

## Girls Overnight Planning Guide

Girls Sleep In training prepares you to teach girls the skills involved with planning and carrying out an overnight, and to incorporate the Girl Scouts principles of safety, inclusiveness, progression of skills, girl leadership, and girl planning. Girls Sleep In covers sleeping accommodations that have heat, electricity, plumbing, and/or a separation from outdoor night sounds. This self study takes approximately two hours but can take longer if you explore additional resources.

### Materials Needed

In order to work through the activities in this self study, you will need a pen or pencil, a copy of these documents:

- Safety-Wise
- The Group Camping Safety Activity Checkpoint

These can be found on the volunteer website at <https://volunteers.girlscoutsrv.org/>

### Course Objective

After completing this self study, you will be able to:

- Describe key readiness indicators for girls and the group.
- Identify options for troop overnight locations—both council and non-council sites.
- Explain appropriate safety and emergency procedures for indoor overnights.
- Describe the steps in planning for an overnight and how to involve the girls in every step in the planning process.
- Create a packing list and describe the “dos” and “don’ts” that should be on the list.
- Identify appropriate council policies and forms for overnights.
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of the adults—leaders, families of troop members and other adults who are participating in the overnight—and the girls.

---

## Progression in Girl Scout Overnights

### What is progression?

Girls grow and develop new skills by starting with activities that are familiar, then working their way up to new and challenging ones. Girl progression is the gradual increase of skills and knowledge, designed to match the girls' learning levels to their abilities and needs. As girls progress in their skills and knowledge, they enjoy the challenges, rather than become frustrated by attempting to learn skills that are beyond their readiness. The more comfortable and prepared the girls are in performing tasks, the easier your role as the adult volunteer becomes.

Certain topics common through all levels in progression:

- skill development;
- safety and standards;
- program goals;
- girl planning;
- age appropriateness;
- environmental protection; and
- fun!

Before going on an overnight, girls should experience activities outside of their troop meetings that provide a gradual progression to the extended activity. Focus on activities that teach planning and group interaction, which are essential for an overnight. These activities should increase in length, from simple hikes to full day trips, or adding additional skill components, such as cooking.

Progression in Beyond the Troop activities starts with looking out and exploring out before moving on to sleeping in, sleeping out and eventually trips out. The full progression is included on the following page to provide perspective. Please note that this training covers only the "sleep in" component of step 4. The "cook in" component is covered in a separate training. As the girls in your troop advance through the progression activities they will add to their skills and their confidence. Allow them to move up as fast as they are ready and able.

## Outdoor Progression Chart – use chart from GSUSA

### 1. Look Out



- Talk about the outdoors
- Learn what to wear
- Learn good outdoor manners
- Draw pictures
- Read stories

### 2. Move Out



- Use senses to look, listen, feel, and smell in the out-of-doors
- Learn to enjoy being outdoors without disturbing nature
- Learn the buddy system

### 3. Explore out – eat no-cook meal



- Take a snack or lunch to eat outdoors
- Take a short trip: hike, bike, or explore
- Learn first aid

### 4. Sleep in – cook in – play out



- Plan for a troop house overnight
- Learn knife safety
- Follow a kaper chart
- Learn to taste unfamiliar food
- Practice Safety-Wise dishwashing
- Develop a basic understanding of nature and environment

### 5. Cook out



- Prepare a shopping list
- Practice packing food
- Learn outdoor Safety-Wise dishwashing and sanitation
- Learn fire safety
- Learn charcoal cooking
- Learn to use a camp stove

### 6. Sleep out



- Learn the proper gear needed for camping
- Demonstrate tent care
- Learn Leave No Trace camping concepts

### 7. Trip out



- Plan a trip extending over several days
- Learn basic outdoor survival skills
- Practice Leave No Trace camping
- Develop new outdoor interests by canoe camping, primitive camping, backpacking, and other extended camping experiences
- Help others learn about outdoor wonders



## Checking In

Why is it important for girls to experience a day trip before planning an overnight?

