

Leave No Trace is an educational program that combines knowledge and judgment with ethical responsibility. It is a program designed to expand the understanding of how we can enjoy the out-of-doors while protecting the natural areas and the experiences we cherish. Your group can do its part by learning more about the program and practicing Leave No Trace whenever they recreate outdoors.

The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics offers a comprehensive program with educational tools and materials, training opportunities, workshops and much more. For more detailed information on specific practices or guidelines for different environments, contact the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics.

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GROUP USE BROCHURE



Organized outdoor groups provide training, equipment, expertise and logistical support for everyone from novices looking for an adventure to experts seeking a unique experience with the help of a guide. Group trips into the outdoors play a critical role in shaping the life-long skills and ethics of their participants. Many who enjoy spending time outside are introduced to the outdoors on a scouting trip, a church group overnight, at a summer camp, with a hiking club or through an educational trip with a school. For this reason, groups are integral to getting Leave No Trace information out to a wide and diverse audience.

However, large organized groups in the out-of-doors sometimes earn a bad reputation. Noise, crowding, trash, poor sanitation, trampling and undue impacts on the land are often blamed on large groups. Sometimes these labels are deserved; more often they are not. Current research indicates that the techniques a group uses and how it behaves in the out-of-doors are more important than its size in determining how the group will affect the land and other visitors.

This pamphlet is designed to help your group develop and adopt Leave No Trace practices that preserve both our outdoor resources and the quality of our outdoor experiences. It is intended to complement the more in-depth guidance provided by the Leave No Trace Skills & Ethics booklet series. Your success in instilling these ethics in your group will make a significant difference in the condition of the out-of-doors and the recreational experience we enjoy there. It may also prevent further regulations or group size limitations from being imposed. Make Leave No Trace part of your group's agenda and help protect the places we cherish.



PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

Remember to plan realistically. Match your group's goals and skills with your trip objectives.

Helpful hints:

- Enroll your group leaders in a Leave No Trace Master Educator course, Trainer course or Awareness Workshop prior to your outing.
- Check with local land management agencies regarding permits, group size requirements and area-specific rules and regulations before you leave for your trip.
- A group size limit of 10 means that your group never congregates in numbers greater than 10. If your group is larger than the area's group size limit, break into smaller sub-groups to travel and camp.
- Avoid the most popular and congested areas, or visit them during times when they are less crowded.
- Make sure everyone has the gear they need to stay comfortable regardless of conditions. You may need to check to ensure critical pieces of equipment—raingear, sunscreen, hat, gloves or proper footwear for example—haven't been left behind.
- Reduce trash by repackaging food and plan your meals so you don't have leftovers.
- Check with local land management agencies on recommended routes and suitable camping locations. If possible, scout the route yourself to find the best and most durable travel corridors, lunch sites and camping spots for your group.
- Bring equipment that facilitates low-impact practices: trash bags, camp stoves, trowels for digging catholes and strainers for dishwater.

Group leaders: Choosing your co-leaders can be challenging. If possible, select leaders experienced in outdoor skills, teaching and Leave No Trace practices. Ideally, you'd like to have sufficient leadership to break the group into small, independent teams to travel and camp. Check with local land management agencies to find out what the group size limits are for the areas you plan to visit.

Train your co-leaders in Leave No Trace skills and ethics and be specific about the traveling and camping techniques you will be using. Introduce the Leave No Trace principles to the entire group before you head into the out-of-doors so everyone understands what is expected of them.

TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

Durable surfaces are surfaces that show little sign of your passing. They include existing trails, established campsites, gravel, sand and dry grassy meadows. In canyon country, the best travel surface is often on slickrock or dry washes, while in the alpine zone it may be over snow or ice.

Generally speaking, with novices, the best Leave No Trace practice is to stick to trails and established campsites until they have the skills necessary to travel in pristine areas with minimal impact. Off-trail travel requires education and scrupulous attention to Leave No Trace techniques. Failure to adhere to these practices can cause lasting impacts on the environment. For these reasons, only groups skilled in Leave No Trace should venture off the beaten path.

Helpful Hints:

- Stick to well-established trails when traveling and when moving around camp. Avoid faint trails and off-trail traffic to protect plants and soils. Traveling single file near the center of the trail will avoid trail widening, particularly along muddy or rutted sections.
- Choose a site large enough for your group or divide into smaller groups and use two or three smaller established or otherwise durable sites.
- Concentrate all activities on the most durable or previously disturbed surfaces and avoid trampling plants.
- Gather as a large group only on durable surfaces.
- Explain what both durable and non-durable surfaces are to your group. Help them recognize areas sensitive to human traffic such as wetlands, riparian zones, recently thawed ground, fragile plants and cryptobiotic soils.

DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

Pack it in, pack it out. This is the primary rule for any group that goes into the outdoors for any reason. Groups have a responsibility to the resource and to those who come after them to leave the water and land free of trash and food scraps. These things often attract wildlife or otherwise alter their natural behavior with serious long-term effects. There is no ‘acceptable’ waste, not even that which is biodegradable, such as banana peels and apple cores. If your group carried it in, carry it out. If trash is found that someone else left behind, carry it out, too.

