

**Council Approval:** Not required  
**Activity Permitted For:** D B J C S A



### About Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing has been around for thousands of years and is a great way for girls of all ages to get outdoors in the winter. Snowshoeing extends the hiking season into winter. It lets girls enjoy 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 that of skiing or snowboarding. Snowshoeing outings can be a good winter adventure for younger girls before advancing to skiing or snowboarding.

There are a few 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.

No lift ticket is required. In ski areas, you can often rent snowshoes.

#### Learn More:

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

### 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](#).

## 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 Checkpoints

**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.

**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.

**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Instruction needs to be given by an adult who has had experience teaching and/or supervising snowshoeing or has documented experience.

**Know girls' 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 girls gain confidence and ability.

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

**Select a safe snowshoeing trail.** Girls are encouraged 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 a lot, but girls can fall down when snowshoeing, most often on descents. Have girls practice getting back up from the ground.

**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 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. See [Volunteer Essentials](#) for information about first-aid standards and training.

**Dress for the conditions:** Be sure girls 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 in girls.

**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 skiers have worked hard to set.
- Skiers have the right-of-way on trail systems, 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 folks you meet along the trail.
- A skier indicates her 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 to each person’s height/weight
- Poles sized to each person’s height
- Winter boots
- Thick, water-resistant gloves or mittens
- A winter hat
- Heavy insulating socks
- Thermal underwear or long johns
- A water bottle
- High-energy food (such as fruits and nuts)
- A daypack to carry personal belongings
- A windproof, waterproof jacket