



## Planning for Trip Safety

The most important factor in having a safe and successful trip is good planning. Let girls do as much of the planning as possible; when girls have been included in planning, they will take the responsibility for enforcing the safety procedures. The leader needs to guide the group to ensure that the plans are appropriate to the girls' experience and skill level.

### Trip Safety

When taking girls on any trip, the troop leader and volunteers are responsible for:

1. Knowing council emergency procedures and safety standards and discussing them with the girls so they know and understand the safety guidelines.
2. Doing pre-trip planning with the girls.
3. Familiarizing yourselves with the site

Check Volunteer Essentials "Chapter 4: Safety-Wise" and any applicable Safety Activity Checkpoints and River Valleys policies and procedures regarding activity safety, girl-adult ratios, permission slips, health forms, leader training and special leadership. Follow them in your pre-trip planning.

**Consider the following:**

#### **Activity safety:**

As you plan each activity, think about the safety issues associated with the activity. Always check "Safety-Wise" and any applicable Safety Activity Checkpoints.

#### **First-aider:**

A qualified first-aider is required for all trips. A qualified first-aider is someone with current first aid/CPR or equivalent training.

#### **Activity supervision:**

The guidelines for some activities such as swimming or archery require supervision by an adult with special training. Check Volunteer Essentials "Chapter 4: Safety-Wise" and any applicable Safety Activity Checkpoints for the leadership requirements needed for activities that you plan.

## Help the girls develop an emergency plan for:

- **Fire:** Consider whether you are in a wooded area or inside a building.
- **Weather:** Consider whether you are in a wooded area or inside a building. An emergency weather radio will allow troop leaders/group coordinators to receive up-to-the-minute weather forecasts. Think about what to do during inclement weather, such as heavy rains, high winds, tornados, lightening, flooding, or winter storms.
- **Personal injury or a lost individual:** The troop leaders, girls and other adult volunteers need to know their roles and responsibilities in the event of a lost or injured person. Try to be familiar with the area you'll be visiting. Know the location and phone number for police, fire, medical personnel, hospitals and/or clinics.
- **Signaling:** Who will be responsible for signaling for specific types of emergencies, and what signal will be used (i.e., whistle, car horn, bell, etc.)?
- **Contact person:** Determine who the emergency contact person will be who stays at home.
  - Leave a list of names, phone numbers and other vital information of all people going.
  - Let the emergency person know how to contact you and where you'll be.
  - Leave your route of travel with the emergency person along with a copy of the outing itinerary so that they can contact you or the girls' families in an emergency.

## Familiarize everyone with the site:

Get together as a group and discuss the following information so everyone has a clear understanding of the safety guidelines for the outing:

- Any rules posted in the building must be followed.
- The phone and local emergency phone numbers.
- The location of the fire extinguisher(s) and/or smoke detector(s).

## Emergencies

**Weather radio:** For some trips you will want to make sure that a weather radio is provided to give you advanced warning of severe weather. If none is provided, be sure to bring your own or be sure that one or more of the adult volunteers have an emergency weather alert function on their phone.

**Emergency plan:** Develop emergency and security plans for the site at which you will be staying and locations you may be visiting. Girls should be aware of these plans.

**Emergency drill:** Have an emergency drill when you get to the site so that the girls are familiar with the plan and the site.

### **Contingency Plans:**

**Weather:** Plan alternate activities that can be used in case of bad weather—rain, extreme heat, etc.

**Time fillers:** Plan simple activities like songs, games, crafts, etc. that the girls can do if they get bored during free time or a lull in the outing.

## **Dressing for the Outdoors**

The key to being dressed for any kind of weather in the outdoors is LAYERING.

Layering is the single most important rule to remember when preparing for an outdoor adventure. If it is cold, layers of clothing will add air space which will help retain body heat. If it gets warm, you can remove layers. There are three basic stages in layering.

1. The inner layer is a moisture management layer, wicking moisture away from your body. Moisture trapped next to your body can make you feel chilled. Your next-to-body layer should be a material other than cotton. Silk, wool, and synthetic wicking fabrics are a good choice.
2. The middle layer is your insulating layer. The insulating layer keeps you warm by holding in body heat. Fibers such as wool, polyester fleece, and down are all excellent insulators.
3. Your outer layer is for wind and water protection. It must be breathable or well vented to keep perspiration from collecting and chilling your body. Choose your outer layer based on your activity and expected weather.

### **Tips for selecting the right clothes for an activity**

- Wear clothing that allows for freedom of movement during strenuous activity.
- Wear a hat in the winter to retain as much as 40 percent of your body heat; wear one in the summer to protect against the sun.
- Avoid clothes that dangle or flap, especially around campfires or stoves. Do not wear flammable clothing, like a plastic raincoat, around a fire.

