

Girl Scouts pride themselves on being prepared for emergencies—big ones or little ones. They are steady, see what needs to be done, and know how to do it.

—Senior Girl Scouting, 1945

Developed in partnership
with the American Red Cross

LEGACY: FIRST AID



Ambassador

First Aid

Girl Scouts get the chance to experience amazing outdoor adventures—and when you're exploring outside, anything can happen. When it does, others may look to you as an Ambassador to know what to do in an emergency situation. In this badge, learn skills that define the Girl Scout motto. You'll be prepared to handle any outdoor situation, from treating a mosquito bite to saving a life.

Steps

1. Learn how to deal with medical emergencies in the wilderness
2. Research careers that save lives in extreme conditions
3. Find out how to care for a critically injured person
4. Know how to move an injured person
5. Explore real-life examples for handling wilderness emergencies

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know more about how to provide first aid in extreme conditions.

Every step has
three choices.
Do ONE choice to
complete each step.
Inspired? Do more!

Tip Before Takeoff

- ▶ If you haven't earned the Senior First Aid badge or had any formal training in first aid and CPR, complete a basic first aid course through your local Red Cross chapter or Girl Scout council before starting this badge.

STEP

1

Learn how to deal with medical emergencies in the wilderness

Adventure trips test your limits, build new skills, and increase your confidence—all while you enjoy the thrill of being outdoors. They also create the possibility of serious medical emergencies. Find out how to handle a worst-case scenario in a particular kind of terrain.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Backcountry.** Interview someone from a search-and-rescue team about the kinds of emergencies you might encounter on a backcountry trip and how to handle them.
OR
- Open water.** Interview a certified lifeguard, emergency medical technician (EMT) who works on open water, or Coast Guard medic about how to handle the kinds of emergencies you might encounter on the ocean or a large body of water.
OR
- Mountains.** Talk to an EMT, wilderness first responder, or rescue squad member with wilderness first aid training about the emergencies you might encounter on a trip in the mountains—including high-altitude sickness—and how to handle them.

High-Altitude Sickness

The higher you climb, the less oxygen there is in the atmosphere—and the greater the chances you or a companion will experience altitude-related problems.

At heights above 8,000 feet—or even at lower altitudes during strenuous activities like hiking, biking, and climbing—many people experience mild effects from acute mountain sickness. In severe cases, acute mountain sickness can cause life-threatening conditions such as swelling or extra fluid in the heart, lungs, brain, and muscles.

Prevention

What's the best way to avoid high-altitude sickness? Here are the basics:

- **Climb slowly.** Take at least two days to reach 8,000 feet. For every 1,000 or 2,000 feet you go above that, rest for a day or two to let your body adjust before you continue.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.**
- **Eat regularly,** especially foods high in carbohydrates.

Early Warning Signs

- Headaches, breathlessness, fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Difficulty sleeping
- Swelling of the face, hands, and feet
- Rapid pulse

More Serious Symptoms

- Bluish skin tone or gray complexion
- Confusion
- Congestion/tightness in the chest
- Cough/coughing up blood
- Withdrawal from social interaction/loss of consciousness
- Inability to walk in a straight line, or to walk at all
- Shortness of breath when resting

Treatment

If you recognize any of the early warning signs, the most important thing is to descend to a lower altitude (quickly but safely) before the symptoms get worse. If you or a companion suffers from more serious symptoms, call for emergency help immediately. You may need treatment with oxygen, specialized drugs, or in a hyperbaric chamber.

STEP

2 Research careers that save lives in extreme conditions

Some people go to work each day ready to save lives in extraordinarily tough situations. Find out more about these careers in an interview. Ask about the training and education needed, and the situations where they've used their expertise.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

Wilderness rescue. Interview a lifeguard, park ranger, or member of a wilderness search-and-rescue squad or ski patrol.

OR

Disaster preparedness. Interview a firefighter, EMT, or member of a local emergency response unit who's trained to handle major disasters such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, or terrorist attacks.

