



Sailing

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: *B J C S A

Activity Not permitted for: Daisies

Not Recommended for: **While sailing for Brownies is permitted, carefully evaluate maturity and decision-making skills based on small craft progression for Girl Scouts and consider whether the sailboat type being used is appropriate.*

About Sailing

The sport of sailing has become very high-tech and competitive since its humble beginnings, but sailors and racers still must rely on the force of wind to propel their boats. There are a wide variety of sailboats, including small and large sailboats, keelboats, and multihulls.

Note: *Girl Scouts are not allowed to operate motorized boats without council permission and are never allowed to parasail. The instructor-to-youth ratio recommended is one to four.*

Know where to sail. Oceans and lakes are ideal for sailing, but many sailing or yacht clubs offer instructions on reservoirs, rivers, and ponds. Contact your Girl Scout council for site suggestions.

Learn More

- [U.S. Sailing](#)
- [World Sailing](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division](#)

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](#) or [U.S. Sailing's Adaptive Instruction Program](#) for more information on including people with disabilities. 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. Learn about [equity in sailing](#) through the stories of sailors of many different identities and experiences. 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.

Sailing Checkpoints

Confirm swimming ability. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Conducting a swimming test in advance is highly recommended. Sailboats likely to capsize, such as Hobie Cats, Lasers, and performance boats, should only be sailed by strong swimmers. 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.

Mandatory life jacket. Each sailor must have a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure the adult or sailing instructor is certified as a sailing instructor or sailing counselor by U.S. Sailing, completes Girl Scouts small craft safety training, or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council’s guidelines.

Compile key contacts. See [Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines](#).

Select appropriate sailboats for water and passengers. Make sure craft weight and passenger capacities are not exceeded (some crafts clearly display maximum capacity). Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment.

File a float plan. If participating in a long-distance sailing trip, it is recommended that a float plan be completed and filed (left) with a person knowledgeable about the trip and when to expect the party back. This person should inform authorities if you are late.

Transport sailboats safely. Sailboats are transported on car-top racks or trailers designed to haul sailboats. Sailboats should be secured with two lines across the top and a line at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first aid kit. Troops must provide one adult certified in Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED, who is prepared for cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first aider with Wilderness First Aid certification.

On the Day of Sailing

- **Get a weather and wind report.** Never sail on a stormy or excessively windy day. On the day of the sailing trip or lesson, visit [Weather.com](#) (which includes marine forecasts, including water temperature and wave height) to determine if conditions are appropriate. If weather conditions prevent the sailing activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternate activity.
- **Review rescue tips.** U.S. Sailing provides instructions for small boat capsize recovery.
- **Use the buddy system.** See [Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines](#).
- **Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning.** Exit water immediately and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them. During storms, if shore cannot be reached, 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.

Ensure docking safety. Ensure that docking lines are in good condition. Follow general safety guidelines provided by boating facility for docking the craft, and ensure the boat is securely connected to the dock before participants exit.

Privately owned sailboats. If using a sailboat that is privately owned, ensure that the owner/operator:

- Is a knowledgeable adult with understanding and ability to assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of Girl Scout members.
- Agrees to follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints relevant to the activity.
- Maintains the vessel in accordance with the Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Coordinates with the activity leader to confirm the required safety gear is available for all participants, and that the gear meets the specifications of authorities for the local jurisdiction.
- Meets Coast Guard and/or local authority requirements.
- Maintains insurance and registration as required by law in their jurisdiction.

For vessels over 30 feet, see [Offshore Water Vessels Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Carbon monoxide warning. Never allow “teak surfing,” swim platform dragging, or bodysurfing behind any vessel. Do not operate a motor or generator while anyone is on or holding onto a swim platform, swim deck, swim step, or swim ladder, except for a very brief time when docking, or entering/exiting the vessel. Carbon monoxide emitted at the stern (back) of the boat can cause death in these situations.

Safety Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications
- Boat shoes (closed-toe) and non-slip hiking/sport sandals with a heel strap, or water socks or shoes (no flip-flops)
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle, foghorn, or sounding flares
- Layered clothing that is easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended)
- Sailing gloves (help save tender hands and improve grip)
- Rigging knife
- Emergency repair kit (duct tape or electrical tape, screwdriver, pliers, shackles, extra line, sewing kit, a spare drain plug, extra cotter rings/pins, and a short piece of light line/rope)
- Emergency survival packet: raincoat, waterproof matches, lightweight/space blanket, hat, raincoat, pocket knife, minimum of 10x10-foot tarp, rope, drinking cup, food, and appropriate liquids (food and water bottles should be secured in the sailboat)
- Paddle (as secondary means of propulsion)
- Bailer (a bucket or scoop used to remove water from a boat)
- 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