---

---

---

What are some “move out” or “explore out” activities you could plan with your troop?

---

---

---

---

## Group Living Skills

### Girl Readiness

Girls should be ready both physically and emotionally for an overnight. They should have a certain competency level in basic group living skills. When is a girl ready for an overnight?

When she...

- is not afraid to be away from home and family overnight
- wants to go
- has experience with new places and new things
- can take turns
- gets along well with all girls in the troop and can work as part of a group
- can cope with “unknowns” such as strange places, darkness, noises, and new foods
- has stamina; doesn’t tire easily
- will work with all girls, not just her best friend
- can keep track of her belongings
- is strong enough to carry her own sleeping bag, pack, etc.
- has coordination to sweep floors, wash dishes, roll up a sleeping bag
- can plan a simple trip: what, where, how, when
- is able to tell others what the rules are
- can make and use a kaper chart
- can handle her own hygiene – brush her hair, brush her teeth
- knows health and safety rules, simple first aid
- knows how to dress for planned activities
- is able to be with a large noisy group for an extended period of time
- has been on a series of day trips and troop activities



## Checking In

How do I know that the girls in my troop are ready for an overnight? Which of the readiness indicators do I feel confident using to judge that the girls in my troop show competency?

---

---

---

---

For those readiness indicators that my troop is not exhibiting, what can I do to help get them there?

---

---

---

---

---

## Properties and Program Resources

### Places to Go

There are a number of places your troop could go for an overnight. The options include, but are not limited to a: family basement, camp troop house, hotel/inn, family cabin, museum or other attraction, church, or school.

Where you go depends on a number of factors. Here is a list of some of the things you should consider when making a choice of location:

- Safety & accessibility – is the site free of hazards and fully accessible to all?
- Cost – how will the cost be covered?
- Location – how far away is it?
- Activities – what do the girls have planned for this overnight?
- Sleeping arrangements – consider adults on overnights (see page 17) as well as whether there are beds, bunks, cots, or mats on the floor.
- Private/public – will there be others around you?
- Meals – cooking facilities, no-cook meals, or eating out?
- Heat – some camp cabins are not winterized.

## Council Sites

River Valleys owns and maintains several facilities and camp sites that are available for rent by troops and service units. Facilities are generally available for rent between Labor Day and Memorial Day, with some available for rent during the summer, as well. Facilities include indoor and outdoor options, day and overnight use, and range from modern to rustic. Depending on the facility, amenities include, but are not limited to: tables, benches/chairs, mattresses/bunk beds, kitchens and basic kitchen appliances/ supplies, firewood and fireplace, showers, etc.

Detailed information about the various council sites as well as the procedures for renting them can be found on the River Valleys Camp website, <https://camp.girlscoutsrv.org/> Click on “Rentals”



### Checking In

Make a list of possible overnight sites the girls in your troop can research.

---

---

---

Refer to the list of factors the girls should consider when choosing a location. Can you think of other areas of consideration that would influence their choice?

---

---

### Things to Do

As the girls in your troop are planning their overnight location, one of the things you should consider is what activities they plan to do. Some of the sites are focused on specific activities, like an overnight at a museum, but planning an overnight in a basite or at a council troop house allows troops to choose their own activities.

A Girl Scout overnight is more than a slumber party. Keep in mind that Girl Scout programs goes beyond the fun and games on an overnight. Cooking skills, developing your kaper chart, practicing first aid skills, or doing a service project can all be part of your overnight program. Learning a new skill or providing a service to others is a great way to make both a lasting impact and lasting memories. You can also use the time to work on badges or a journey, or plan your Girl Scout year.



## Checking In

Scenario: At the planned overnight, the girls want to watch movies during the evening and the adults can have some quiet time together upstairs. Is this a good example of good Girl Scout programming? What could be done differently?

