



Girl Scouts Readiness in Camping

Minimal Impact Outdoor Skills

A core value of Girl Scouting is to encourage environmental stewardship and leadership by practicing Leave No Trace principles and minimal impact camping to help protect the natural environment.

Leave No Trace skills are reflected in the Outdoor Journeys as girls move through a progressive series of activities, like backyard campouts, overnights at Girl Scout facilities, hikes in local and state parks, or trips in back country wilderness areas.

Some of the concepts of minimal impact camping can be taught before girls go camping. Girls need to understand that their daily actions have an effect on the environment. For example:

- At troop meetings each girl should be responsible for cleaning up after herself, not wasting materials, turning off unnecessary lights, conserving water, and leaving the meeting place cleaner than she found it.

When girls move from an indoor setting to the outdoors, have them:

- Find out what to wear for different kinds of weather.
- Go outdoors for a hike, backyard sleep out, or nature walk.
- Appreciate the environment by spotting different types of plants, or watching birds and animals.
- Learn safety rules for outdoor activities.
- Learn to read a map to get where she wants to go.
- Try some simple camp food preparation.

The First Overnight Trip

Overnights away from home allow girls to test themselves in a new but safe circumstance that they helped plan and prepare. Girls grow as a result because they:

- Learn teamwork skills.
- Forge friendships.
- Build self-confidence.
- Learn how to live and work in a new environment.
- Build bonds with adults.
- Increase their skills and feel good about their accomplishments.

The first time away on Girl Scout trip is a big step and real adventure, especially for younger girls. Consider these guidelines for a girl's first overnight:

- She should want to go.
- She should not be afraid to be away from her home or family overnight (and her family should be prepared to let her go).
- She should be able to cope with new circumstances such as:



- meeting new people
 - visiting strange places
 - darkness (no electricity or nightlight), different night noises, insects, and other small creatures
 - sleeping in a strange bed or on a pad on the floor
- She can function as a member of the group.
- She is willing to sleep, eat, and play with all girls, not just her best friends.
- She can be flexible, not always have her own way.
- She can share her space and manage it with little privacy.

The following indicators can help you know if a girl has the skills and knowledge to enjoy an overnight experience:

- She can participate in planning a simple trip; use a kaper chart or similar assignment sheet, and follow written, verbal, or illustrated instructions for food preparation.
- She can wash dishes, clean up the kitchen for cooking area, and store food properly.
- She has practiced packing and repacking her luggage, unrolling and rolling her bedroll or sleeping bag, using a flashlight, etc.
- She has been on a series of day trips, has participated in cookouts, or has been on an overnight backyard or family camp trip.

What type of overnight?

When girls are ready for an overnight camping trip, the next step is to decide what type of experience is right. Usually:

- Younger girls camp in lodges, cabins, backyards or platform tents at an established Girl Scout site.
- Older, more experience campers choose a more challenging type of camping such as backpacking, horse packing, or a canoe trip.

Your Girl Scout council has policies and procedures regarding appropriate distances and types of trips for girls and can provide guidance. Always consult Safety Activity Checkpoints for important camping guidelines.