OR

Military medicine. Interview a combat medic or member of a military medical unit to find out more about how they care for soldiers during training exercises or combat.

Careers to Explore

First response or wilderness EMT
Girl Scout outdoors specialist
Veterinarian
Physician's assistant

Home health aide
Special education teacher
Veterinary technician
Hearing therapist

Combat medic
Dental hygienist
Epidemiologist
Nurse
Ultrasound technician

Midwife
Laboratory technician
Acupuncturist
Pharmacy technician

Page from the Past

First Aide badge 1924–1938

Girls earning this badge in 1925 had to demonstrate:



- Applying a sterile dressing
- Stopping bleeding
- Putting on a splint
- Making a stretcher from uniform blanket or Scout neckerchief and poles

STEP

3 Find out how to care for a critically injured person

In a remote location or extreme situation that prevents help from reaching you, it's important to know how to keep someone who is critically injured alive until professionals can take over. Find out how to keep an injured person alive for 16 to 24 hours.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Take a wilderness first aid course.** Find a course taught by a certified instructor or endorsed by an accredited organization such as the Wilderness & Remote First Aid course offered by the Red Cross. (Ambassadors can be certified as American Red Cross Instructors in this course and others.)

OR

- Interview a doctor, nurse, EMT, or first responder.** Find someone who specializes in wilderness or survival medicine and ask about the techniques they use to keep people alive in remote areas. Have them help you role-play what you would need to do to treat injuries you may encounter in your outdoor adventures.

OR

- Discover how to use what's on hand in an emergency.** With the help of a doctor, nurse, or EMT who specializes in disaster or survival medicine, find out how common items found in the house or car might help keep a critically injured person alive when emergency help is delayed.

STEP 4 Know how to move an injured person

When you took your first aid and CPR certification course, you learned not to move someone with a serious injury. But sometimes there's no choice. If there's an immediate danger, such as fire, fallen power lines, or flooding, you may need to move the person out of harm's way. Find out how to do this safely.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Visit a medical school.** Schools often have student clubs focusing on wilderness, survival, or disaster medicine. Find one near you and set up a time when you and your Girl Scout friends can meet with them.

Tip: Contact the Wilderness Medical Society to see if they have a Student Interest Group registered near you.

OR

- Take a wilderness first aid course.** Find one that teaches different techniques for carrying people to safety on your own or with others. This may be the same course you take to complete step 3.

OR

- Organize a mock emergency drill.** Get help from emergency responders such as firefighters or EMTs. Assign some people to be victims with various injuries, while others learn to move them safely. Switch roles so that everyone has a chance to "treat" victims, then ask the emergency responders to give you feedback on how you did.

First Responders

The people called to the scene of an emergency are often called "first responders." They might be police, firefighters, and paramedics, but people in many other career fields are also trained to be first responders. A first responder may be someone from child protection agencies, Poison Control, mental health service employees, or members of a crisis hotline.

Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of the USA, National Historical Preservation Center. Used by Permission.



First Aid was a basic part of Girl Scouting in 1913. Savannah Girl Scouts demonstrate the proper way to carry an invalid.

Flight Paramedics

A flight paramedic, or flight medic, is a paramedic who is trained to work on patients in flight. They usually travel in helicopters with other medical personnel, such as doctors and nurses. (Most large hospitals have helicopters and places for them to land safely.) A flight paramedic works to keep a patient stable while they're flown to a hospital. These paramedics must be able to stay calm and focused in a hectic environment—and usually have at least five years' experience working as a paramedic on the ground.

STEP 5 Explore real-life examples for handling wilderness emergencies

When you read about a tragedy or accident in which people are injured, often there's an average person who doesn't panic and uses a little bit of training and a lot of courage to save someone's life. Find out more about everyday heroes.

CHOICES — DO ONE:

- Explore wilderness survival.** Read a book or magazine article or see a movie that tells a real-life story about people who faced an emergency in the wilderness. Note what they did or didn't do to create the situation and how they handled it.

