



GSME Campfire Safety Patch

Campfires are a useful tool when camping and being in the outdoors. Campfires are a great outdoor resource for heat, cooking, light, sometimes even a beacon and have been known to enhance prosocial behavior—who doesn't love sitting around a campfire singing and sharing stories?

However, learning how to have a safe campfire is an important part of being a Girl Scout. Cooking over a campfire out in the outdoors in general is the hallmark of Girl Scouts. Before you can cook over a campfire, you must learn campfire safety. Campfires are a lot of fun, but they can be dangerous too. That is why you should know how to be safe around them and build them safely with an adult.

Learning campfire safety and usage is an important skill to help instill confidence in the girls and help them take ownership in tasks that require the use of a campfire while outdoors as well as ensure proper technique and safety for all involved. To have a campfire, one or more of the adults needs to be troop camp trained. Girls must not have campfires until they have been instructed in the safe use of this resource by a trained/knowledgeable adult. An adult should always be present with a campfire. Never assume girls know good safety practices even if they have campfires at home. Establish expected safety rules and expect each girl to always follow them. Allow the girls to practice their skills in a developmentally appropriate manner (starting with edible fires and moving up to building fires, but not lighting them, and eventually lighting them once a girl has individually demonstrated the skills with campfire safety progression) and set aside our adult fears. The only way for girls to master their campfire skills and become confident in their abilities is to practice. Please take the time to work through each step, ensuring the girls have mastered the skill before moving on. To receive her patch, each girl must demonstrate her knowledge and skills. At any point, if a girl is being unsafe with a campfire or tools used, she will lose the privilege to build and start campfires or possess the tools to do so.

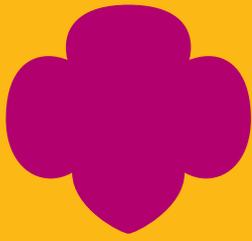
Levels

Girl Scout Daisies-Ambassadors begin with Level 1 and continue sequentially, at their own pace, to complete any or all levels. Girls may start at a higher level if all the skills for the previous levels have been mastered. Girls should progress through the program according to their needs and abilities, and based on the [Safety Activity Checkpoint guidelines](#).

A general progression guideline is:

- Level 1: 2nd year Daisies and up
- Level 2: Brownies and up
- Level 3: Juniors and up
- Level 4: Cadettes and up





Campfire Safety & Etiquette

Do's

- **DO** have one or more of the troop adults fully troop camp (parts 1 & 2) trained and present with the girl(s).
- **DO** remember, campfires are an outdoor resource for heat, cooking, light, sometimes even a beacon. The campfire should have a purpose-not just for fun.
- **DO** be respectful of the honor and privilege of being able to build and have a campfire.
- **DO** always check the fire making rules of the area and follow the safety tips outlined in this patch program.
- **DO** use a prepared fire ring or circle.
- **DO** be sure to have a bucket of water and spade, rake, shovel, or broom nearby.
- **DO** check for overhead trees/brush.
- **DO** tie long hair back when working with fires.
- **DO** keep the fire small.
- **DO** allow the wood to burn all the way through until it turns into ash. If anything is warm or glowing, you want to sprinkle water on it until it is cool enough to touch. Always make sure an adult is around to help you with this step.
- **DO** rake the fireplace level.
- **DO** allow the ashes to cool. Then carry them at least 200 feet from trails, campsites, and places where you get water from, and spread them out in the woods. *Note: Some camps may have a special fire safe can for ashes.*

Do Nots

- **DO NOT** abuse the honor and privilege of being able to build and have a campfire.
- **DO NOT** have anyone in the circle of stones. No one should be within the circle of stones except the fire builders.
- **DO NOT** wear loose-fitting sleeves, ponchos, or ties that might catch fire. Everyone should have shoes and socks-no open-toed shoes. REMEMBER that fleece melts, not burns.
- **DO NOT** use liquid fire starters. Use Girl Scout approved fire starters. Never use an accelerant-grease, oil, kerosene, or flammable liquids on your fire.
- **DO NOT** leave the fire unattended.
- **DO NOT** blow on or fan a fire. Build it so the wind is to your advantage.
- **DO NOT** play active games around a fire.
- **DO NOT** drown the fire ring. Never pour water on the fire because hot steam develops-sprinkle it with water instead.
- **DO NOT** bury charcoal or partially burned wood after your campfire.
- **DO NOT** leave coals unattended until they can be touched with bare hands.