There are four primary goals behind the proper disposal of human waste in the out-of-doors:

1. Minimize the chances of water pollution
2. Minimize the chances that other people, animals or insects could come into contact with the waste and then potentially spread disease
3. Minimize any aesthetic issues associated with human waste
4. Maximize the decomposition rate

Think carefully about the maturity of your group when considering how you will dispose of human waste. With children and novices, you will need to be extremely diligent about instruction and compliance, and you may want to camp near toilet facilities, trashcans and potable water initially.

Helpful hints:

- A variety of commercial products are available for carrying out human waste. These products minimize odor, leakage and disposal problems. Talk to land management agencies or the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics about specific options.
- In most areas, catholes are another acceptable option for human waste disposal. Catholes should be 6-8 inches deep and located 200 feet (70 adult paces) from any water source or intermittent drainages. Instruct your group thoroughly on the appropriate use of catholes and carry trowels for digging.
- Pack out toilet paper in plastic bags. Baby wipes are useful for reducing odor and improving cleanliness.
- Strain dishwater to remove food scraps, pack these out with the rest of your trash. Strained dishwater can be scattered well away from camp.
- Wash dishes or bathe more than 200 feet from water sources and minimize use of soap.
- Inspect your campsite and lunch areas carefully for trash or food scraps before moving on.

LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

Young people love to build dams and stick shelters and take home turtles as pets. Adults often catch a “collecting bug” and load their packs with interesting rocks, feathers, seashells, flowers, potshards and arrowheads. In the outdoors, these activities change the aesthetics of a site and generally have a lasting impact on the ecology and the cultural or historical record. Consider the cumulative impact if everyone took home a memento.

Help your group recognize the magic of unaltered nature. Keep people active so they don’t get bored and start elaborate construction projects. Inspect your campsite before you leave and do your best to restore the site.

Helpful Hints:

- Make sure all members of your group know the law. In many places, collecting—everything from fossils to wild plants—is illegal.
- Before you approach a cultural or historic site, sit down with your group and tell them the story of the site. Help them recognize its value and the need to leave it untouched so it can be enjoyed by others in the future.
- Supervise your group around sensitive plants, animals or cultural sites. A crushed plant or collapsed wall can happen very quickly with energetic youth, no matter how well meaning they are.

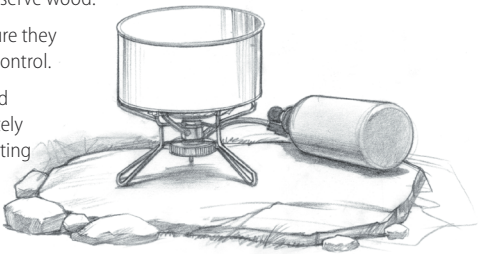


MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

Fires have their role. Many groups bond by telling stories, roasting marshmallows, or just hanging out around a campfire, but campfires have been over used in many places. It’s easy to find campfire pits overflowing with charcoal and trash, damaged trees and areas stripped of wood. Use this information to reinforce the use of minimum-impact fires or to encourage your group to forgo fires altogether.

Helpful Hints:

- Carry and use stoves.
- Substitute candle lanterns for campfires or enjoy the nighttime without any artificial lighting.
- Make sure your fire site is durable, especially if it’s to serve as a gathering area.
- Consider bringing your own firewood or, if allowed, collect only dead and downed wood that can be broken by hand.
- Keep campfires small and burn them for a short time to conserve wood.
- Tend fires to ensure they don’t get out of control.
- Burn all wood and charcoal completely to ash before putting the fire out.



RESPECT WILDLIFE

Helping wildlife stay wild is an important Leave No Trace concept. Wildlife around the world face threats from loss and fragmentation of habitat, invasive species, pollution, over-exploitation, poaching and disease. Protected lands offer a refuge from some, but not all, of these problems. Consequently, wildlife need recreationists who will promote their survival rather than add to the difficulties they already face.

Helpful hints:

- Investigate wildlife concerns prior to your trip. Carry the equipment you need to store your food out of reach of animals. This may require bear canisters, ropes for hanging food, or simple plastic food containers to keep rodents away.
- Don’t disturb animals, especially during mating or birthing season. If you see their behavior change due to your presence, you are too close. Change your travel path, move away and lower your voice.
- Observe animals from a distance. Carry binoculars, a telephoto camera lens or a spotting scope to enhance your viewing.
- Pick up all food scraps, even tiny crumbs, and pack them out with your garbage so animals don’t come to associate humans with food.
- Supervise youth around wildlife. Educate them about the rationale for not chasing, disturbing, feeding or getting too close to animals. Get group members excited about observing animals without disturbing them.



BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS

One of the primary arguments land managers use for limiting group size is that large groups have profound social impacts on other visitors. This impact can be mitigated by behavior. A courteous, well-behaved group can do wonders to minimize the potential negative issues associated with large groups.

Helpful Hints:

- Be aware and considerate of others. Move off the trail to a durable surface for breaks or to allow faster travelers to pass.
- Advise group members that voices carry long distances and that many visitors attach great importance to finding solitude.
- Break into smaller groups for travel. Camp and meet in larger groups only in locations out-of-sight and earshot from other visitors. Avoid camping in large groups near shelters and other popular camping spots. Save those areas for individuals, pairs or smaller groups.
- Remember, a group size limit of 10 means that your group never congregates in numbers greater than 10. If your group is larger than the area’s group size limit, break into smaller sub-groups to travel and camp.
- Visit and enjoy, but don’t monopolize, water sources, viewpoints or other areas of interest.