



Girl Scout
Trailblazers



Girl Scouts of Central Texas Volunteer Guide

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Why Girl Scout Trailblazers, Why Now?

Girl Scouts provides a wide array of opportunities for teens to engage in high adventure. Girl Scout Trailblazers is a special interest troop that offers adventure on trails and in wilderness areas.

Revitalizing and expanding these troops are national priorities and, as such, GSUSA is releasing this set of updated, twenty-first century guidelines.

With the release of these guidelines, GSUSA seeks to support the revitalization, initiation, and/or expansion of Girl Scout Trailblazer troops nationally. Included within

this comprehensive document is direction on troop composition and trail-focused activities; safety considerations; direction on concentrations and badges; opportunities for youth to lead; and insight into the product program and merchandise as they apply to Trailblazers.



When youth participate in Girl Scouts' outdoor programming, they benefit in four important ways per the findings from the Girl Scout Research Institute:

- 1. Outdoor Competence:** Girl Scouts learn to engage safely and responsibly in a range of outdoor activities.
- 2. Outdoor Interest:** Girl Scouts develop a love of nature and an interest in the natural world.
- 3. Outdoor Confidence:** Girl Scouts gain confidence in their ability to take on new challenges and learn from and succeed in them.
- 4. Environmental Stewardship:** Girl Scouts come to understand how their behaviors impact the environment and what they can do to protect the natural world.

Girl Scout Trailblazer troops have been a part of Girl Scouts' bold history since the 1950s. Initially one of several patrols that included Mariners (on the water), Mounted (equestrian), Panorama (general), and Wing (air and flight), the Trailblazers enjoyed camping, hiking, and stewardship. Today, the Trailblazer program provides teen Girl Scouts, grades 8 to 12, an opportunity to engage deeply in high-adventure outdoor activities. Trailblazers develop skills in orienteering, survival camping, trail hiking, sports, and environmental stewardship.

What Is the Girl Scout Trailblazer Program?

The Trailblazer program provides teen Girl Scouts an opportunity to engage deeply in high-adventure outdoor activities in a broad range of modalities, geographies, and climates.

Trailblazers develop skills in:

- Diverse hiking styles, including snowshoeing and backpacking.
- Types of camping, such as tent, survivalist, and canoe.
- Orienteering methods, such as GPS, map and compass, and star navigation.
- Conservation, service, and Take Action projects, such as trail cleanups, trail reconstruction, and maintenance.
- Outdoor preparedness and safety in diverse weather conditions, climates, and terrains.
- Survivorship, including construction of emergency shelter and ways to call for help without cell phone service.
- High-adventure sports, such as rock climbing, trail races, mountain biking, snowshoeing, dog sledding, and ropes courses.
- Trailblazers engage in these activities year-round on almost every trail and environment that can support them!

Who Can Become a Trailblazer?

All youth and adults participating in a Trailblazer troop are required to be current Girl Scout members. These are recommendations for Trailblazer troop composition:

- **Experience level:** There are no prerequisites for joining a Trailblazer troop other than an interest and willingness to complete the requirements of the Trailblazer pin within the first year of being a Trailblazer.
- **Frequency:** It is recommended Trailblazer troops meet a minimum of one time a month as research shows monthly involvement in the outdoors contributes substantially to Girl Scouts' leadership development and to their satisfaction with Girl Scouts.



- **Ability level:** Girl Scouts of all ability levels can participate with the appropriate accommodations.
- **Age:** It is recommended that Trailblazer troops are comprised of teens in grades 8 through 12. Girl Scouts younger than eighth grade level may find some of the physical activities too challenging depending on their strength, size, and ability. Girl Scouts older than eighth grade level sometimes find it difficult to commit to regular troop meetings because of the heavy pressures and responsibilities of high school. Eighth grade is the optimal time to retain or reengage Girl Scouts as they consider how they'd like to pursue new, adventurous opportunities through Girl Scouts.

Note: According to Safety Activity Checkpoints, Cadettes can take part in many of the same activities as Seniors and Ambassadors. Consider engaging sixth and seventh grade Girl Scouts in activities that introduce them to and prepare them for Trailblazer troops.

Interview with a Trailblazer

Girl Scout Trailblazers and alum range in age from early teens to nearly 100 years old and live all around the world. There is wide variety in how Trailblazers engage in their outdoor pursuits. Below, lifelong Trailblazer Amanda P. answers Girl Scouts of the USA's questions.

Q: What was your Girl Scout background?

Amanda: I started as a Girl Scout Daisy and stayed with Girl Scouts through the completion of my Gold Award. One of my favorite memories from Girl Scouts was Caves and Crevasses at Camp Tahigwa. My Silver Award project was a summer reading program for youth, and my Gold Award project was an astronomy program for Brownies that helped them to earn badges.

Q: What was your educational history?

Amanda: I received a BA in earth science (University of Northern Iowa), a certificate in outdoor skills and leadership (University of Alaska Southeast), and an MS in recreation and sport administration (Western Kentucky University).

Q: Tell us about your career.

Amanda: I started as coordinator for adventure trips at the University of Maryland in 2011 after completing my graduate degree and, in 2014, I became assistant director for the adventure program there. I am also involved with the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE), have served on its board of directors, and have hosted its national conference. Currently, I organize the Women's Leadership Mentor Institute (WLMI) for AORE.



Q: What is your favorite thing about being in the backcountry?

Amanda: Being able to get away and disconnect from the busyness of life while connecting with people in beautiful places.

Q: Why do you enjoy hiking, and backpacking specifically?

Amanda: I like the physical challenge and workout that comes with being on my feet, and I love being able to carry everything I need on my back while backpacking.

Q: What are the favorite places you've hiked/backpacked?

Amanda: Cracker Lake in Glacier National Park, the Subway in Zion National Park and Gokyo Ri in Nepal.

Q: What advice would you give Girl Scouts starting off with hiking and/or backpacking?

Amanda: Don't rush to finish the hike. Slow down and take time to enjoy the sights around you and the people you are with. There is no need to hurry and no need to be the fastest.

Q: What advice would you give adults supporting Girl Scouts in these types of specialized troops?

Amanda: The outdoors can be an equalizer and provide a great space for Girl Scouts to be their authentic selves. Help them to see that they can be their true selves and be liked for who they are.





