



Cadette Trailblazing

Join in a favorite Girl Scout Adventure! Head for the backcountry, where you'll explore nature and challenge your body on a trailblazing trek. In this badge, you'll stay at least one night at a backwoods or primitive site, so get ready to learn some new outdoor skills while you share fresh-air fun and games with your Girl Scout sisters.

Steps:

- 1 Start planning your adventure
- 2 Get your body and your teamwork skills ready
- 3 Create your menu
- 4 Gain some trailblazing know-how
- 5 Head out on the trail

Purpose:

When a Girl Scout Cadette has earned this badge, she will know how to take a safe and fun overnight backpacking trip.

Sidebar: Quote

How often have you wished to explore the woods, make supper over an open fire, pitch a tent, and sleep under the stars listening to the thousands of night sounds which the darkness seems to literally turn on? If you want to try some outdoor living, Scouting gives you a wonderful opportunity to find out what it is all about. – Senior Girl Scout Handbook, 1963

Step 1: Start planning your adventure

When you're packing in and packing out all your gear, pay special attention to preparation. Do one of the choices below to help you review the planning checklist on the next page.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Ask an older Girl Scout or Girl Scout Volunteer for tips. She should have tips on nearby campsites and recommendations for the kinds of gear you'll need to stay safe and have fun.

OR

Check with a member of a local trekking club. Ask the person to come speak to your group, tell you about trails in the area, and help you plan your adventure.



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OR

Do it yourself. Pick up maps and information about places to trek from a library, bookstore, or recreation center. Look in hiking books or go online to research the supplies you'll need.

Sidebar: Quote

Important for an overnight camping trip are the ability to adapt yourself to new and strange conditions, the spirit of comradeship, and cooperation that is founded on unselfishness and self-reliance, perseverance, and perception that will enable you to shoulder your own share of the duties and responsibilities of the occasion. – Girl Scout Handbook, 1933

Step 2: Get your body and your teamwork skills ready

Hiking can be hard work, so make sure you're ready. Can you carry all your supplies over the distances and terrain you'll travel? Can you work together with your trailblazing companions? Get your group in mental and physical shape for the trip. (For at least one of the sessions, do your exercise with your pack fully loaded and in the shoes you plan to wear.)

Before you begin, fill out the quiz in the blue box and discuss your answers with your group.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Participate in a physically challenging team-building course. These might be offered through your Girl Scout council, Outward Bound, or another organization. To continue to practice the skills you gained on the course, meet at least twice before you go.

OR

Build teamwork and endurance. Do three hikes, bike trips, or jogs of at least 30 minutes each with the friends with whom you'll be hiking. Try to practice on your own as well.

OR

Try a "boot camp" exercise course. Find a course in your community, or ask a coach or trainer to help you make your own. Practice the routine at least three times all together before you go. Try to practice on your own as well.



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Sidebar: TIP

Just as important as being able to go, go, go is knowing when to give your body a break. During this step, practice listening to your body when it wants to slow down and conserve energy.

Sidebar: Quote

Cooking over an outdoor fire is a fine art and has to be studied carefully. It should be called almost a post-graduate course in the camp studies.

Step 3: Create your menu

You'll need meals that are not only energy-packed but lightweight. What's the difference between freeze-dried and dehydrated foods? Which foods pack best? Which need to be repackaged? What do you need to eat to keep your warm, energized, and satisfied? Find the answers and plan your menu based on what you discover. Use one of these choices to help you.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Find three recipes for quick meals. Look for meals that can be cooked quickly in one pot using a cooking stove. Quick cooking means more time can be spent exploring. It, also, means using less cooking fuel. Ask your companions about their favorite foods and any allergy restrictions, and keep them in mind.

OR

Get into quick-energy snacks. You'll need fast fuel on your trek! Plan a menu to include energy bars and other non-cook lunch items. Then, try three different recipes for energy bars or quick snacks before you go, and make your favorite to take on your trek.

OR

Take the trash challenge. Since you'll be packing out what you packed in, plan your menu to create as little trash as possible. Bringing just enough food for each person and selecting foods with minimal packaging are two ways to reduce trash – find at least three more.

Sidebar: TIP



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Under no circumstances should any food EVER be kept in a tent – it WILL attract animals (like bears) and insects. You, ALSO, need to make sure there is none on your clothing or other equipment when you go to bed.

Step 4: Gain some trailblazing know-how

You might already have some great trail skills, and if you don't, one of your trailblazing companions might. Within your group, assess what would be most useful for each person to learn and divide these choices accordingly.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Learn how to purify water. The farther away from civilization you head, the less likely you are to find a water tap! Research the common water pollutants in the area where you'll travel. Find out about methods of purifying water and practice at least one. FOR MORE FUN: Learn how to construct a solar still in the ground to extract water.

OR

Practice navigating with a map and compass or GPS unit. Trace out a hiking route on a topographical map. Describe what you would see along the way by visualizing the terrain from the map symbols, and decide where you'll take rest breaks based on the topography. Remember, if you're taking technology on the trail, have a low-tech backup in case you move out of range of GPS satellites. FOR MORE FUN: Try orienteering or geocaching on the trip.

OR

Pitch your tent three times in three different locations. Select a tent that will meet the needs of your group. Then practice assembling, taking down, and storing the tent in three locations with different conditions. You'll always want a well-drained, level tent site, but it's good to practice in various conditions – who knows where you might go trailblazing next!

Sidebar: More to EXPLORE

Build a shelter. What shelter needs might you have in a survival situation? If it's environmentally sound and you have permission, construct a shelter using fallen branches, other found materials, or the natural features of a site. For example, construct a snow cave for winter survival or storm-lash a backpacking tent.

Sidebar: Trailblazing Tips

- Make sure you leave your hike route, destination, and time you're expected to return with an adult back home.
- Choose your site well before dark, so you have chance to get everything set up.
- Set up camp well away from the shore of a stream, lake, or other body of water.
- Check weather reports before you go to be prepared for possible conditions.
- Whenever possible, use an established campsite to concentrate your impact on the environment rather than disturb a new area or multiple areas. If you need to make a new site, try for minimal impact.
- Find out if primitive toilets will be provided, or if you'll be digging your own. If so, check to see what's allowed in your area and prepare accordingly. Don't forget your hand sanitizer

Step 5: Head out on the trail

Enjoy being away from it all and out in the natural world, using your skills and adventuring with friends. Practice Leave No Trace principles, and take time to bond and reflect on your experience. Try one of these activities once you've settled in for the evening.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Play stuff-sack dramatics. From tents or packs, everyone finds the strangest thing they have. Then, get into teams. Make as many stuff sacks as the number of teams, and mix up the objects evenly in the sacks. Then, give each team 15 minutes to invent a play that uses every object as a prop. Remember, use the objects as things they're NOT – a banana is not a fruit, but a telephone, a stray sock, or a fancy glove.

OR

See the stars. Bring a guide to constellations with you, and identify as many as you can in the night sky. Talk about the stories behind the stars from Greek mythology. And, what about a game of constellation charades using what you find out from stories?

OR

Tell a progressive story. One girl starts a story and tells it for a minute, and, then, the story is picked up by the next girl until everyone has made up a part. You could even act out the story as you tell it, or tell your part in song!



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Sidebar: TIP

If you have a digital camera, video camera, or smartphone document your trip in video and photos. When you get home, make a digital album to share with the group.

Sidebar: Quote

There is a peculiar charm about the morning in the open woods that must be felt to be appreciated. -How Girls Can Help Their Country, 1913

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