



Snorkeling

Activity Permitted for: J 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 Snorkeling

Snorkeling is a great way to explore underwater life without the complicated equipment required for scuba diving. It is important to learn how to breathe properly using snorkels and to receive instruction from an experienced snorkeler or equipment rental facility.

Coral, an ecosystem of shell and marine life, is a popular attraction for snorkelers and must be respected. As ocean organisms that support plants and fish, coral reefs are an essential part of the underwater ecosystem. Unfortunately, coral reefs are under threat due to changes in climate patterns, ocean acidification, and people who mistreat it. Touching coral can harm the delicate outer layer, which may take as long as one hundred years to recover.

It is important to know where it is safe to snorkel. Snorkeling is recommended in warm ocean water with minimal waves or current.

Learn More

- [National Association of Underwater Instructors](#)
- [Professional Association of Diving Instructors](#)
- [Snorkeling 101: The Complete Guide to Snorkeling](#)

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 the [National Instructors Association for Divers 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.

Snorkeling Checkpoints

Vendor Approval Required for snorkeling 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 dollars 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.

Ensure participants are strong swimmers. Participants' swimming abilities need to be classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, etc.) at council approved sites, or participants can provide proof of [swim test](#) certification. In the absence of swim test certification, a swim test should be conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure the snorkeling instructor holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI) or the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) or has equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines.

Verify certified lifeguard is present. If the scuba instructor is not also a certified lifeguard, you will need a lifeguard present. Lifeguards need current ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module or YMCA Waterfront Lifeguarding Certification, or the equivalent. You need one certified lifeguard for every 25 swimmers. The primary guard must be an adult (age 18). Secondary guards can be 16 years old. Girl Scouts may only snorkel in the ocean, surf, or bay when there are ocean/surf-certified lifeguards on duty, if one is not provided. *See swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints for details.* **Size up snorkeling gear.** Ensure the appropriate sizes of masks, snorkels, and fins are available, and make sure that masks fit girls' faces securely and comfortably. With goggles, the air space in front of the eyes is important to see properly underwater. Also keep in mind that objects viewed underwater while wearing a mask appear about 25 percent larger and closer than objects seen through a mask out of water.

Safeguard valuables. Do not leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a snorkeling school, inquire about the company's storage options.

Prepare for emergencies. An adult with rescue experience and/or certification must be present. If snorkeling from a boat, at least one adult should have Girl Scouts small craft safety training certification or equivalent experience. (One person can hold both of these qualifications.)

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 snorkel on a stormy or extremely windy day; strong winds and large waves decrease visibility and make swimming difficult. On the day of the snorkeling trip or lesson, check Weather.com, or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. If weather conditions prevent the snorkeling activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Use the buddy system. See [Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines](#).

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately, and head to shore. 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.

Safety and Required Gear

- Wearable flotation device. Consult with your instructor to evaluate whether participants should wear a flotation device such as a simple waist belt or snorkeling vest. Water currents or surge, visibility, and participants' swimming ability should be considered. If life jackets are recommended by the instructor, then use U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets (Type III recommended) that fit according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure they are in good condition with no tears.
- Snorkel.
- Mask.
- Emergency flotation device. At least one graspable and throwable Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) needs to be immediately available.