---

---

---

---

## Policies & Forms

### Approval

For a Basic Trip the Girl Scout Trip - Planning Worksheet must be completed and given to an at-home contact. A completed form constitutes River Valleys' approval. Basic Trips Include Troop Meeting Trip (During regular meeting time), Day Trips or Simple Overnight (2 nights or less).

The following trips require additional council approval. Extended Troop Trip (lasting 3 nights or more or including air travel), International Trip (including Canada), Regional Trip (involving more than 3 troops or more than 1 Service Unit) or High Risk Activity (Activity not included in Safety-Wise Activity Checkpoints) For these trips the Girl Scout Trip – Request To Plan Form must be submitted to River Valleys once the basic planning of the trip has been completed, at least 6 months prior to departure. Additionally a copy of the Girl Scout Trip - Planning Worksheet must be submitted to River Valleys at least 8 weeks prior to departure for all River Valleys' Approved Trips.

Information on Travel Progression and Planning, as well as forms can be found on the River Valleys Volunteer website.

<https://volunteers.girlscoutsrv.org/reference/articles/travel/>

## Adults on Overnights

The policy of River Valleys is that any adult volunteer who has regular contact and interaction with girls, including participating in an overnight, must have completed a background check and be a registered member of the Girl Scouts of the USA.

Adults helping girls plan, organize and carry out an overnight trip accept 24-hour responsibility for the girls in their care. The adults need to arrange appropriate and discreet sleeping, bathroom, and shower facilities for men and women accompanying the girls. There are also specific guidelines on page 16-17 of Safety-Wise

These include:

- If there is a leader with a relationship to another leader (married, family, partnership) a third, unrelated adult must be part of the leadership team.
- No adult will sleep alone with a group of Girl Scouts. In a family overnight situation, a girl may sleep alone with her parent/guardian.
- Male adults will sleep in a separate space from the girls.

Each of these situations is explained further in Safety-Wise.



### Checking In

How does River Valleys define an Extended Overnight Trip?

---

---

---

How far in advance must you submit a trip approval form?

---

---

---

### Safety-Wise

In Girl Scouting, the emotional and physical safety and well being of girls is always a top priority. The Health and Safety section of the River Valleys Volunteer website includes links to various Health and Safety forms, as well as the current online version of Safety-Wise which provides comprehensive safety guidelines for all activities, programs, and events. You can find this information on <https://volunteers.girlscoutsrv.org>. Put Health and Safety into the search.

---

## **Girl Planning**

Planning for a troop overnight should begin many months before the event and should be girl-led as much as possible. As a leader you have specific responsibilities, particularly for the health and safety of your troop, but most of the planning steps are opportunities for learning and developing for the girls.

In keeping with the three processes of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, there should be as many planning activities as possible to be girl-led, considering the age and abilities of the girls. Older girls can take the bulk of the responsibility for planning and executing activities. Younger girls will require more of your guidance but should still be deeply involved in making choices about their activities. Also, give girls the chance to learn cooperatively, by having girls teach each other new skills, rather than instruction always coming from adults. Let girls learn by doing: if research or special equipment is needed, they'll learn better doing that research themselves than by having you do the legwork and report back to them. Even Daisies can do basic research and give reports or do show-and-tell for each other. Ambassadors may need you only for moral support as they research, teach each other, and plan their excursions.

## **Leader Responsibilities**

Parts of planning that require your involvement:

- site reservation and fee;
- securing permission for the trip from your service unit manager;
- first aider and first aid kit;
- sufficient adult help;
- responsible drivers, proper insurance, seat belts;
- securing permission slips and health forms;
- knowing any health problems your girls may have and how to deal with them;
- budget;
- alternate plans, cancellation criteria, rescheduling;
- working toward a spirit of inclusiveness; and
- communicating responsibilities to other adult chaperones.

