

The Handbook of the Wild

Human Waste Disposal Protocols

A technical guide to the most common, yet least discussed, challenge in the outdoors.

What **concerns novice hikers** more than **bears or blisters**? The question of "**How do I go?**" Rest assured, humans have been doing this for millennia. This guide transforms awkward anxiety into logical, Leave No Trace (LNT) methodology. **Read this before you pack.**

The Golden Rule: Keep the Wild Wild

The Philosophy of Leave No Trace



The Biological Whys



Why can't I just go anywhere?



- ⚠️ **Goats Crave Salt:** In alpine areas, urine on vegetation attracts mountain goats. They crave the salt and will dig up fragile plants to get to it.
- **Decomposition Speed:** Soil health determines how fast waste breaks down. High elevation = slow decomposition.
- ⚠️ **Water Safety:** Unfiltered water sources must remain uncontaminated for wildlife and hikers alike.

The Essential Sanitation Toolkit

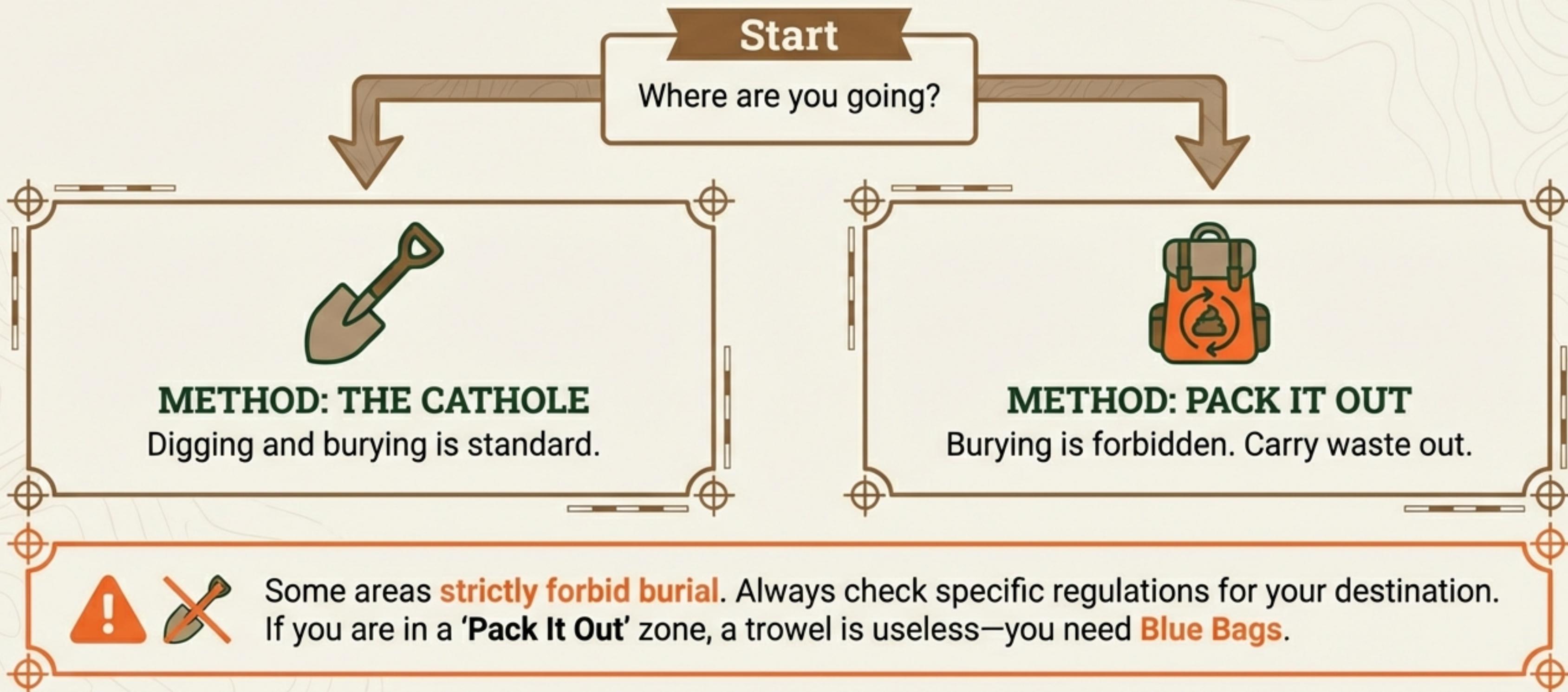


“You wouldn’t hike without boots. Don’t go without a trowel.”



Safety Orange

Know Your Zone: The Regulatory Check



Liquid Waste: Location Relative to Ecosystem



Forests (The General Rule)

200 Feet Away

Move 70 steps away from any water source (ponds, streams, lakes).



Large Rivers (The Exception)

Go in the Water

For rafting groups on high-volume rivers, Leave No Trace recommends peeing directly into the river. Dilution prevents campsite soil saturation.



Alpine Zone

The Rock Surface

