

Waterskiing and Wakeboarding

Council Approval: [Required](#)

Activity Permitted For: J C S A

About Waterskiing and Wakeboarding

Similar to surfing, learning to stand up on water skis or a wakeboard (a single board resembling a snowboard) is one of the sport's primary challenges, especially for beginners. Waterskiing requires thorough instruction and practice; key elements of successful waterskiing include balance, a strong grip, and proper-fitting skis/board and bindings. Skiers either wear one board (called slalom) or two skis (called combo); barefoot waterskiing is an advanced skill.

Beginners must learn the waterski position: knees bent and together, leaning back with weight on the balls of the feet, head up, arms straight, and skis pointing forward. Girls will learn technique and safety to prevent injuries such as water skiers must learn (contrary to instinct) to release the towline as soon as they begin to lose their balance.

Girls can start the learning process on land. Before entering the water, it helpful to simulate the waterskiing process on a sandy beach and learn how to wear the skis and hold onto a water-ski handle properly. They can and should also learn to communicate with the spotter (the person on the back of the boat watching the skier) with specific and agreed-upon hand signals. This way the spotter can then shout out to the driver when necessary.

Another fun technique is to learn by watching others—videotape other Girl Scouts who are learning to waterski and have girls watch it to find out how to improve their performance.

Open bodies of water, such as a lakes and bays, are ideal. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions and search online for lakes nearby.

Learn More:

- [USA Water Ski](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Visit [USA Water Ski](#) for information about amenities for water skiers with disabilities.

Safety Gear

- U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears.
- At least one graspable and throwable Coast-Guard approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Life raft and/or towing boat
- Ski lines (tow lines) at least 75 feet long; a single handle is used on the ski line
- Wakeboard or rounded (not pointed) skis that are appropriate to the skill and size of the skier
- Water skis
- Foot bindings appropriate for skier's weight and skiing speed

- Waterproof sunscreen (SPF of at least 15), applied every two hours, and lip balm
- Beach towel
- Dry clothing and sunglasses to wear after surfing
- Wet suit if water temperatures are cold, below 70 degrees Fahrenheit

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) ahead of time before taking girls out for this activity. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, or sudden illness.

No areal or acrobatics or tricks on skis. Girls are not permitted to attempt aerial tricks on water skis or wakeboards.

Protect hands. Water skiers can get blisters from the pressure of holding onto the rope handle; wearing gloves or taping hands can help. Learn how on [Waterski Magazine](#).

No ocean skiing. Skiers stay in bays, inlets, lakes, and gulfs and do not ski in the ocean without explicit council approval.

Learn skiing safety. Girls will learn basics like staying behind the boat, as it is dangerous to curve around the boat. Also, skiing outside the wake is an advanced technique for experienced skiers only.

Verify instructor and boat driver knowledge and experience. Ensure that the adult or instructor is certified by USA Water Ski or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines. Confirm that the boat driver is an adult of at least 21 years of age and has an appropriate license, and is skilled in operating the watercraft.

Ensure participants are able to swim. Participants' swimming abilities are confirmed and should be clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, and so on) at council-approved sites, or participants provide proof of swimming-test certification. In the absence of swimming-test certification, a [swim test](#) should be conducted before or on the day of the activity. Consult with your Girl Scout council for additional guidance.

Check the boat safety features. Make sure the boat has sufficient power to tow the skier(s) and is equipped with a side-angle rearview mirror, fire extinguisher, flags, paddle, horn, bailing device, two gas tanks (for outboard motors), mooring ropes (extra line), boarding ladder, and throw bag.

Prepare for emergencies. If a lifeguard is not on duty, an adult with rescue and resuscitation experience and/or certification is present. 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, and who is prepared to handle cases of near-drowning, immersion hypothermia, and sunburn. 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.

Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning. Exit water immediately, and take shelter away from tall objects (including trees, buildings, and electrical poles). Find the lowest point in an open flat area. Squat low to the ground on the balls of the feet, and place hands on knees with head between them. During storms, if shore cannot be reached, keep a sharp lookout for other boats and obstructions.

Keep track of water skiers. Use a list or checkboard system to stay aware of water skiers' whereabouts.