



Hiking

Activity Permitted for: D B J C S A

Council Approval: Required as per Council Policy P1; [Activity/Trip Permission \(2129\)](#) for day hikes over 3 miles and/or hikes more than 30 minutes away from emergency services

Vendor Approval: Not Required

Required Training: 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn). At least one adult trained for hiking; 281 GS 202 Day Trail Hiking for day hikes over 3 miles and/or hikes more strenuous due to elevation changes, rugged terrain, or other challenges. Hikes more than 30 minutes away from emergency services require first aider with Wilderness First Aid Certification. *See below for additional required training prerequisites*

About Hiking

Unlike short walks, hiking may involve lengthy, back-country walking trips and often requires sturdy boots to provide traction on rocks and uneven trail beds. When practicing Leave No Trace while hiking, it is important for hikers to leave trails as—or better than—they found them. Although the action of one hiker may not strongly affect the environment, the effects of large groups of hikers can degrade trails.

Hiking is the ideal opportunity for girls to learn and practice map and compass skills. Before heading out on a lengthy hike, learn how to read a map and use a compass. Look at a map to understand where you started and where you plan to finish. You can always check with your local, state, or national park for interesting and exciting trail ideas.

Note: For overnight hiking experiences, follow the guidance in [Backpacking Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), [Travel/Trips Safety Activity Checkpoint](#) and [Camping Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Learn More

- Make an emergency survival kit: [REI – The Ten Essentials](#)
- Locate hiking areas near U.S. metropolitan areas: [All Trails](#)
- [American Hiking Society](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)

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 [Move United](#) to find out more about hiking for people of all abilities.

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. No matter how long or short the hike is, always let people know where you'll be hiking and when you're expected to return. **Always share your hiking itinerary/route with an emergency contact who is not going on the hike.** Predetermine where you ought to be at certain points in the day. Your emergency contact should have all your information, know when you expect to return or when to expect you to check in by a specific time, and who to contact if you don't. **For hikes over 3 miles and/or more than 30 minutes away from emergency services, submit your hiking itinerary to the council with form #2129 Activity/Trip Permission.**

Hiking Checkpoints

Verify leader/instructor knowledge, experience, judgment, and maturity. Ensure that at least one adult is trained or possesses knowledge, skills, and experience in the following areas:

- Planning and preparation before the hike
- Trails/route to be hiked
- Hiking progression
- Hiking with kids
- Ten essentials of hiking and how to use them
- Outdoor skills
- Hiking etiquette
- Gear, packing and how to organize it
- Safety, recognizing and preventing emergencies
- First aid knowledge to prevent or treat injuries or illness on a hike
- Food, water, and water purification
- Weather
- Sanitation
- Leave No Trace

Required Prerequisite 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.

Required Training: At least one adult trained for hiking; 281 GS 202 Day Trail Hiking for day hikes over 3 miles and/or hikes more strenuous due to elevation changes, rugged terrain, or other challenges. Hikes more than 30 minutes away from emergency services require first aider with a Wilderness First Aid or Wilderness First Responder Certification.

Adult volunteers who are registered and have been screened by the council must be present to meet the grade level-specific adult-to-girl ratios.

Girls should plan the activity. Encourage girls to plan routes, activities, and guidelines for dealing with problems that may arise with other groups of hikers.

Prompt girls to share resources. Encourage girls to distribute a list of hiking gear and supplies, and to determine which resources can be shared. Be sure girls and adults have a good understanding of how to practice the Leave No Trace principles on the hike.

Choose an appropriate hiking route. Terrain, mileage, and hiking time should be known to the hikers in advance. Hikes are restricted to a reasonable length as determined by age, level of experience, nature of the terrain, physical condition of the hikers, disabilities, weather conditions, and time of day. The hiking pace must always accommodate the slowest hiker.

Assess safety of hiking routes. The route needs to be known to at least one of the adults or a report is obtained in advance to assess potential hazards, such as poisonous plants, dangerous animals, unsafe drinking water, cliffs, and drop-offs. Ensure that a land management or similar agency is contacted during the trip planning stage to determine available routes, recommended group size, water quantity and quality, and which permits are needed.

Ensure hikers have a comprehensive understanding of the trip. Group members are trained to be observant of the route, surroundings, and fatigue of individuals. Instruction is given on the safety rules for hiking, such as staying together in a group, recognizing poisonous plants and biting or stinging insects and ticks, respecting wild animals, practicing Leave No Trace, and behaving effectively in emergencies. Ensure that girls, based on their level, know how to read maps, use a compass, navigate a route, and estimate distance.

Respect the environment and keep trails clean. Use the principles of Leave No Trace. Carry out food and all trash. Hike on established trails. Do not remove natural materials, such as leaves or branches. In addition, avoid eating wild foods, walking on, or uprooting plants, interfering with or feeding wild animals, and littering.

Practice safe hiking. Instructions should be given on the safety rules for hiking, which include forbidding hiking off the trail and after dusk. Girls should stay on the pathway to avoid trampling trailside plants and causing erosion. In addition, be sure to take adequate rest periods with time to replenish fluids and eat high-energy food (such as fruits and nuts). Girls must take proper precautions in areas where poisonous plants, snakes, or ticks are prevalent.

Safety Gear. The gear you will need will depend on the length of your trip, the location, and weather.

- A water bottle or hydration pack with enough water for each girl for the length of the hike.
- Sturdy footwear based on the type of trails and length of the hike.
- Map and compass or GPS device.
- Flashlight, whistle, pocket-knife.
- A working cell phone held by designated adult for emergencies.
- An emergency survival kit.