

Patch Program

Camping Adventures

Get ready for your camping adventure! Explore the outdoors. Discover new ways to cook camp meals, master campfire safety skills, learn campcraft skills, and practice Leave No Trace principles.

Be entered into our featured patch sweepstakes! Patch purchasers will be automatically entered into our sweepstakes, with the chance to win a Girl Scout hiking backpack. Read the [sweepstakes rules](#) for details.

Grade level requirements:

- **Daisies (grades K-1).** Choose one activity from each category.
- **Brownies (grades 2-3).** Choose two activities from each category.
- **Juniors (grades 4-5).** Choose two activities from each category.
- **Cadettes (grades 6-8).** Choose three activities each from Discover and Connect and one activity from Take Action.
- **Seniors (grades 9-10).** Choose three activities each from Discover and Connect and one activity from Take Action.
- **Ambassadors (grades 11-12).** Choose three activities each from Discover and Connect and one activity from Take Action.

When you're done, [submit photos](#) and a story to inspire other Girl Scouts to create their own camping adventures! [Purchase the patch](#) by April 30, 2025.

Discover

Enjoying the great outdoors has been a part of Girl Scouting tradition from the beginning. Camping can take you from your backyard or a state park to the top of a mountain. Sleep in a tent or a hammock – or directly under the stars! While you learn and practice basic camping skills, you will build the knowledge and know-how to camp nearly anywhere your adventures take you!

- **Fire building:** Making an edible campfire is a tasty way to learn all about building a campfire! Always make sure your long hair is pulled back before building a fire. Gather an empty paper plate, a glass of water, some pretzel rods, pretzel sticks, shredded cheese, marshmallows, goldfish, and mini chocolate chips. Settle in with your ingredients and [learn about the common campfire builds](#) like the log cabin, A-frame, and the cone. Then enjoy your edible campfire!
- **Leave No Trace**, or LNT, is a set of seven principles that encourages practicing good outdoor manners and learning how to have a minimal impact on the environment. LNT is built on the belief that if all people do something simple to help take care of the outdoors, we will all benefit – and so will the Earth. The seven principles are: plan ahead and prepare, travel and camp on durable surfaces, dispose of waste properly, leave what you find, minimize campfire impacts, respect wildlife, and be considerate of others.

Learn to leave no trace anytime you interact with nature! Younger Girl Scouts, [learn the hand signals](#) to help you remember the seven principles. Older Girl Scouts, complete the 45-minute [“Leave No Trace 101” online training](#). Girl Scout caregivers should monitor websites that Girl Scouts view, ensuring that they are safe and actively controlled.

Want to learn more about Leave No Trace? Check out the GSCTX “Leave Only Footprints” patch and curriculum available in the Austin GSCTX Shop. Contact them at austinshop@gsctx.org for more information.

- **Outdoor dreaming:** Close your eyes and picture yourself on a camping trip. What do you see? Are you pitching a tent or sleeping under the stars? Are you with your Girl Scout troop or your family? Are you hiking to your campsite with a backpack, or did you arrive in a car? Will you be cooking hot dogs and s’mores over a campfire or making meals on a camp stove? Are you surrounded by trees, or can you hear a creek running nearby?

There are no wrong answers! Take a peek at [GSUSA’s Outdoor Progression](#). What are you ready to try or learn to prepare for your next

outdoor adventure? Talk to an adult or your Girl Scout troop about what new skills or activities you would like to try next – and make a plan! What resources do you need to make it happen?

