

Safety Activity Checkpoint

Sailing

HIGH-ADVENTURE ACTIVITY: Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form Required
First-Aider and Lifeguard/Trained Water Rescue Required

Council Approval: Required
Activity Permitted For: B J C S A
Not Permitted for: Daisies or Brownies

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. Sailing is not allowed for Daisies or Brownies.



Note: Girls are not allowed to operate motorized boats without council permission and girls are never allowed to parasail. The instructor to girl ratio recommended is 1:4.

Know where to sail. Oceans and lakes are ideal for sailing, but many sailing or yacht clubs offer instructions on reservoirs, rivers, and ponds. Check [GSNorCal's Approved Vendor List](#) for outfitters in your area.

Learn More:

- [American Sail Training Association](#)
- [International Sailing Federation](#)
- [U.S. Sailing](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division](#)

Making Activities Accessible

In order to make your activity accessible to girls of all abilities, it's important to communicate with all girl attendees and their caregivers to learn about and accommodate their varied support needs. For resources and information on accessible sport and adventure activities, visit [International Sailing Federation](#) and [Move United Sports USA](#) provide to people with disabilities and/or special needs.

Equity

In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities, consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the girls in your troop that could affect a girl's ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with girls and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all girls and their families feel comfortable that they have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as the proper equipment, prior experiences, and skills needed to enjoy the activity.

Safety Activity Checklist

Standard Safety Guidelines. Refer to the "Standard Safety Guidelines" in the [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) which apply to all Girl Scout gatherings and activities. When the adult-to-girl ratio, or other safety

parameters, are stricter for a specific activity than in the Standard Safety Guidelines, always follow the stricter parameters in the activity chapter.

COVID-19 Guidelines. Review the “Coronavirus Safety in Girl Scouts” section in the [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) under the “Standard Safety Guidelines” section and be certain to consult with [GSNorCal’s specific COVID-19 guidance](#). When applicable, always call ahead to the vendor, property or facility involved to check for their COVID-19 safety requirements as you prepare to take girls for this activity.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) ahead of time before taking girls out for this activity. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, or sudden illness.

Ensure participants are able to swim and are comfortable in the water. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Consult with parents/guardians about girls’ swim abilities before the event. See the [Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoint](#) for water-abilities testing samples, or ask your instructor for guidelines. Only strong swimmers are approved for whitewater canoeing. See Volunteer Essentials for information about first-aid standards and training. [[SAFETYWISE: First Aid & First Aiders](#)]

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 that 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 certification, or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to GSNorCal guidelines.

Compile key contacts. See [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints 2023-2024](#).

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, filed and left with a person knowledgeable about the trip. This person should also know when the party is expected back from the trip. Float plans cannot be filed with the U.S. Coast Guard.

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 and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle 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. See [Volunteer Essentials \[First Aid & First Aider\]](#) for information about first-aid standards and training.

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. Intellicast also reports on sailing conditions. 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 capsizing recovery.

Use the buddy system. See [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints 2023-2024](#).

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 the responsibility of the safety and well-being of girls and volunteers
- Agrees to follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints relevant to the activity
- Maintains the vessel in accordance with the Safety Activity Checkpoints
- Has the required safety gear as required in their jurisdiction, or listed in the Safety Activity Checkpoints, or coordinates with the activity leader to have the proper gear
- Meets Coast Guard and/or State and local jurisdiction requirements and laws [[California Harbors and Navigation Code: Operation and Equipment of Vessels](#)]
- Maintains insurance and registration as required by law in their jurisdiction

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

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-toed 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, fog horn, or sounding flares
- Layered clothing that's easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended)
- Sailing gloves (these help save tender hands and improve grip)
- A 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 10-foot by 10-foot tarp, rope, drinking cup, food and appropriate liquids (food and water bottles should be secured in the sailboat)
- Paddle (as second means of propulsion)
- Bailer (a bucket used to remove water from a boat)

- At least one graspable and throw-able personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water

Girl Scouts of Northern California's Approval Process for Sailing

Sailing is considered a high adventure activity and must be pre-approved by the council.

- **Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form:** Submit the online [Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form](#) to council at least 4-6 weeks prior to your activity. Gather the following information to complete this form:
 - Confirmation that your chaperones are registered members of Girl Scouts of Northern California, have a current background check, completed the troop chaperone course and troop driver course (if transporting girls), and completed the [California State Mandated Reporter Training](#). Troop Leaders can find this information in their [Volunteer Toolkit](#).
 - Name of First Aider and a copy of their current CPR/First Aid certification card. Certification needs to be renewed every two years. If you are hiking or backpacking farther than 30 minutes from a medical facility, please have the information of the member, who is certified in Wilderness First Aid, accompanying your troop.
 - Confirm that the necessary online and in-person courses have been completed for this trip. You can find more information or register for these courses in your [Volunteer Learning Portal](#) in the section called Trip & Outdoor Advisor.
 - The **Trip & Outdoor Advisor Course** is required for all overnight and [high-adventure activities](#).
 - The **Camp Out course** is required for all camping trips that involve advanced outdoor cooking or camping trip with girls to a campground or other non-GSNorCal outdoor facility for longer than 1 night without indoor plumbing and electricity. Girls should have already had practice sleeping and cooking outdoors.
 - The **Extended Trips course** is required for troops traveling three (3) nights or more.
 - The **Girl Scout Small Craft Safety Training** is required before you take girls on a small craft water adventure.
- **High-Adventure Approved Vendor List:** GSNorCal troops/groups must select a high-adventure vendor from the [High-Adventure Approved Vendor List](#), which consists of organizations that meet Girl Scouts safety and insurance requirements for the activity. For the safety of our members, before a troop uses a high-adventure site/vendor for a troop or service unit event, the council must approve the high-adventure site/vendor. This process is designed to ensure a safe experience and protect the council's and volunteer's legal interests.