## **Involving Girls**

There are many ways to involve the girls in the planning process. Here are just a few suggestions:

### **Have a brainstorming session**

This immediately gives the girls the feeling that anything is possible—and ideas will flow! There will be enough time later to be practical and finalize the plans generated by this activity.

### **Use check lists**

Provide a list of potential activities. Let each girl check the things that appeal to her. Leave space at the bottom of the sheet for them to write in suggestions.

### **Offer a few “taster” activities**

Watch the girls' reactions to new suggestions. They won't hide their enthusiasm, or lack of it, for the activity.

### **Make a suggestion box**

This allows girls to put in ideas anytime. It also provides for the individual girls with different ideas a chance to share.

### **Take a hike or trip away from the meeting place**

Point out program possibilities. Perhaps girls will discover an ecology project.

### **Investigate**

Have girls research places to go, facilities offered, and program activities. Before the outing have them investigate food prices, gather resource books, or material for activities.

### **Make a game out of it**

First girl: "I'm going on an overnight, and I need to take my sleeping bag." Second girl: "I'm going on an overnight too, and I need to take my sleeping bag and my flashlight." and so forth, until each girl has added at least one necessary item.

### **Make exhibits or draw pictures of "needs"**

"Needs" could be contents of a first aid kit, supplies for a program activity, food for a meal, etc.

### **Make up skits to practice "What to do if..."**

Topics could be: a girl cuts her finger, you see an animal, the troop is bored, etc.

### **Play duffle bag**

It's a relay game to learn how to dress for the weather. Who can choose the most appropriate items of clothing for an event? Items are taken from a duffel bag.

### **Make gorp (good ole raisins and peanuts)**

Do it as a group and discuss good nutrition. Caution – traditional gorp recipes include peanuts, be sure to check with the girls in your troop regarding food allergies.

## **Plan for Inclusiveness**

When planning for an overnight, consider the impact of any differences between the members of your troop. You'll need to take these differences into consideration as you plan your location, meals and activities.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical considerations:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ facility accessibility</li><li>○ activity choices</li><li>○ food options</li><li>○ meal times</li></ul></li><li>• Religious considerations:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ choice of dates</li><li>○ arrival and departure times</li><li>○ food options</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial considerations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ having appropriate gear</li><li>○ activities planned</li><li>○ affordable locations</li></ul></li><li>• Family considerations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ adult involvement</li><li>○ pick-up / drop-off options</li><li>○ transportation</li></ul></li></ul> |
|---|--|



### **Checking In**

In what other ways does diversity and inclusiveness play a part in planning an overnight?

---

---

## **Planning Timeline**

A fun and successful overnight adventure starts several meetings before the overnight. The girls should be involved in all aspects of planning and preparation for their overnight!

The following timeline should be considered the minimum preparation time required:

### **Five or more meetings before...**

- Begin discussing the overnight: where you're going and what the girls can expect
- Brainstorm program activities
- Start planning for equipment and supplies - personal and troop
- Plan your budget

### **Four meetings before...**

- Plan menus or snacks
- Final plans for activities
- Create a packing list
- Discuss your overnight rules
- Practice skills - build edible fires, tie knots using licorice ropes

### **Three meetings before...**

- Review safety procedures and prepare for emergency situations
- Assemble a first aid kit
- Send permission slips home with girls
- Plan shopping trip
- Finalize transportation plans

### **Two meetings before...**

- Prepare and eat something you plan to eat on the overnight
- Remind girls who have not turned in permission slips

### **One meeting before...**

- Review plans and make sure everything is done
- Review equipment/supply lists
- Make sure everyone has necessary emergency information

### **One meeting after...**

- Evaluate what worked and what didn't work

## **Budget Development**

Once you have decided on an overnight, you will need to determine your budget. To determine a cost per person, itemize all of the costs of implementing the overnight. Be sure to include the girls in the development of the budget so they gain an understanding of the costs involved.

