

Fishing: Safety Activity Checkpoints



Fishing (also referred to as “angling”) is a sport, a leisurely activity and a major food industry, depending on who you’re talking to. In the United States, freshwater fishing is more popular than saltwater fishing, and varieties include fly fishing, ice fishing (see the “Ice Fishing” Safety Activity Checkpoints) and match fishing (the most popular form of competitive fishing). The best times of day to fish rely on a variety of factors, such as amount of sunlight, temperature and depth of water and winds. In general, however, the best times to fish are early in the morning or in the mid-evening.

Know where to fish. Lakes, rivers, ponds, creeks, and the ocean are great places to fish. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. Also, Takemefishing.com provides an online tool to select fishing locations in the United States.

Include girls with disabilities. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that [Disabled Sports USA](http://DisabledSportsUSA.org) provides to people with disabilities.

Fishing Gear

Required Gear

- If fishing from a boat, reference the “Row Boating” or “Sailing” Safety Activity Checkpoints
- If girls are wading in water more than knee-deep or fishing from a boat, ensure that they wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears. Read about Coast Guard life jackets [here](#).
- Fishing rod appropriate to the type of fishing
- Fishing tackle (and tackle box) appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines

Recommended Gear

- Layered, non-cotton clothing that's easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended)
- Boat shoes, closed-toe and nonslip hiking/sport sandals with heel strap, water socks or shoes (no flip-flops)
- Waterproof sunscreen (SPF of at least 15), apply at least every two hours
- Sunglasses or sunhat
- Flashlight
- Insect repellent
- Cooler and ice for keeping fish cool and avoiding spoilage (if intended for consumption)
- If fishing from a boat, at least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) is immediately available for each group on the water
- Fishing net

Prepare for Fishing

- Communicate with council and parents.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Girls plan the activity.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- Ensure participants are able to swim (for girls wading in water more than knee-deep).** Participants' swimming abilities are classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, etc.) at council-approved sites, or participants provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a swim test is conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.
- Arrange for transportation and adult supervision.** For the recommended adult-to-girl ratios see the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- *Ensure that the supervising adult or fishing instructor holds the following certification or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines, as outlined in [Volunteer Essentials](#):**
 - **Fishing from a dock:** American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is 1 to 10, except for Daisies where the ratio is 1 to 6. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
 - **Fishing while wading, above knee-deep.** American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is 1 to 10, except for Daisies where the ratio is 1 to 6. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
 - **Fishing from a shoreline or while wading (up to knee-deep):** American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue is recommended, but not required. However, personal flotation devices or other water rescue equipment must be provided. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is 1 to 10, except for Daisies where the ratio is 1 to 6. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
 - **Fishing from small craft:** American Red Cross Small Craft Safety certification; the ratio of adult watcher to participant is 1 to 10, except for Daisies where the ratio is 1 to 6. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
 - **NOTE:** The instructor-to-participant ratio is NOT necessarily the same as the adult-to-girl ratio that is found in the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints. Both ratios MUST be complied with when girls are participating in fishing. For example, if there are 20 Juniors participating in a fishing activity, there must be 2 instructors plus 3 adult Girl Scout volunteers (who are not instructors).
- Compile key contacts.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.

- ❑ **Observe fishing and environmental regulations.** When selecting a fishing location, follow local, state and federal fishing regulations, and obtain [fishing licenses](#), where required. Use the correct type of bait and fishing gear permitted in that area, and learn about limits on the number, size and kind of fish that you can keep. Also select a fishing location that is separate from swimming areas.
- ❑ ***Select appropriate boats for water and passengers*.** Make sure craft weight and capacity are not exceeded (some crafts clearly display maximum capacity). Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment.
- ❑ **File a float plan for extensive boat trips.** If going on an extended boat fishing trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify local authorities should your group not return. Float plans must include the names of people on board, destination, craft description, times of departure and return and additional details about routes and marine communications. The Coast Guard provides an [electronic, printable form](#).
- ❑ **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 to handle 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. See [Volunteer Essentials](#) for information about first-aid standards and training.

On the Day of Fishing

- ❑ **Get a weather and wind report.** Never fish on a stormy or extremely windy day. On the day of the fishing activity, visit [weather.com](#) or other reliable sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. If weather conditions prevent the fishing trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.
- ❑ **Use the buddy system.** See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.
- ❑ **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. During storms, if shore cannot be reached, secure all loose gear, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions, head into the wind at a 45-degree angle, and stay low.
- ❑ **Respect fish and wildlife.** Whenever possible, use barbless hooks, and return live fish to the water. Remove fishing gear, bait, and dead fish at the end of the fishing activity.

Fishing Links

- American Sportfishing Association: www.asafishing.org
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: www.wsfprprograms.fws.gov
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: www.fishwildlife.org
- International Game Fish Association: www.igfa.org
- Leave No Trace: www.lnt.org
- Take Me Fishing: www.takemefishing.org
- U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division: www.uscgboating.org

Fishing Know-How for Girls

- **Lure them in.** Learn all about the vast variety of artificial and live fish bait on this at [Take Me Fishing](#).
- **Learn about rods and reels.** Spincast, spinning, baitcast, and fly are the four reel types on the [Take Me Fishing](#).

***These checkpoints must be reviewed with the vendor and/or facility, when appropriate.**