



Running activities safely

This module will refresh your memory on:

- What a risk assessment is.
- How to do dynamic risk assessments.
- What kinds of hazards you might come across.
- How to help run activities safely in your role as a young leader.

A quick note. There will be some references to the types of physical harm that are possible when doing different activities.

Balancing risk, fun and safety

Did you know that you assess risk all the time, without even realising it? Every time we try new things we take a risk. It's all part of getting out of our comfort zone. In guiding, we help young people do this every week, giving them the chance to feel the buzz of achieving something amazing. But safety always comes first. Even in the best planned activities, risk is still around. That's why it's so important to be prepared to prevent risks – and deal with unexpected ones that crop up. You've already done your safe space training when you became a young leader. But now it's time to become a hazard-spotting, risk-planning pro!

Risk assessments: how we make fun happen

Risk assessments are usually written tools to help explore the things that could go wrong with an activity. They help us figure out how to reduce the risk level and decide if it's too risky.



Here's an example using the game **stuck in the mud**.

Positives: Fun, gets the wiggles out, girls want to play it, doesn't need resources, can do it anywhere.

Risks: Brownies might run into walls or each other (no, really, they do this all the time) or slip, trip and fall.

In this activity, the positives outweigh the risks, so we just need to think about how to make it safer, in the easiest way possible.

Check out [this video](#) for a refresher of the definitions of risk assessment, hazards and dynamic risk assessments

Your role: As part of the leadership team, you should help with the risk assessments. You could be asked to work out the risks of an activity or take action to make an activity less risky (these are called control measures).



Now, let's dive deeper into what it takes to do a risk assessment.

Breaking risk assessments down, step-by-step

The adult leaders in your unit will [complete a risk assessment](#) for all the fun things you do in guiding: days out, residentials and unit meetings – everything. They do this using a template, and if you'd like to see it, just ask your leader to show you. You'll never need to do a risk assessment on your own. If you're asked to help with a risk assessment, all you need to do is follow these 6 simple steps.



Step 1: Spot the hazards

Think about what could cause harm to someone or something:

- First, look for the easy things – like moving traffic – and note these down.
- Then look for the less obvious ones – like bacteria or someone being upset – add these too.

**Where's the hazard (risk factor)?**

Look at a picture of a room in a place you're not familiar with. If you're stuck for inspiration, try using a famous building like the Houses of Parliament. Or, head somewhere local like your library or nearest coffee shop. Once you've chosen a space, write out all of the hazards that you can see.

**Step 2: Think about the hazards' effects**

Think about how the hazards you've spotted might affect your group:

- Could they cause a physical injury or lead to an item being damaged?

- Could there be an emotional impact, like girls getting upset?
- Could there be a cost involved? Like the unit having to pay for something unexpected?
- Could there be a reputational effect, like poor behaviour leading to the unit not being invited to future events?

Step 3: Remember the safety measures you've already got sorted

Note down all the things you've already got in place to make things safer. For example, with stuck in the mud, you always tell the girls not to run into walls and watch where they're going. They might not always listen, but you do warn them!

Step 4: Think about the risk level

This helps us to decide whether or not an activity is too risky, and it depends on two things: the likelihood of the risk turning into an incident and how bad it would be if it did. Ask yourself:

- How likely is it that each risk will become an incident? (Unlikely, likely, or very likely.)
- How bad would each of the risks be if they became incidents? (Are we talking slight harm, like bruises, more significant harm, like minor fractures, or very serious harm, which could mean multiple injuries and major fractures.)

Some risk assessment forms include a table which helps you decide whether or not you should go ahead with an activity. Others might be pre-filled to make it faster for you, but remember, always ask your leader to take a look at a risk assessment before you jump into an activity.

Step 5: Manage the risk

Once you know the level of risk, think about anything else you can do to remove, reduce or control the hazards. For example, you could move your game of stuck in the mud away from the walls.

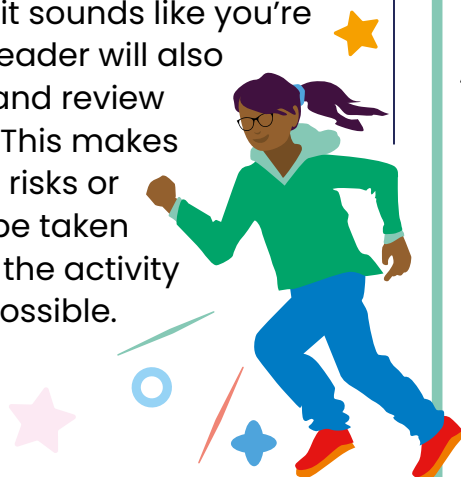
Here are some top tips from other young leaders on controlling risks:

- You can always ask the girls what they think the risk might be! If you tell them to stop running, get them to think why you've asked that.
- Think about what's in your control to change – you can't easily move the pile of chairs, but you can get the girls to move away from them.



Step 6: Decision time

Look back at the risk level now you've thought about everything, has it changed? Once you've thought about all the risks, it's up to you and the rest of the leadership team to make a call on if the activity should go ahead. Remember, we want to run challenging and exciting activities, while keeping everyone safe. If your activity ticks all these boxes, then it sounds like you're good to go! Your leader will also regularly update and review risk assessments. This makes sure that any new risks or adaptations can be taken into account, and the activity stays as safe as possible.



Dynamic risk assessments

You've done your a safe space training and covered the STAR (stop, think, act and review) method for dynamic risk assessments, but if you want to brush up on your skills, you can [check out the e-learning](#).



Dynamic risk assessment

Look at this example from Chloe, a young leader with Brownies, about a time when they needed to carry out a dynamic risk assessment.

'We have a local stream, and we usually go there at the end of term in the summer. It gets quite deep in places, and Brownies are little humans! When we arrived the water was higher than we expected it to be... Before we got in, I did a dynamic risk assessment of the water and identified where the girls can and cannot go. This made the evening, very successful, safe and wet!'

What would you have done in this scenario?



Sometimes you might feel uncomfortable taking action yourself, or you just don't know what to do. That's ok! Even though you have permission to take action to reduce risk any time you see something harmful, you don't have to handle everything alone.

Always talk to your unit leader or your young leader coordinator about risk in your unit – they can help you work out what you might do.

And remember, you rule the risks, they don't rule you!



Outstanding!

You've explored all about running activities safely. Now let's put those skills into action and have as much fun as possible. Good luck!