



## Scuba

**Council Approval:** Required – High Risk

**Tier 2**

**Activity Permitted For:** C S A

### About Scuba

Scuba diving is an eye-opening opportunity to experience the underwater world of sea life. Scuba is an acronym for “self-contained underwater breathing apparatus” and requires specialized equipment, most of which certified scuba-diving schools rent for lessons. Scuba diving can be done throughout the country in a variety of locations, including oceans, lakes, and rivers.

Organizations such as the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI) and the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) offer online tools to locate certified scuba instructors. Scuba diving is a challenging activity, and girls who wish to learn to scuba dive must be at least 12 years old and meet the age and health requirements set by the certifying agency.

### Learn More:

- World’s best dives for kids and teens: [Sport Diver](#)
- Family-friendly scuba dives: [The Active Times](#)

### Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities, and check out the [Handicapped SCUBA Association](#) and more information on [adaptive scuba programs](#).

### Safety Activity Checkpoints

**Ensure participants are able to swim.** Participants’ swimming abilities need to be classified and clearly identified (for instance, with colored headbands to signify beginners, advanced swimmers, etc.) at council-approved sites, or participants must 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. Ensure participants also have an understanding of the body of water they are going to dive in and aware of the type of marine life they may come across.

**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Ensure that the scuba-diving teacher holds instructional certification from Scuba Schools International (SSI), PADI, the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), or the YMCA. The instructor-to-girl ratio should be one to four.

**Verify a certified lifeguard is present.** If the scuba instructor is not also a certified lifeguard, you will need a lifeguard present. Lifeguards need current ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module, YMCA Waterfront Lifeguarding Certification, or the equivalent. You need one certified lifeguard for every 25 swimmers. The primary guard must be an adult (age 18). Secondary guards can be 16 years old.

**Select a safe diving site.** Make sure your instructor is familiar with the scuba site. Scuba trips to unknown or non-designated areas are not allowed.

**Size up scuba gear.** Communicate girls' ages, heights, and weights to instructors and equipment providers to ensure the appropriate size of scuba gear is available. Be sure that the instructor and participants check equipment before use.

**Safeguard valuables.** Don't leave personal belongings and valuables unattended in a public place. If working with a scuba-diving school or camp, inquire about the organization's storage amenities.

**Prepare for emergencies.** 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, 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.

#### **Safety and required gear:**

- When divers are waiting on a boat, participants must wear a [U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket](#) (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure they're in good condition and contain no tears.
- A wet suit or dive skin
- Air tank
- Underwater compass, depth gauge, temperature gauge, and bottom clock
- Snorkel
- Weight belt (weights help a diver descend into water)
- Floating dive flag
- Mask
- Mask defogger solution
- Fins
- Gloves

- Regulator
- Writing slate and pencil
- Lights
- At least one graspable and personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) should be immediately available for each group on the water.

These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, or your council as appropriate.