



## Bicycling

**Activity Permitted for:** D B J C S A

**Council Approval:** Required for long trips as per Council Policy P1; [Activity/Trip Permission \(2129\)](#)

**Vendor Approval:** Required for bike shuttle services

**Required Training:** GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn)

### About Bicycling

Cycling is a fun activity that girls can enjoy their entire lives. As with all activities, progression through skill building and conditioning are very important. Long day cycling trips, mountain and road biking, and long-distance cycling trips can be strenuous. The terrain may be difficult. Girls must also carry more gear and supplies than on short day trips. For this type of cycling, it is essential for girls to have opportunities to condition themselves beforehand. When training for lengthy bicycle trips, set realistic goals for mileage. Plan to gradually increase the distance. For instance, one week aim to ride ten miles and strive for 15 the next.

### Learn More

- Middle and high school mountain biking teams: [National Interscholastic Cycling Association](#)
- [American Bicyclists](#)
- [People for Bikes](#)
- [International Mountain Bicycling Association](#)
- [Teen Trail Corps](#)
- [Adventure Cycling Association](#)
- [USA Cycling](#)
- [Tread Lightly](#)

Find out about mountain bike trails in your area at [MTBproject.com](#). Check with your local bicycle coalition or mountain bike association for events that can help you learn. Contact local bike shops and ask if they will host a maintenance clinic or guided ride for your group.

### Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities

Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that the [National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability](#) provides for people with disabilities.

**Equity.** In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities, consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to

fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity.

**Infectious Disease Guidelines.** Girl Scouts use a commonsense approach to health and safety. Before participating in Girl Scouting activities, members are to undergo health checks at home for any symptoms such as fever of 100.4 (or need for fever-reducing medications) chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, stomach aches, nausea, or vomiting. Members with any of these symptoms or in need of fever-reducing medication **MUST** stay home until fully recovered.

**Emergency Action Plan (EAP).** Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before taking girls out for any activity and review it with the girls so they too are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

## **Bicycling Checkpoints**

**Vendor Approval Required for bike shuttle services.** Review Vendor Approval section under the *Standard Safety Guidelines for vendor approval timelines*. Connect with your Girl Scout council for approved vendor suggestions to ensure they are properly insured. If it is not, allow enough time to have the vendor approved. The owner operator should be able to confirm one million dollars General Liability insurance upon request. For privately/locally owned businesses, the council will request a certificate of insurance to document evidence of the insurance coverage and name the council as additional insured. Most facilities will accommodate this request if they are able to administratively. [See High Adventure Approved Vendors List \(#2127\)](#).

**Required Training:** Troop/Group Program leaders must complete GSUSA's online leadership courses and GSVSC's 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights course in gsLearn. Adult volunteer chaperones must complete GSVSC's 281 GS 104 Orientation for Support Volunteers online course in gsLearn.

**Organize cycling groups.** Participants should travel in groups of five or six, unless on a bike path. An adult must ride at the head and rear of every two groups. Groups should ride with at least 150 feet between them so that vehicles may pass. Each girl must have her own bike, unless riding tandem. Girls riding tandem bikes must have their own seats.

**Select a safe cycling site or route.** A community bike park is an excellent place to evaluate and practice bike handling skills. When selecting a trip route, use designated bicycle paths whenever possible. Avoid routes with heavy traffic and observe all state and local biking rules.

**Make careful plans for the type of road or trail to be traveled.** For example, secondary roads are quiet, but may have trees, curves, and hills that obstruct visibility. When planning to cycle on trails, check that trails are authorized for cycling by contacting land managers or checking jurisdictional websites and maps. Notify jurisdictional authorities about the group's trip when necessary.

**Know your surroundings.** Check the location of emergency and medical services along the route.

**Consider your riders.** Ensure that the length and terrain of the route, the time of day, weather, and equipment are appropriate for the girls' experience levels and physical condition. Review the route together and practice map-reading skills.

### **Check the ABCs:**

- **Air:** Check tire pressure and ensure it meets the tire's specific air requirement.
- **Brakes:** Check that pads and brakes are adjusted appropriately.
- **Chain:** Make sure the chain is engaged with gears and shifting smoothly.

**Ride safely.** Plan to ride only during daylight hours. Ride with the flow of traffic. Obey traffic regulations, signals, lane markings, and local ordinances pertaining to bicycling. When on natural surface trails, cyclists yield to all others on the trail including hikers and those on horseback. Review trail etiquette guidelines.