Pee on durable rock surfaces, not plants. This prevents goats from destroying vegetation to get the salt.

Mechanics and Privacy for Liquid Waste

The Technique



Avoid Splash-back: Find soft earth or pine needles which absorb liquid quickly.

Orientation: If on a slope, face downhill so the stream runs away from your feet.

Stance: A wide stance aids balance. Ensure straps and boot laces are tucked away.

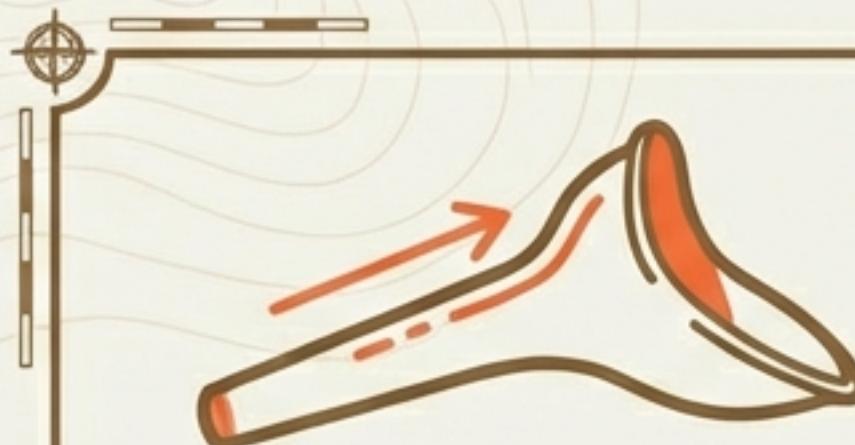
Privacy Hacks



The Sarong: A lightweight towel or hiking skirt allows you to squat with privacy in open areas.

The Lookout: A hiking partner can stand guard on the trail to warn of approaching hikers.

Advanced Liquid Gear: Funnels and Bottles



The Pee Funnel (Stand-to-Pee Device)

Useful in cold/rainy weather or non-private alpine areas.

Pro Tip: Practice at home first (the shower is a great training ground). Carry it in a rinse-able plastic bag.



The Tent Bottle

To avoid exiting the tent in the cold of night. Use a

distinguishable bottle (different from your drinking water!). **Seal tight**, place outside vestibule, dump 200 feet away in the morning.



The Pee Rag

Replaces TP for liquid waste. A bandana tied to the outside of the pack to **UV sterilize/dry**. Wash when possible.

THE ART OF NUMBER TWO

Solid Waste Disposal

This is the core technical skill of backcountry hygiene. It requires site selection, excavation, and proper biology management. The goal is to maximize decomposition and minimize social impact.