Consider these expenses:

- cost of first aid or BTT training for adults;
- site rental;
- food and beverage, kitchen supplies;
- equipment rental;
- program supplies;
- postage and printing for items such as mailings to parents, confirmations, forms;
- health and safety supplies;
- purchased services such as a lifeguard or naturalist;
- leasing costs such as for a bus or van or auto mileage at the current rate to encourage volunteer drivers; and
- insurance. (Girl Scout non-member insurance must be purchased for unregistered participants.)

Consider the fixed costs of your overnight and variable costs when determining your budget. Fixed costs are costs those which cannot be adjusted (e.g. site rental). Variable costs are costs that vary according to the number of participants (e.g. food and beverage).

Evaluation of budget planning after the overnight is valuable for planning future events. Think about what worked well and what should be done differently.

## **Planning Chart**

On the following page is a planning chart. As you review, think about all of the steps in planning an overnight with your troop. Consider each of the sections, who will be taking care of each of them, and when each step needs to be done. Also, consider how to involve the girls in the planning for each section. Whether it's choosing a site, planning your activities, selecting food, defining the rules, or creating a packing list, ask how much can your girls do.

## Overnight Planning Chart

What needs doing?	Who is doing it?	When must it be done?	How did it go?
<b>PERMISSION:</b> To use site			
Parent/Guardian permission			
<b>LEADERSHIP:</b> Trained adult			
Adult/girl ratio			
Special consultants			
<b>FINANCES:</b> Site fee			
Transportation costs			
Food costs			
Special materials			
<b>TRANSPORTATION:</b> Drivers/insurance			
Directions			
Timing			
Paper work/each car			
First aid kit/each car			
<b>EQUIPMENT:</b> Personal			
Group			
<b>SAFETY:</b> Camp rules			
First aid kit			
Emergency contacts			
Location of help			
First aider – <b>current</b>			
<b>FOOD:</b> Menus			
Quantities			
Storage			
Transportation			
Purchasing			
<b>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:</b> Supplies			
<b>RESPONSIBILITIES:</b> Kaper chart			
Schedules			
<b>EVALUATION:</b>			



## Checking In

Pick three or four of the steps in either the planning chart or timeline section above and describe how you will have that step be girl led?

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Roles & Rules

### Establishing Rules for Your Overnight – Group Agreement

Work with your girls to establish the rules that everyone will follow on the overnight. Some rules must be set by the adults; others may be set by the girls, but all rules should be **simple, reasonable, enforceable, and understood**.

Before the trip ask the girls to tell you what the rules are. Write them out and post them where they can be seen so the girls will feel ownership of the rules.

Consider having the girls create a written contract of behavior expectations. Include determined consequences for serious violations (e.g. call home; sent home at family expense). Have the girls and their families sign it. Be prepared to follow through with consequences.

#### Rules may include:

- use the buddy system;
- report strange noises, people, and activities to an adult immediately;
- wear shoes;
- run only if it is required for an activity;
- report all injuries to an adult;
- stay with the group; no wandering away;
- follow the kaper chart so that everyone helps with jobs;
- set “lights-out” and “wake-up” times;
- wash hands after using the bathroom, before preparing food, and before eating;
- use “Please”, “Thank you”, “You’re welcome”, and “May I help you?” often; or
- leave mp3 players, radios, and other electronics at home.

## Adult Chaperones

Safety-Wise provides the minimum number of adults you will need to include in the overnight based on the age and number of girls. Be sure to consider the type of activities planned when determining the number of adults.

Some tips for working with adult chaperones include:

- Review the Girl Scout Leadership Experience, key Girl Scout concepts and Safety-Wise with the adults ahead of time and make sure they understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Give them specific assignments for the overnight.
- Have their child in a different adult's patrol or group.
- Remind them they are role models - no smoking or drinking.



### Checking In

What other rules can you think of that you might want to include on your list?

---

---

---

What is the minimum number of adults that are required for an overnight with 18 Girl Scout Brownies?

