

The Gulf Coast is home to some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, right in our own backyard! Have fun, be safe and learn about protecting our beautiful Gulf Coast beaches by earning this badge. Complete the following five steps by doing one activity from each step. (Please check badge availability at [here](#) before beginning activities.)

### Steps

1. Be Safe!
2. Have Fun!
3. Learn about Wildlife
4. Protect the Environment
5. Watch the Weather!

### Purpose:

When I've earned this badge, I will have gained practical life skills that will help me be safe and enjoy the beautiful beaches along the Gulf Coast.

### Before you start:

- Bring an adult
- Wear sunscreen
- Check the weather forecast
- Bring water
- Adults - consult and follow Safety Activity Checkpoints

### Step 1 Be Safe!

#### CHOICES – DO AT LEAST ONE (all are recommended for safety!):

- Learn about Beach Warning Flags. What does each flag mean?
  - Double Red Flag:
  - Single Red Flag:
  - Yellow Flag:
  - Green Flag:
  - Purple Flag:
- Water Safety
  - Never swim alone. Always swim with a buddy.
  - Girl Scout groups must have a certified lifeguard present when swimming.
  - Swim within the designated areas. Don't swim near pilings, piers or platforms. Be cautious in areas between sandbars or near steep drop-offs.
  - Do not swim in areas being used by fishermen. Avoid swimming areas where schools of fish are present.
  - Beware of rip currents and undertows. Learn about rip currents and what to do if you are caught in a rip current.
- Sun Safety
  - Drink plenty of water.
  - Wear sunscreen and sunglasses to protect your skin and eyes from the sun.
  - Don't stay out too long - use a beach umbrella or tent to get out of the sun.
  - Find out the UV index for the day and learn about the dangers of UV Radiation.



## Step 2 Have Fun!

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Sand Fun
  - Build a sand castle.
  - Lie on the beach and have a friend cover your legs with sand in the shape of a mermaid tail. Take a picture of you as a mermaid!
  - Be sure to fill any holes you make so others don't trip.
- Beach Fun
  - Take a walk on the beach and collect seashells.
  - Fly a kite.
  - Play a game of beach volleyball.
  - Throw a Frisbee with a friend.
- Water Fun (obey the safety rules!)
  - Swim!
  - Float on a raft or tube.
  - Wade in the surf and look for sea creatures.

## Step 3 Learn about Wildlife

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Observe wildlife at the beach and make a list of what you see. Learn which animals may be endangered or protected at Gulf Coast beaches.
- Learn about Alabama Sea Turtles by visiting <http://www.alabamaseaturtles.com/>.
- Learn how to share the beach with turtles and how you can help protect them.
- Learn why sea oats and other dune plants are vital to the dune ecosystem.

## Step 4 Protect the Environment

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Leave No Trace. Take your trash with you when you leave. Don't forget your chairs, pails, umbrellas, and towels. Leave the beach better than you found it!
- Participate in Coastal Clean-up or have a mini-cleanup with your group.
- Research environmental issues that can affect the local beaches. For example oil rigs, building construction, and tourism.

## Step 5 Watch the Weather!

### CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Lightning at the beach can be deadly! Learn what to do if a thunderstorm or lightning is near.
- What is a waterspout? How is it different from a tornado?
- What different kinds of clouds do you see? Take a photo or draw a picture of a cloud at the beach. Clouds change to vivid colors at sunset, making it the perfect time to capture their beauty.