The Foundational Girl Scout Experience, Trailblazer Style

Trailblazers experience all that Girl Scouts offers through a focus on the great outdoors. As with all troops, Girl Scouts will provide an emotionally and physically safe space, a consistent, supportive adult, and active family engagement throughout the troop year. Troops will meet regularly—at least monthly—throughout the year. Girl Scout Trailblazers will:

- Earn skill-building badges in STEM, Outdoor, Life Skills, and Entrepreneurship through the lens of a Trailblazer.

OR

- Take part in a National Leadership Journey. All Journeys are eligible. Consider the Think Like a Citizen Scientist Journey. This is a great opportunity to collect data while in the field and support environmental conservation efforts globally!

OR

- Earn a highest award. The Girl Scout Silver and Gold Awards are a fundamental part of the Girl Scout experience. Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors grow through a progressive leadership experience where they partner with their communities to create sustainable solutions that address society's biggest challenges. Empower your Girl Scouts to take action on environmental conservation or another Trailblazer-related issue and support their growth into courageous leaders, community organizers, and change makers.

1. The Girl Scout Leadership Experience: This experience is what Trailblazer troops activate through the challenges teens face together on the trail. They learn about themselves and their values and they stretch to seek and meet challenges beyond what they might in other settings. Trailblazers gain a unique perspective that encourages systems thinking; they see the interconnectedness inherent to their environment. They become stewards of their environment, advocates for the wilderness, and leaders in the outdoors.

2. The Three Girl Scout Processes: These ensure the promotion of the fun and friendship that have always been integral to Girl Scouting.

- Girl Scout-led means that youth take an active and grade-appropriate role in figuring out the what, where, when, why, and how of what they do.
- Learning by doing is hands-on learning that engages Girl Scouts in an ongoing cycle of action and reflection. When youth participate actively in meaningful activities outdoors and later reflect on them, they gain a deeper understanding of concepts and mastery of outdoor skills.
- Cooperative learning is designed to promote sharing of knowledge, skills, and learning in an atmosphere of respect and cooperation as Girl Scouts work together on goals that can only be accomplished with the help of others.

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- 3. Take Action:** Take Action and service projects can focus on a wide variety of nature and service-related activities.
- Service projects address an immediate environmental need. Trash pickup on a trail is an example of a service project.
 - Take Action projects offer sustainable solutions. Rather than simply picking up trash, Girl Scouts might place trash and recycling bins at the trailhead and arrange to have trash picked up or carried out.
- 4. Awards:** These are an excellent option for Girl Scouts interested in pursuing honors that develop their leadership skills. Below are some considerations:
- Cadettes can go for the Silver Award after completing one Cadette Leadership Journey.
 - Seniors/Ambassadors must earn the Silver Award and complete one Senior/Ambassador Leadership Journey or, in lieu of the Silver Award, two Senior/Ambassador Leadership Journeys before earning the Gold Award.
 - Girl Scouts may set their sights on earning the Cadette, Senior, or Ambassador Leadership Torch, Service to Girl Scouting Bar, or Community Service Bar for their service and leadership efforts within their Trailblazer troop or wider community. These awards recognize Girl Scouts who go above and beyond in service to their troop or school as they identify issues they might want to tackle in their highest award.
 - Girl Scouts eager to mentor younger Girl Scouts and build their group leadership skills (and the pipeline for future Trailblazers!) may consider earning these:
 - Leader in Action and Program Aide pins for Cadettes
 - Volunteer in Training and Counselor in Training pins for Seniors and Ambassadors
 - Service to Girl Scouting Bars for Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors
 - Silver Award for Cadettes
 - Gold Award for Seniors and Ambassadors
- 5. Trips and travel:** Trailblazers have the opportunity to travel all over the world. Through camping and hiking, troops will begin their Trailblazer experience by exploring locally. Girl Scouts can grow and work toward high-adventure activities ranging from horseback riding and climbing to backpacking, hiking, and trail running. Girl Scout Trailblazers also have the choice to travel independently on a Girl Scout Destination! Destinations could include adventures like backpacking in Costa Rica or hiking the Alps through three European countries. Trailblazer troops can visit and plan a multiday hike at the Our Chalet World Center in Switzerland.
- 6. Product program:** Trailblazers participate in product program just as other troops do. This is a great way for Trailblazers to purchase and maintain their equipment and participate in events. If a Girl Scout is in both a home troop and a Trailblazer troop, the Girl Scout, troops (home and Trailblazer), and council product program staff need to have a discussion as to how to distribute the product program earnings. For example, they may apply all door-to-door sales under one troop and all booth sales under the other troop. The income from product program does not become the property of individual youth members. Girl Scouts, however, may be eligible for rewards and program credits that they put toward council-sponsored camps, programs, and approved troop and service unit travel. Note that if Girl Scouts are participating in multiple troops,

for instance, a home troop and a Trailblazer troop, there may be community and geographical issues to consider when participating in cookie booths. Girl Scouts who sell in two troops will not be able to combine their totals from each troop for rewards, the vendor systems are not setup that way. Girl Scouts will earn rewards based off the sales in each individual troop, which may mean duplicate items.

- 7. Girl Scout traditions:** These include, but are not limited to, saying the Girl Scout Promise and Law, singing Girl Scout songs, taking part in ceremonies, and wearing a Girl Scout uniform.
- 8. The Trailblazer uniform:** The uniform is the same Girl Scout age-level uniform as that for other troops. However, Trailblazers can identify themselves by wearing their Trailblazer pin on their sashes where memberships are located.

Volunteers

Girl Scouts is committed to providing amazing experiences to youth, and we want our volunteers to feel engaged and empowered with the knowledge and skills to be a part of that mission. All Girl Scout Trailblazer volunteers are expected to be registered, screened, and prepared members of Girl Scouts. The volunteer should stay current with all council-level required trainings for their role. As stated above, Trailblazer troops participate in activities just like any other Girl Scout troop. As such, Trailblazer troop leaders are expected to abide by all requirements and procedures as outlined in the position description.

Progression Within Trailblazer Troops

It is highly recommended that Trailblazer troops follow the GSUSA Outdoor Progression Model (refer to Appendix A) when planning and participating in outdoor-related activities. Progression allows Trailblazers to learn the skills they need to become competent in the outdoors, including how to plan and organize outdoor activities.