- **Knotty knowledge:** Practice the skills you need to go camping before you ever pitch a tent! Knots are a simple skill to practice anywhere and they're essential to tie tent flaps and clotheslines, hang food bags or hammocks, or to tie a canoe to a dock. Get a 12- to 18-inch piece of paracord, rope, or even some shoelaces to try these knots: overhand, round turn and two half hitches, clove hitch, square/reef knot, sheet bend, and bowline. You can find a [video with step-by-step instructions](#) or by using a website like [AnimatedKnots.com](#).
- **Deep in the heart of Texas:** Texas's immense size and diverse geography offers a wide range of camping experiences, from the piney woods of East Texas to the rugged mountains of West Texas. [Explore this map of the Texas State Parks](#) to find one close to your home – or all the way on the other side of the state. Where can you camp on the beach? Or swim in the world's largest spring-fed swimming pool? Find dinosaur tracks in the river? See bats emerge from their roost in an old railroad tunnel? Visit bison and longhorns? Or hike in the second largest canyon, second only to the Grand Canyon? All at Texas State Parks! Which park would you pick for a camping trip if you could go anywhere in Texas? Whether you prefer coastal camping, desert landscapes, or lush forests, Texas has a perfect spot for every outdoor enthusiast. Texas has 88 state parks!

Connect

Camping allows you to connect with wilderness on a whole new level. You may splash through a creek that crosses a trail, hear the nighttime chorus of frogs or coyotes, learn that food cooked over a campfire tastes better than anything you've ever eaten, and discover the quiet and peace of the wilderness!

- **S'mores:** Have you ever wondered who invented the sweet, melty, and gooey treat made of fire-roasted marshmallows with a chunk of chocolate sandwiched between two graham crackers? Could it have been Girl Scouts? The first published recipe for "Some Mores," or s'mores, can be traced back to *Tramping and Trailing with the Girl Scouts*, a Girl Scout handbook published in 1927. Nearly 100 years later, s'mores are still a staple of any

camping trip. Create three of your own new recipes for s'mores. What flavors would you add or combine to make your perfect recipe?

- **Gear up:** You would not wear ballet flats to run a mile, and you can't play soccer without a ball! Camping is the same. You need the right gear, which can make a camping trip not only more fun but also safer. Ask an adult who is an experienced camper about their gear. What type of shoes will give you traction and protect your toes? What is in their first aid kit? How do they prepare food? Where is their favorite camping place? What is their favorite piece of gear – and why? How do they prepare food?
- **Cozy time:** Did you know that different sleeping bags are made for different types of sleeping environments? The sleeping bag you use for a sleepover might not keep you warm enough for a December camping trip. Sleeping bags are actually tested in a lab to make sure you know you're choosing the right sleeping bag for the season and area where you camp! Research the difference between the *comfort rating* and the *lower limit rating*. If you have a sleep sack with a favorite cartoon character or princess on it, for example, it may not have any rating and may not be warm enough for outdoor camping.

If you have a sleeping bag, pull it out and take a look. Can you find a label on yours? Or is there a number in the name, like the "Snuggly Scout" 20, as in 20 degrees Fahrenheit? Kids' sleeping bags aren't required to have a comfort rating, so always plan ahead to have the clothing layers you need to keep you dressed appropriately for the weather.

While you're thinking about a cozy night camping, how about making **sleeping bag SWAPS**? You only need a few crafty items. Make extras and share them with your troop or friends.

- **Staying dry:** Try this cold-weather clothing experiment from *Outdoor Education in Girl Scouting*, published in 1996. Put a cotton sock on one hand and a wool sock on the other. Place your fingertips into a pail of water. Then take them out. Which hand feels warmer? Does wetness creep up either sock? How long does it take each sock to dry. Which material would you want to wear in cold weather? Why?
- **Campfires** are deeply rooted in tradition. Picture making s'mores or hot dogs, singing or sharing stories in a circle around the fire, or just enjoying the warmth of the flames. For many, a camping trip wouldn't be complete without a fire!

Every campfire requires a plan. When camping, plan ahead to buy firewood locally (where you plan to use it). Many state parks and campgrounds do not allow people to gather wood. And did you know that that state of Texas regulates the movement of firewood? Forest pests, such as the emerald ash borer, threaten the health of Texas trees. Also, is there a burn ban? Burn bans reduce the risk of wildfire during drought and excessive heat.

What you can do to practice building a fire – without ever lighting a match – is to **learn more about the three sizes of wood you need: tinder, kindling, and fuel.** Gather enough of each size from the ground in your yard or at a park to practice building the fire structure. Never break branches off of a tree for a fire. It hurts the plant and “green” wood doesn’t burn well.

