

Basic Outdoor Skills

All Grade Level Patch



This patch program was developed to teach girls the basic camping skills needed to spend time in the out-of-doors. Each level is a progression in these skills and must be completed before the next level is begun.

Daisies, Brownies or Juniors can earn this patch in a day camp, resident camp or in their own troop.

Cadette, Senior or Ambassadors may earn the levels the same way or by teaching these skill levels to a younger group.

Level I

This level will help girls get acquainted with skills needed to be comfortable in the out-of-doors.

1. Learn good manners to use in the out-of-doors.
2. Learn how to dress for the expected weather and what to bring along for unexpected weather.
3. Learn how to tie and release a square knot and what a square knot is used for.
4. Find out how to open, close and pass a knife safely.
5. Learn how to do first aid for a skinned knee and a bee sting.
6. Learn how to choose a safe spot to build a fire and why hair should be tied back when working near a fire.
7. Help prepare a meal which requires no fire.
8. Learn how trees and plants help us.

Leader's Guide

1. Discuss with the girls that good manners means caring for the feeling of others. Respect other camper's boundaries and always ask permission to enter camp. Leaving your litter behind is not considerate. A Girl Scout always leaves her campsite better than she found it.
2. Have the girls explain how they should dress for different situations. Examples: A day at the beach; a hike in the rain; a walk on a windy day; a summer picnic. Always keep health and safety in mind when discussing sleeve length to prevent sunburn, pants to protect legs and proper shoes.
3. A square knot is used to tie two ends of a rope together when both ends are about the same thickness. Practice tying and releasing the knot until the girls can do it fairly quickly. Try a knot-tying relay. One way to teach knot tying to girls is to use "long string licorice." When finished the girls get to eat the treat.
4. Keep safety in mind when using a knife of any kind. Give every girl a chance to open, close and pass a knife safely. Girls can use a paper knife to start with. Girls should learn how to handle a knife correctly because they will need to use knives in simple cooking. Have the girls practice with a buddy, ensuring girls are far enough apart so their arms do not reach each other.
5. Always stress the importance of preventing accidents (i.e. running may lead to skinned knees and disturbing bees may lead to being stung). Learn first aid for a skinned knee and bee sting.
6. Choose a safe spot to build a fire. Fires burn upward. Don't ever build one under low or overhanging branches. Make sure the ground area is clear of things overhanging branches. Make sure the ground area is clear of things like leaves, dry grass, twigs, etc. The best place for fires is in designated fire rings. Long hair should be tied back to prevent it from catching on fire.
7. Prepare a meal which needs no fire such as ants on a log, walking salad or a jungle breakfast.
8. Discuss with the girls how trees and plants help us (shade, food, furniture, beauty, animal helpers, paper, fuel, flood control, oxygen, smog absorber).

Level II

1. Know the rules to follow for hiking safely on city streets or county roads.
2. Find out what “dressing in layers” means and how it helps you to be more comfortable.
3. Show that you can tie a square knot and clove hitch and what they are used for.
4. Find out how to clean and sharpen a knife and know why it is safer to use a sharp knife.
5. Learn first aid for cuts and burns and discuss ways to prevent these accidents.
6. Know what safety equipment should be ready before a fire is started. Practice laying a foundation fire.
7. Help prepare a one-pot meal.
8. Find out more about ways to protect the natural world and choose an outdoor “good turn” to include in your next outdoor activity.

Leader’s Guide

1. Safety means walking on sidewalks, crossing with the light, walking facing traffic when there are no sidewalks, crossing as a group and not in one long line. Do not obstruct the sidewalk. Girls should walk with a buddy. It is a good idea to have each girl count-off and keep the same number for a hike. Then it is easy to check the girls when you leave and arrive at each rest or lunch stop. Always keep yourself visible; wear bright clothes during the day and white at night. Carry a light at night, but do not aim it at drivers or the face of other hikers. Have the whole troop get up and take a walk to practice some of the things listed above.
2. Dress in several layers of clothing. As the day warms it is easy to peel off a layer or two and add them back on in the evening or when it gets cooler. The layers trap the body heat and are often warmer than one heavy article of clothing. Always take a hat for sun protection and heat retention. Girls might have a fashion show to demonstrate the layering technique.
3. Review the square knot from Level I and all the uses for clove hitch. The clove hitch is used to put up a clothesline, tie the end of a rope around a pole or tree, and to start lashing.
4. Clean a knife by washing with water and drying with a soft cloth. Never clean a knife in dirt or sand. To sharpen a knife, use a sharpening stone that has been lubricated with oil or water before using. Always keep the blade pointed away from the body. Practice with a buddy.
5. Talk with girls about preventing cuts and burns. Cuts should be washed well with soap and water, then covered. Minor burns should be put in cool water quickly. Serious burns should be treated immediately by a doctor. Have the girls practice what to do if someone’s clothing catches fire (stop, drop, and roll).
6. Safety equipment for fires consists of a bucket of water and a shovel or rake. The A-frame Foundation is to hold the kindling off the ground so air can circulate. Teach the girls about the three sizes of wood used in fire building.
7. One-pot meals can also be your favorite casserole cooked out-of-doors. There are many one-pot meals to try such as Campfire Stew, Tacos, etc.
8. The girls should now be ready for a walk, a cookout, or a backyard overnight. Find out more ways to protect the natural world and choose a project to include in your next outdoor activity.

