



Snowshoeing: Safety Activity Checkpoints



Originating thousands of years ago as a means of trekking through snow, snowshoeing has evolved to become a competitive winter sport. Snowshoes also have evolved to become sophisticated sporting equipment. Traditional snowshoes are made of wood and rawhide lacings, and modern snowshoes are typically constructed from plastic, metal, and other synthetic materials. As for selecting appropriate boots, waterproof boots or snowboarding boots work well, as do waterproofed leather hiking boots for snow hiking, and trail-running shoes work well for snow-running. Contact ski facilities and outdoor equipment stores to inquire about renting snowshoe equipment. Girl Scout Daisies may participate in snowshoeing provided the proper sized equipment is provided and they have the physical skills and coordination required for the activity.

Know where to snowshoe. Snowshoe at Girl Scout camps, national and state parks, Nordic centers (usually located around a ski resort), and ski slopes. Backcountry destinations can be used by Seniors and Ambassadors only, provided they are led by a leader highly experienced in this type of activity. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. Also, for information about snowshoe events, visit [Winter Trails](#).

Include girls with disabilities. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information for people with disabilities at [Disabled Sports USA](#)

Snowshoeing Gear

Required Gear:

- Snowshoes and bindings that fit properly
- Hat
- Thick, water-resistant gloves or mittens
- Windproof, waterproof jacket or parka
- Waterproof boots
- Snow pants or Gaiters (for deep, new snow, so that the snow doesn't get into your socks and shoes)

Recommended Gear

- Heavy, wool/synthetic insulating socks (avoid cotton socks)
- Layered clothing
- Thermal underwear or long johns
- Sunscreen (SPF of at least 15) and lip balm
- Sunglasses or ski goggles to protect eyes from bright snow glare
- Water bottle, high-energy food (such as fruits and nuts for longer trips),
- Daypack to carry personal belongings for longer trips. For balance, one or two snowshoe poles or ski poles that are proper size for the girls

Prepare for Snowshoeing

- Communicate with council and parents.** See the *Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Girls plan the activity.** See the *Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Arrange for transportation and adult supervision.** For the recommended adult-to-girl ratios see the *Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Instruction is given by an adult with experience teaching and/or supervising snowshoeing and has documented experience according to your council's guidelines
- Compile key contacts.** See the *Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Select a safe snowshoeing site.** Girls are encouraged to plan trip details and include adequate rest periods with opportunities to replenish fluids and eat high-energy foods (such as fruits and nuts). The nature of the terrain, potential hazards (such as an avalanche or frozen lake), mileage, and approximate snowshoeing time are known to all group members in advance. When a latrine is not available, individual cat holes at least 200 feet away from water sources are used to dispose of and bury human waste; tampons, sanitary supplies, and toilet paper are packed out (visit www.int.org for more information).
- Map the course.** The route is marked on a map and before snowshoeing designate a meeting place where girls can contact a supervising adult.
- Ensure girls are prepared for snowshoeing.** Girls get in condition by exercising before snowshoeing. Ensure that equipment is appropriate for the type of terrain, the participants' body weight, and the weight of any backpack.
- Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in First Aid, including Adult and Child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, sprains, fractures, and altitude sickness. Search-and-rescue procedures are written out in advance. Emergency transportation is available; if any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with Wilderness First Aid. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

On the Day of Snowshoeing

- Get a weather report.** On the morning of the activity, check weather.com or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. Xcski.org provides reports about snow conditions by region. If severe weather conditions prevent the activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternate activity, or postpone the activity. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans for severe weather with girls.
- Use the buddy system.** See the *Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Girls are instructed in basic snowshoeing techniques.** Adults are aware of each girl's ability. Practice sessions are scheduled for beginners.
- Be prepared in the case of an emergency.** Girls are trained in winter survival (such as snow-cave building, whiteouts, and avalanche avoidance), as needed. Advance arrangements are made for medical emergencies and evacuation procedures.

Snowshoeing Links

- National Ski Patrol: www.nsp.org
- Snowshoe Magazine: www.snowshoemaq.com
- The United States Snowshoe Association: www.snowshoeracing.com
- Leave No Trace: www.lnt.org

Snowshoeing Know-How for Girls

- **Learn about types of snowshoes.** Aerobic/running snowshoes are the smallest and lightest; recreational are mid-size snowshoes designed for moderate walks; and mountaineering snowshoes are the largest snowshoes that are meant for intense, long-distance hikes.