---

---

---

## Leave No Trace

Girl Scouts have a long tradition of including outdoor activities in their program. Not every overnight will include outdoor activities but if you plan to spend some time outdoors you will want to be sure your girls understand and practice good Leave No Trace manners in the outdoors.

There seven principles of Leave No Trace. They are:

- \* Plan ahead and prepare
- \* Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- \* Dispose of waste properly
- \* Leave what you find
- \* Minimize campfire impacts
- \* Respect wildlife
- \* Be considerate of other visitors

(Kid-friendly version)

- \* Know before you go
- \* Choose the right path
- \* Trash your trash
- \* Leave what you find
- \* Be careful with fire
- \* Respect wildlife
- \* Be kind to other visitors

More information, including how to apply the principles, can be found at the LNT website: [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org). The more informed and comfortable you are with these principles, the easier it will be to help the girls to incorporate them into the planned activities.

## **Gear & Packing**

A good rule of thumb for gear on an overnight is to not pack more than you can carry in one trip. With a bag of clothes over their shoulder and a sleeping bag (with pillow rolled up in it) in their arms, each girl should be able to haul her own gear from the car to your overnight site. If you're only going to be staying one night you might consider having the girls roll their personal gear up in their sleeping bag and skip the separate bag altogether. Large suitcases are not necessary for weekend trips and may cause a problem with limited space. Talk with your girls about packing light. Make up a packing list as a group activity at one of your planning meetings so everyone has a chance to think about what is, and is not, needed.

### **Personal Gear**

The following is a list to help you get started on your own troop's packing list:

- Sleeping bag or bedroll, pillow, extra sheet or blanket (appropriate for your accommodations)
- Clothing appropriate for the weather and planned activities
- Underwear and socks
- Footwear appropriate for the weather and planned activities
- Pajamas and slippers
- Personal care items: toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, towel, wash cloth, shampoo, deodorant, etc.
- Sunscreen, lip balm, bug spray, etc.
- Flashlight
- Outer wear – jacket, hat, gloves/mittens, scarf, rain gear, rain boots
- Hair care items - comb/brush, hair binders, etc.
- Bandana
- Medications – must be given to first aider
- Permission slips and other paperwork
- A small stuffed animal – if every girl brings one, no individual girl will feel awkward about still wanting hers at night

Consider adding to your packing list a “Leave at home” section, or at least have the discussion about what items to leave at home. This could include:

- Cell phones – you need to decide as a troop whether to allow them and if so, with what restrictions
- Other electronics – anything with headphones in particular restricts interactions
- Money – if there is a reason for girls to have money be specific about the amount
- Jack knife – unless you specifically plan to do a jack knife activity (requires prior jack knife safety in a troop meeting).
- Food – can attract pests
- Jewelry – easily lost

On your packing list you might also consider having a column to check off the item as it is packed at home and a second column to check off the item as it is packed to go back home. Encourage girls (and reinforce with the families) to pack their own gear for the overnight so they know exactly what they brought. Remember that being able to keep track of one's own belongings is one of the readiness indicators mentioned in the previous girl readiness section.

## Program Ideas

There are many ways to teach and reinforce appropriate clothing and gear to pack for an overnight. The following two games can be modified to work with many scenarios.

### Go/No-Go Game

The purpose of this game is to help girls learn how to dress in the outdoor environment.

You will need:

- two bags, one marked “GO” and one marked “NO-GO”
- photos of clothing from magazines and catalogs; some clothing should be appropriate for outdoor situations and others not.

To play the game, choose:

- an outdoor activity
- the time of year the activity will take place
- the location of the activity

Have the girls choose clothing appropriate to the activity, time of year, and location. If the clothing is appropriate, the picture goes in the “GO” bag; if not appropriate, it goes into the “NO-GO” bag. Have the girls discuss why the clothing is or is not appropriate.

