



Climbing and Rappelling

Activity Permitted for: D B J C S A

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

Vendor Approval: Required

Required Training: 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights
(gsLearn)

About Climbing and Rappelling

Girls may participate in various types of climbing, rappelling, and rope adventures.

Notes:

- *Daisies and Brownies can do bouldering, slacklining, and low-challenge elements.*
- *Daisies and Brownies may participate only in activities that are designed for their ages, with equipment suitable to the size and ability of each girl.*
- *Outdoor high ropes, high elements, and rappelling are only permitted for Girl Scout Juniors and older.*

Bouldering. This sport involves climbing without a rope but at a height not greater than 6 feet off the ground. Spotters (participants who safeguard the movements of a member of the group) provide support and protect the head and upper body of a climber in case of a fall. Spotting is used when descending and ascending high elements or climbing routes.

Top Roping. In this climbing method, the rope is anchored from the top of the climbing route, using belays (safety ropes to secure a person to an anchor point). The belayer (person who controls the belay/safety line to prevent long and dangerous falls) is set up at the bottom of the route with the other end of the rope tied to the climber.

Multi-Pitch Climbing. For experienced climbers only, this is a climb on a long route that requires several pitches the length of a rope or less. (A “pitch” is the rope-length between belay stations). The group climbs to the top of the first pitch; the lead climber climbs the next pitch, anchors in, and belays each remaining climber individually to the anchor.

Free Climbing. This method, which involves climbing on rocks or walls without a belay system in place, is not approved.

Slacklining: A sport and an art that can involve balance training, recreation, and moving meditation. It is similar, at first glance, to tightrope walking and is accomplished by stretching and tensioning a 1-inch to 2-inch length of nylon/polyester webbing between two anchor points, most often trees. It is a way of passing time while maintaining concentration, fitness, core strength, and balance. It can be used as a team-building activity in which spotters safeguard the movements of each member of the group.

Artificial climbing walls and harnessed indoor ropes are great learning options too.

Learn More

- [International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation](#)
- [Climbing Magazine](#)
- [Indoor Climbing Basics - REI](#)
- All about Rock Climbing: [Mpora.com](#)

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities

Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location and/or the instructor in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities. For more information visit [Adaptive Sports at Move United](#).

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.

Climbing and Rappelling Checkpoints

Vendor Approval Required for climbing and rappelling. 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.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. For *bouldering, top roping, and multi-pitch climbing*, an instructor with documented experience—indicating competence in equipment use, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training (must provide certification) or documented experience according to your council's specific guidelines—directly supervises the group. Ensure that there is a regular process of review and update for all instructors. A minimum of two instructors needs to be present and instructors should be skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching and

supervising spotting and belaying techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group. Before use, instructors must inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas.

Facilitators of indoor or outdoor artificial climbing walls and auto belay or harnessed indoor ropes courses should have experience, indicating competence in equipment maintenance, safety and rescue techniques, proper use of the course, and hands-on training. A minimum of one facilitator and an additional adult must be present, and facilitators need to be skilled in selecting appropriate activities, teaching, and supervising spotting and lowering techniques, and modifying tasks to provide an appropriate experience for the ages and skill levels in the group. Before use, facilitators should inspect all equipment, course components, and landing areas.

Indoor or outdoor artificial climbing walls and auto belay or harnessed indoor ropes courses are activities that do not incorporate an element of high risk and can be done by Brownies through Ambassadors. However, all ages must have appropriately sized harnesses. If no harness properly fits a child, that child cannot participate in climbing and/or rappelling. Daisies are not permitted to participate in climbing and rappelling.

The instructor-to-participant ratios are:

- **Bouldering and Top Roping:** one instructor to ten participants
- **Multi-Pitch Climbing:** one instructor (qualified lead climber) to three participants.

Select a safe site. Permits and permission requests are filed as required for outdoor natural climbing sites and facilities. All permanent structures and the belaying system are planned and constructed by experienced individuals. Plans and procedures are established to avoid unauthorized use of the site, structures, and equipment. The artificial climbing site must be posted to warn against unauthorized use.

Participants learn about and prepare for climbing and rappelling. Instructors teach a set of readiness and action commands to all participants for climbing, spotting, and belaying. All participants take part in muscle warm-up and stretching activities before beginning physical activities. Instructors describe the objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants before beginning an activity.

Participants practice safe climbing and rappelling techniques. Spotting techniques (if necessary) are taught, demonstrated, and practiced by participants prior to any climbing or rappelling activity. All activities should be appropriately spotted. For activities where partners are needed, instructors must match participants according to size and skill level, if appropriate. Instructors should supervise all tie-ins, belays, and climbs on climbing sites and spotting on bouldering sites.

Safety Gear

- Climbing helmets (with Union of International Alpine Association approved label) worn for all outdoor natural climbing situations where the participant is more than 6 feet off the ground and by participants standing in the “fall zone” beneath a climbing element. Helmets are also required for belay, unless the hosting facility or instructor indicates the use of helmets is hazardous for belay.
- A disposable liner, such as a shower cap or surgical cap, to wear underneath the helmet to protect against the spread of head lice.
- A chest harness with a seat harness or a full-body harness, required for specific climbing or ropes activities.
- Sturdy shoes.
- Close-fitting clothing—loose clothing should be avoided, especially around the head and neck.
- Portable drinking water.
- Raingear, as necessary.

- Long pants or bike pants are strongly recommended for activities involving potential skin abrasions on legs.

All equipment used for belaying, such as ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets, should be designed and tested for the purpose of this type of activity and appropriate for the size of the user.