Resources:

<https://my.girlscouts.org/content/dam/girlscouts-vtk2019/local/aid/meetings/B18EB02/Campfire-Safety-Rules.pdf>

<https://my.girlscouts.org/content/dam/girlscouts-vtk/meeting-aids/Fire.pdf>

<https://Int.org/how-to-collect-firewood/>

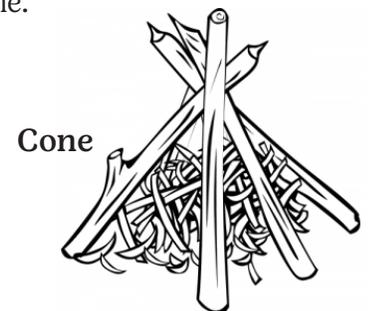
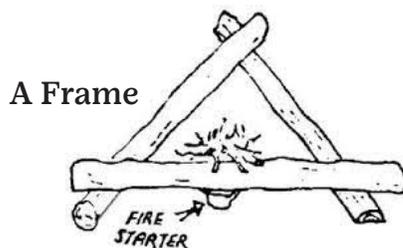
<https://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/en/for-volunteers/volunteer/resources.html>

<https://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscoutsofmaine-redesign/documents/program/Edible-Campfire.pdf>

Level 1: Introduction to campfire safety (2nd year Daisies and up)

Girls will learn campfire safety. Be sure to review the Campfire Safety and Etiquette with each level.

- Set up a pretend firepit or sit around a real one. Girls act out camp safety scenarios to show what they would do in certain situations. For example, if you are near a campfire, girls should act out walking carefully around it (relates to the Buddy Camper Daisy badge).
- Talk with someone like a park ranger, or someone from the fire department about safe campfire management and forest fire prevention.
- Learn about the common campfire builds like the Log Cabin, A-Frame, and Cone.



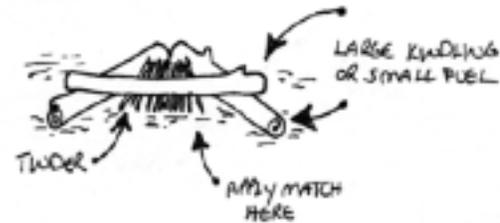
- Make edible campfires. For ideas on how to do this activity, see <https://www.girlscoutsofmaine.org/content/dam/girlscoutsofmaine-redesign/documents/program/Edible-Campfire.pdf>



Level 2: Building a campfire (Brownies and up)

Girls learn how to safely build a campfire. Be sure to review the Campfire Safety and Etiquette with each level.

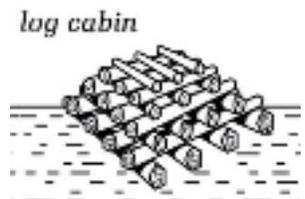
- ❑ Learn how to prepare and build a campfire.
- ❑ Make a list of tools needed at a fire site such as-but not limited to-matches, water bucket, shovel, rake, sticks/wood, and where you can get them.
- ❑ Learn how to choose a site and prepare it for a fire ring.
- ❑ Girls should know how to collect wood for the fire. In addition to knowing how to build and put out a fire, considering where our firewood comes from is an essential piece in having a campfire. Learn about the four D's of Leave No Trace when it comes to collecting firewood-Dead, Down, Dinky and Distant. Use only dead wood-wood that has been dead long enough to be dry found on the ground. Do not break from trees-the wood should be physically separated and down from living trees. Look for wood no wider than an adult wrist. If the branches can't be broken by hand, they are too wide and may not burn completely. Wood should be collected 200 feet from camp to keep the area natural and also save wood for the next campers to collect. If you are unable to collect firewood from the area, bring firewood purchased in the local area. Firewood brought from another area could also bring invasive pests.
- ❑ Learn how to safely light a match. Have the wind at your back before lighting. Make sure everyone else is an arms length away when striking a match. Strike match away from you. Once the girls have reviewed and understood the basics of match safety, have each girl strike a match one at a time and drop the match into a bucket of water.
- ❑ Learn how to put out a fire. Let the fire die down until only ashes are left. This should not be a problem if you only built a fire big enough for your needs. Stir the ashes with the shovel, sprinkle with water, stir again, and repeat until no more heat is felt. Clean up the fire circle before leaving on your last day of camp; there should be no warm coals left. Before you leave your site - clean the fire ring. If you are at a GSME camp, the ranger will dispose of the ashes.
- ❑ Learn how to build an A-frame fire, light it, and put it out safely. (Relates to the Brownie Cabin Camper Badge and the Junior Eco Camper Badge)



Level 3: Building and managing campfires (Juniors and up)

Girls continue to learn campfire building and proper management of fires and tools. Be sure to review the Campfire Safety and Etiquette with each level.

- ❑ Learn how to build a log cabin fire, light it, and put it out safely.
- ❑ Learn the laws for regulating open fires in your area and what permits are needed.
- ❑ Demonstrate you know the safe use of a shovel and rake and how to store each away properly.
- ❑ Know how to waterproof your matches. Make waterproof matches by coating stick match ends with clear nail polish, allowing them to dry completely before putting them back into the container. Have waterproof matches in wet or damp weather. (Relates to the Junior Eco Camper Badge)



Level 4: Advanced fire building (Cadettes and up)

Girls continue to learn campfire building, including advanced techniques and proper management of fires and tools. They will also teach younger girls their skills. Be sure to review the Campfire Safety and Etiquette with each level.

- Learn how to build a trench fire, crisscross fire, or reflector fire against a rock.



Crisscross
(Log Cabin)

- Practice starting a campfire with only your jackknife, steel & flint, and a mirror.
(Relates to Ambassador Survival Camper badge)
- Teach younger girls about fire safety.