



Surfing

Activity permitted for: J C S A

Not permitted for: Daisies, Brownies, and non-swimmers

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 Surfing

Surfing (also referred to as “surfboarding”) is one of the most challenging water sports but if a new surfer is well prepared, it can be a safe, rewarding experience that develops balance, agility, strength, and confidence. With proper instruction from an experienced surfing instructor, many first timers can stand up on their boards during the initial two- to four-hour session. Brownies can learn with boogie boards (much smaller boards) as opposed to surf boards which is a good progression step to surfing. However, all Girl Scouts participating in surfing of any kind must test as proficient swimmers before they try surfing. Refer to the [Swim Test](#) in [Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

While people learn at different paces, three to four lessons are recommended for beginners. Enrolling girls in a surf camp or daylong surfboarding lesson is highly recommended for beginners. Be sure to inform the surf school of girls’ ages, heights, and sizes to reserve appropriate surfboards and wet suits.

During lessons, even before going in the water, girls can learn the basics of surfing, such as:

- Finding the best position for the body on the board, steering out from the shore, keeping the nose of the surfboard pointed toward the surf to cut through the waves, and not getting positioned sideways (to avoid getting caught by a wave and tumbled around).
- Going around the break line (the point at which waves begin to break) when paddling out from the shore and not through it to allow other surfers plenty of space.
- Sharing the waves, staying out of the way of other surfers, and never taking off on a wave in front of another surfer (called “snaking”).
- Keeping the board by always using the ankle leash (it is dangerous to other surfers and swimmers when surfers let go of surfboards).

The ocean is best to surf, but some rivers and regions along the Great Lakes also can be suitable for surfing when the weather is warm.

Learn More

- [Surflife](#)
- [Surfing Handbook](#)
- [International Surfing Association](#)

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities

Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. When planning to visit a waterfront at a park, contact the park office in advance. Also contact the instructor or facility teaching or hosting the surfing event 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.

Surfing Checkpoints

Vendor Approval Required for surfing 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.

Check swimming ability. Participants' swimming abilities should be classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored wristbands to signify beginning and advanced swimmers) 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. See [Swimming Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Instructors should hold a certification from the National Surf Schools and Instructors Association, the International Surfing Association, or similar certification. Ocean lifeguard certifications are required. The instructor -to-girl ratio should be one to four.

Note: The instructor-to-participant ratio is different from the adult-to-girl ratio found in [Introduction: Standard Safety Guidelines](#). Both ratios must be complied with when girls are participating in surfing. For example, if 15 Juniors are participating in surfing, there must be four instructors plus two adult Girl Scout volunteers who are not instructors.

Pick an ability appropriate site. Make sure the surfing location complements the surfers' abilities and levels. Some beaches designate areas for beginners, intermediate surfers, and higher-level surfers. If the surfing location does not designate areas by skill level, verify with the surfing instructor that the location is appropriate for the girls.

Select a safe location. A location with a soft, sandy, or muddy bottom is best. Choose a location that does not have a sharp-edged or rocky bottom, which can be dangerous and can cut feet and limbs. Also, inquire about potential dangerous marine life and rip tides. Keep girls away from these hazards when they become evident.

Safeguard valuables. Don't leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a surfboarding school or camp, call ahead to inquire about the company's storage options.

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 tide report. Never surf on a stormy day. Following rainy weather, check the water quality before surfing. On the morning of the surf trip, determine whether conditions will be appropriate for surfing by searching for regional surf reports on [SurfLine.com](#), [FreeTideTables.com](#), [17ft.com](#), and [Weather.com](#). If weather conditions prevent the surf trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

Assess wave heights. Call the surf instructor on the day of the trip to confirm that wave heights are appropriate for girls. Wave heights rely heavily on wind strengths; two- to three-foot waves are recommended for beginners. When waves surpass five feet, it can be difficult to paddle out from the shore.

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.

Required Gear

- Surfboard (soft-deck long boards are generally recommended for beginners).
- Bathing suit.

- Rash guard.
- Wet suit (recommended for warmth and skin protection, especially when water temperature is below 70 degrees Fahrenheit; most surf schools rent full-body or partial suits, but they may not be “required” depending on the temperatures).
- Rocky bottom surf shoes.
- Goggles for members with glasses.

Safety Gear

- 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 (check with lifeguards at the waterfront).
- Leash, also referred to as a leg rope. Cord that attaches the surfboard to the surfer’s ankle, so that she does not have to swim too far to catch up to the board after a wipeout (usually included with a surfboard rental).

Recommended Gear

- Beach towel.
- Dry clothing and sunglasses to wear after surfing.