



“There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature.”

—Rachel Carson



Survival Camper

If you’ve ever imagined going off the grid and going back to the land, this is your chance! Survival camping is the ultimate camping adventure. Are you ready to test your skills with limited supplies—and have an unforgettable experience with your camping crew? Let’s go!

Steps

1. Plan a survival camping trip
2. Gather your gear
3. Plan and prepare your trip meals
4. Learn a survival camp skill
5. Go camping

Purpose

When I’ve earned this badge, I’ll have planned and gone on a survival camping trip with a group of Girl Scouts or family members.





Ready? Before You Start This Badge . . .

CHOOSE YOUR TRIP.

Survival camping does not mean wandering out into the wilderness and getting lost! It means challenging yourself to get by with fewer traditional camping amenities—safely. You can practice your survival camping skills at a backcountry or primitive campsite.

Research camping locations and decide where you'll go. Come up with your own trip, or check out trips offered by local Outdoor groups.

MAKE A PLAN.

Once you decide on your trip, take the steps to make it happen.

- ➔ **Come up with a budget** and figure out how to pay for your trip. What kind of money earning will you need to do? You and your troop or group may want to use your Girl Scout Cookie earnings.
- ➔ **Find out what special gear or equipment** you need for your trip, such as fire-starting tools, chlorine tabs for water purification, or a water purifier. Look into renting or borrowing gear.
- ➔ **Research your destination:** How will you get there? Is the area prone to flash floods? What is the terrain? Is the area prone to wildfires, and will you need to keep an eye out for any nesting birds or animals at the time of your trip?
- ➔ **See what's available at your campsite or backcountry area,** and find out what's permitted. Are there primitive bathroom facilities? Are campfires allowed? Where is a water source nearby?

STEP

1

Plan a survival camping trip

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more.

Survival camping means heading out with no pre-made shelter (like a tent) and challenging yourself to camping with limited equipment. (Safely, of course!) Once you've answered the questions in the "Before You Start This Badge" box, talk to an expert in survival camping. Here are some of the questions you might ask, if you don't already know the answers:

- What type of permits, if any, will we need for our trip?
- How have you created your own shelter on survival camping trips? What methods worked best?
- What's the best way to purify water?
- Did you forage for safe foods to eat?
- Have you experienced any kind of emergencies on survival camping trips? How did you handle them? What do I need to know to be safe?
- What do you think of our budget? Is there anything we missed?
- What do you think of our gear list? Is there anything we missed?

CHOICES-DO ONE:

- ☐ **Talk to a survival camping expert.** Learn from the experience of someone who has done this kind of camping. She or he could be a Girl Scout volunteer, older Girl Scout, teacher, parent, or an adult friend of your family.

OR

- ☐ **Visit a sporting goods or outdoor retail store.** Talk to an outdoor retail expert about what you'll need for your trip. Get their planning suggestions and ask any questions you may have. Just remember that this person is a store employee, and they may see you as a customer—you don't have to buy anything just because they recommend it!

OR

- ☐ **Talk to a ranger.** If there are rangers or other staff members in the area where you plan to camp, they can be excellent resources. Reach out by phone or email to see if someone can talk to you and your travel group and answer questions about your trip. Make sure you bring a trusted adult along, of course!



Leave No Trace

Learn and be prepared to use the Leave No Trace Principles to help protect the environment on your adventure trip:

- ➔ **Plan ahead** so you leave nothing behind. Get to know the area you'll visit. Repackage and store food in reusable containers.
 - ➔ **Travel and camp on durable surfaces.** Walk only on existing trails and camp on surfaces that are already impacted or are durable enough to withstand repeated trampling.
 - ➔ **Dispose of waste properly:** Carry out what you carry in—never dump anything on a campsite or into a water source. Bury solid human waste at least 200 feet from water, trails and camp—and at least 6–8 inches deep.
 - ➔ **Leave nature as you find it—**don't collect or take anything from the outdoors.
 - ➔ **Minimize campfire impacts:** Instead of using firewood and building campfires, pack a lightweight cooking stove and lantern.
 - ➔ **Respect wildlife** by checking them out at a distance. Never approach, feed, or follow them.
 - ➔ **Be considerate of other visitors.** Remember you're not alone in the wilderness. Keep your voices down and let nature be the loudest sounds you hear.
- Want to become an expert? Complete a Leave No Trace trainer course at www.lnt.org, and spread the word by sharing what you've learned with younger Girl Scouts!



Packing Essentials

No matter what type of camping you do, you'll want to bring these items along. Talk to your family before you go, to make sure you're not missing anything!

