



Scuba Diving

Activity Permitted for: C S A

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

Vendor Approval: Required for outfitter (vendor)

Required Training: 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn); GS 203 International Trip Training when activity occurs during international travel. *See below for training prerequisites*

About Scuba Diving

Scuba is an acronym for “self-contained underwater breathing apparatus” and requires specialized equipment. Scuba diving can take place in a variety of locations, including oceans, lakes, and rivers.

Divers can progress from exploratory experiences in pools, to various certification training courses, and finally to recreational dives.

Organizations such as the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), Scuba Schools International (SSI), and the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), offer online tools to locate certified scuba instructors. Scuba diving is a challenging activity, and girls who wish to learn to scuba dive must be at least 12 years old and meet the age and health requirements set by the certifying agency.

Pool Only Scuba Experience Programs.

Most dive agencies offer non-certification scuba experience programs for beginner participants of varying ages. This is a great way to explore the sport before ‘diving in.’ Follow dive agency standards for age, health, supervision, and maximum depth requirements. Girl Scout adult-to-girl ratios must be maintained.

A Girl Scout [swim test](#) is required prior to participating in a scuba experience program. Contact your council for information on whether or not the dive professional teaching the class can administer the test prior to water activities. A sample swim test can be found in [Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Learn More

- Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI): [PADI](#)
- Scuba Schools International (SSI): [Dive SSI](#)
- National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI): [NAUI](#)
- World Recreational Scuba Training Council: [WRSTC](#)
- Diver’s Alert Network (DAN): [Diver's Alert Network](#)

- World's best dives for kids and teens: [Sport Diver](#)
- Family-friendly scuba dives: [The Active Times](#)

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 [Handicapped SCUBA Association](#) and [adaptive scuba programs](#).

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.

Scuba Diving Checkpoints

Vendor Approval Required for scuba outfitters. 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 dollar s General Liability insurance upon request. For privately/locally owned outfitters (vendors), 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 Prerequisite Training: Troop/Group Program leaders must complete GSUSA's online leadership courses. Adult volunteer chaperones must complete GSVSC's 281 GS 104 Orientation for Support Volunteers online course in gsLearn.

Required Training: 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn); GS 203 International Trip Training when activity occurs during international or travel via cruise ship.

Confirm participants are able to participate in scuba activities. Each person must complete the [World Recreational Scuba Training Council \(WRSTC\) medical form](#), including a doctor's signature stating the student is fit for diving prior to enrollment.

Confirm participants are strong swimmers. Scuba requires a high degree of ability and comfort in the water, called "watermanship." Dive training organizations' watermanship evaluations vary, but

typically include demonstration of ability to swim a minimum of 200 yards, tread water for 15 minutes, or swim 500 yards with mask, fins, and snorkel, or some combination. Consult the instructor.

Ensure participants also fully understand the body of water they are going to dive in and aware of the type of marine life they may come across.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure that the scuba-diving teacher holds instructional certification from SSI, PADI, NAUI, or other industry recognized dive training organization. Verify that the certifying agency has guidelines for working with youth.

Maintain appropriate ratios. These ratios must be followed:

| Type of Training | Instructor to Student Ratio |
|---|---|
| Pool training activities. | 1:8 |
| Confined water training activities. | 1:6 |
| Open water training dive. | 1:4; two students may be added with additional instructor |
| Open water certification | 1:4; instructor with a certified assistant. |
| <i>These ratios are considered an ideal and can be reduced if environmental conditions or other factors are not optimal. Please obtain prior council approval for adjusted instructor ratios.</i> | |

To maintain general supervision of the girls, non-diving volunteers may be able to supervise pool or confined water activities by watching from the pool deck or surface. For open water training dives, non-divers may supervise from land or boat. Among the student divers, instructors, and watchers, there must always be two unrelated adults, one of whom is female, who are approved by your Girl Scout council.

Select a safe diving site. Make sure your instructor is familiar with the scuba site. Scuba trips to unknown or non-designated areas are not allowed.

