

Council Approval: Required

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

Not Allowed For: Daisies and Brownies



About Waterskiing and Wakeboarding

Similar to surfing, learning to stand up on water skis or a wakeboard (a single board resembling a snowboard) is one of the sport's primary challenges, especially for beginners. Waterskiing requires thorough instruction and practice; key elements of successful waterskiing include balance, a strong grip, and proper-fitting skis/board and bindings. Skiers wear either one board (called slalom) or two skis (called combo); barefoot waterskiing is an advanced skill.

Beginners must learn the waterski position: knees bent and together, leaning back with weight on the balls of the feet, head up, arms straight, and skis pointing forward. Girls will learn technique and safety to prevent injuries, such as, water skiers must learn (contrary to instinct) to release the towline as soon as they begin to lose their balance.

Girls can start the learning process on land. Before entering the water, it is helpful to simulate the waterskiing process on a sandy beach and learn how to wear the skis and hold onto a water-ski handle properly. They can and should learn to communicate with the spotter (the person on the back of the boat watching the skier) with specific and agreed-upon hand signals. This way the spotter can then shout out to the driver when necessary.

Another fun technique is to learn by watching others—videotape other Girl Scouts who are learning to waterski and have girls watch it to find out how to improve their performance.

Open bodies of water, such as, lakes and bays, are ideal.

Learn More:

- [USA Water Ski](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities and/or Special Needs

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or special needs and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Visit [USA Water Ski](#) for information about amenities for water skiers with disabilities and/or special needs.

Safety Gear

- 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.
- 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
- Life raft and/or towing boat
- Ski lines (tow lines) at least 75 feet long; a single handle is used on the ski line
- Wakeboard or rounded (not pointed) skis that are appropriate to the skill and size of the skier
- Water skis
- Foot bindings appropriate for skier's weight and skiing speed
- Waterproof sunscreen (SPF of at least 15), applied every two hours, and lip balm
- Goggles for girls who require glasses or contact lenses (available at sporting-goods stores; if prescription goggles are too expensive for girls to purchase, make sure girls test non-prescription goggles to assure proper fit over prescriptive eyewear)
- Beach towel
- Dry clothing and sunglasses to wear after the activity
- Wet suit if water temperatures are cold, below 70 degrees Fahrenheit

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Ensure that girls do not operate motorized boats.

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.

Ensure no tricks. Girls are not permitted to attempt aerial tricks on water skis or wakeboards.

Protect hands. Water skiers can get blisters from the pressure of holding onto the rope handle; wearing gloves or taping hands can help. [Waterski Magazine](#)

No ocean skiing. Skiers stay in bays, inlets, lakes, and gulfs and do not ski in the ocean.

Learn skiing safety. Girls will learn basics like staying behind the boat, as it is dangerous to curve around the boat. In addition, skiing outside the wake is an advanced technique for experienced skiers only.

Verify instructor and boat driver knowledge and experience. Ensure that the adult or instructor is certified by [USA Water Ski](#), possesses equivalent certification, or has documented experience. Confirm that the boat driver is an adult, at least 21 years of age and has an appropriate license, and is skilled in operating the watercraft.

Ensure participants are able to swim and are comfortable in the water. Success on the water depends on comfort and ability in the water. Consult parents/guardians about girls' swim abilities before event. See the [Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoint](#) for guidelines.

Check the boat safety features. Make sure the boat has sufficient power to tow the skier(s) and is equipped with a side-angle rearview mirror, fire extinguisher, flags, paddle, horn, bailing device, two gas tanks (for outboard motors), mooring ropes (extra line), boarding ladder, and throw bag.

Prepare for emergencies. If a lifeguard is not on duty, an adult with rescue and resuscitation experience and/or certification is present. 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, and who is prepared to handle cases of near drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. 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.

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them. During storms, if shore cannot be reached, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions.

Review rescue tips. [Paddling.net](#) has instructions on small boat capsize recovery.

Keep track of water skiers. Use a list or checkboard system to stay aware of water skiers' whereabouts.

Girl Scouts of Northern California's Approval Process for Waterskiing and Wakeboarding

Waterskiing and wakeboarding are considered high-adventure activities 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.