



Fishing and Ice Fishing

Activity Permitted for: D B J C S A

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

Vendor Approval: Required for outfitters or when fishing from rented small watercraft or chartered boats

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

About Fishing and Ice Fishing

Fishing (also referred to as “angling”) is a sport, a leisurely activity, and a major food industry, depending on who you ask. In the United States, freshwater fishing is more popular than saltwater fishing, and varieties include fly fishing, ice fishing, and match fishing. The best times of day to fish depend on a variety of factors, such as amount of sunlight, temperature, depth of water, and wind. In general, however, the best times are early in the morning or mid-evening.

Ice fishing, the practice of fishing through a hole cut in the ice of a body of water, is a relaxing wintertime activity—particularly in northern U.S. states. Ice anglers often sit on stools inside small ice shanties, which provide shelter and warmth in cold temperatures. Shanties are typically made of wood or plastic and are rented from sport-fishing outlets or made at home. Overall, lakes and ponds tend to be best. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. Consult state ice angler associations for information about ice fishing events and resources.

Fishing teaches respect for fish and wildlife. Whenever possible, use barbless hooks, and return live fish to water.

Learn More

- All things fishing: [Take Me Fishing](#)
- [American Sportfishing Association](#)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#)
- [International Game Fish Association](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard’s Boating Safety Division](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)
- Video about ice fishing: [YouTube](#)
- Minimizing fishing’s impact on the environment: [Seafood Watch](#)

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 and resources visit [Fishing Has No Boundaries](#).

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.

Fishing and Ice Fishing Checkpoints

Vendor Approval Required for fishing outfitters or when fishing from rented small watercraft or chartered boats. 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 \(#2127\)](#).

See [Offshore Water Vessel Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for deep sea fishing trips or any chartered boat fishing trips.

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.

Make sure you've got the right life jackets. If girls are wading in water more than knee-deep or fishing from a boat, ensure that they wear 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. Read the U.S. Coast Guard's [Life Jacket Wear/Wearing Your Life Jacket](#) for more information.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure the adult or fishing instructor holds American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification or possesses equivalent certification or documented

experience (competencies); the ratio of instructor to participant is 1:10. Consider additional adult watchers for groups that are more scattered and/or not clearly visible at all times.

Observe fishing and environmental regulations. When selecting a fishing location, follow local, state, and federal fishing regulations and obtain fishing licenses, where required. Use the correct type of bait and fishing gear permitted in that area, and learn about limits on the number, size, and kind of fish that you can keep.

Verify safety of ice-fishing location. Ensure that ice is solid and thick enough to support the ice fishers' weight. Opinions vary about the appropriate thickness of ice for fishing. Generally, the thickness should be between 4 and 6 inches. Your local department of natural resources can provide help. The Department of Natural Resources of the State of Minnesota also provides [guidelines for ice thickness](#). Once arriving at a lake, check the ice thickness, keeping in mind that temperature, snow cover, currents, springs, and rough fish all affect the relative safety of ice. Also, ice is seldom the same thickness over a single body of water and can be 2 feet thick in one place and 1 inch thick a few yards away. Assess the ice depth at least every 150 feet. [Read more on ice-fishing safety](#).

Know where to find first aid. 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. Basic ice rescue techniques should be practiced. Appropriate rescue equipment needs to be on hand (for example: ring buoy, rope, throw bag, pole, ladder, and—where necessary—boat).

Safety requirements for various fishing locations:

- **From a dock.** Fishing from a dock requires the presence of a first aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Wading above the knee.** Fishing while wading above knee-deep requires the presence of a first aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification. Ensure that all girls and adults wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket (Type III). The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Wading below the knee.** When fishing from a shoreline or while wading up to knee-deep, the presence of a first aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue is recommended, but not required. However, Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices or other water rescue equipment must be provided. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Fishing from small craft.** Completes Girl Scouts small craft safety training certification; the ratio of adult watchers to participant is one to ten, except for Daisies, where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.

Select appropriate boats for water and passengers. Make sure craft weight and capacity are not exceeded (some watercrafts will clearly display maximum capacity). Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment.

File a float plan for extensive boat trips. If going on an extended boat fishing trip, file a float plan with a dependable person who will notify local authorities should your group not return. Float plans must include the names of people on board, destination, craft description, times of departure and return, and additional details about routes and marine communications. The Coast Guard provides an electronic, printable form.

Remove fishing gear, bait, and any dead fish at the end of the fishing activity.

Safety Gear for General Fishing

- Fishing rod appropriate to the type of fishing.
- Fishing tackle (and tackle box) appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught.
- If girls are wading in water more than knee-deep or fishing from a boat, ensure that each girl and adult wears a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket (Type III).
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines.
- Layered, non-cotton clothing that is easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended).
- Boat shoes, closed toe and non-slip hiking/sport sandals with heel strap, water socks, or shoes (no flip-flops).
- Cooler and ice for keeping fish cool and avoiding spoilage (if intended for consumption).
- If fishing from a boat, at least one graspable and throwable Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water.
- Fishing net.

Safety Gear for Ice Fishing

- Snowsuit, warm coat, hat, and mittens
- Lightweight rubber gloves or hunting/fishing gloves
- Waterproof boots that protect against cold temperatures
- Fishing rod (1- to 3-foot rods are most common)
- Fishing tackle (and tackle box) appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines
- Ice auger (ice saw or chisel); [read about augers and other equipment.](#)
- Jigging rod/pole or tip-up to catch fish
- Ice bucket and scoop
- At least one graspable and throwable Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Flashlight and lantern
- Cooler for storing fish (if intended for consumption)
- Shanty (optional)
- Ice sled for pulling equipment (optional)
- First Aid kit

Ice Safety Quiz

Please read information from both the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources' website on ice safety. **Then take the quiz below and submit to your council at info@gsvsc.org with 2129 Activity/Trip Permission form.**

- [Ice Safety - MN Department of Natural Resources](#)
- [Ice Safety - WS Department of Natural Resources](#)

True or False

1. _____ Booming and Cracking ice is very dangerous.
2. _____ Ice freezes uniformly. If the ice is 12 inches thick in one area of the lake, then it is 12 inches thick everywhere else.
3. _____ New clear ice is the safest, strongest ice.
4. _____ If you fall through, you should remove your winter clothes immediately in the water to help keep you afloat.
5. _____ Ice, six inches thick, can support a pick-up truck.
6. _____ A ladder can be used to assist someone who has fallen through the ice.
7. _____ Ice claws are simple to make at home and a very convenient tool to help yourself get out of the water.
8. _____ If you were to fall through, you should swim away from where you came from, since that ice must be very thin.
9. _____ It is recommended to wear a life jacket underneath a winter coat while on the ice.
10. _____ Cold blood can linger in your arms and legs and suddenly rush to your heart and cause cardiac distress.

Short Answer

1. Where can you find information about lake conditions?
2. What are some ways to measure the thickness of the ice?
3. What are some items that you should always bring with you out onto the ice?
4. What 5 ways can you assist someone exiting the lake after breaking through?
5. After someone falls through and they successfully exit the water, how would you treat them for hypothermia?