

Safety Activity Checkpoint Ax, Knife, & Hatchet Throwing

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

Council Approval: Required
Activity Permitted For: C S A



About Ax, Knife, and Hatchet Throwing

Some of the oldest weapons, tools, and hunting methods include the ax, knife, and hatchet and they are still used for their traditional purposes in some areas today. Learning how to handle them safely by aiming at targets for accuracy is also common today as a recreational and competitive activity. It is an ideal way to learn how to handle these tools safely, tools that can be used in the great outdoors and wilderness excursions.

Good throwing requires learning positive traits such as patience, determination, focus, attention to detail, discipline, and persistence. Since these skills are likewise key elements of leadership and confidence, we encourage our girls to take what disciplines they learn from any sport or activity and apply it to their participation in their communities and the world.

There are a variety of styles and sizes of axes, knives, and hatchets. The ones the girls will be learning about are designed for the express purpose of hitting a target.

Learn More:

- [World Ax Throwing League \(WATL\)](#)
- [National Axe Throwing Federation](#)
- [American Knife Throwers Alliance](#)

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

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.

Assess participants' maturity level. Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves and others.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. One adult needs to be trained and experienced in ax, hatchet, or knife throwing safety (depending on which you are doing), form and technique, range rules specifications, and emergency procedures.

Note: The instructor-to-participant ratio is not the same as the adult-to-girl ratio found in [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints 2023-2024](#). You must follow the Target Sports—Master Progression Chart. However, both ratios must be complied with when girls are participating in throwing sports. For example, if 15 Cadettes are on the throwing line, there must be two instructors plus eight adult Girl Scout volunteers (who are not instructors) who are present during the activity.

Select a safe site. Check [GSNorCal's Approved Vendor List](#). When using a vendor, ensure that:

- If choosing a vendor that is not currently on the approved vendor list, please allow 8-12 weeks for approval and addition of the vendor. Vendor approval is not guaranteed, and is dependent on the vendors' interest in partnering with GSNorCal.
- Equipment should be stored in a box, closet, or cabinet and locked when not in use.
- Equipment, including targets, are checked each time and in good condition.
- Range rules and throwing command controls are clearly posted and taught to all participants in advance of stepping on to the range.

- Clear safety signals and range commands to control the activity are posted and taught to all participants in advance of stepping on to the range.
- Backstops or a specific safety zone is set behind the targets.
- Clearly delineated rear and side safety buffers are known to the entire facility population.
- The shooting line is clearly defined.

At an indoor range, make sure that:

Indoor Range Specific Guidelines: [WATL for Indoor Range Information](#)

Note: For hatchet throwing, indoor ceilings must be a minimum of 12 feet high; metal chain link 15-foot floor-to-ceiling partitions must separate sets of two targets; and within a set of two targets, there must be a 6-foot floor-to-ceiling partition between the targets.

- Each throwing area is designated as a throwing lane.
- A regulation lane for competition must contain 2 targets.
- Fences or walls block this area from the rest of the facility to keep throwers and axes all contained in a safe environment.
- Only the two participating throwers and the axe-throwing coach are allowed inside the lane at one time. This includes ensuring the area behind the throwers is clear of any other person up to 5'.
- 10 ft minimum/clear ceiling height (within the throwing lane) is recommended for safety reasons.
- Targets are well-lit
- Doors or entries to the range are locked or blocked from the inside.
- Fire exits are not blocked.

At an outdoor range, check that:

Outdoor Range Specific Guidelines: [WATL for Outdoor Range Information](#)

- Each throwing area is designated as a throwing lane.
- There needs to be a marker of 12 ft from the targets to designate the safe zone.
- Only the two participating throwers and the supervisor are allowed inside the lane at one time. This includes ensuring the area behind the throwers is clear of any other person up to 6'.
- There needs to be 8ft tall fencing on the sides around the throwing area. This fencing must cover at least 15 ft to the front of the targets and connect to the fencing behind the targets with the back fencing.
- There needs to be 8ft tall fencing covering behind the target
- If the targets are not fully enclosed in fencing with a ceiling, then there must be fencing at least 10 ft away behind the targets
- Under no circumstances can spectators or the public be allowed to walk behind the target, even behind the 8ft tall fencing area
- If there is any reason to go behind the targets, it will only be by an authorized facilitator. Axes must all be put down any time a facilitator is behind a target.

Ensure equipment is properly sized for the girls and is made for throwing. Knives should be between 9 to 16 inches and not overly sharp. Hatchet heads should weigh between 1.25 and 1.75 pounds, the handle should be wood, length must be at least 13 inches, including the handle in the eye of the blade and the face (blade) of the axe must be no longer than 4 inches and not overly sharp.

Girls should learn about throwing. Girls develop skills based on proper procedures and form, handling the equipment, getting the right stance, sighting, and observing safety practices.

Always keep the knife/hatchet pointed in a safe direction. This is the primary rule of target sport safety. A “safe direction” means that the knife/hatchet is handled so that even if it were to be dropped or slipped out of the thrower’s grip it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control your actions at all times.

Ensure that equipment to be used is in good condition. Make sure that the equipment is clean, in good working order, and that nothing is broken or loose. Targets and backstops for targets 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. Make sure girls and adults are wearing closed-toed shoes.

Plan in advance. Call ahead to determine any special suggestions from the vendor or facility.

Ensure the instructor reviews all rules, range, and operating procedures with participants beforehand.

Safety and Required Gear

- Axes, knives, hatchets
- Targets (positioned at recommended/safe distance)
- Hard shoes (to protect feet from bounce backs)
- Gloves (may be provided)

Target Sports -

Ax, Knife, and Hatchet Throwing Progression Chart

| Shooting Type | Grade Level/ Minimum Age | Participant-to- Instructor Ratio | Instructor/Expert Certification |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Ax/ Knife/ Hatchet Throwing | C S A | 8:1 | One adult trained in throwing safety for equipment you are using, form and technique, range rules, and emergency procedures. In addition, one adult for every eight Cadettes, Seniors or Ambassadors is required. |

Girl Scouts of Northern California’s Approval Process for Tomahawk, Knife, and Hatchet Throwing

Ax, Knife, and Hatchet Throwing are considered 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/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.