

## Safety Activity Checkpoint Scuba

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

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: C S A (12 years and older)



### About Scuba

Scuba diving is an eye-opening opportunity to experience the underwater world of sea life. Scuba is an acronym for “self-contained underwater breathing apparatus” and requires specialized equipment, most of which certified scuba-diving schools rent for lessons. Scuba diving can be done throughout the country in a variety of locations, including oceans, lakes, and rivers.

Divers can progress from exploratory experiences in pools, to various certification training courses, and finally to recreational dives.

Organizations such as the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), Scuba Schools International (SSI) and the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) offer online tools to locate certified scuba instructors. Scuba diving is a challenging activity, and girls who wish to learn to scuba dive must be at least 12 years old and meet the age and health requirements set by the certifying agency.

#### Learn More:

- Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI): [PADI](#)
- Scuba Schools International (SSI): [Dive SSI](#)
- National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI): [NAUI](#)
- World Recreational Scuba Training Council: [WRSTC](#)
- Project Aware: [Project Aware](#)
- Diver’s Alert Network (DAN): [Diver's Alert Network](#)

- World’s best dives for kids and teens: [Sport Diver](#)

### Pool-Only Scuba Experience Programs

Most dive agencies offer non-certification scuba experience programs for beginner participants of varying ages. This is a great way to explore the sport before “diving in.” Follow dive agency standards for age, health, supervision, and maximum depth requirements. Girl Scout adult-to-girl ratios must be maintained.

**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 recommended for scuba. See Volunteer Essentials for information about first-aid standards and training. [[SAFETYWISE: First Aid & First Aiders](#)]

- Family-friendly scuba dives: [The Active Times](#)

## 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 [Move United](#).

Contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities and/or special needs, and check out the [Handicapped SCUBA Association](#) and more information on [adaptive scuba programs](#).

## 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 Checkpoint

**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 participate in scuba activities.** Each person must complete the [World Recreational](#)

[Scuba Training Council](#) (WRSTC) [medical form](#), including a doctor’s signature stating the student is fit for diving prior to enrollment.

**Ensure participants are able to swim and are comfortable in the water.** Scuba requires a high degree of ability and comfort in the water, called “watermanship.” Dive training organization watermanship evaluations vary, but typically include demonstration of ability to swim a minimum of 200 yards, tread water for 15 minutes, or swim 500 yards with mask, fins, and snorkel--or some combination. Consult the instructor.

Ensure participants also have an understanding of the body of water they are going to dive in and aware of the type of marine life they may come across.

**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Ensure that the scuba-diving teacher holds instructional certification from SSI, PADI, NAUI, or other industry-recognized dive training organization. Verify that the certifying agency has guidelines for working with youth.

**Maintain appropriate ratios.** These ratios must be followed:

Type of training	Instructor to student ratio
Pool training activities	1:8
Confined water training activities	1:6
Open water training dive	1:4; 2 students may be added with additional instructor
Open water certification	1:4 instructor with a certified assistant
<i>These ratios are considered maximum and should be reduced if environmental conditions or other factors are not optimal.</i>	

To maintain general supervision of the girls, non-diving volunteers may be able to supervise pool or confined-water activities by watching from the pool deck or surface. For open water training dives, non-divers may supervise from land or boat. Among the student divers, instructors, and watchers, there must always be two unrelated adults, one of whom is female, who are approved by GSNorCal.

**Select a safe diving site.** Make sure your instructor is familiar with the scuba site. Scuba trips to unknown or non-designated areas are not allowed.

**Size up scuba gear.** Communicate girls’ ages, heights, and weights to instructors and equipment providers to ensure the appropriate size of scuba gear is available. Be sure that the instructor and participants check equipment before use. See gear list below.

**Use the buddy system.** All divers must use the buddy system above and under the water. **Solo diving is prohibited within Girl Scout programs.**

**Safeguard valuables.** Do not leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a scuba-diving school or camp, inquire about the organization’s storage amenities.

**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](#) for information about first-aid standards and training.

**Get a weather and wind report.** Never scuba dive on a stormy or extremely windy day. Check weather.com or other reliable weather source to determine if conditions are appropriate. Know how to respond if weather conditions change quickly.

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. If on a boat, follow the instructions of the boat captain.

**Recreational Diving.** After becoming certified divers, Girl Scouts may continue with recreational (non-training) dives, based on certification levels. A dive professional is required to provide expert supervision.

- Follow dive agency standards which will give guidelines on what progressive experiences are possible. Most agencies have Junior Diver standards; adhere to requirements to dive with an adult, parent, or professional.
- Pre-entry level certification/supervised diver courses (such as PADI Scuba Diver) requirements for maximum depth and supervision must be met. Verify that all participants are certified by a reputable dive agency. All divers (Girl Scouts and adults) must provide proof of diving experience within 6 months of the dive, or take remedial instruction.
- The ratio for recreational diving is 1:8 professional-to-diver.
- Solo diving in Girl Scouts is prohibited; all divers must dive with a buddy.
- Full penetration diving of wrecks and overhead environments are prohibited by recreational divers in a Girl Scout program.
- Rebreathers or any gases/blends except air and up to 36% enriched air are prohibited. Only those certified to use enriched air blends may do so.

**Diving from Boats.** If using a dive boat 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 local jurisdiction requirements.
- Maintains insurance and registration as required by law in their jurisdiction.

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

### **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.

## **Scuba-Diving Gear**

### **Required Gear for all Dive Activities**

- Fins, mask, snorkel, and boots (if conditions warrant)
- Compressed gas cylinder and valve
- Buoyancy control device (BCD) with tank mount or separate backpack, and low-pressure inflator
- Primary regulator and alternate air source
- Breathing gas monitoring device/Submersible Pressure Gauge (SPG)

- Depth monitoring device
- Time monitoring device
- Quick-release weight system and weights (if necessary for neutral buoyancy)
- Adequate exposure protection for local dive conditions
- Emergency oxygen kit and waterproof first aid kit (1 per group)

### Additional Required Gear for Open Water Dives

- When divers are riding or waiting on boat, each wears 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.
- At least one graspable and Coast-Guard approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) should be immediately available for each group on the water.
- Compass.
- Dive tables or dive computer.
- Audible emergency surface signaling device.
- Personal surface marker buoy.
- Floating dive flag (1 per group or as dictated by local regulations).
- Dive tool/knife (certified divers) unless prohibited by local regulations.
- Lights, slate and pencil, drift buoy, or other gear, as conditions require.

### Recommended Gear

- Mask defogger solution or cloth
- Swimsuit with rash guard and swim tights, dive skin or wetsuit
- Waterproof, coral-safe sunscreen (SPF of at least 15) and lip balm
- Beach towel
- Dry clothing for after the dive

### Girl Scouts of Northern California’s Approval Process for Scuba

Scuba 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 [MyGS Account - GSLearn](#) 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 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.