- ✓ Water in a reusable bottle, water purification gear
- ✓ Flashlight with extra batteries
- ✓ Long-sleeved jacket
- ✓ Poncho or raincoat
- ✓ Sun protection: hat with a brim, sunscreen, lip balm, and sunglasses
- ✓ First aid kit
- ✓ Any medications you may need (inhaler, EpiPen)
- ✓ Pocket knife (be sure to practice your knife skills before your trip)
- ✓ Emergency food (such as trail mix or granola bars)
- ✓ Trowel, plastic bags that zip, and toilet paper (to make a portable toilet, if needed)
- ✓ Whistle
- ✓ Appropriate shoes
- ✓ Matches in a waterproof container (for backup if your fire-starting methods are too challenging)
- ✓ Bug spray
- ✓ Map of area and compass

STEP 2 Gather your gear

Even if you're an experienced camper, this badge is your chance to take your skills to the next level. Survival camping comes with its own unique challenges and requires extra-special attention to your supplies. In Step 1 of this badge, you talked to an expert about the kind of gear you'll need for your trip. If you haven't done it already, make your packing list. (See the box on this page for some essentials.) Then choose one of these options to complete this step.

CHOICES—DO ONE:

- ☐ **Build your stamina.** Maybe you're a star athlete at school, or maybe you're not usually much for exercise. Either way, camping can challenge your fitness in new ways. You want to be able to carry your gear, explore your surroundings, and go on hikes or other adventures without getting too tired or sore. Practice carrying your full backpack (make sure it is no more than 20% of your body weight, to avoid injury) for 15 minutes a day, and build up to an hour. If you'll be wearing hiking boots on your trip, wear them—it will help break them in and get your legs used to the extra weight. Make sure you're challenging yourself to some hills, too—your camping area probably won't be exactly flat!

OR

- ☐ **Compare-share-repair with your camping crew.** Since you'll be traveling with a group, make gear a group effort! Get together to compare packing lists, see what's missing or what can be shared between girls, and clean or repair any items that need some extra love. Talk about the challenges you want to try on your trip—whether it's trying to start a fire with a jackknife, steel and flint, and a mirror, or using knots to lash a shelter—and make sure you have the necessary gear, along with backup materials for safety.

For More FUN: Hold a gear demonstration for younger Girl Scouts. You could show them how to pack for a camping trip, set up a tent, or how to use first aid supplies.

OR

- ☐ **Plan gear for side hikes.** Research your camping area and see what's available nearby for hiking or other excursions. With your group, decide what you'd like to do and when, and make sure everyone has the necessary gear. Add any additional items to your packing lists.

Food Safety, Storage, and Cleaning

Reduce weight and waste by leaving as much packaging at home as possible. You may want to repackage some foods into sealed plastic bags. If possible, try to group foods together by meal and day of trip. You can also print or write out cooking instructions to keep with your meals.

Protect food (and anything else with a smell, like toiletries) from animals. Unless you are carrying food for a hike, never keep any food in your backpack, tent, duffel bags, or elsewhere near your sleeping area. If you're staying at a campsite, store food in a designated rodent-proof area. If this is not available, check to see if food should be hung in trees or stored in a vehicle.

Use three buckets or deep pans for dishwashing. The first is for hot, soapy water; the second holds clean water for rinsing; the third is either for boiling water or cool water with a health department-approved sanitizing solution. Sanitize dishes by placing them in a net bag and immersing in boiling water for one minute, or according to the directions of the sanitizing solution. Hang the net bags to air dry.

Dirty dishwater should be filtered to remove food particles once the water has cooled. If you're staying at a campsite, follow their rules for disposal of your dishwater, or practice the Leave No Trace method of scattering strained dishwater instead of pouring it into the ground.



STEP 3 Plan and prepare your trip meals

If you've been in Girl Scouts for a long time, you've probably perfected your s'more technique. If you're ready to kick your camp cooking skills up a notch, a survival camping trip is the perfect opportunity! Get together with your camping buddies and plan your trip menu, making sure it avoids any food allergies and fits within your budget. Check your kitchens to see if you have any items already, then shop for the supplies you'll need.