As for campfires, you must put safety first! Pull long hair back into a ponytail. Make sure you have an attentive adult right there. Every fire requires an established fire ring or fireplace, tools (shovel and a bucket of water), and a full assessment of the area for safety. Practice building the A-frame or log cabin style of fire using the three sizes of wood *without using a match or lighter*. You’ll be prepared the next time you need to have a real campfire.

- **“Be prepared”** is the Girl Scouts motto. Any day hike can turn into an overnight trip if your hiking doesn’t go as planned! It is a good practice to pack the “ten essentials” for every outdoor adventure, especially hiking. These essentials include navigation (map, compass, GPS), illumination (flashlight or headlamp), sun protection (clothing, sunscreen), first aid (including insect repellent), a pocketknife, fire (matches, lighter), shelter, extra food, extra water, and extra clothing. **Learn more about the ten essentials.** The original list was created in the 1930s to ensure people were prepared for wilderness emergencies! How would your packing list change in the summer versus winter?

Make a flashcard for each of the ten essentials. Cut pictures out of magazines or draw pictures on each card. Then practice packing and using the ten essentials for your next outing. What other essential would you add to the list?

- **“Leaves of three, let it be.”** Touching poison ivy can make a camping trip extremely uncomfortable! Did you know that every part of the poison ivy plant – leaves, vines, stems, and roots – contain urushiol oil. This oil is what

causes the rash when your skin touches poison ivy. Check out a book from your local library about poisonous plants or native plants in your area so you can learn to identify the plants you might see on a camping trip. Make flashcards or a nature journal to document and draw at least five plants growing in your area.

- **Campsite set-up:** Deciding where and how to set up your campsite will help you have a pleasant and safe experience. At a campground, you'll be setting up in a designated area or tent site. In your backyard, you will need to pick the best site. Use the five W's to choose a site! Clear any site of sticks, rocks, and any other debris. Then look around for:
 1. **WIND.** Identify which direction the wind is blowing. Will it blow campfire smoke straight toward your tent? Are there trees, plants, or rocks to block your tent from the wind? Don't forget to stake down your tent!
 2. **WATER.** No one wants to move a tent in the middle of a storm! Have you selected a spot in a low-lying area where rainwater might pool or even run through your tent site during heavy rain? A sign of water runoff is a line of leaves and dirt that look like it has been pushed to the side. However, having water nearby at a primitive site or while backpacking can be essential for filtering and drinking. A natural water source can also bring wildlife who come to drink.
 3. **WILDLIFE.** Look around for signs of animal homes. Do you see tracks? Scat? What animals are known to live in the area? What precautions should you take?
 4. **WIGGLIES.** Do you see insect homes, cobwebs, beehives, or ant mounds?
 5. **WIDOWMAKERS.** Look up. Do you see dead trees or branches above your tent site? Falling branches could cause serious injuries. Look for visual signs of rot or decay on the trees around you.
- **Ms. Manners:** After learning about Leave No Trace (above), discuss with your troop or family what it means to have good outdoor manners. For example, leaving litter behind is inconsiderate to other visitors and can be hazardous to animals. What might happen to your chewed bubble gum if you dropped it on the ground? What about the pieces of a broken glass bottle? How about a plastic grocery sack? Take a ten-minute walk. What litter do you see, and how might it impact the environment or animals? Bonus: Safely pick up the litter you find and dispose of it properly.

- **Making treks:** Backpacking is a form of camping that involves carrying your essentials with you to set up camp further afield from a typical campsite. But backpacking is just walking and camping! Learn how to pack and fit a backpack correctly. How should the weight be distributed? What are the differences between internal and external frame backpacks?

If you've never backpacked before, plan a practice trip with your troop or family to a nearby park or playground. Set up tents – or just a picnic! Using a map, plan a route of two to three miles – on trails or sidewalks!

