



Snowshoeing

Council Approval: Not Required

Activity Permitted for: D B J C S A

About Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing has been around for thousands of years and likely originated in Central Asia. It's a great way for Girl Scouts of all ages to get outdoors in the winter. Snowshoeing extends the hiking season into winter and lets them enjoy their favorite trails and parks in a new way. Best of all, all ages and ability levels can enjoy the sport together.

As the saying goes, "If you can walk, you can snowshoe." The learning curve is much shorter than it is for skiing or snowboarding. Snowshoeing outings can be a good winter adventure for younger Girl Scouts before advancing to skiing or snowboarding.

There are techniques, however, that are worth practicing: widening your stance (to avoid stepping on snowshoe frames), going up and down hills, traversing slopes, and pole usage.

Lift tickets are not necessary for snowshoeing, and at some ski areas you can rent snowshoes. Check with your council, too, as they may have youth snowshoes available.

Learn More

- For those who are new to the activity: [Snowshoe Magazine](#)

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.

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.

Snowshoeing Checkpoints

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Instruction should come from an adult with experience teaching and/or supervising snowshoeing or has documented experience according to your council's guidelines.

Know participants' limits, especially for new or inexperienced snowshoers. There is nothing wrong with a half-hour hike—15 minutes out and 15 minutes back. Start slowly, planning short routes and building up the level of adventure once Girl Scouts gain confidence and ability.

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

Select a safe snowshoeing trail. Keep it girl-led: encourage Girl Scouts to plan trip details and include adequate rest periods with opportunities to replenish fluids and eat high-energy foods (such as fruits and nuts). Stick to established trails at first. Many ski areas have cross-country ski trails that snowshoers can share. On those, you are never too far from other people, and you are not likely to encounter avalanche hazards.

Be able to recognize trail hazards. Creek crossings, changing weather, avalanche conditions, and tree or rock wells can be difficult or downright dangerous.

Share your plan. Make sure a contact knows where you are snowshoeing and when to expect the group to return home.

Practice recovering from a fall. The act of getting up while wearing snowshoes can be a cumbersome process. It does not happen often but falls do occur when snowshoeing, most often on descents. Have members practice getting back up.

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 not instructing the activity, who is prepared for cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, and sprains. 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.

Dress for the conditions. Be sure participants carry extra layers for warmth, particularly extra base layer tops in case the ones they are wearing get wet from exertion or the weather. Know the signs of hypothermia so you can recognize them quickly.

Follow snowshoeing safety standards:

- When sharing the trail with cross-country skiers, try to make your own trail whenever possible, staying out of the tracks other skiers have worked hard to set.
- Skiers have the right-of-way on trails, since it is easier for a snowshoer to step off the trail safely than it is for a skier to stop or go around. Always be polite to the people you meet along the trail.
- A skier indicates their desire to pass by calling “track, please.”
- Do not snowshoe close to the edge of an embankment or a cliff.

Safety and Required Gear

- Snowshoes sized and adjusted for each person and strapped securely around the shoe or boot
- Poles sized to each person’s height
- Winter boots
- Thick, water-resistant gloves or mittens
- A winter hat
- Heavy insulating socks
- Thermal underwear or winter underwear
- A water bottle
- High-energy food (such as fruits and nuts)
- A daypack to carry personal belongings
- A windproof, waterproof jacket