Safety Activity Checkpoint

Fencing

HIGH-ADVENTURE ACTIVITY: Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form Required

Council Approval: Required
Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A
Approved vendor required.

About Fencing
Derived from the word “defense,” fencing is a sport and martial art that involves using swords called foils (practice swords), sabers, and épées (a fencing sword with a bowl-shaped hand guard). The objective of fencing is to touch the opponent with the tip of a sword without being hit by the opponent’s sword. A fencing game (or bout) is typically three minutes—the first fencer to score five touches (or hits) wins; if neither reaches five within the designated time period, the participant with the most touches wins. If performed correctly with the proper equipment, fencing is a safe activity with a low injury rate. Most fencing clubs provide students with a full kit of equipment. Daisies learn about fencing games and the rules of fencing but should use only foam (mock) swords.

Learn More:
- U.S. Fencing Association: www.usafencing.org
- International Fencing Federation: www.fie.org
- Fencing 101: USA Fencing

Include Girls with Disabilities
Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Research relevant resources provided for people with disabilities.

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**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** One adult needs to be a certified fencing instructor or have equivalent certification, or documented experience, in accordance with GSNorCal’s guidelines. Ensure that there is a ratio of one instructor for every ten girls. Fencing is always well supervised and appropriate to age, skill level, and endurance.

**Note:** The instructor-to-participant ratio is not the same as the adult-to-girl ratio in Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints 2019-2020. Both ratios should be complied with when girls are participating in fencing, particularly Daisies and Brownies.

**Assess participants’ maturity level.** Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves and others. Ensure that swords are appropriate to the age, size, strength, and ability of the girls.

**Select a safe site.** Call the facility ahead of time to determine what accommodations they have for children and to learn their experience levels by age group.

**Always keep the sword pointed in a safe direction.** This is an important rule of fencing. A safe direction means that the sword is pointed away from yourself and other persons, leaning it downward when walking or resting, or anytime when not jousting. Control the sword at all times.

**Ensure that equipment to be used is in good condition.** Make sure that the equipment is clean and in good working order and that nothing is broken or loose. Check that the épée or foil handles and/or wrist and arm guards are in good repair.

**Dress appropriately for the activity.** Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment. Also, have girls tie back long hair.

**Review rules and expectations.** The instructor reviews the rules and operating procedures with girls beforehand.

**Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a 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 abrasions, sprains, and fractures. Emergency transportation is available; if any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services. Ensure the presence of a first-aider and plan for emergency medical routes, consider heavily trafficked routes depending on the day and time. See Volunteer Essentials for information about first-aid standards and training. [SAFETYWISE: First Aid & First Aiders]

**Safety and Required Gear**

- Foils, sabers, or épées
- Fencing glove
- Plastron (underarm protector worn on fencing arm)
- Fencing jacket
- Fencing knickers or pants that cover knees
- Long socks that go up to knees (soccer socks are recommended)
- Sneakers or closed-toed shoes

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**Girl Scouts of Northern California’s Approval Process for Fencing**

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Fencing 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 and have a current background check. 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.
    - For example, 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 **Backpacking course** is required before you take girls on an overnight backpacking 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.

- **Adding high-adventure facilities to the Approved Vendor List:** If your preferred vendor is not listed on the High-Adventure Approved Vendor list, please follow the simple steps in the [Volunteer Essentials](#) for adding high-adventure vendors.

Questions: Contact GSNorCal’s Risk Management Team at [Travel@GSNorCal.org](mailto:Travel@GSNorCal.org)