As Trailblazer troops start out and/or welcome new members, troop leaders should take a step back and revisit the Look Out, Meet Out, and Move Out steps in order to welcome new members to the troop while gauging their comfort level with and experience in the outdoors. Be sure to meet Girl Scouts where they are, knowing not everyone is coming into the troop with the same experience or confidence level regarding outdoor activities. It is recommended that troops focus on building a strong sense of community within their troop, learning more about one another and creating a strong foundation as they meet outdoors at local parks or outdoor spaces.

Much of a Trailblazer troop's time may be focused on the Explore Out step where day adventures—bike rides, climbing experiences, geocaching, citizen-based data collection, hiking, kayaking, trail-run adventure, horseback riding, archery, trail cleanup, and so forth—take place. These day experiences tend to fit into a busy schedule, allowing for a Girl Scout to have exposure to the outdoors with her troop without a huge time commitment.



As the troop becomes more comfortable outdoors, Trailblazer troops may decide to move on to the Cook Out and Sleep Out steps. These two steps are foundational in having Girl Scouts learn, practice, and teach back outdoor skills. Girl Scouts are focusing on building mastery in the areas of fire building, outdoor knots and lashing, navigation, outdoor cooking and food storage, water purification, and outdoor tools. Skills can be practiced during day get-togethers or local overnight campouts. Remember—repetition is the key to mastery!

Trailblazer troops will naturally flow into the Camp Out and Adventure Out steps as their outdoor skill confidence increases and they feel more comfortable with one another. Trailblazer troops have numerous opportunities to participate in overnight and multiday outdoor adventures regionally, nationally, and internationally.

- It is essential that previously learned outdoor skills are incorporated on these trips, along with new skills. It is difficult to teach advanced outdoor skills if the foundational skills are not there—teaching triangulation with navigation would be difficult if Girl Scouts were not confident with basic map and compass skills, for example. Skills are easily forgotten if not used frequently.
- Keep progression in mind with the type of camping Girl Scouts and troops are doing. For example, backpacking trips should take place after car camping, primitive camping at a walk-in site, and some day hike trips. Build up to more advanced activities, making sure Girl Scouts have the necessary foundational skills and experiences.

Reminder: Troops can ebb and flow between these steps after they have worked through them in order. For example, Trailblazing troops that have worked through the steps and are now experiencing the Camp Out and Adventure Out steps can always go back to Explore Out, Cook Out, and Sleep Out in order to either refresh previously learned skills before a big trip or to try out new outdoor adventure activities.

Trailblazer Events

Trailblazers may be interested in outdoor adventure programs and events found locally, within their council or neighboring councils, or across the nation.

Outdoor activity interests can vary from troop to troop and for individual members; each Trailblazer troop can identify what type of activities they are interested in and then conduct research to find events that match their interest level and travel abilities.

There are several jamboree- and camporee-type events hosted by councils throughout the country that focus on outdoor skills and high-adventure activities.

A council can host events for Girl Scout Juniors, Brownies, and Daisies to introduce them to outdoor craft activities, such as outdoor cooking, knot tying, and navigation.



The Trailblazer Experience



Girl Scout Trailblazer Pin

With the release of these guidelines, GSUSA is offering a new Trailblazer pin, as a sister to the existing Mariner pin. The pin should be worn on the sash with membership pins.

To become a Trailblazer, Girl Scouts will complete the requirements for the Trailblazer pin:

- Know and recite the Girl Scout Promise;
- Know and recite the Girl Scout Law; and
- Complete the first level of three concentrations described below.



Trailblazer Concentrations

There are five suggested concentration areas for Trailblazer troops to explore. Practicing outdoor skills while working on badges, Journeys, highest awards, and Take Action projects, Girl Scouts can learn the skills they need to accomplish the steps for each concentration area listed below. Girl Scouts can focus on one concentration area or all of them. The choice is theirs!



1. Hiking: Girl Scouts may do the following steps.

- Learn about trail safety, how to choose routes that fit their abilities, and how to plan, prepare, and pack for hikes of minimal to moderate lengths and durations.
- Learn a variety of orienteering methods, including GPS, map, and compass and/or star navigation; discover different hiking styles, such as snowshoeing or backpacking; and demonstrate proper gear maintenance and storage.
- Individually, each plan and lead a hike for their troop of moderate length that includes elevation changes and varied terrain, if possible. Before the hike, they will explain trail safety, how to pack appropriately, and proper nutrition planning, and they will describe the intended route, highlighting notable conditions. They should advise their troop on how to avoid and prepare for poor conditions that may arise. They should take the lead on the hike, ensuring that there is sufficient time to rehydrate and eat, that everyone is obeying trail regulations, and that they understand the route and navigation strategy. They may choose to have a focus for the hike that includes flora and fauna identification or wind pattern and cloud identification. After the hike they should lead the group in cleaning, repairing, and properly storing all gear used and debriefing the experience.

2. Stewardship: Girl Scouts may do the following steps:

- Learn about well-known or professional environmental stewards, the principles of Leave No Trace, and primary environmental conservation needs and efforts in their area.
- Participate in a trail cleanup, an environmental demonstration, or another environmentally focused event in their area.
- Individually, each plan and lead their own outdoor/environmental/high-adventure event. They may choose to identify an environmental issue, an opportunity to showcase, or another topic of their choosing. They should create a dynamic event that engages the local community and leaders. They should share their Trailblazer experience with younger Girl Scouts to support their learning of environmental stewardship.

3. Adventure sport: Girl Scouts may do the following steps.

- Learn about safety, regulations, and gear and connect with professional or local athletes or leaders in an adventure sport of their choosing. They should compare it to two other adventure sports to consider what is similar and different about the sports. They may also consider interviewing someone who is knowledgeable in the sport. Different types of adventure sports may include rock climbing, trail running, mountain biking, snowboarding, dog sledding, and cross-country skiing.



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- Try at least two adventure sports. As a troop, Trailblazers try these sports together or separately depending on their interest levels. If possible, they should schedule group or individual lessons. The troop should debrief on their collective experiences.
 - Individually, each set a goal in an adventure sport to achieve within a year. They should develop a plan for achieving the goal that potentially includes meeting with a coach, ongoing training, and advancement of skills. Upon achieving the goal, they should host events or opportunities to introduce the sport (and Trailblazers!) to younger Girl Scouts.

