



Chapter 4: Safety-Wise

In Girl Scouting, the emotional and physical safety and well-being of girls is always a top priority! Here's what you need to know.

Knowing Your Responsibilities

You, the parents/guardians of the girls in your group, and the girls themselves share the responsibility for staying safe. The next three sections flesh out who's responsible for what.

Responsibilities of the Volunteer

One of your responsibilities as a volunteer is to safeguard the health of the girls in your group and instill in them a sense of safety. This responsibility may take the form of:

- Working to prevent injury or illness to girls and other volunteers
- Demonstrating a concern for the health and safety of the individuals for whom you are responsible
- Honoring pluralism and diversity so that girls feel emotionally safe—that is, accepted by and connected with you and other girls in your group

Girl Scouts requires you to:

- Observe all safety guidelines and Safety Activity Checkpoints, as well as procedures outlined by your council, including those that supplement or augment Girl Scouts standards. Also be sure to follow local, state, and federal laws and ordinances.
- Stay cognizant of the locale, weather, and other conditions before, during, and after an activity.
- Involve girls in safety planning (events should be girl-led, but girls will require guidance from you on staying safe).
- Be a positive role model for girls, adhering to the following guidelines at all times:
 - Don't use illegal drugs!
 - Don't smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol in the presence of girls.
 - Don't engage in child abuse of any kind. Abuse includes neglect, physical injury, emotional maltreatment including verbal abuse of a child, and sexual abuse. Sexual advances, improper touching, and sexual activity of any kind with girl members are strictly prohibited.
- Don't carry firearms or ammunition in the presence of girls. If you're facilitating a marksmanship activity, you must get council permission for this activity, and then transport weapons separately. The minimum age for girls using firearms in highly supervised activities is 12 years old.
- Take advantage of the learning opportunities offered by your council.

Responsibilities of Parents and Guardians

You want to engage each parent or guardian to help you work toward ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of girls. Clearly communicate to parents and guardians that they are expected to:

- Provide permission for their daughters to participate in Girl Scouting as well as provide additional consent for activities that take place outside the scheduled meeting place, involve overnight travel, involve the use of special equipment, and/or cover sensitive issues.
- Make provisions for their daughters to get to and from meeting places or other designated sites in a safe and timely manner and inform you if someone other than the parent or guardian will drop off or pick up the child.
- Provide their daughters with appropriate clothing and equipment for activities, or contact you before the activity to find sources for the necessary clothing and equipment.
- Follow Girl Scout safety guidelines and encourage their children to do the same.
- Assist you in planning and carrying out program activities as safely as possible.
- Participate in parent/guardian meetings.
- Be aware of appropriate behavior expected of their daughters as determined by the council and you.
- Assist volunteers if their daughters have special needs or abilities and their help is solicited.

Responsibilities of Girls

Girls who learn about and practice safe and healthy behaviors are likely to establish lifelong habits of safety consciousness. For that reason, each Girl Scout is expected to:

- Assist you and other volunteers in safety planning.
- Listen to and follow your instructions and suggestions.
- Learn and practice safety skills.
- Learn to “think safety” at all times and to be prepared.
- Identify and evaluate an unsafe situation.
- Know how, when, and where to get help when needed.

Knowing How Many Volunteers You Need

Girl Scouts adult-to-girl ratios show the *minimum* number of adults needed to supervise a specific number of girls. (Councils may also establish *maximums* due to size or cost restrictions.) These supervision ratios were devised to ensure the safety and health of girls—for example, if one adult has to respond to an emergency, a second adult is always on hand for the rest of the girls. It may take you a minute to get used to the layout of this chart, but once you start to use it, you’ll find the chart extremely helpful.

	Group meetings: Two non-related adults (at least one of whom is female) for this number of girls	Group meetings: Plus one adult for each additional number of girls	Events, travel, and camping: Two unrelated adults (at least one of whom is female) for each number of girls	Events, travel, and camping: Plus one adult for each additional number of girls
Girl Scout Daisies (K– grade 1)	12	6	6	4
Girl Scout Brownies (grades 2–3)	20	8	12	6
Girl Scout Juniors (grades 4–5)	25	10	16	8
Girl Scout Cadettes (grades 6–8)	25	12	20	10
Girl Scout Seniors (grades 9–10)	30	15	24	12
Girl Scout Ambassadors (grades 11–12)	30	15	24	12

Here are some examples: If you have a group meeting with 17 Daisies, you need three non-related adults (in other words, not your sister, spouse, parent, or child), at least one of whom is female. (If this isn't making sense to you, follow the chart...you need two adults for 12 Daisies and one more adult for up to six more girls. You have 17, so you need three adults.) If, however, you have 17 Cadettes attending a group meeting, you need only two non-related adults, at least one of which is female (because, on the chart, two adults can manage up to 25 Cadettes).

In addition to the adult-to-girl ratio chart, please remember that adult volunteers must be at least 18 years old (or at the age of majority defined by the state if it is older than 18).

Transporting Girls

Transportation decisions are an important aspect to any off-site Girl Scout activity, and your greatest concern is *always* safety. If you or the girls are arranging group transportation, whether for a day trip or for a much longer travel event, consider the basics of both private and public transit (which is preferred).

Public Transportation

Public transportation includes trains, subways, buses, ferries, and airlines. Public transportation is regulated, which makes it preferable to chartered vehicles, but this mode of transportation is not without challenges. The biggest challenge with any public transportation is staying together as a group, so be sure everyone has directions and a map, and always designate a meet-up area if anyone gets separated. Girls also need to be vigilant for criminals, both those who might do them bodily harm and those who are interested in stealing their money, jewelry, and electronic devices. As long as you prepare them for their exciting journeys on public transportation, they'll have an adventure they'll remember for years!

Private Transportation

Private transportation includes private passenger vehicles, rental cars, privately owned or rented recreational vehicles and campers, chartered buses, chartered boats, and chartered flights. Each driver of motorized private transportation must be at least 21 years old and hold a valid operator's license appropriate to the vehicle—state laws must be followed, even if they are more stringent than the guidelines here. Anyone who is driving a vehicle with more than 12 passengers must also be a professional driver who possesses a commercial driver's license (CDL)—check with your council to determine specific rules about renting large vehicles.

Please keep in mind the following non-negotiable points regarding private transportation:

- Even though written agreements are always required when renting or chartering, you are *not* authorized to sign an agreement or contract—even if there is no cost associated with the rental. Such an agreement must instead be signed by the person designated by your council.
- Check with your council to make sure you are following accepted practices when using private transportation; this ensures that both you and your council are protected by liability insurance in the event of an accident.
- If your council has given permission to use a rented car, read all rental agreements to be sure you comply with their terms and avoid surprises. Note the minimum age of drivers (often 25), as well as the maximum age (often under 70). Be sure the car is adequately insured, knowing who is responsible for damage to or the loss of the vehicle itself. Also, ensure you have a good paper trail, with evidence that the vehicle rental is Girl Scout-related.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission for any use of transportation outside of the meeting place.

Checklist for Drivers

When driving a car, RV, or camper, take the following precautions and ask any other drivers to do the same:

- Ensure all drivers are adults—girls should not be transporting other girls.
- Never transport girls in flatbed or panel trucks, in the bed of a pickup, or in a camper-trailer.
- Keep directions and a road map in the car, along with a first-aid kit and a flashlight.
- Check your lights, signals, tires, windshield wipers, horns, and fluid levels before each trip and check them periodically on long trips.
- Keep all necessary papers up to date, such as your driver’s license, vehicle registration, any state or local inspections, insurance coverage, and the like.
- Wear your seat belt at all times, and insist that all passengers do the same; keep girls under 12 in the back seats.
- Follow all the established rules of the road in your state (following the speed limit, keeping a two-car-length between you and the car ahead of you, not talking or texting on a cell phone or other personal electronic device, not using earbuds or headphones, driving with your headlights on, and so on).
- Avoid driving for extended periods at night, when tired, or taking medication that makes you drowsy.
- Plan rest stops every few hours; if driving with others, prearrange stopping places along the way. When planning longer trips, arrange for relief drivers. Check with your council for specific guidelines.

Remember that every time a group meets at a time and location different from the regular group meeting, you must use a permission form—even if the girls are responsible for getting to that location on their own. Permission forms give parents the “who, what, when, where, and why,” so that they can decide whether their daughter can participate in an event or go on a trip. A signed permission form permits you to include the girl in the activity and also provides you with up-to-date emergency contact information.

Checklist for Girls

Girls need to adhere to the following checklist when being transported. You may decide to create a contract listing the following items, which girls sign before leaving on any trip. Girls will:

- Follow all rules and instructions for this trip.
- Assist with reading signs and maps, when asked.
- Keep seat belts fastened at all times.
- Refrain from arguing, yelling, and throwing things.
- Play games or listen to music *quietly* with other passengers, being considerate of the driver and other passengers.
- Stay with the group during stops.
- Alert the driver and an adult volunteer to a missing buddy, an obstacle, or an open door or trunk.

Hosting a Girl-Led Event

If you're working with girls who want to host an event—large or small—be sure girls are leading the event-planning, instead of sitting by passively while you or another adult plans the event. To get girls started, ask them to think about the following questions:

- What sort of event do we have in mind?
- Who is our intended audience?
- Does the audience have to be invited, or can anyone come?
- What's our main topic or focus?
- What's our objective—what do we hope to accomplish at the end of the day?
- Will one or more speakers need to be invited? If so, who? How do we find speakers?
- Where will the event take place?
- Is there a charge for this venue?
- Is the venue large enough to accommodate the audience?
- Do we have to obtain permission to use this venue? If so, from whom?
- Are there adequate facilities for the audience? If not, how much will extra portable toilets cost, and how many do we need?
- Is there adequate parking or a drop-off point for girls?
- Do we need tables? chairs? podiums? microphones? speakers?
- What sort of entertainment will we provide?
- Will we provide or sell refreshments? If so, what kinds?
- How many chaperones will we need? Who will we ask?
- What emergency care do we need to plan for? Is the event large enough that local police and fire departments need to be notified?
- Do we need to purchase additional insurance for non-Girl Scouts?
- How will we advertise the event?
- What decorations will we use?
- Will we give away any keepsakes?
- Will we charge for the event?
- Who will set up the event?
- Who will clean up after the event?
- How will we determine whether the event was a success?

Ideas for girl-led events with family, friends, and community experts are also available in the journey adult guides!

Approaching Activities

How can you, as a Girl Scout volunteer, determine whether an activity is safe and appropriate? Good judgment and common sense often dictate the answer. What is safe in one circumstance may not be safe in another. An incoming storm, for example, might force you to assess or discontinue an activity. If you are uncertain about the safety of an activity, call your council staff with full details and don't proceed without approval. Err on the side of caution and make the safety of girls your most important consideration. Prior to any activity, read the specific Safety Activity Checkpoints (available on your council's Web site or from your support team in some other format) related to any activity you plan to do with girls.

When planning activities with girls, note the abilities of each girl and carefully consider the progression of skills from the easiest part to the most difficult. Make sure the complexity of the activity does not exceed girls' individual skills—bear in mind that skill levels decline when people are tired, hungry, or under stress. Also use activities as opportunities for building teamwork, which is one of the outcomes for the connect key in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Health Histories (Including Examinations and Immunizations)

Volunteers are asked to maintain these records for their group. Girls' health histories may include a physician's examination and a list of immunizations—as needed. Please keep in mind that information from a health examination is confidential and may be shared only with people who must know this information (such as the girl herself, her parent/guardian, and a health practitioner).

For various reasons, some parents/guardians may object to immunizations or medical examinations. Councils must attempt to make provisions for these girls to attend Girl Scout functions in a way that accommodates these concerns.

It is important for you to also be aware of any medications a girl may take or allergies she may have.

- Medication, including over-the-counter products, must never be dispensed without prior written permission from a girl's custodial parent or guardian. (Your council can provide this form.) Some girls may need to carry and administer their own medications, such as bronchial inhalers, an EpiPen, or diabetes medication.
- Common food allergies include dairy products, eggs, soy, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, and seafood. This means that, before serving any food (such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cookies, or chips), *ask* whether anyone is allergic to peanuts, dairy products, or wheat! Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies should be aware of their allergies, but double-checking with their parents/guardians is always a good idea.

Girl Scout Activity Insurance

A portion of the individual annual membership dues pays for supplementary insurance for the member only. This insurance provides up to a specified maximum for medical expenses incurred as a result of an accident while a member is participating in an approved, supervised Girl Scout activity, after the individual's primary insurance pays out. Non-registered parents, tagalongs (brothers, sisters, friends), and other persons are not covered by basic coverage. This is one reason all adults and girls should be registered members.

This insurance coverage is *not* intended to diminish the need for or replace family health insurance. And it does not duplicate medical-expense benefits collected under other programs, so after approximately \$100 in benefits have been paid under this plan, the family's medical insurance takes over. If there is no family insurance or healthcare program, a specified maximum of medical benefits is available.

An optional plan of activity insurance is available for Girl Scouts taking extended trips and for non-members who participate in Girl Scout activities. These plans are secondary insurance that individuals are entitled to receive while participating in any approved supervised Girl Scout activity. Optional insurance coverage is available for any Girl Scout activity that involves non-Girl Scouts or lasts longer than three days and two nights. Go to www.gswestok.org to find out how to apply.

Review the [Girl Scouts insurance plan](#) description here.

Providing Emergency Care

As you know, emergencies can happen. Girls need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to adults any accidents, illnesses, or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. To this end, you can help girls:

- **Know what to report.** See the "Procedures for Accidents" section later in this chapter.
- **Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.** Certain extreme-weather conditions may occur in your area. Please consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- **Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons, and building-security responses.** Every girl and adult must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
- **Assemble a well-stocked first-aid kit that is always accessible.** First-aid administered in the first few minutes can mean the difference between life and death. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911.

First-Aid/CPR

Emergencies require prompt action and quick judgment. For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first-aid/CPR-certified. For that reason, if you have the opportunity to get trained in council-approved first-aid/CPR, do it! You can take advantage of first-aid/CPR training offered by chapters of the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, American Heart Association, or other sponsoring organizations approved by your council. Try to take age-specific CPR training, too—that is, take child CPR if you're working with younger girls and adult CPR when working with older girls and adults.

First-Aider

A first-aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout–approved first-aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for child CPR. If, through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association, you have a chance to be fully trained in first-aid and CPR, doing so may make event- and activity-planning go a little more smoothly. The Safety Activity Checkpoints tell you when a first-aider needs to be present and, if you're a first-aider, you'll be all set!

There are two categories of first-aiders:

- **First-aider (level 1):** The presence of a first-aider (level 1) is required many group activities. The course required to be a first-aider (level 1) is one that offers standard first-aid and CPR, preferably with a focus on children. The Safety Activity Checkpoints state clearly when a first-aider (level 1) is needed.
- **First-aider (level 2):** The presence of a first-aider (level 2) is required at resident camp, and at any camp activity with more than 200 participants. In addition, some activities require a first-aider (level 2); the Safety Activity Checkpoints state clearly whether a first-aider (level 2) is needed. First-aiders (level 2) pass the same course as first-aiders (level 1), and also have emergency response/first response, sports safety, wilderness first-aid, and/or advanced first-aid and CPR training. Each organization has a different name for its training, so be sure to ask whether a training course fulfills the level-2 requirements.

First-Aid Kit

Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its [Anatomy of a First Aid Kit](#). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites, and the like.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain your council and emergency telephone numbers (which you can get from your council contact). Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms, and health histories may be included, as well.

Procedures for Accidents

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the sick or injured person. Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the names and telephone numbers of council staff, parents/guardians, and local emergency services such as the police, fire department, or hospital emergency technicians. Our council's procedures and emergency contact information:

1. **Give priority** attention to providing all possible care for the injured person or persons. In the event of a fatality, ALWAYS notify the police. Retain a responsible person at the scene. See that no disturbance of victim or surrounding is permitted until police have assumed authority.
2. **Secure** a doctor, ambulance, policy and clergy as appropriate. Cooperate fully with law enforcement officers but retain your copies of all permission slips and medical records; policy and hospital authorities may make copies.
3. **Refer all media** (newspaper, radio, TV) inquiries to the council office. Do not make any statements or do not release names.
4. **Contact** one of the following to report emergency and secure additional assistance:
 - a. **Council Office: 1-800-698-0022 or 405-528-3535**
 - b. **Cathy Stackpole, CEO - cell phone: 405-974-1187**
 - c. **Susan Bohl, COO – cell phone: 405-706-2005**

After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance, if needed, at the scene, and will notify parents/guardians, as appropriate. If a child needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with regard to notifying parents or guardians. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with these representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, notify the police. A responsible adult must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings. Follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, your council, and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.