Level III

1. Discuss the buddy system and how it adds safety to a trail hike, swimming activity or any outdoor activity.
2. Find out what equipment each person needs on a hike and what items are needed by the whole group.
3. Show that you can tie a square knot, clove hitch and bowline. Know the uses of each knot.
4. Working a safe distance from others, carve or whittle something. Examples are: Fuzz stick, cooking stick, friendship stick
5. Practice tying a triangle bandage for an arm sling.
6. Know how to light a charcoal fire by helping build one and keep it going.
7. Cook something in foil or on a stick
8. On an outdoor activity, do something to improve the site that shows you understand the saying "A Girl Scout leaves a place better than she found it."

Leader's Guide

1. The buddy system is having a partner to help you. If a girl gets into difficulty in a pool or on a hike, there is someone to call the leader. The buddy system helps keep a girl from wandering off and getting lost. The triple buddy system is excellent for trips or backpacking because if one of the girls gets hurt there is one to go for help and one to administer first aid or keep her company.
2. When your troop plans a hike, determine what equipment will be needed. The troop needs a well-stocked first aid kit, map of the hiking area, flashlights and waterproof matches. The girls should have sturdy shoes, a bandana or sun hat, sunscreen and possibly a canteen of water, lip balm, a whistle and food. As the complexity of your hike or outing increases, add additional items such as extra socks, rain poncho, compass and a pocketknife. Plan clothing accordingly.
3. Review square knot and clove hitch. Teach how to tie a bowline knot which is used in life saving and rescue work, or to make a loop in the end of a rope that will not slip or change size.
4. Review knife safety. Consider carving a potato. Balsa wood, apple heads for dolls or a walking stick.
5. Practice tying a triangle bandage for an arm sling. Discuss other uses for a triangular bandage.
6. Teach how to light a charcoal fire. Charcoal may be lit with fire starters. Remember to allow about 30 minutes from the time you start the charcoal until the time you need to have the fire ready for cooking. Place fire starters on the bottom and charcoal on the top. This fire used for foil cooking.
7. A foil packet may be placed directly on the coals. Use heavy-duty foil or two layers of the lighter weight to form foil packages. Seal well on all edges. You will need a pair of long handled tongs for turning packets and removing them from the fire. The packets can contain a complete meal or a side dish. Some examples are potatoes and onions with a pat of butter; fish, hamburger, or chicken with sliced vegetables; sliced ham or spam with pineapple and sweet potatoes. Be sure to slice the vegetables thin so that they cook through. Core an apple and fill with cinnamon, raisins, and brown sugar. Bake in foil.
8. Share with the girls activities that will improve their outdoor site. Let the girls think up ways to put their ideas into action. Remain flexible to new ideas when you arrive at the activity site.

Level IV

1. With a buddy, make a sketch map for someone else to follow. With a buddy, follow the sketch map drawn by another team.
2. Using three blankets and a ground cloth make a bedroll and tie it securely. Know how to roll and tie your own sleeping bag.
3. Demonstrate that you can tie a square knot, clove hitch, a bowline and a taut line hitch. Know the use of each of these knots.
4. Learn how to hold and pass an axe safely. Learn how to sharpen an axe.
5. Learn what to do if someone faints or is severely sunburned. Discuss ways to help prevent these conditions.
6. Be able to lay and light a fire and keep it going. Know how to put out a fire when you are done using it.
7. Use at least two of the following cooking methods: reflector oven, Dutch oven, paper bag cooking, orange shell on coals, coffee can cooking (vagabond stove), solar cooking, or box oven.
8. Practice conservation of fuel using only as much fuel as needed for cooking and campfires.

Leader's Guide

1. The length of the hike will depend on your site. It may be through a park, around school buildings, or a campground. In pairs have the girls note landmarks on their maps and make a legend. Have the girls had fun? Maybe they would like to do this again on another day with a different destination. Trail signs a sketch maps are in several Girl Scout resource books.
2. Practice with the girls how to roll and tie their own sleeping bags or bedroll.
3. Review the square knot, bowline and clove hitch. Teach the taut line hitch. It is used to adjust the tension of a tent rope.
4. Practice knife safety. A good habit to develop to develop when passing a knife is to always wait for the receiver to say "thank you" before letting go. This can prevent the tool from being dropped and causing injury. Try a new project using a knife. Be sure they are sharp.
5. Discuss prevention of accidents, Fainting—have victim lie down for at least 10 minutes. Keep head low. If recovery is not prompt or if condition worsens seek a doctor's help. Sunburn— try to prevent by limiting exposure to the sun. Once burned, stay out of the sun completely until all soreness is gone. If burn covers large area or is severe, a doctor may be needed. Whenever possible have a nurse or certified first aider talk to the girls.
6. Lay and light a fire. The girls should know what the fire is being used for. This will assist them in deciding what kind of fire to build and how large it needs to be. Girls need to know how to put out by spreading out what is left with the rake or shovel then sprinkling the fire with water. Stir the ashes and sprinkle again. Keep doing this cycle until a hand held over the remaining ashes feels no heat.
7. Try a new cooking method. Use any two cooking methods not used before in Levels I, II, or III if you can find a new one that is not on the list....go for it.
8. Practice conservation for fuel using only as much fuel as needed for cooking and campfires. Let the girls try to practice this as they use fuel for cooking and campfires. A fire that is too big is also too hot to get close enough to use for cooking. Plan for a fire to burn itself out about time you are done using it. Don't add a lot of wood to a campfire right before bedtime.