4. Camping: Girl Scouts may do the following steps:

- Learn about camping styles, such as car camping, backpacking, horseback camping, and canoe camping. They will learn about gear options for two styles that they'd like to explore. They should consider how the experiences and gear vary in different seasons or climates. They should learn about camping safety and regulations, how to obtain permits, and how to locate good camping sites.
- Learn about camp kitchens and cooking methods, food safety (including keeping it safe from animals), and the best meal types for the various camping styles. They may build their own camp kitchen item and identify for which camping style(s) is appropriate. Or they may choose to learn about different camping shelter options, including tent types, maintained trail shelters, private or public cabins, pop-up trailers, natural shelters, hammocks with bug net and rain fly attachments, or conditions in which sleeping under the stars can be appropriate. They should be able to identify different styles and the intended uses for at least three important camping items, such as tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, packs, hydration containers, and footwear.
- Individually, each plan and lead at least two nights of camping (consecutive nights or separate trips) using different camping styles. They should designate duties for set up, meal prep, cleanup, and breakdown and plan and shop for all meals. Prior to the adventure, they should review safety, regulations, site selection, and forecasted weather. They may need to notify local park rangers or other authorities of their plans. After the trip, debrief and reflect on what they learned and how they want to improve their adventure next time.

5. Survivorship: Girl Scouts may do the following steps:

- Learn first aid and basic trail safety. This may include how to use natural resources as substitutes for splints, salves, food, or even shelter. They should learn about backcountry camping and interview someone knowledgeable in this activity.
- Learn about surviving in the wilderness in difficult conditions. This may include learning about local edible plants; how to prepare for exposure to extreme weather conditions, including heatstroke, hypothermia, and dehydration; how to build a natural shelter and other forms of emergency shelter; how to locate water; and ways to call for help without cell phone service.
- Individually, each plan and lead a backcountry camping trip. On this trip they may build natural shelters, try techniques for no-match fire building, demonstrate and explain proper use of emergency shelters, supplement their diets with well-researched edible plants, practice techniques for locating water sources and filtering/purifying the water; and explore natural/minimal equipment navigational techniques.

Learning by Doing

Trailblazer troops can be multipronged when it comes to learning, practicing, and mastering outdoor skills while participating in outdoor activities. As Girl Scouts are working on one or more of the Trailblazer concentration areas (listed previously), they will be developing outdoor skills and may be earning badges and highest awards or completing Journeys and Take Action projects.

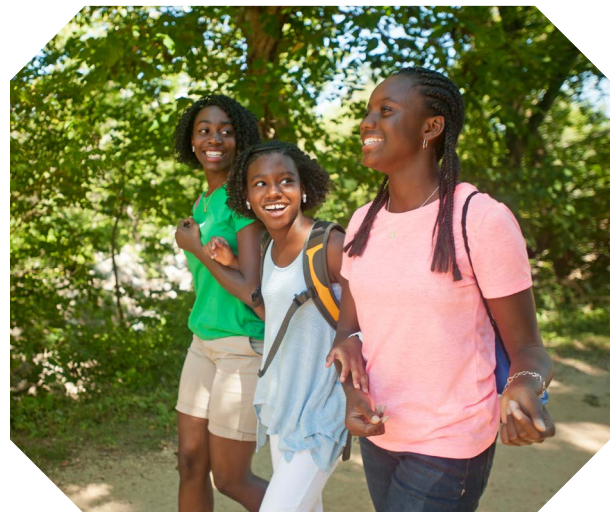
1. Trailblazer skill areas: While working on the concentration areas, Girl Scouts may be encouraged to expand their outdoor knowledge to include the content areas listed below. The concentration areas will all overlap with these skill areas depending on the interest of the troop. Troop leaders should keep in mind progression when incorporating these areas into their activities and meetings. A detailed outline of skills Girl Scouts may learn is included in Appendix B.

- Safety in the backcountry
- Outdoor gear
- Outdoor skills (includes fire building, outdoor knots and lashing, navigation, outdoor cooking and food storage, water purification, and outdoor tools)
- Outdoor adventure sports
- Environmental stewardship

2. Badges: Badges appropriate and relevant to the Trailblazer program will depend on Girl Scouts' level and the focus of the troop's programs and activities. Below is a suggested list of badges by Girl Scout grade level for Trailblazing troops to use as starting points.

Cadettes

- Badges for the Explore Out step (GSUSA Outdoor Progression Model):
 - Eco Trekker: Learn the skills for minimizing impact on the environment while planning and taking an outdoor trek.
 - Cadette Trail Adventure: Plan and learn the skills to do a long-distance trail run or take three separate challenging trail hikes.
 - Cadette Snow or Climbing Adventure: Plan, learn the skills, and experience a snowboarding or ski trip or an outdoor climbing adventure.
 - Outdoor Art Apprentice: Be inspired by the outdoors and create nature-themed art.
 - Trees: Get to the root of what trees are all about and branch out as a naturalist.
 - Night Owl: Uncover the mysteries of the world after dark.
 - Archery: Know how to take aim outdoors with archery skill.



- Badges for the Camp Out and Adventure Out steps (GSUSA Outdoor Progression Model):
 - Primitive Camper: Plan and go on a primitive camping trip with a group of Girl Scouts or family members.
 - Trailblazing: Take a safe and fun overnight backpacking trip (minimum of one night).
- Badges to include that are not directly connected to outdoors but could be through a Trailblazer's eyes:
 - STEM: Digital Movie Maker, Robotics badge series, Science of Happiness
 - Group/Community Building: Finding Common Ground, Girl Scout Way, Good Sportsmanship
 - Art: Book Artist, Comic Artist
 - Other Skills: First Aid, Public Speaker