CHOICES-DO ONE:

- ☐ **Research and talk to an expert about survival nourishment.** You might ask about edible plants, starting fires without matches, and how to use solar water collectors. After your research and conversation with an expert, talk to your parents or guardians to see what they're comfortable with you trying on your trip. **Do not try any survival nourishment methods without their permission.**

OR

- ☐ **Challenge your camp cooking skills by creating a menu that uses three different cooking methods.** You can use any three methods you like, but you will need to factor in what's allowed and safe for the area you'll be camping in. Some possible options are a no-cook meal, a dehydrated meal (you'd need to dehydrate your food at home first), a meal cooked over a campfire, or a solar-cooked meal. If you choose cooking over a campfire for one of your methods, make sure fires are permitted where you're camping. If you want to try solar cooking, research it to see if it's recommended in that climate zone—and if so, be sure you are taking all precautions to avoid food poisoning.

OR

- ☐ **Make and use a box oven.** If your survival camping trip will be based at a campsite, you may be able to bring and use a box oven—check your campsite's policies to make sure. If it's allowed, and you won't be too weighed down by the supplies, a box oven is a fun and effective way to cook your meals. Research different methods for making these ovens, and choose the one that works best for you.

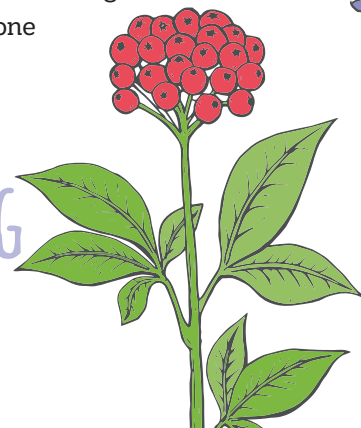


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Safety at Camp

The top priority of any camping trip is safety—*especially* a survival camping trip.

Investigate your camping area. Look for signs of flash flooding, ant mounds, animal tracks, and dead or dying trees.

Don't assume you'll have cell service. If you're far out in the wilderness, cell service may be unreliable. Look into cell service in the area where you'll be camping. (Some cell providers may have better service than others.) If

service is spotty, make sure you can easily get to a place where you can make a call. Have emergency contact numbers with you at all times. Think about how you will charge your battery.

Know where to go for help. Find out about park administrators or rangers who can help in an emergency. Be sure to check in with park staff or campground hosts **before** you go on your trip—or on any side hikes—so people know where you'll be in case of an emergency.



STEP

4 Learn a survival camp skill

In Step 1 of this badge, you talked to an expert about building your own shelter and purifying water. Next up: Expand your survival camping resume by adding one of these skills.

CHOICES-DO ONE:

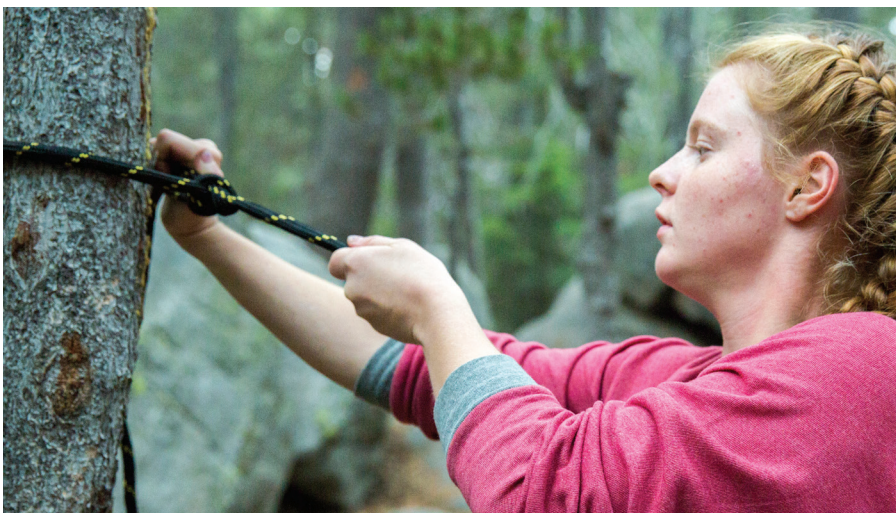
- ☐ **Practice starting a campfire with only your jackknife, steel and flint, and a mirror.** Have an adult who's experienced with this method show you how it works. (This could be the same person you talked to in Step 1 of this badge.) Then practice the method yourself, and try to use it on your trip—**always with an adult present, even for practice.** It is difficult to start a fire this way, so don't get discouraged if you have trouble! Just keep trying. You'll bring matches on your trip for backup.

