



Recreational Tree Climbing

Council Approval: Required.

Activity Permitted for: J C S A

About Recreational Tree Climbing

In recreational tree climbing, girls explore the beauty of living trees with guided facilitator support. Recreational tree climbers use ropes, harnesses, saddles, and climbing techniques to ascend into the crowns of trees and the canopies of forests. Care should be taken to keep climbers and trees safe.

Climbing may be done on branches that have at least 6 inches of living tissue. A full inspection of the health of the tree and surrounding area must be made.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

- **Choose a certified instructor.** The facilitator needs to have documented experience in leading and teaching tree climbing.
- **Emergency Action Plan (EAP).** Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) ahead of time before taking girls out for this activity. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, or sudden illness.
- **File required permits.**
- **Inspect equipment.** The instructor will inspect all equipment before each use. Equipment will be well-maintained. A use log will track wear, stress, and deterioration of gear. Outside professionals should periodically inspect all trees and equipment. A written equipment monitoring and retirement process needs to be followed.
- **Ensure the instructor climbs all routes** before participants begin.
- **Ensure only instructors clip participants** in and out of the tie-in system.
- **Ensure a process for managing safety and performing rescues** is in place.
- **Ensure helmet-only areas are clearly designated** in order to protect participants and passersby from falling debris.
- **Get a weather report.** On the morning of the activity, check a reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. Be prepared to alter the activity plan if weather conditions change. Participants must not climb when trees or gear are wet. In the event of a storm, take shelter away from all trees and other tall objects. 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.
- **Participants should receive instruction.** Instructors must describe the climb's objectives, safety procedures, and hazards to the participants.
- Climbers learn:
 - Readiness and action commands
 - Muscle warmup and stretching techniques
 - Safety procedures and site-specific hazards

Safety Gear

- Climbing equipment—such as ropes, webbing, harnesses, hardware, and helmets—designed for this purpose and appropriate for the size of the user
- Climbing helmets worn by all participants who will be more than 6 feet off the ground or on belay; helmets must be approved by the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA)
- Sturdy shoes

Leave No Trace

While climbing in natural areas, it's important to respect the environment. Read tips from the [Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics](#).

The Global Organization of Tree Climbers has an [interactive map](#) to help you find tree-climbing programs.

Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. If visiting a national park, contact the park in advance. Ask about accommodating people with disabilities.

Additional Resources:

Check out [Disabled Sports USA](#) to learn about adaptive climbing.