Seniors

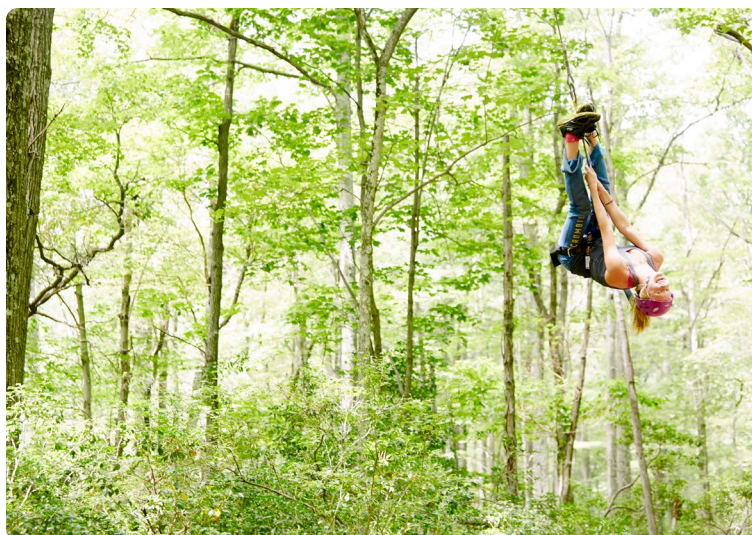
- Badges for the Explore Out step (GSUSA Outdoor Progression Model):
 - Eco Explorer: Research different environmental issues and take at least one trip to see how an area is impacted.
 - Senior Trail Adventure (Trail Running): Plan and learn the skills to compete in a trail race.
 - Outdoor Art Expert: Learn how to create art outdoors with a focus on the environment.
 - Sky: Understand the sky—from science to stars to stories.
 - Space Science Expert: Understand more about the universe—your place in it and how light is used to make discoveries about it.
 - Paddling: Learn paddling skills and know how to be safe—and have fun—on the water. (Explore Out or Camp Out).
- Badges for the Camp Out and Adventure Out Steps (GSUSA Outdoor Progression Model):
 - Adventure Camper: Plan and go on a camping trip that includes adventure activities with a group of Girl Scouts or family members—e.g., kayaking, mountain biking, rock climbing, or similar activity combined with overnight camping).
 - Paddling: Learn paddling skills and know how to be safe—and have fun—on the water. (Explore Out or Camp Out).
 - Adventurer: Go on a multiday outdoor adventure trip with friends and other Girl Scouts—e.g., rock climbing, spelunking, skiing, canoeing, or similar activity combined with overnight camping for a minimum of two nights).



- Senior Trail Adventure (hiking): Plan and learn the skills to take a three-day, two-night backpacking trip.
- Senior Snow or Climbing Adventure: Plan and learn the skills to take an overnight snow camping trip or a two-day outdoor climbing trip.
- Traveler: Plan a great trip of at least one night—whether it’s around the corner or across the globe.
- Badges to include that are not directly connected to outdoors but could be completed through a Trailblazer lens:
 - STEM: Website Designer, Robotics badge series
 - Group/Community Building: Girl Scout Way
 - Other Skills: Cross-Training, First Aid

Ambassadors

- Badges for the Explore Out Step (GSUSA Outdoor Progression Model):
 - Eco Advocate: Learn how to advocate for environmental issues concerning nature.
 - Trail Adventure (Trail Running): Plan and learn the skills to help coach another Girl Scout in trail running.
 - Outdoor Art Master: Bring art and the outdoors together and get inspired by the beauty in nature.
 - Water: Dive deep into water—from its scientific origins to the joy of splashing around.
 - Ultimate Recreation Challenge: Plan and take five outdoor adventures that challenge and transform you (Explore Out, Camp Out, and/or Adventure Out).
- Badges for the Camp Out and Adventure Out steps (GSUSA Outdoor Progression Model):
 - Survival Camper: Plan and go on a survival camping trip with a group of Girl Scouts or family members.
 - Ambassador Trail Adventure (Hiking): Plan, prepare, and complete a five-day, four-night backpacking trip.
 - Ambassador Snow or Climbing Adventure: Plan, prepare, and complete a three-day winter backpacking trip or a three-day outdoor climbing trip.
 - Ultimate Recreation Challenge: Plan and take five outdoor adventures that challenge and transform you (Explore Out, Camp Out, and/or Adventure Out).



- Badges to include that are not directly connected to outdoors but could be completed through a Trailblazer lens:

- STEM: Robotics badge series
- Group/Community Building: Girl Scout Way
- Art: Photographer
- Other Skills: First Aid, Coaching

3. Journeys: Below is a suggested list of Journeys by Girl Scout grade level for Trailblazer troops to use as starting points with their troops.



Cadette

- Outdoor Journey: badges (Night Owl, Trailblazing, Primitive Camper), Take Action project (make your favorite park, beach, or forest a better place for everyone)
- Other Journeys to consider: aMAZE!, Breathe

Seniors

- Outdoor Journey: badges (Adventurer, First Aid, and Adventure Camper), Take Action project
- Other Journeys to consider: Sow What?, MISSION: SISTERHOOD!

Ambassador

- Outdoor Journey: badges (Outdoor Art Master, Water, Survival Camper), Take Action project
- Other Journeys to consider: Your Voice, Your World, BLISS: Live It! Give It!

4. Highest awards: Working with younger Girl Scouts will help Cadettes to earn their Leader in Action and Program Aide pins, Seniors and Ambassadors to earn their Counselor in Training and Volunteer in Training pins, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors to earn their Service to Girl Scouting Bar. Girl Scout Silver and Gold Awards are the highest awards for a Girl Scout Cadette, Senior, or Ambassador. GSUSA provides explicit direction on how youth members pursue highest awards.

5. Take Action projects: Take Action projects focus on environmental stewardship and action related to the outdoors. They can include preventing litter or pollution from degrading the natural habitat, reconstructing a trail, or bringing attention to a critical environmental issue and providing a solution. Service projects may include introducing hiking skills or adventure sports to troops of younger Girl Scouts, whether in the community or at camp.

6. Career exploration: Girl Scout Trailblazers are exposed to a breadth of career opportunities related to the outdoors. Troops can visit outdoor-related facilities and hear from women who are professionals in a wide variety of outdoor careers, such as adventure filmmakers, environmental engineers, geologists, landscape architects, marine biologists, park/forest rangers, and wildlife managers. See Appendix D for more resources.

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7. **Product program:** Trailblazers participate in product program just as other troops do. See the product program bullet point in “The Foundational Girl Scout Experience, Trailblazer Style” section on page 10.
 8. **Girl Scout traditions:** Girl Scout traditions include, but are not limited to, wearing a Girl Scout uniform and saying the Promise and Law. Traditions also include singing Girl Scout songs, taking part in ceremonies such as an investiture, a bridging, a rededication, and so forth. Troops can determine what Trailblazer-specific traditions they’d like to incorporate—they might provide personalized hiking sticks to troop members after they meet certain requirements as well as specialized “accessories” for the hiking sticks after the Girl Scouts have acquired specified skills.



