**Council Approval:** Required. This is a vendor provided activity.

**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.

If participating in this activity as part of a trip, troops must complete the [GSNI Troop Trip Travel Request Form](#).

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

**Not Recommended for:** Daisies, except with an experienced adult in each rowboat

### About Row Boating

Rowing uses oars to propel a boat across the water and is one of the earliest forms of transportation. It is a great way to build teamwork and skill. Beginners can start rowing in a stable boat on flat water. Most Daisies do not have the reach needed to row a standard rowboat. Daisies may use basic rowboats only if they have an adult in the boat with them. Interested rowers can progress to competitive “crew” racing, or specialized rowing in boats such as Venetian gondolas. Currents, waves, rapids, and wind affect conditions. Those conditions and the type of boat will determine what is appropriate for your troop. See [Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart](#).

Most rowing is done on flat water with little or no current, such as a lake, calm river, or pond. Oceans and rivers can be suitable if rowers have advanced instruction and skills. Consult local experts or your council for suggestions.

You can learn a lot about rowing online. You should learn basic skills from an expert, but it is fun to discover gear options, places to go, and cool tips. Check out the basics at [U.S. Rowing](#).

Also find out about collegiate and Olympic rowing. Some colleges and universities have women’s crew teams, which race streamlined boats called “sculls” and “shells” in races called “regattas.”

### Learn More

- [Rowing vocabulary](#)
- General boating safety: [Boat Safe](#), [Boat-Ed](#), [U.S. Coast Guard](#)

**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 [Paralympic.org](#) and learn about water safety for children with special needs.

**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.

### Row Boating Checkpoints

**Ensure participants are wearing U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets.** Type III life jackets are recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure they are in good condition and contain no tears. *Exception for competitive racing sculls and shells: because they can get caught on oars in fast-paced team rowing, it is acceptable to carry life jackets in a chase boat. All competitive rowers must be strong swimmers.*

**Confirm swimming ability.** Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conducting a swimming test in advance is highly recommended. See *Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints* for a sample or ask your instructor for guidelines. If a swimming test is not possible, presume all participants are non-swimmers. Only strong swimmers may row in sculls and shells.

**Practice recovery procedures.** The instructor should demonstrate self-recovery and righting techniques for the type of boat being used. Learn and practice these skills, as appropriate for the trip. This will help prevent disorientation or fear if participants end up in the water.

**Verify instructor/expert qualifications and experience.** The skill level of the adults must be higher than the difficulty of the intended rowing type. At least one adult instructor or lifeguard should be able to effectively communicate commands and instructions, and be certified or trained per the rowing section of the Master Progression Chart:

Type of Craft and Water	Grade Level	Participant to Instructor Ratio	Instructor/Expert Certification <i>With multiple choices, only <u>one</u> is required.</i>
<b>Rowing</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Participant to Instructor Ratio</b>	<b>Instructor/Expert Certification</b> <i>With multiple choices, only <u>one</u> is required.</i>
Rowboat: Protected from wind, waves, and boat traffic, flat, no current	D, B, J, C, S, A  <i>Daisies only with adult in boat</i>	12:1 plus 1 watcher/ helper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Canoe Association (ACA) Paddlesports Safety Facilitator for that craft</li> <li>OR an instructor with the demonstrated equivalent experience in line with these credentials</li> </ul>
Scull or Shell: Protected from wind, waves, and boat traffic, flat, no current	C, S, A  <i>who are strong swimmers</i>	Varies, consult instructor or coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>U.S. Rowing Coach Level 1 or higher</li> <li>OR Demonstrated equivalent experience in line with above credentials</li> </ul>

**Ensure the instructor will review site-specific emergency techniques** for the type of craft used.

**Ensure the lead instructor has firsthand knowledge** of the hazards and conditions of the location and type of boat being used.

**Ensure adult certifications are appropriate for the activity.**

**Check lifeguard qualifications.** Ensure lifeguards overseeing rowing have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the body of water and the specific watercraft involved.

**Arrange for watchers/helpers.** An adult watcher or skilled helper is required to assist the instructor. See [Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart](#). This person should have basic skills in rowing and supports the group by reinforcing instructions and watching for possible emergencies. ARC Basic Water Rescue, [ACA Paddlesport online course](#), or similar training is the preferred preparation. Consult the instructor for specific watcher/helper qualifications.

**Select a safe site.** Do not row in unknown areas; know the locations of all shipping channels. Rowing is not permitted farther than 1 mile from the nearest shore. Make sure of the following:

- Busy channels are avoided when possible and crossed carefully, when necessary, at a 90-degree angle to the channel traffic

- Surf zones and areas with standing waves are avoided
- On long passages, boats are close enough together so that a group decision can be made if wind and water conditions change
- You are aware of possible changes in water level due to tides or dam releases, and how these affect water conditions

**Avoid hazards.** These include strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences, and low power lines. Rapids must be avoided.

**Do not exceed boat weight and capacity.** Many boats have a plate near the stern (back) showing these maximums.

**Ensure boats are not overloaded with gear.** Gear should be distributed evenly among rowers.

**Know universal signals.** Whistle and visual signals should be used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at [Paddle.com](http://Paddle.com).

**Prepare for emergencies.** Pack a waterproof first aid kit if taking a rowing trip. See [Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines](#) for information on what to pack and other guidelines.

**File a float plan.** If participating in a long-distance trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify authorities should your group not return on time.

### On the Day of Paddling or Rowing

- At least one adult certified in Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED must be present who is not instructing the activity.
- **Get a weather and wind report.** Check [Weather.com](http://Weather.com) or other reliable weather sources, including the “boat and beach” forecast, which covers wind speed, water temperature, and wave height. Be prepared with a backup plan or postpone the activity if weather prevents the outing.
- **Review what to do in a storm.** If thunder is heard or lightning seen, get everyone off the water immediately. Do not return until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last evidence of the storm. If you cannot get to shore, secure all loose gear, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low. If possible, do not touch metal or water when there is a chance of lightning.

**Report accidents.** Notify marine law enforcement or your council as appropriate.

### Safety and Required Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III life jackets recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications)
- Rowboat, scull, or shell sized appropriately for the participants and suitable for the type of water
- Oars that are the right size and style for the boat type and person using them
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, compressed air horn, or VHF radio on navigable waters
- At least one graspable and throwable Coast Guard–approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water (for boats 16 feet or longer)
- Rescue gear appropriate for boat type and conditions
- Emergency gear appropriate for the activity type and distance from shore, such as:
  - bailer (a scoop for removing water from a boat) or foot pump
  - emergency repair kit: duct tape or electrical tape, screwdriver, pliers, spare plugs
  - spare oar or paddle, first aid kit, repair kit, and standard safety equipment, including signaling equipment

- emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, pocket knife, 10x10-foot tarp, rope, food, and appropriate liquids (food and water bottles should be secured in the boat)
- All other items required by the boating jurisdiction in which you will row