### Dress for the Weather Relay

You will need:

- Slips of paper with weather descriptions (rainy, snowing, sunny, etc.)
- An assortment of outdoor clothing

To play the game:

Divide girls into teams. Put a pile of clothes at a point in front of each team. Designate a goal location.

At the start signal, one girl from each team picks a slip of paper that described a weather condition, runs to their pile, puts on appropriate clothing and runs to the goal. She then returns to the bag, undresses, and rejoins her team to tag the next girl to do the same.

Variation:

Have an assortment of outdoor activity equipment in the bags (e.g. skis, sled, snorkel and fins, backpack and hiking stick). Each girl chooses a slip of paper that describes an activity before running. She must choose the correct equipment.



### Checking In

If bedwetting is an issue for some girls in your troop, what accommodations can you consider to help girls take care of themselves and preserve their dignity in a group overnight setting?

---

---

---

---

## Hot Stuff – Fireplaces & Campfires

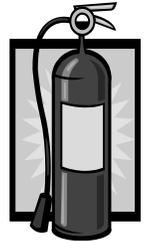
Campfires are another long-standing Girl Scout tradition. Many of River Valleys' camp troop houses have fireplaces in them or fire rings nearby. Information on fire building is included here to allow you to build a fire for ceremonial or program use only. Cooking over the fire (beyond marshmallows for s'mores) is not addressed in this training. Girls Cook Out training addresses cooking over a campfire.

### Fire Safety Rules

If you intend to use the fireplace or have a campfire on the overnight, it is important for you and your girls to know how to build, tend and put out a fire safely before you go.

The following rules apply to both indoor and outdoor fires:

- Always have firefighting equipment available, including fire extinguisher, water, loose soil or sand, and a shovel and rake, as appropriate, before you start your fire.
- Do not use liquid fuels to light or increase the fire.
- Do not wear clothing with dangling ends around a fire and tie back long hair.
- Do not wear plastic garments or fabrics that can melt such as fleece and nylon around a fire. Plastic and synthetic garments are extremely flammable and can cause severe burns.
- Keep all combustible materials at least three feet away from a fire.
- Restrict the number of people who are tending the fire.
- Avoid playing active games or other activities near the fireplace.
- Do not poke the fire with a stick and pull out the burning stick – once the stick goes in the fire it stays in the fire.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Restrict the size of the fire as appropriate – don't add more wood than you can expect to burn in the time you will be by the fire and don't add any wood in the last half hour. You want your fire to almost burn itself out by the time you're ready to put it out.
- Put your fire out completely when you are done. You should be able to put your hand on the ashes to ensure they are no longer burning.



### Campfires – To burn or not to burn...

Campfires were originally needed for survival but our attraction for them continues. They provide warmth, comfort, ceremony, and shared fun. However, there are native impacts of fires:

- fire rings leave evidence of human impact;
- heat damages soil;
- burning wood impacts natural resources; and
- burning produces air pollution.

As an alternative to a traditional campfire you could try some of these ideas:

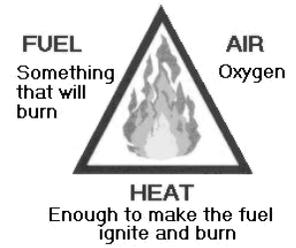
- Star watching
- Candle lantern
- Luminaries
- Gas lantern
- Flashlight circle (girls shine their flashlights in the center of the circle)

If you choose to have a campfire outside, remember to minimize the impact of fire by using responsible Leave No Trace tactics. Make sure that burning wood is permitted and fire danger is low. Check local regulations and weather conditions.