Appendix A: GSUSA Outdoor Progression Model

girlscouts
of central texas

Outdoor Progression

Progression allows girls to learn the skills they need to become competent in the outdoors, including how to plan and organize outdoor activities. Acknowledge a girl's mastery of an outdoor skill and invite her to challenge herself further by taking that next step up and out! Outdoor fun can be endless when girls lead.



Appendix B: Trailblazer Skill Development Areas

Safety in the Backcountry

Learn about and practice basic first-aid skills; encourage Girl Scouts to become certified in first aid.

- First-aid care: Altitude sickness, blisters, burns, chafing, chapped lips, heat exhaustion, hypothermia, insect bites, scrapes and cuts, sprained ankles
- First-aid kits: Individual first-aid kits (bandages, antiseptic wipes, individually wrapped gauze pads), group first-aid kit (supplies covered by the first aider's training)
- First-aid classes: First aid/CPR with AED, wilderness first aid (minimum age is 14 years old), wilderness first responder (minimum age is 16 years old)

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and use a variety of communication devices on their outdoor adventures. Two-way radios, cell phones, satellite phones, personal locator beacons, satellite messengers, signal mirrors

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and write risk management plans prior to their outdoor adventures.

- Contact the land management agency prior to your outdoor adventure to learn more about the area you will be in and to make them aware of your troop's plans.
- Items to include in risk management plans:
 - Full name, date of birth, and guardians of everyone on the outing.
 - Two emergency contacts for each youth member on the trip, including names and phone numbers.
 - Important medical information for anyone on your outing, such as allergies, medications, conditions, and so forth.
 - Trip itinerary, including names, addresses, and phone numbers for all locations. If you're in a campground, highlight where you plan to camp on a map.
 - If on a multiday backcountry adventure, highlight exit points along your route in case an emergency evacuation is needed.
 - Check-in times and the designated person you will be checking in with. Also come up with a plan for what to do if a check-in is missed.
 - Phone numbers and addresses for the area's emergency contacts, such as the sheriff's department, park office, fire department, nearest hospitals, and so on.

Encourage Girl Scouts to identify and plan for potential hazards/dangers prior to their outdoor adventure.

- **Animals:** Bear, mountain lions, venomous animals (snakes, spiders, bees), mosquitoes, alligators

- **Geographic features:** Water (stream crossings; rivers/lakes/ocean currents, temperatures, and depths), steep elevation climbs and drop-offs (narrow trails up steep mountain sides, overlooks), rock scrambles (dislodge rocks on those below you)
- **Weather:** Lightning (afternoon thunderstorms; rainy season), cold, heat, snow, heavy rain, avalanches, mud slides

Outdoor Gear

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about, demonstrate, and use a variety of outdoor gear.

- **Clothing:** Layering (base, middle, and outer), the functions of different materials, dressing for the weather they may encounter (heat/cold, sun/rain/snow), amount to bring based on the outdoor adventure
- **Footwear:** Hiking boots, trail runners, gaiters, socks (different weights, materials)
- **Hydration:** Water bottles, hydration reservoirs, dromedaries
- **Backpacks:** Day packs, hydration packs, hiking backpacks
- **Light sources:** Flashlights, headlamps, lanterns
- **Navigational items:** Maps, compass, GPS unit
- **First aid:** First-aid kits, hand sanitizer, communication devices, medications, inhalers, EpiPens
- **Cooking items:** Stoves (or other cooking method), lighter/matches, food (meals and snacks), pots/pans, utensils, dishwashing items, hand sanitizer
- **Camp shelters:** Tents, hammocks, tarps, bivy sacks
- **Sleeping bags:** Down and synthetic bags (noting temperature ratings, weight, and features with zippers, pockets, padding, and the like); sleeping bag liners

- Sleeping cots/pads: Sleeping cots, sleeping pads (air, self-inflating, and closed-cell foam)
- Other items: Trekking poles, camp tools (e.g., knives, hatchet), sun and bug protection
- Adventure-specific items: Dependent on adventure

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and demonstrate gear maintenance, basic repairs, and proper storage of items.

- Gear maintenance: Waterproofing (tents, rain gear, backpack covers), stove maintenance, water purification system maintenance, adventure sport-specific equipment maintenance (e.g., tuning a bike, changing bow string or cable on an archery bow)
- Gear repair: Tent (fix a zipper, patch a hole, repair a tent pole), sleeping bag (fix a zipper, patch a hole), sleeping pad (patch a hole), backpacks (fix a zipper, patch a hole, fix a buckle), stove (simple repairs based on stove type), adventure sport-specific repair (e.g., flat tire on a bike, crack in a kayak paddle)
- Gear cleaning and storage: Sleeping bags, sleeping pads, stoves and fuel, water purification systems, tents, footwear, adventure sport-specific (e.g., climbing rope, snowboard)

Outdoor Skills*

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and use a variety of fire-building techniques.

- Fire safety: Safety circle around the campfire area, matches/lighter/lighter fluid usage, water bucket, stirring stick, non-burnable items (e.g. plastics, aerosol cans, garbage, wood from certain trees), using established and non-established campfire areas, fire bans
- Wood sizes: Tinder, kindling, fuel
- Campfire types: A-frame, lean-to, teepee, log cabin, star
- Fire building without matches: Flint and steel, battery and steel wool, magnifying glass and sun, bow drill

- Fire building in inclement weather: Rain, snow, wind

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and use a variety of outdoor knots and lashing techniques.

- Knots: Square knot, slip knot, half hitch, clove hitch, figure eight, bowline, double fisherman's, trucker's hitch, water knot
- Types of lashing: Square, diagonal, sheer, round, continuous
- Lashing projects: Table, chair, clothes drying rack, water/washstand, frame for a tent

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and use a variety of navigational techniques.

- Basics: Cardinal directions using the sun and stars, trail signs/markers/cairns, basic trail maps, topographical maps, safety if lost in the backcountry
- Compasses: Parts of a compass, adjusting the compass for declination, taking and using bearings to determine your location or destination on a map (including triangulation)
- GPS: Satellites and coordinates with GPS units, basic functions of your GPS unit, setting and using waypoints, tracking your path, using a GPS while on outdoor adventures
- For more fun: Participate in an orienteering course or go geocaching to practice using your compass and/or GPS unit.