GirlScoutsRV.org • 1-800-845-0787

- Be prepared by choosing waterproof rain gear. Also wear it on cold days or when the wind will evaporate moisture from your skin.
- Choose clothing that covers the arms and legs for protection from insects, ticks, poisonous plants and sun.
- For summer, choose materials like cotton that will breathe, but in winter wear wool or polypropylene.

## The Buddy System

The buddy system is far more than just the obvious pairing of girls. It is one of the most effective methods of protecting girls while they are outdoors or away from the regular troop meeting place. It also offers a quick way for a leader to determine whether a person is missing. The buddy plan does not relieve the leader of responsibility for knowing where every member of the troop or group is, but it does permit everyone to share the responsibility. The leader needs to involve everyone in the buddy plan before and throughout the outing. Under the buddy system, the troop is divided into teams of two. Each girl is responsible for:

- Staying with her buddy at all times;
- Warning her buddy of danger;
- Giving her buddy immediate assistance if it is safe to do so; and
- Calling for help or going for help when necessary.

### **Before the trip:**

In many troops the girls choose their own buddies. This is not always wise and may lead to hurt feelings or the ostracism of one or more of the girls. There is less potential for trouble if buddy assignments are arbitrary (assigned by the leader in alphabetical order of first or last name, by birthday, etc.) or random (by drawing lots or playing a game). If there are an odd number of girls, then one group of three should be “truddies.” If one girl is particularly unpopular, then random buddy assignments are particularly important. When possible, a leader should not appoint herself (or volunteer her daughter) to be an unpopular girl’s buddy; that may increase her sense of isolation and the group’s hostility toward her.

### **Pre-trip planning:**

Skits, quiz games, flash card games, opinion polls and discussions are all ways of making pre-trip planning interesting and fun for girls. Using a variety of these approaches, the leader should help the girls:

- Know what safety and security problems they may encounter at the chosen site or on the way to it, other people they may meet at the site or on the way, what special activities are planned and what risks those activities involve, and special skills they may need to take part in those activities;
- Know how to deal with hazards and potential problems (e.g., how to respond when meeting different groups or individuals, in what situations to give help to their buddy and when not to try, when to call for help or go for help, and the importance of taking buddy checks seriously and responding promptly);
- Develop safety and security procedures for buddy teams to follow if they become separated from the group or discover they are truly lost, the type of signal to use, and what signal codes will activate “buddy check,” “help,” “we are lost”; and
- Decide on the best basis for choosing buddies, taking the site and activities into consideration (on cookouts, buddies may be chosen from the same kaper group; for activities such as swimming, they should be chosen from the same ability level) before dividing into groups for random or arbitrary buddy assignment.

#### **At the start of each trip:**

- Have girls and adults choose their buddies according to the procedure decided on before the trip. If there is an odd number, one team should be “truddies.”
- Conducts a quick review to remind everybody of hazards, special do’s and don’ts, signaling plan, code, etc. Ask each girl to contribute to the review.
- Establish where adults can be found, where to go for help, etc.

#### **During the trip:**

- The leader or adult in charge of the activity conducts periodic buddy checks.
- When the buddy check signal is given, each person finds her buddy, clasps her hand, and holds it up. The adult will be able to spot any unattached person immediately and, by counting the teams, be sure no team is missing.

- Frequent buddy checks while swimming are especially important.

### **Fringe benefits of the buddy system:**

- The buddy system is a natural way for girls to establish new friendships, especially when team combinations change periodically.
- The buddy system allows the leader to provide real-life situations in which girls are encouraged to use their powers of observation, initiative and skills. It gives a girl a realistic framework in which to carry out the basic teachings of Girl Scouting—doing good turns, helping other people, being a sister to other Girl Scouts and living by the Promise and Law. A leader who uses the plan indicates to girls that she considers them to be trustworthy and dependable.
- The buddy system serves as a motivation to each girl to improve her skills and to show herself worthy of the leader’s trust and her buddy’s trust.
- The buddy system is simple to use, helps protect the group, is meaningful to girls and improves with constant use. Don’t underestimate it.

### **Supervision of Girls on a Trip**

Adults accompanying a group should be chosen for their patience, flexibility and good judgment.

