

Archery: Safety Activity Checkpoints



One of the oldest weapons and hunting methods, archery is still used for its traditional purposes, but is common today as a recreational and competitive activity. There are a variety of styles and sizes of bows and arrows, but they're all used for one purpose: to hit a target. Archery is not recommended for Girl Scout Daisies. Girl Scout Brownies can participate in some archery activities if the equipment is designed for children of that grade level and body size. Participants must be old enough to understand safety procedures and handle equipment so as not to endanger themselves and others. Ensure that bows and arrows are appropriate to the age, size, strength, and ability of the girls.

Know where to participate in archery. Look for organized indoor and outdoor archery ranges. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions.

Include girls with disabilities. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations.

Archery Gear

Basic Gear

- Waterproof sunscreen and (SPF of at least 15) and lip balm
- Sunglasses

Specialized Gear

- Bows
- Arrows
- Targets (paper targets are typically mounted on hay bales)
- Wrist, finger, and arm protection, such as finger tabs and arm guards (right- and left-handed models)

Prepare for Archery

- **Communicate with council and parents.** Inform your Girl Scout council and girls' parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and council guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Make arrangements in advance for all transportation and confirm plans before departure. Make provisions for safe handling of archery equipment to and from the range.
- **Girls plan the activity.** Keeping their grade-level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.
- **Arrange for adult supervision.** The recommended adult-to-girl ratios are two non-related adults (at least one of whom is female) to every:
 - 12 Girl Scout Brownies
 - 16 Girl Scout Juniors
 - 20 Girl Scout Cadettes
 - 24 Girl Scout Seniors
 - 24 Girl Scout Ambassadors

Plus one adult to each additional:

 - 6 Girl Scout Brownies
 - 8 Girl Scout Juniors
 - 10 Girl Scout Cadettes
 - 12 Girl Scout Seniors
 - 12 Girl Scout Ambassadors
- **Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** One adult is a certified [National Archery Association](#) instructor or has equivalent certification or documented experience and skill in teaching/supervising archery. The instructor reviews the rules and operating procedures with girls beforehand, and posts safety rules at the site. Ensure that there is a ratio of 1 instructor for every 10 girls. Archery games away from a regular course are well supervised and appropriate to age, skill level, and location of shooting.
- **Compile key contacts.** Give an itinerary to a contact person at home; call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list of girls' parents/guardian contact information, telephone numbers for emergency services and police, and council contacts—keep on hand or post in an easily accessible location.
- **Girls learn about archery.** Girls develop skills based on proper procedures and form, such as stringing the bow, nocking the arrow, getting the right stance, sighting, and observing safety practices. Before archery activity, girls learn the following:
 - Archers straddle the shooting line to shoot.
 - Girls waiting to shoot stay well behind the archery line. A quiver for holding arrows is provided for each line of shooters. Never point a bow and arrow at a person, even when not drawn.
 - Arrows are not picked up until the "load" command is given.
 - Never shoot an arrow until the "fire when ready" command is given.
 - Never draw the string and let go without an arrow; this is called dry firing and can break the bow.
 - When aiming arrow, keep tip pointed toward the target. Shoot only at target and never at anything else, including trees, animals, etc. Never shoot an arrow straight up into the air.
 - Wait until the all-clear command is given before retrieving arrows.

- **Dress appropriately for the activity.** Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment. Also have girls tie back long hair.
- **Ensure that equipment is in good condition.** Make sure that arrows are not warped and do not have cracked nocks or loose or missing feathers; bowstrings do not have broken or loose strands, and bows do not have loose or broken arrow rests; backstops for targets are in good repair. A beginner uses arrows that extend one to two inches in front of the bow when the bow is at full draw. Only target tip arrows are used, never broadhead/hunting tips.
- **Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a first-aid kit and a first-aider with certificates in First Aid, including Adult and Child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of puncture wounds and sunburn. If any part of the activity is located 60 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider (level 2) with Wilderness and Remote First Aid. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

On the Day of the Archery Activity

- **Get a weather report.** On the morning of an outdoor archery activity, check weather.com or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. If severe weather conditions prevent the archery activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternate activity. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans for severe weather with girls.
- **Use the buddy system.** Girls are divided into teams of two. Each girl chooses a buddy and is responsible for staying with her buddy at all times, warning her buddy of danger, giving her buddy immediate assistance if safe to do so, and seeking help when the situation warrants it. If someone in the group is injured, one person cares for the patient while two others seek help.
- **Safeguard valuables.** Secure equipment in a dry, locked storage area. Archery equipment is stored in its proper storage container and locked when not in use.
- **Be prepared in the event of a storm with lightning.** 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.
- **Practice safe archery.**

At an outdoor range:

- Targets are not placed in front of houses, roads, trails, or tents.
- Avoid areas with pedestrian traffic.
- Clear areas of brush; a hillside backstop is recommended.
- Be sure the shooting area and the spectator area behind the shooting area are clearly marked.
- In the shooting area, ensure a distance of at least 50 yards behind the targets and 20 yards on each side of the range. An outdoor range is not used after nightfall.
- Archery equipment is stored in the box and locked when not in use

At an indoor range:

- Targets are well-lit, and doors or entries onto the range are locked or blocked from the inside.

- Do not block fire exits.

Archery Links

- National Field Archery Association: www.nfaa-archery.org
- USA Archery: www.usarchery.org
- World Archery Center Instructor Courses: www.worldarcherycenter.com/instructor_courses

Archery Know-How for Girls

- **Learn how to string a bow.** Read a step-by-step guide at Archery World U.K. web site.
- **Learn archery safety basics.** Learn tips such as “Never put an arrow into a bow unless you are on the shooting line” on the Colorado Division of Wildlife web site.

Archery Jargon

- **AMO length:** A standardized length for measuring bow strings
- **Anchor point:** Part of the bow to rest lightly as the string is pulled toward the face, usually the corner of the archer’s mouth or chin
- **Dry fire:** Shooting a bow without an arrow, which can damage the bow