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and use a variety of outdoor cooking and food storage techniques.

- Cooking methods:
 - Fire (wood, charcoal): Stick, pie irons, foil packets, grilling, one-pot meals
 - Ovens: Dutch ovens, box ovens, reflector ovens
 - Stoves (front country): Two burner camp stoves (propane), vagabond stoves, buddy burners
 - Stoves (backcountry): Canister stoves (isobutane, propane), liquid fuel (white

gas), pros and cons of different types of stoves (e.g., the weight, boil time, igniter options, and stability of stove)

- Food options:
 - Fresh foods, dry food items, canned food, freeze-dried food (make your own, purchase premade)
 - Foraged edibles (adult with expertise in subject matter required)
- Food storage:
 - Food safety when camping with coolers (temperature, time in cooler, spoilage signs)
 - Front country: Inside vehicle, metal food lockers
 - Backcountry: Bear canisters, metal food lockers, hang food
 - Note: Food storage requirements are often outlined by the land management agency overseeing the area you're exploring.
- Cleaning methods:
 - Front country: Three-sink method (hot soapy water, warm rinse, bleach), disposal of gray water
 - Backcountry: Pack out all food scraps, use of biodegradable soap, disposal of gray water, distance from campsite, trail, and water sources

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and use a variety of water purification systems.

- Types of water purification systems: Chemical treatments (e.g., chlorine dioxide tablets, iodine tablets), water filters (e.g., pumps, bottles, squeeze, straws), water purifiers (e.g., pumps, bottles, ultraviolet light purifiers), boil
- Discussion points: What a good water source looks like, how to collect water from a water source, prefiltering if needed, what microorganisms live in water that could

make you ill (e.g., protozoa, bacteria, and viruses)

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn about and use a variety of outdoor tools.

- Types of outdoor tools: Pocketknife, multitool, saw, hatchet, ax, snow saw, snow shovel
- Discussion points: Safety, proper use, adult supervision requirements, review of basic first aid for cuts

*Note: All Trailblazer troops are required to follow Safety Activity Checkpoints along with Volunteer Essentials and council-specific safety guidelines for all outdoor activities.

Outdoor Adventure Sports*

Encourage Girl Scouts to try a variety of outdoor adventure activities.

- Water activities: Beach combing, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding, row boating, sailing, scuba diving, snorkeling, surfing, swimming, tubing, wakeboarding, water skiing, whitewater rafting, windsurfing
- Land activities: Biking (road and mountain), camping (cabin, car, primitive, backpacking, survival), climbing (bouldering, challenge courses, recreational tree climbing, rock climbing, and zip lining), geocaching, hiking, horseback riding, orienteering, spelunking, target sports (archery, shooting sports, tomahawk, knife, and hatchet throwing), trail running
- Snow activities: Cross-country skiing, dog sledding, downhill skiing, ice fishing, sledging, snowboarding, tobogganing

Encourage Girl Scouts to connect their other passions with their love for the outdoors.

- Arts (photography, painting, videography)
- Physical fitness (cardiovascular activities, strength training, yoga)

- STEM (astronomy, engineering, robotics)

Encourage Girl Scouts to combine two or more of their favorite outdoor adventure activities.

- Bikepacking (bike trips with overnight camping along the way)
- Canoe or kayak camping (canoe/kayak trips with overnight camping stops along the water)
- Orienteering races (orienteering combined with trail running)
- Yoga on paddleboards

Encourage Girl Scouts to try a variety of camping shelters with their outdoor adventures.

- Cabins, glamping, campers, tents (car camping, backpacking), hammocks, tarps, bivy sacks, sleeping under the stars
- Emergency shelters using the natural area around them (rocks, trees, ground litter, dead branches)
- Snow camping (quinzee, snow trench, and tent)

Encourage Girl Scouts to participate in Girl Scout-sponsored outdoor adventures.

- Destinations and troop treks facilitated by GSUSA.
- Outdoor adventures hosted by your council or other councils.

*Note: All Trailblazer troops are required to follow Safety Activity Checkpoints along with Volunteer Essentials and council-specific safety guidelines for all activities.

Environmental Stewardship

Encourage Girl Scouts to learn and put into practice the Leave No Trace principles.

- Leave No Trace principles are included in many outdoor-related Girl Scout badges and Journeys. Take the time to revisit them each time; repetition will form habits.

- Learn the history of environmental stewardship, including how and why the Leave No Trace principles came to be.
- Provide hands-on activities to help show Girl Scouts the impacts on the environment when Leave No Trace principles are not followed.
- Earn their environmental stewardship badges (Eco Trekker, Eco Explorer, and/or Eco Advocate).

Encourage Girl Scouts to attend programs and/or workshops focused on environmental education.

- Search online for environmental education programs that provide curriculum and training focused on flora, fauna, and all types of environments.
- Programs or workshops offered by city, county, and state natural resource departments.
- Programs or workshops offered by colleges and park and recreation departments.

Encourage Girl Scouts to discover their interests in environmental stewardship by participating in a variety of activities.

- Small-scale biological survey and/or data collection event, such as counting birds from a bird blind in a protected refuge area.
- Wildlife-, water-, and/or flora-monitoring program as citizen scientists with your county or state's natural resource entity.
- Trail maintenance or restoration projects.
- River cleanup day while learning about healthy waterways.

Encourage Girl Scouts to incorporate environmental stewardship with their favorite outdoor adventure activities.

- Backcountry camping while doing an organized trail maintenance project.
- Beach camping while doing a beach cleanup day.
- Kayak trip while collecting data for a wildlife watershed area.

Appendix C: Tips for Adults Supporting Youth in the Outdoors

Personal Hygiene in the Outdoors

Discuss personal hygiene prior to and during outdoor adventures.