Kids should only carry a light load with some personal gear. Adults can carry or deliver any heavy items. Research the gear you might need, including tents and backpacking stoves. No gear? No problem. **GSCTX rents backpacks**, tents, backpacking stoves, and sleeping pads.

- **Eat for energy!** Outdoor activities can require lots of energy. GORP is an acronym for trail mix made of “good old raisins and peanuts.” It is portable, convenient, tasty, and highly customizable. The combination of nuts and dried fruits can provide an instant energy boost. Create a recipe of something sweet (dried cherries, banana chips, raisins, or chocolate chips), something salty (pretzels, cashews, almonds, pumpkin seeds, popcorn), and something fun (marshmallows, granola, shredded coconut). What are some other ingredients you would add to your GORP? How many tasty combinations can you dream up? Share your recipe with your troop or some friends for a day of outdoor adventure.

Take Action

As a Girl Scout, you can make the world a better place!

- **Teach the Golden Rule:** Girl Scouts all know how important it is to “leave a place better than you found it.” This is also the golden rule of camping! You may have also heard the idea you should “take only photos, leave only footprints.” Both of these statements can be tied to Leave No Trace.

Help spread the word about the seven principles of Leave No Trace. Teach the hand signals to a younger troop of Girl Scouts, make a poster for your school library, or teach your own troop its importance. To help remember the seven principles, create a bracelet with a different colored bead for each principle.

- **Do your part to “Pick Up America”** and clean up litter to make your community or a campground a cleaner place. Make your online pledge with [Pick Up America and GSUSA](#).
- **Just call me Girl Scout Ranger:** Have you visited a national park? Here in Texas, you can visit Big Bend National Park and Guadalupe National Park in West Texas. Nearby national parks include Hot Springs National Park in neighboring Arkansas and Carlsbad Caverns and White Sands in New Mexico. Many national parks in the United States offer camping opportunities. Whether you’re looking to pitch a tent, park an RV, or hike to the backcountry, you can find any type of camping.

Plan a trip to a national park – and become an official Girl Scout Ranger. Complete ten hours of service at one or more national parks by participating in a service or educational project. Research the park you’re planning to visit. Call or email in advance to make your plan! Both state parks and national parks have Junior Ranger programs too! Ask for a Junior Ranger guide at the entrance to the park.

- **Calling all citizen scientists** and any Girl Scout who just wants to get outside and explore nature! Here’s another way to learn about the wild plants and animals in your environment – no matter where you go. [Join the GSCTX City Nature Challenge event](#) and use the iNaturalist app to snap pictures of the plants, wildlife, and any nature around you between April 25-28, 2025. Don't let the word “city” fool you - observations can be made anywhere, including your own backyard!

The City Nature Challenge is an annual four-day global bioblitz at the end of April, where cities are in a collaboration-meets-friendly competition to see what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal. People around the world work together to find and document the nature in their area. Knowing what species are in your city can help scientists, land managers, and communities study and protect our local nature. By participating in the City Nature Challenge, not only do you learn more about your local environment, but you can also make your city a better place - for you and other species. Plus, you earn a cool patch! Sign up before April 16, 2025.

- **You can help:** Accidents and injuries can happen anywhere at any time. When you’ve had practice and learned what to do, it is easier to be prepared and to stay calm in any situation! Girl Scout First Aid badges (all levels) are a

progressive first step in learning the basics at any age. Complete the First Aid badge for your level.

Ready for the next level of learning with First Aid? Older Girl Scouts can complete an age-appropriate level of First Aid or CPR training to learn how to respond to different types of injuries or illnesses.

A variety of First Aid/CPR/AED classes are available to youth 11+. Girl Scouts (16+) can take Wilderness First Aid to learn to assess injuries and illnesses, how to treat wounds, and how to respond to heat-related emergencies. Lifeguard certification (15+) includes CPR, First Aid, and AED training. Youth in a junior lifeguard (11-14) class will not receive certification in CPR/AED or First Aid, but they will receive training in these important topics. All of these trainings can help you earn the First Aid badge for your level – and the confidence to help others.