### **Help girls learn to:**

- **Watch the road.** Recognize and avoid common roadway hazards like drainage grates and utility access hole covers, sand, gravel, glass, wet leaves, litter, and other road and trail hazards.
- **Communicate and cooperate with other road and trail users.**
- **Ride defensively.** Girls should stay aware of their surroundings and put themselves in the best position for safety.
- **Prepare for the unexpected.**
- **Pack light.** In addition, cyclists should carry a load weight on practice rides which is similar to the load weight they will carry on the planned, longer trip.
- **Practice packing and storing gear.** Light gear is stored in bicycle panniers (foldable carriers) or packs on the back of the bike.
- **Practice bike-riding skills in traffic.** These include signaling, scanning ahead and behind (especially before moving left), yielding to oncoming traffic, and making left turns. Girls should ride single file with traffic but can ride side-by-side briefly in order to pass a slower rider.
- **Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead.**
- **Be aware of hazards.** Understand that motor vehicle traffic presents the greatest danger to cyclists. Other hazards that can also cause cycling accidents include motor oil, wet leaves, parked cars, parked cars with doors that open in front of a cyclist, and rocks.
- **Brake early.** Girls should slow down and brake gradually and early, before necessary, especially on curves and when going downhill.
- **Stop fully.** It is important to make a full stop and look left, right, and left again, especially at the end of a driveway and before entering a street or roadway.
- **Walk bikes across busy intersections.** Signal properly. Use hand signals to let other cyclists and drivers know when girls plan to turn and stop. Girls should also let other cyclists know when they plan to pass before actually passing.
- **Use lights.** Keep lights on to increase visibility.
- **Make basic repairs.** This should be based on what is age appropriate.
- **Dress the right way.** Dress in layers in cooler temperatures and shed layers as you get warmer. Avoid cotton and use synthetic fabrics instead because they wick sweat away from the skin. Wear reflective or light-colored clothing when cycling at dusk and wear bright-colored or fluorescent clothing during the day. On longer trips in cooler weather, carry extra clothing and rain gear. Do not wear dangling earrings, bracelets, or necklaces that can tangle in equipment.
- **Learn emergency moves.** Read about and practice the quick stop, rock dodge, and instant turn at [Bike League](#), which also provides tips for beginners.

### **On the Day of the Ride**

- **Stretch your muscles.** Before cycling, always warm up. Try walking, jogging, or cycling slowly before going faster. Gently stretch your hamstrings, quads (against a wall), and calves, before and especially after riding.
- **Be prepared in case of an emergency.** Provide a detailed itinerary and plan to call and check in with someone each day. Carry identification and a list of emergency phone numbers and contact information for bike repair shops.
- **Prepare for the long haul.** Adjust bicycles frequently for comfort. Check handlebars after adjusting the seat for proper leg extension. When stopping for the day, cool down gradually by

walking around for a few minutes—do not stop cycling abruptly. Watch girls so that they do not push beyond their endurance levels.

**Safety Gear.** Safety gear needed will depend on the length of your trip, the location, and the weather.

Bicycles should be in good working order and appropriate for the type of ride planned. Seats should be adjusted to the right height for each rider. Girls should have a slight bend in the knee when seated. A seat that is set too low is a common problem and causes significant discomfort. Watch for seats set too high, a girl's legs should never be fully extended.

It is also important for girls to have appropriate pedals for their experience level. Beginners should use flat pedals; experienced riders may choose clip-in pedals. Protective bicycle helmets with properly fitted safety straps are also required. Helmets should fit comfortably but snugly, be worn level on the head, and not move in any direction when the chin strap is securely fastened.

The helmet should meet the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F1163-88 requirements. Check the helmet for a Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) seal.

You will also need a cycling repair kit for each group. Each kit should contain:

- tire pump,
- spare tubes of appropriate size,
- a tire patch kit,
- tools, including tire irons, a screwdriver, an adjustable wrench, pliers, and hex-head (Allen) wrenches.
- lubricating fluid,
- front and rear lights, for visibility during the day and at dusk,
- bike bell,
- reflectors,
- two water bottles or a hydration pack,
- day pack,
- appropriate clothing, such as bike shorts designed for cycling with wicking fabric,
- non-perishable, high-energy foods such as energy bars, fruits, and nuts,
- cycling gloves,
- stiff-soled athletic shoes such as court shoes or cycling shoes for beginners; shoes with clips for experienced riders using clip-in pedals, and
- general map and/or bike route map or map app on a smart phone.