OR

- Investigate extreme first aid.** Find at least five news items about everyday people who saved someone's life using first aid during an extreme situation. Share them with friends and family and discuss common threads in the stories. Did the heroes have training? What do they credit with helping them save someone else's life?

OR

- Interview an everyday hero.** Talk to someone who used first aid to save a life, or someone whose life was saved by a person who gave them first aid. What aspects of their training were most helpful? How did they make decisions about what to do? Did anything unexpected happen that they had to deal with?



More to Explore

Wilderness Challenge

Once you've earned this badge, you will be prepared for many of the challenges the wilderness can throw at you. So why not put your skills to the test with a friend or two—and find out if you have what it takes to survive a real wilderness challenge?

Come up with a scenario that would really challenge your limits, and find a group of two to six people to take it on with you. Imagine a raging blizzard moving in while you're hiking, your car breaking down on a lonely stretch of road in the desert, or other test. Then, come up with a way to spend a full 24-hour day—maybe even two—testing your ability to “be prepared” and survive using your skills. Work on your challenge idea with an experienced Girl Scout adult who can help decide on details and create a backup emergency plan.

THINK ABOUT

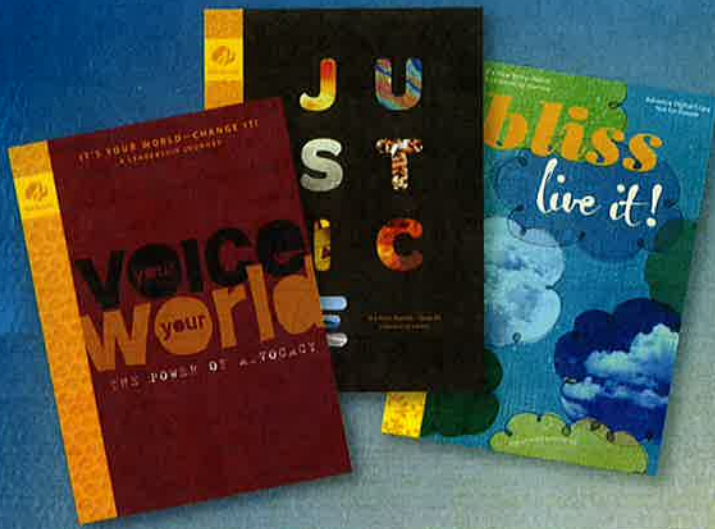
- **Supplies:** What do you normally have available in your school backpack, handbag, or car? If you are suddenly stranded you will be limited, adding to the challenge, so make your supply list as realistic as possible.
- How you'll find water if you need it
- What you'll need to keep yourself warm (or cool if it's hot)
- How to make sure everyone in the group is staying healthy. What will you do if someone starts showing signs of dehydration, hypothermia, heatstroke, or altitude sickness? What will you do in case of poisonous insect or snake bites? How would these types of situations influence the decision-making capacity of the affected group member?

During your challenge, have each girl write a few sentences in a journal every hour. Keep track of your moods and that of the group as a whole. You may be surprised by how quickly people fall into certain roles—one girl may take on the role of the leader, while another may work at keeping people cheerful and motivated. Capture your thoughts about how well your group works together.

Once you are safely back home, reflect on your challenge. What did you learn about things you should always carry? Is there anything you'd like to have on hand in an emergency that you don't normally have with you? What about things you'd do without? Were you surprised by anything that happened within your group?

“I don't ever remember Mrs. Low being without her beloved whistle and knife dangling from her leather belt!”

— Josephine Daskam Bacon, early Girl Scout
Chairman of Publications and Publicity



Add the Badge to Your Journeys

Any time you venture outside on your Journeys, the skills you learned in this badge will keep you prepared.

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Inspiring others to learn first aid by sharing stories of people who have used their training to save other people's lives
- Organizing a career day to help others learn about jobs in wilderness or survival medicine
- Being prepared to handle serious medical emergencies on outdoor adventures with confidence



I'm inspired to: