



Stand-Up Paddleboarding

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: J C S A

Not Recommended for: Daisies and Brownies

About Stand-Up Paddleboarding

Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) is a water sport born from surfing, with modern roots in Hawaii. While standing, paddlers propel SUPs across the water with long-handled paddles. Paddling is a full-body sport that uses core muscles and develops excellent balance and coordination. With instruction, beginners can quickly learn to paddle on flat water lakes and bays. Experienced paddlers can tackle ocean surf or rivers with a certified instructor's guidance.

With the right instruction, equipment, and preparation, almost any body of water is suitable for SUP. Start on flat water with little or no current. Progress to more advanced conditions, like rivers or oceans.

The U.S. Coast Guard considers SUPs vessels when they are used outside of designated swim areas or ocean surfing zones. Therefore, federal regulations about life jackets, sound devices, and lights apply.

Learn More

- Interactive maps of places to go: [Paddling.com](#) and [American Whitewater](#)
- For river paddling: [American version of the International Scale of River Difficulty](#)
- [Free online paddling safety course, recommended for all paddlers: ACA Paddlesports](#)
- [Collection of educational paddling videos: ACA Paddlesports Resource Library](#)
- [Info on gear selection and how-to: Paddling.com](#)
- [American Canoe Association SUP: Leashes & Lifejackets Video—When to Wear, When Not to Wear](#)
- [Stand Up Paddle World](#) 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. Visit [Move United](#) and [Abilities.com](#) to learn more about inclusion and adaptive equipment for paddlers, as well as water safety for children with special needs.

Equity. Ask the paddleboard provider about any height or weight restrictions, and communicate this information to families in advance. Ensure the provider has a board appropriate for each person, or choose another vendor. 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.

Stand-Up Paddleboarding 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. 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 are approved for paddling in open ocean or moving water.

Ensure all paddlers wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket. 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.

Practice recovery procedures. The instructor demonstrates self-recovery and righting techniques. Learn and practice these skills. This will help prevent disorientation or fear if someone ends up in the water (which is likely with SUP).

Verify instructor knowledge and experience:

- The skill level of the adults must be higher than the difficulty of the intended activity.
- The instructor or guide must be able to effectively communicate commands and instructions.
- The instructor or guide needs to review site-specific emergency techniques. For example, when paddling in shallow water, the instructor should remind paddlers how to fall from their boards.
- The lead instructor or guide needs to have firsthand knowledge of the hazards and conditions of the location being used.
- At least one adult instructor or guide should be currently certified for the conditions per the Master Progression Chart:

Stand-Up Paddleboarding	Grade Level	Participant to Instructor Ratio	Instructor/Expert Certification <i>With multiple choices, only <u>one</u> is required.</i>
Flat water: Protected from wind, waves, and outside heavy boat traffic, with current less than 0.5 knots, and within swimming distance of shore	J, C, S, A	5 participants: 1 trip leader; with an additional qualified assistant, ratio 10:2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Canoe Association (ACA) Paddlesports Safety Facilitator certification in SUP and completion of ACA Level 1: Introduction to SUP Skills course • OR ACA SUP Day Trip Leader Assessment • OR Level 1 Introduction to SUP Instructor or higher • OR completed boat education paddle sports course for your state • OR an instructor with the demonstrated equivalent experience in line with these credentials • OR American Red Cross Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module • OR demonstrated equivalent experience in line with above credentials

