



## Ax, Knife, and Hatchet (or Tomahawk) Throwing

**Activity Permitted for:** C S A

**Note:** See [Target and Shooting Sports—Master Progression Chart](#)

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

**Vendor Approval:** Required approved indoor and outdoor throwing ranges (vendor)

**Required Training:** 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn). See below for training prerequisites

**Required Certification:** GSVSC Level I Throwing Instructor Certification

*When leading ax, knife, hatchet (or tomahawk) throwing sport activities with Girl Scouts, volunteers must hold the required certifications or work with an approved vendor. If not using a council-owned range, Troops/Groups are required to use council approved indoor and outdoor throwing ranges. Council must approve all sites in advance.*

### About Ax, Knife, and Hatchet (or Tomahawk) Throwing

Some of the oldest weapons, tools, and hunting methods include the ax, knife, and hatchet (or tomahawk) and they are still used for their traditional purposes in some areas today. Learning how to handle them safely by aiming at targets for accuracy is also common today as a recreational and competitive activity. It is an ideal way to learn how to handle these tools safely, tools that can be used in the great outdoors and wilderness excursions.

Good throwing requires learning positive traits such as patience, determination, focus, attention to detail, discipline, and persistence. Since these skills are likewise key elements of leadership and confidence, we encourage our girls to take what disciplines they learn from any sport or activity and apply it to their participation in their communities and the world.

There are a variety of styles and sizes of axes, knives, and hatchets. The ones the girls will be learning about are designed for the express purpose of hitting a target.

#### Learn More

- [World Ax Throwing League \(WATL\)](#)
- [National Axe Throwing Federation](#)
- [American Knife Throwers Alliance](#)

## **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.

**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.

## **Ax, Knife and Hatchet (or Tomahawk) Throwing Checkpoints**

**Vendor Approval Required for indoor and throwing ranges.** Review Vendor Approval section under the *Standard Safety Guidelines for vendor approval timelines*. If not using a council-owned range and equipment, contact 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 ranges, 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 \(#2147\)](#).

**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.

**Required Certification.** When leading ax, knife, hatchet (or tomahawk) throwing activities with Girl Scouts, at least one adult volunteer must be certified as a GSVSC Level I Throwing Instructor. Contact the council for more information about becoming certified.

**Assess participants' maturity level.** Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves or others.

**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** One adult needs to be trained and experienced in ax, hatchet, or knife throwing safety (depending on which you are doing), form, technique, range rule specifications, and emergency procedures. Ensure the experienced instructor reviews all rules, range, and operating procedures with girls beforehand.

**Note:** The instructor-to-participant ratio is different from the adult-to-girl ratio found in in the Safety Standards and Guidelines. You must follow the [Target and Shooting Sports—Master Progression Chart](#) for the proper number of instructors. Additionally, both ratios must be complied with when girls are participating in throwing sports. For example, if 15 Cadettes are on the throwing line, there must be eight instructors plus two adult Girl Scout volunteers (who are not instructors) who are present during the activity.

Use chart below to verify required instructor certifications. **Required Certifications:**

Shooting Type	Grade Level Minimum Age	Participant-to- Instructor Ratio	Instructor/Expert Certification
Ax/Knife/Hatchet Throwing	C, S, A	2:1	Adult instructors are trained and experienced in blade throwing safety specific for the ax, knife or hatchet being used including proper form and technique, range rule specifications, and emergency procedures. <b>Check with the council for Level I Axe, knife, Hatchet, (or Tomahawk) throwing training.</b>

**Select a safe site.** Troops/Groups are required to use council approved indoor and outdoor throwing ranges. Council must approve all sites in advance. If not using a council-owned range, check with council staff to see if an approved vendor list is available. The council will look for organized indoor and outdoor throwing ranges. The council staff will call the facility to determine the following safety information to select a safe site:

- Equipment should be stored in a box, closet, or cabinet and locked when not in use.
- Equipment, including targets, are checked each time and in good condition.
- Range rules and throwing command controls are clearly posted and taught to all participants in advance of stepping on to the range.
- Clear safety signals and range commands to control the activity are posted and taught to all participants in advance of stepping on to the range.
- Backstops or a specific safety zone is set behind the targets.
- Clearly delineated rear and side safety buffers are known to the entire facility population.
- The shooting line is clearly defined.

**At an indoor range, make sure that:**

Indoor Range Specific Guidelines: [WATL for Indoor Range Information](#)

**Note:** For hatchet throwing, indoor ceilings must be a minimum of 12 feet high; metal chain link 15-foot floor-to-ceiling partitions must separate sets of two targets; and within a set of two targets, there must be a 6-foot floor-to-ceiling partition between the targets.

- Each throwing area is designated as a throwing lane.
- A regulation lane for competition must contain 2 targets.
- Fences or walls block this area from the rest of the facility to keep throwers and axes all contained in a safe environment.

- Only the two participating throwers and the ax throwing coach are allowed inside the lane at one time. This includes ensuring the area behind the throwers is clear of any other person up to 5'.
- 10 ft minimum/clear ceiling height (within the throwing lane) is recommended for safety reasons.
- Targets are well lit.
- Doors or entries to the range are locked or blocked from the inside.
- Fire exits are not blocked.

**At an outdoor range, check that:**

Indoor Range Specific Guidelines: [WATL for Outdoor Range Information](#)

- Each throwing area is designated as a throwing lane.
- There needs to be a marker of 12 ft from the targets to designate the safe zone.
- Only the two participating throwers and the supervisor are allowed inside the lane at one time. This includes ensuring the area behind the throwers is clear of any other person up to 6'.
- There needs to be 8 ft tall fencing on the sides around the throwing area. This fencing must cover at least 15 ft to the front of the targets and connect to the fencing behind the targets with the back fencing.
- There needs to be 8 ft tall fencing covering behind the target.
- If the targets are not fully enclosed in fencing with a ceiling, then there must be fencing at least 10 ft away behind the targets.
- Under no circumstances can spectators or the public be allowed to walk behind the target, even behind the 8 ft tall fencing area.
- If there is any reason to go behind the targets, it will only be by an authorized facilitator. Axes must all be put down any time a facilitator is behind a target.
- Outdoor Range Specific Guidelines: Outdoor Range Information

**Ensure equipment is properly sized for the girls and is made for throwing.** Knives should be between 9 to 16 inches and not overly sharp. Hatchet heads should weigh between 1.25 and 1.75 pounds, the handle should be wood, length must be at least 13 inches, including the handle in the eye of the blade and the face (blade) of the axe must be no longer than 4 inches and not overly sharp.

**Girls should learn about throwing.** Girls develop skills based on proper procedures and form, handling the equipment, getting the right stance, sighting, and observing safety practices.

**Always keep the knife/hatchet pointed down range in a safe direction.** This is the primary rule of target sport safety. A safe direction means that the knife/hatchet is handled so that even if it were to be dropped or slip out of the throwers grip it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control your actions, always.

**Dress appropriately for the activity.** Make sure that all participants will avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment. Also make sure long hair is tied back and always wear closed-toed shoes.

**Safety and Required Gear**

- Axes, knives, hatchets, and tomahawks
- Targets (positioned at recommended/safe distance).
- Hard shoes (to protect feet from bounce backs).
- Gloves (may be provided).