## Fire Building

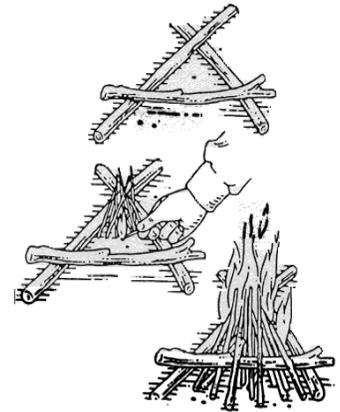
A fire requires three things to burn: air, fuel and heat. The structure of the fire is built to provide for airflow. A lit fire starter or tinder will provide enough heat to light the fuel. The fuel is provided in increasing sizes as the fire takes hold.

Fire starters are a bridge between your match and your fuel. It is something that catches fire easily and stays burning long enough to get some wood burning.



Follow these steps to build your outdoor fire:

1. **Choose a suitable and safe place.** Use an existing fire scar (damaged soil that hosted a previous fire) and place a large bucket of water and shovel nearby for putting the fire out.
2. **Gather your wood pile.** You will need three types of fire material: tinder, kindling, and fuel. The match lights the tinder; the tinder lights the kindling; the kindling lights the fuel.
3. **Build a foundation fire.** Use three pieces of kindling to form an “A” in your fire ring with the open end facing the wind. Place a fire starter and a large handful of tinder on the crossbar of the “A.” Leave space to place the match under the tinder. Then place several pieces of kindling on top of the tinder. Make sure you have additional kindling and fuel on hand before you start the fire. Keep adding kindling to the fire one piece at a time. Gradually increase the size of the wood until the fire is robust. If needed, blow gently at the base of the fire to give it more air. Blow with the wind, not into it.
4. **Enjoy your fire.** Continue adding wood as needed to keep your fire going, but don’t add more than you’re likely to burn. Make sure you allow for airflow as you add additional fuel.
5. **Put out your fire.**
  - Burn remaining wood to ash and let your fire die down.
  - Use a shovel to break up and spread out coals.
  - Stir the ashes, sprinkle them with water, and then stir again. Repeat until there is no gray ash anywhere in the fire pit.
  - Pass your hand several inches above the ashes. Sprinkle hot spots with more water.
  - The fire is out when there are no live coals or gray ash, and you can hold your hand over any spot for 25 seconds and not feel any warmth.
  - Dispose of ashes as recommended at the site.



Be sure to practice your fire building skills before working with the girls in your troop to model correct behavior for the girls.

## Fireplaces

Before starting a fire in a fireplace, be sure you understand clearly the general procedures below. If you have questions, please contact the camp staff.

1. Open the fireplace damper before starting the fire.
2. Use a small amount of tinder and kindling to start the fire. Begin building the fire on the floor of the fireplace near the back fireplace wall. You can use the same basic “A” frame layout used to start any campfire. This warms the flue and initiates the upward draft.
3. As the fire begins to burn, gradually and carefully add larger pieces of wood until the fire has enough fuel-sized wood to burn continuously. Use only enough wood needed for your purpose.
4. Use a fire screen if possible.
5. Do not add wood to the fire during the last half hour of your stay. Push the ashes and partially burned pieces of wood to the back of the fireplace and allow the fire to burn out completely before you leave. Do not use water to extinguish a fire in a fireplace! It will crack the brick and damage the chimney.
6. Clean up your fireplace as instructed.

If you have a chimney fire:

- shut the draft controls and damper completely
- call the fire department
- alert everyone in the building and evacuate children and extra adults
- activate the chimney fire extinguisher and drop it in the firebox
- notify the camp staff

## Program Idea – Edible Fire

One fun and tasty way to teach girls about fire safety, and the steps to build and put out a fire, is to create what we call an edible fire. Using an assortment of edible items to create your fire scar, fuel, flames, etc. You can talk through all of the steps and then consume your fire to leave nothing behind.



### Checking In

Before you light a fire you need to first have a way to put it out. What items should you always have nearby when you are planning to have a fire?

---

---

---

Perhaps you have memories of campfire activities from your past that you’d like to recreate with the girls in your troop. How might you need to update the activity to ensure a safe experience for your girls?

---

---

---