Size up scuba gear. Communicate girls' ages, heights, and weights to instructors and equipment providers to ensure the appropriate size of scuba gear is available. Be sure that the instructor and participants check equipment before use. See gear list below.

Use the buddy system. All divers should use the buddy system above and under the water. Solo diving is prohibited within Girl Scout programs. Members do not dive alone.

Prepare for emergencies. 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, who is prepared for 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 certification.

Get a weather and wind report. Never scuba dive on a stormy or extremely windy day. Check Weather.com or other reliable weather source to determine if conditions are appropriate. Know how to respond if weather conditions change quickly.

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. If on a boat, follow the instructions of the boat captain.

Recreational Diving. After becoming certified divers, Girl Scouts may continue with recreational (non-training) dives, based on certification levels. A diving professional is required to provide expert supervision.

- **Follow dive agency standards** which will give guidelines on what progressive experiences are possible. Most agencies have Junior Diver standards; adhere to requirements to dive with an adult, parent, or professional.
- **Pre-entry level certification/supervised diver courses (such as PADI Scuba Diver) requirements for maximum depth and supervision must be met.** Verify that all participants are certified by a reputable diving agency. All divers (Girl Scouts and adults) must provide proof of diving experience within 6 months of the dive or take remedial instruction.
- **The ratio for recreational diving is 1:8 (professional-to-diver).**
- **Solo diving in Girl Scouts is prohibited;** all divers must dive with a buddy.
- **Full entry diving of wrecks and overhead environments are prohibited** by recreational divers in a Girl Scout program.
- **Rebreathers and any gas blends (except air and up to 36% enriched air) are prohibited.** Only those certified to use enriched air blends may do so.

Diving from Boats. If using a privately owned diving boat, ensure that the owner/operator:

- Is a knowledgeable adult with understanding and ability to assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of girls and volunteers.
- Agrees to follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints relevant to the activity.
- Maintains the vessel in accordance with the Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Coordinates with the activity leader to confirm the required safety gear is available for all participants, and that the gear meets the specifications of authorities for the local jurisdiction.
- Meets Coast Guard and/or local jurisdictional requirements.
- Maintains insurance and registration as required by law in their jurisdiction.

For vessels over 30 feet, see [Offshore Water Vessels Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

Carbon Monoxide Warning. Never allow "teak surfing," swim platform dragging, or bodysurfing behind any vessel. Do not operate a motor or generator while anyone is on or holding onto a swim platform, swim deck, swim step, or swim ladder, except for a very brief time when docking, or entering or exiting the vessel. Carbon monoxide emitted at the stern (back) of the boat can cause death in these situations.

Scuba Diving Gear. Required gear for all diving activities:

- Fins, mask, snorkel, and boots (if conditions warrant).
- Compressed gas cylinder and valve.
- Buoyancy control device (BCD) with tank mount or separate backpack, and low-pressure inflator.
- Primary regulator and alternate air source.
- Breathing gas monitoring device/Submersible Pressure Gauge (SPG).
- Depth monitoring device.
- Time monitoring device.

- Quick-release weight system and weights (if necessary, for neutral buoyancy).
- Adequate exposure protection for local dive conditions.
- Emergency oxygen kit and waterproof first aid kit (1 per group).

Additional Required Gear for Open Water Dives

- When divers are riding or waiting on boat, each wears a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure they are in good condition and contain no tears.
- At least one graspable and Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) should be immediately available for each group on the water.
- Compass.
- Dive tables or dive computer.
- Audible emergency surface signaling device.
- Personal surface marker buoy.
- Floating dive flag (1 per group or as dictated by local regulations).
- Dive tool/knife (certified divers) unless prohibited by local regulations.
- Lights, slate and pencil, drift buoy, or other gear, as conditions require.

Recommended Gear

- Mask defogger solution.
- Swimsuit with rash guard and swim tights, or dive skin.
- Waterproof, coral-safe sunscreen (SPF of at least 15) and lip balm.