

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



### About Fishing and Ice Fishing

Fishing (also referred to as “angling”) is a sport, a leisurely activity, and a major food industry, depending on whom you ask. In the United States, freshwater fishing is more popular than saltwater fishing, and varieties include fly-fishing, ice fishing, and match fishing. The best times of day to fish depend on a variety of factors, such as amount of sunlight, temperature, depth of water, and wind. In general, however, the best times are early in the morning or in the mid-evening.

Ice fishing, the practice of fishing through a hole cut in the ice of a body of water, is a relaxing wintertime activity—particularly in the northern U.S. states. Ice anglers often sit on stools inside small ice shanties, which provide shelter and warmth in cold temperatures. Shanties are typically made of wood or plastic and are rented from sport-fishing outlets or made at home. Overall, lakes and ponds tend to be best. Connect with GSNorCal for site suggestions. Consult state ice-angler associations for information about ice fishing events and resources.

Fishing teaches respect for fish and wildlife. Whenever possible, use barbless hooks, and return live fish to water.

#### Learn More:

- All things fishing: [Take Me Fishing](#)
- [American Sportfishing Association](#)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#)
- [International Game Fish Association](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard’s Boating Safety Division](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)
- Video about ice fishing: [YouTube](#)
- Minimizing fishing’s impact on the environment: [Seafood Watch](#)

## 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 [Fishing Has No Boundaries](#).

## 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.

**Make sure you have the right life jackets.** If girls are wading in water more than knee-deep or fishing from a boat, ensure that they wear 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. Read about [Coast Guard: Wearing Your Life Jacket](#).

**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Ensure that the adult or fishing instructor holds American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience (competencies); the ratio of instructor to participant is 1:10. Consider additional adult watchers for groups that are more scattered and/or not clearly visible at all times.

See the [Offshore Water Vessel Safety Activity Checkpoint](#) for deep sea fishing trips or any chartered boat fishing trip.

**Observe fishing and environmental regulations.** When selecting a fishing location, follow local, state, and federal fishing regulations and obtain fishing licenses, where required. Use the correct type of bait and fishing gear permitted in that area, and learn about limits on the number, size, and kind of fish that you can keep.

**Verify safety of ice-fishing location.** Ensure that ice is solid and thick enough to support the ice fishers' weight. Opinions vary about the appropriate thickness of ice for fishing. Generally, the thickness should be between 4 and 6 inches. Your local department of natural resources can provide help. The Department of Natural Resources of the State of Minnesota also provides [guidelines for ice thickness](#). Once arriving at a lake, check the ice thickness. Keep in mind that temperature, snow cover, currents, springs, and rough fish all affect the relative safety of ice. In addition, ice is seldom the same thickness over a single body of water, and can be 2 feet thick in 1 place and 1 inch thick a few yards away. Assess the ice depth at least every 150 feet. [Read more on ice-fishing safety](#).

**Know where to find first aid.** 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. Basic ice rescue techniques should be practiced. Appropriate rescue equipment needs to be on hand (for example: ring buoy, rope, throw bag, pole, ladder, and—where necessary—boat).

### Safety requirements vary:

- **From a dock:** Fishing from a dock requires the presence of a first-aider with American Red Cross Lifeguard certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is 1:10, except for Daisies where the ratio is 1:6. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.

- **Wading above the knee:** Fishing while wading above knee-deep requires the presence of a first-aiders with American Red Cross Lifeguard or Swift Water Rescue certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is 1:10, except for Daisies where the ratio is 1:6. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Wading below the knee:** When fishing from a shoreline or while wading (up to knee-deep), the presence of a first-aiders with American Red Cross Lifeguard is recommended, but not required. However, personal flotation devices or other water rescue equipment must be provided. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is 1:10, except for Daisies where the ratio is 1:6. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Fishing from small craft:** American Red Cross Small Craft Safety Certification; the ratio of adult watcher to participant is 1:10, except for Daisies, where the ratio is 1:6. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight. A small craft can be defined by Jon Boats, Skiffs, Dinghies, Inflatables, Aluminum Fishing Boats, Pontoon Boats, Car-Toppers, Canoes and Kayaks.

**Select appropriate boats for water and passengers.** Make sure craft weight and capacity are not exceeded (some crafts clearly display maximum capacity). Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment.

**File a float plan for extensive boat trips.** If going on an extended boat-fishing trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who is not attending the trip and will notify local authorities should your group not return. Float plans must include the names of people on board, destination, craft description, times of departure and return and additional details about routes and marine communications. The Coast Guard provides an electronic, printable form: [USCG Float Plan](#)



Remove fishing gear, bait, and any dead fish at the end of the fishing activity.

**Have a Troop First-Aider present.** Troop First Aiders are required for troop/group activities as required for certain Safety Activity Checkpoints including camping, travel and high-adventure activities. [\[SAFETYWISE: First Aid & First Aiders\]](#) Learn more on how to become a Troop First-Aider by logging into [GSNorCal's Training Section](#) of the website.

### Safety Gear for General Fishing

- Fishing rod appropriate to the type of fishing
  - Fishing tackle (and tackle box) appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught
- If girls are wading in water more than knee-deep or fishing from a boat, ensure that each girl and adult wears a U.S. Coast Guard- approved life jacket (Type III)
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines
- Layered, non-cotton clothing that's easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended)
- Boat shoes, closed-toed and non-slip hiking/sport sandals with heel strap,

water socks, or shoes (no flip-flops)

- Cooler and ice for keeping fish cool and avoiding spoilage (if intended for consumption)
- If fishing from a boat, at least one graspable and throw-able Coast-Guard approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Fishing net

### Safety Gear for Ice Fishing

- Snowsuit, warm coat, hat, and mittens
- Lightweight rubber gloves or hunting/fishing gloves
- Waterproof boots that protect against cold temperatures
- Fishing rod (1- to 3-foot rods are most common)
- Fishing tackle appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught (and tackle box)
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines
- Ice auger (ice saw or chisel), jigging rod/pole or tip-up to catch fish. [Read about augers and other equipment.](#)

- Ice bucket and scoop
- At least one graspable and throw-able personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Flashlight and lantern
- Cooler for storing fish (if intended for consumption)
- Shanty (optional)
- Ice sled for pulling equipment (optional)
- First Aid Kit