- **Bodily fluids:** Urinating (pee rags versus drip drying), menstruating (tampons, pads, menstrual cups), defecating (cat hole, pack it out)
 - **Pee rag:** Opt for using a bandana to wipe urine with instead of drip drying or using toilet paper in the backcountry; tie used bandana on outside of backpack when not in use (dries this way); rinse out with water and biodegradable soap (optional) in the morning and then tie back on pack.
- **Bathroom bag:** Bag for dirty items and one for clean items, hand sanitizer, wet wipes, toilet paper, tampons/pads/menstruation cups, trowel
 - Have someone bring a few menstrual hygiene items with them regardless of where they are at in their menstruation cycles; trips and physical activity can disrupt their cycles.
- **Clothing:** Wear moisture-wicking underwear and sports bras (not cotton). Bring three pairs of underwear (one is worn, one is being cleaned, one is extra) and two sports bras (one for the trail and one for the campsite). Wash underwear on the trail with biodegradable soap and hang on pack to dry during the day.
- **Cleaning:** Use wet wipes throughout the day—after changing menstruation method, after defecating, and before bed.

Note: Volunteers should be approachable about this topic and openly discuss it. Yeast infections, bladder infections, and/or improper storage of used tampons/pads/menstruation cups do not make for a great outdoor experience. Some youth may reach out asking about tampon

usage while on a trip if they haven't used one before but would like to do so due to the nature of the activity (e.g., kayak trip).

Check-ins with the Girl Scouts

Adults are encouraged to check in with Girl Scouts one-on-one in the morning, during the day, and in the evenings to check on their mental health.

- **Sleep:** Ask about their nighttime sleep while on overnight trips, especially multnight trips. Help support them if nighttime sleep is a struggle that might be improved with ear plugs, white noise, a rest/nap period during the day, a change in sleeping arrangements, or something else.
- **Connection to the group:** Ask how they are connecting with others in the group and find out if they are having any issues. Peer relationships and knowing how they fit into their social circle are very important at this age.
- **Overall mental health:** Ask how difficult the activity is for them—are they struggling to keep up with the group and/or do they find themselves wanting to quit the activity and go home? What is motivating them to move forward? What are they enjoying most about the trip?

Adults are encouraged to check in with Girl Scouts one-on-one in the morning, during the day, and in the evenings to ascertain their physical health.

- **Chafing:** Ask if they are chafing (armpits, between the thighs, where sport bra straps and underwear waist bands sit) and assist with first-aid care to help them feel more comfortable.
- **Feet:** Check feet once a day for blisters, red spots, irritated toenails, and so forth; apply first aid as needed.
- **Bodily functions:** Ask about the frequency of their defecation. If they are menstruating, ask them if they are doing okay with

supplies and feeling clean—you don't want them holding their bodily functions for long periods of time.

- Overall physical health: Ask about how they are feeling physically (sore muscles, stiff joints, aches) and provide first aid and tips (stretches) as needed.

Adults are encouraged to do a community circle in the morning and evening with the entire group.

- Mornings: Post breakfast have the troop review the day's itinerary, share their roles for the day as leaders, navigators, chefs, activity leaders, encouragers, or other role, and do a group stretch or yoga.
- Evenings: Post dinner have the troop participate in some sort of debriefing activity where they can reflect on the day and share their highs, lows, gratitude toward someone else for their actions that day, and so forth. Adults can help facilitate these by asking open-ended questions to keep Girl Scouts sharing more than surface-level type responses. There are numerous debriefing activities found online and in teambuilding books.

Create a Safe, Encouraging Environment

Adults should help create a strong sense of community among members in a Trailblazer troop.

- The outdoors provides Girl Scouts a chance to step outside any established "labels" or "groups" they are associated with at school and to be on level footing with their peers. A strong community between members in the troop is essential for being an effective team when participating in outdoor adventures.
- Troop leaders may work with the troop to establish a code of conduct which outlines the expectations the adults have of youth members, those youth have of the adults, and those youth have of each other. It could address expected behavior, attendance, willingness to try activities, social media in-

teraction, and relationships youth have with one another within the troop. If a code of conduct is discussed, troops should revisit it frequently and hold troop members accountable.

- Troop leaders may make it a priority to provide team-building activities during the first few months the troop is together and throughout the year.

Adults should understand how their council wants them to respond if Girl Scouts discuss sensitive topics.

- Spending quality time outdoors with a group of peers can plant the seeds of lifelong friendships. Expect Girl Scouts to form tight bonds with one another and to have deep, meaningful conversations while together.
- Adults should be prepared for conversations about sexuality, self-harm, suicide, politics, financials, religion, alcohol, drugs, smoking, and so forth. These may take place during the day, but more than likely will happen around a campfire or in their sleeping areas at night.
- Adults should feel comfortable addressing these topics with Girl Scouts by following council safety guidelines. For more information, visit www.gsctx.org/safety.

Responsible Adult Reactions to the Outdoor Experience

- Adults should have a "can-do" attitude.
- Adults need to exhibit a "can-do" attitude around their troop, especially when situations are less than ideal. As a troop leader of a Trailblazer group you will need to keep a positive, optimistic mind-set and help Girl Scouts overcome obstacles in their way.
- Remember, the troop will feed off each other and you when it comes to their mind-sets and attitudes. Inclement weather, injuries, getting off route, prolonged stops along the way (such as when a kayak tips over on a river and must be rescued, emptied, and

reloaded), arguing with other Girl Scouts, and so forth can put Girl Scouts in negative mind-sets quickly.

- It could rain or be extremely hot during your entire backpacking trip—are you mentally prepared to handle that along with supporting the Girl Scouts in your troop on their adventure?

Appendix D: Resources

Career Exploration

Adventure filmmaker
Archaeologist
Architectural and engineering manager
Backpacking trip leader
Camp counselor
Conservation land manager
Conservation scientist
Environmental engineer
Environmental lawyer
Environmental science and protection technician
Environmental scientist
Environmental Farmer
Forester Geographer
Geologist or geoscientist
Landscape architect
Lifeguard
Marine biologist
Marine engineer and naval architect
Park/forest ranger
Photojournalist
Public educator and outreach specialist

River-rafting guide
Storm chaser
Urban planner
Wildlife biologist
Wildland firefighter
Wildlife educator
Wildlife inspector and forensics specialist
Wildlife law enforcement officer
Wildlife manager
Wildlife technician
Zoologist

Outdoor Organizations

The Sierra Club National Park Service—see Junior Ranger Program
United States Forest Service—see Junior Forest Ranger Program
Hike it Baby
Audubon Society
National Wildlife Federation—see Ranger Rick Program
Discover the Forest Outward Bound Diversify
Outdoors Chicago Voyagers
Greening Youth Foundation Latino Outdoors
Outdoor Afro
The Venture Out Project