River Class I: Moving water rivers including class I sections	C, S, A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACA SUP Day Trip Leading Skills Assessment and ACA Level 3: River SUP Skills Course • OR ACA Level 3: River SUP instructor or higher • OR an instructor with the demonstrated equivalent experience in line with these credentials • Use helmets when they are recommended or provided. Leashes not required, but if worn must be on a quick-release belt.
River Class II: Whitewater rivers including class II sections, where limited maneuvering in current is required to avoid obstacles	C, S, A	5 Participants: 1 trip leader; with an additional qualified assistant, ratio 10:2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACA Level 4: Whitewater SUP Assessment and Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue Skills Course • OR ACA Level 4: Whitewater SUP instructor or higher • OR an instructor with the demonstrated equivalent experience in line with these credentials • Helmets and quick-release leashes required.
Coastal SUP / Touring: Calm, protected water with constant access to safe landing, within half mile from shore; wind less than 10 knots, waves less than 1 foot, current less than 1 knot, no surf	C, S, A	5 Participants: 1 trip leader; with an additional qualified assistant, ratio 10:2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACA SUP Trip Leader Assessment • OR ACA Level 2: Essentials of SUP Instructor or higher • OR an instructor with the demonstrated equivalent experience in line with these credentials • Helmets not required. Leashes required (straight or coil).
Trips and ocean surf SUP	C, S, A	Varies, mandated by outfitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed professional guide • OR licensed professional instructor who is provided by an outfitter.
Class III–V	Not Permitted	N/A	N/A
<p>Qualified assistants: The American Canoe Association does not put strict parameters on the definition of “qualified assistant” on purpose. Assistants do not need to be certified, but they need to understand the curriculum and be able to meaningfully assist in the delivery of a quality course and provide assistance and rescue should an emergency arise. ACA Paddlesport online course, American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue, or similar training is recommended as preparation.</p>			

Check lifeguard qualifications. For lifeguards used as experts overseeing SUP, ensure they have the proper training, experience, and rescue equipment for the body of water being used.

Arrange for watchers/helpers. An adult watcher or skilled helper is required for some group sizes. See [Paddling and Rowing Sports—Master Progression Chart](#). This person should have basic skills in the activity and support the group by reinforcing instructions, watching for possible emergencies, and helping with rescues if needed. Basic water rescue, Girl Scouts small craft safety training, or similar training is the preferred preparation. Consult the instructor for specific watcher/helper qualifications.

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

- The launching area is free of glass and debris and has a gentle slope and good footing. Rocks should be avoided.

- 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, except as part of planned ocean/surf or whitewater paddling.
- On long passages, boards 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 such as strainers, sieves, hydraulics, waterfalls, bridges, dams, fences, and low power lines. Rapids must be avoided unless part of a planned whitewater route.

Research water conditions. Select the right boards for participant skill level and conditions.

Know universal signals. Whistle and visual signals are used to pass messages or call for help. Learn them at Paddle.com.

Prepare for emergencies. Pack a waterproof first aid kit if you will be away from shore. Follow other guidelines in [Introduction: Standard Safety 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

- Troops must provide one adult certified in Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED who is not instructing the activity.
- **Get a weather and wind report.** Check 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, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low.
- **Review self-rescue techniques.** Ensure each person can get back on their board. When paddling in cold water, also review cold-water survival techniques and treatment for hypothermia.
- **Use the buddy system.** Stay within sight of at least one other board.
- **Transport boats safely.** Use car-top racks or trailers specifically designed for paddleboards. Secure them with two lines across the top (one at each end), and with lines at the bow and the stern. Drivers must have prior experience hauling trailers.

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

Safety Gear. Some of the gear you will need depends on the type of paddling or on the water conditions. Check with your instructor.

- A U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket is worn, always, while paddling (Type III life jackets recommended and should fit according to weight and height specifications)
- Paddleboards sized appropriately for the participants and suitable for the type of water
- Paddles the appropriate size and style for the activity and person using them (a good rule of thumb is 10 inches higher than the paddler’s height; keep extras on hand)
- Emergency sound device, such as a whistle
- Rescue gear appropriate for conditions, such as a throw bag or throw line or waist-mounted tow system
- Leash to keep board close in case paddler falls off (no leashes in rivers, to avoid entrapment)

- Helmet, chest protector, arm protection, and leg protection for whitewater stand-up paddleboarding (inflatable board recommended)
- Any other items required by the boating jurisdiction in which you will paddle