OR

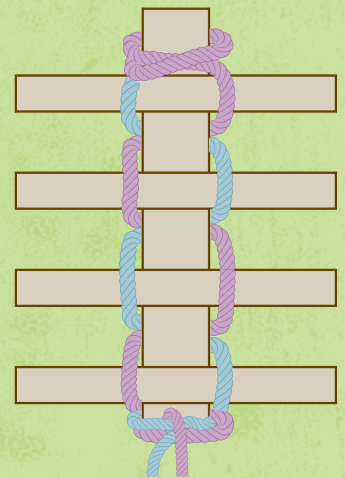
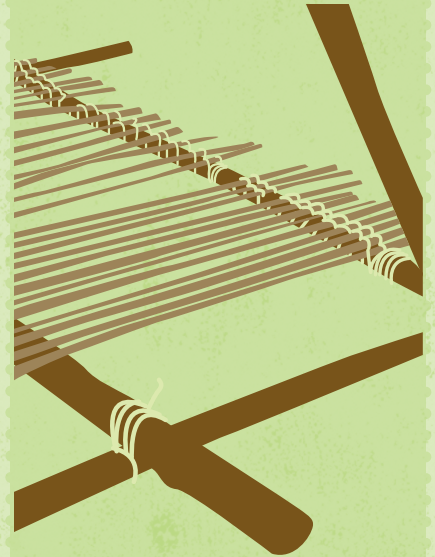
- ☐ **Find your way—using only landmarks and the sun.** One of the trickiest—and most useful—wilderness survival skills is finding your way without a compass or map. It could make the difference between being lost in the woods and finding your way back safely. It's an advanced skill, but you can start practicing now! Research different methods for navigation, then pair up with an experienced adult and practice. You don't want to *actually* get lost, though—always bring a topographical map, compass, and cell phone for backup. Remember never to assume you will have cell service.

OR

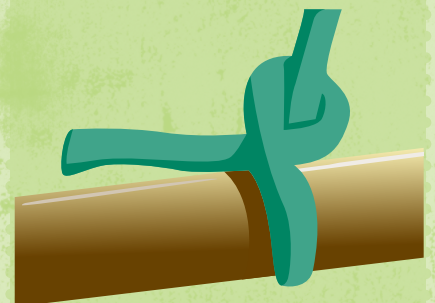
- ☐ **Strengthen your knot-tying skills.** Practice any knots you already know—like the square knot and clove hitch—and add some new ones, like the snake lashing or half hitch. Once you've practiced and have several knots down, use the knots to create a lashed shelter. If possible, re-create the shelter on your trip.



KNOT TYING



SNAKE LASHING



HALF HITCH

A background image showing a sunset or sunrise over a rocky, mountainous landscape. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue. The foreground shows dark, textured rock formations.

STEP

5

Go camping

Now it's time for your survival camping trip—you're ready for this! Once you arrive, start by setting up your camp in three separate areas: one for sleeping, one for washing, and one for cooking. Since you'll be making your own shelter, choose your sleeping area carefully. You want to stay as warm and dry as possible, and make sure the area shows no signs of insect mounds or animal tracks. Find secluded spots for a backcountry bathroom at least 200 feet from the trail or water source.

CHOICES—DO ONE:

- ☐ **Keep a journal of your trip.** You're guaranteed to remember your trip if you keep a record of it to read later on. You might share sketches, poems, funny things that happened, or things you'd do differently next time. It can be a private journal just for you, or something you share with your trip mates. If you want to share it, you could add photos and make copies for everyone after the trip.

OR

- ☐ **Learn about trail signs, cairns, and their use.** Cairns are human-made stacks of rocks that have been put in place to guide hikers and mark trails. In order to Leave No Trace, do not touch any cairns that you see, or create your own. Do the research before your camping trip so you're comfortable with trail signs and understand how cairns are used. Then, while you're on the trip, split into pairs and use trail signs for the other girls in your group to follow. See if you can spot any cairns on the trail. Just be sure to take your trail signs down afterwards, so you don't confuse other hikers!

OR

- ☐ **Plan a survival challenge game for your camp mates.** It could be an endurance test, a cooking contest, a shelter-making challenge—anything that puts your survival skills to the test. Get creative with both your game and the prizes!





Going on a Journey? Do some badge work along the way.

All of your Leadership Journeys involve a Take Action project. While you're on your camping trip, keep your eyes and ears open for project ideas. Maybe you'll encounter an environmental issue that inspires you to make a change, or maybe you'll talk politics around the campfire and the wheels will start turning. Keep an open mind, and you may be surprised where inspiration strikes!

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Teaching younger Girl Scouts how to stay safe on a survival camping trip
- Hosting a survival challenge game night for family and friends
- Showing my siblings how to make and use a box oven



I'm inspired to:

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