

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: *D B J C S A

Approved vendor NOT 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 as the balance and hand-eye coordination needed to fence are not sufficiently well developed at this age.

Learn More:

- U.S. Fencing Association: www.usafencing.org
- U.S. Fencing Coaches Association: USFCA
- International Fencing Federation: www.fie.org
- Fencing 101: USA Fencing

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.

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 2023-2024](#). 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. Ensure that 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 with wilderness first-aid certification. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training. The designated adult should have a working cell phone for emergencies. [[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

Girl Scouts of Northern California's Approval Process for Fencing

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, 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. [[SAFETYWISE: First Aid & First Aiders](#)]