#### **They need to understand their responsibilities during the trip.**

- The group leader should explain the role and expectations of all supervising adults before the trip.
- They should understand the plans the girls have made for the trip.
- They should understand the safety systems for the trip and the buddy system that the girls have learned.
- If they are drivers, they need to know the transportation safety standards in Volunteer Essentials “Chapter 4: Safety-Wise” and in any applicable Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- They need to know the emergency procedures for the site as well as during travel to and from the site.
- They must act as responsible role models by not smoking, drinking or taking illegal drugs while on the trip.

The group leader needs to communicate with the other adults and encourage them to attend meetings when the troop is preparing for the trip. They should know what equipment and clothing to bring. They need to know the schedule and expectations that the girls have set for themselves.

### **Supervision means:**

- Encouraging girls to try new things
- Watching, guiding, motivating
- Intervening before injuries occur (safety is a primary concern)
- Being knowledgeable about the activity to be supervised and the potential for injury
- Being a role model
- Taking full responsibility for an activity or group of girls when asked
- Providing effective discipline when needed (criticize the behavior, not the child)
- Knowing where girls are at all times
- Being easily located by girls who need help
- Helping girls understand how to do unfamiliar tasks while giving them real responsibility for finishing a job so that they see themselves as useful and competent
- Providing praise for effort and achievement
- Helping girls who need it with tasks such as combing hair and reminders to wash hands, change to clean clothes when needed, etc.

If the adults have daughters in the group, they may want to discuss ways to encourage these girls to feel that they are part of the group, not different or special. Also realize that young girls sometimes find it hard to share the time and attention of their parent (or special adult) with other girls.

### **Leave No Trace**

Leave No Trace is a set of outdoor ethics promoting conservation in the outdoors. It is built on seven principles:

#### **The seven principles of Leave No Trace:**

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly

#### **Girl-friendly version**

- Know before you go
- Choose the right path
- Trash you trash

- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors

- Leave what you find
- Be careful with fire
- Respect wildlife
- Be kind to other visitors

There are some things we can do to help preserve the environment for our own and others' use:

- When hiking, stay with your group. Stay on the trail! Walk single file on narrow trails; if you meet another group, go around quickly and quietly.
- Protect the vegetation and soil. Do not pick anything. You can look, draw pictures or take photographs.
- Pack out your trash. If you bring it in, take it out!
- Pick up litter as you find it (unless it poses a hazard). Leave the campsite cleaner than you found it.
- Don't feed the animals.
- Repackage supplies at home into recyclable or reusable containers. Look for ways to minimize the amount of gear and packaging you take along.
- Keep campfires small. Use only down, dead wood for fires and gather only what you need. Use an existing fire ring when available.
- Put fires out carefully and completely.
- Keep partly burned wood in the fire ring for the next fire.
- Use charcoal for your fire whenever possible.
- Sprinkle your dishwater over a wide area or use it to put the fire out.
- Keep water sources clean.
  - Dispose of dishwater and cleaning water at least 200 feet from water sources (ponds, streams, lakes, etc.).

**Leave No Trace: Questions to Consider:**

These questions can help you keep the principles of Leave No Trace in mind when cooking outdoors:

**Plan ahead and prepare:**

- Is the location right for what you plan to do?
- Are you packing clothing and equipment that is appropriate for the environment?
- Do you need a permit or reservation?

- How can you reduce packaging and fuel requirements for cooking?
- How are you going to store or hang food away from animals?
- Have you divided the group into small cooking groups?

**Travel and camp on durable surfaces:**

- Have you asked about trail conditions and committed yourself to staying on established trails, including avoiding trail shortcuts and following switchbacks?
- Do you know to stay with your group?

**Dispose of waste properly:**

- Do you have sufficient garbage bags for packing out all disposable items? This includes food wrappings, food scraps, waste paper, toilet paper and sanitary products.
- Are you taking biodegradable soap?
- Did you bring an extra bag to carry out litter?
- Do you know the proper way to dispose of dishwater at a campsite? How far away from water sources?

**Leave what you find:**

- Do you know not to pick the flowers?
- Have you considered ways to record your experience and feelings by packing a journal, camera or art supplies?

**Minimize campfire impacts:**

- Do you plan to cook with stoves?
- Do you have enough fuel for each cooking group?
- Have you checked whether fires are permitted?
- Do you know how to choose a fire site to minimize damage, as well as how to protect the area from fire?
- Do you know how to properly extinguish a campfire?

**Respect wildlife:**

- Do you know ways to make sure that you do not feed any wildlife?
- Do you know of ways to observe wildlife from a distance?

**Be considerate of other visitors:**

- Are you planning to leave electronics at home? Let nature's sound prevail.

- Have you talked about your goals for the trip?
- Are you allowing time for reflective experiences?
- Have you discussed what other people are seeking from a wilderness experience and how to minimize your impact on their experiences?