Selection

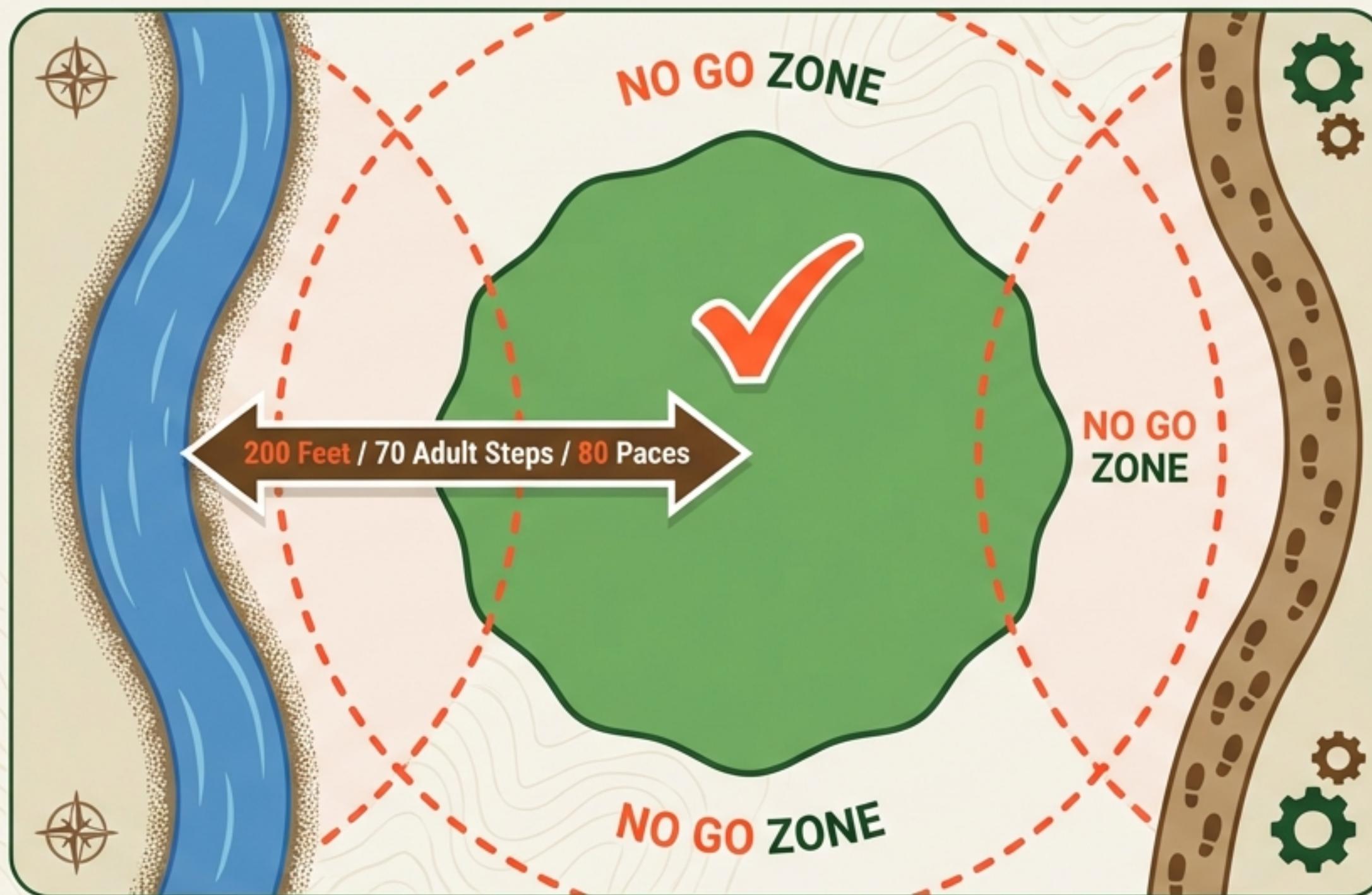


Excavation



Cover & Camouflage

Step 1: Site Selection & The 200-Foot Rule

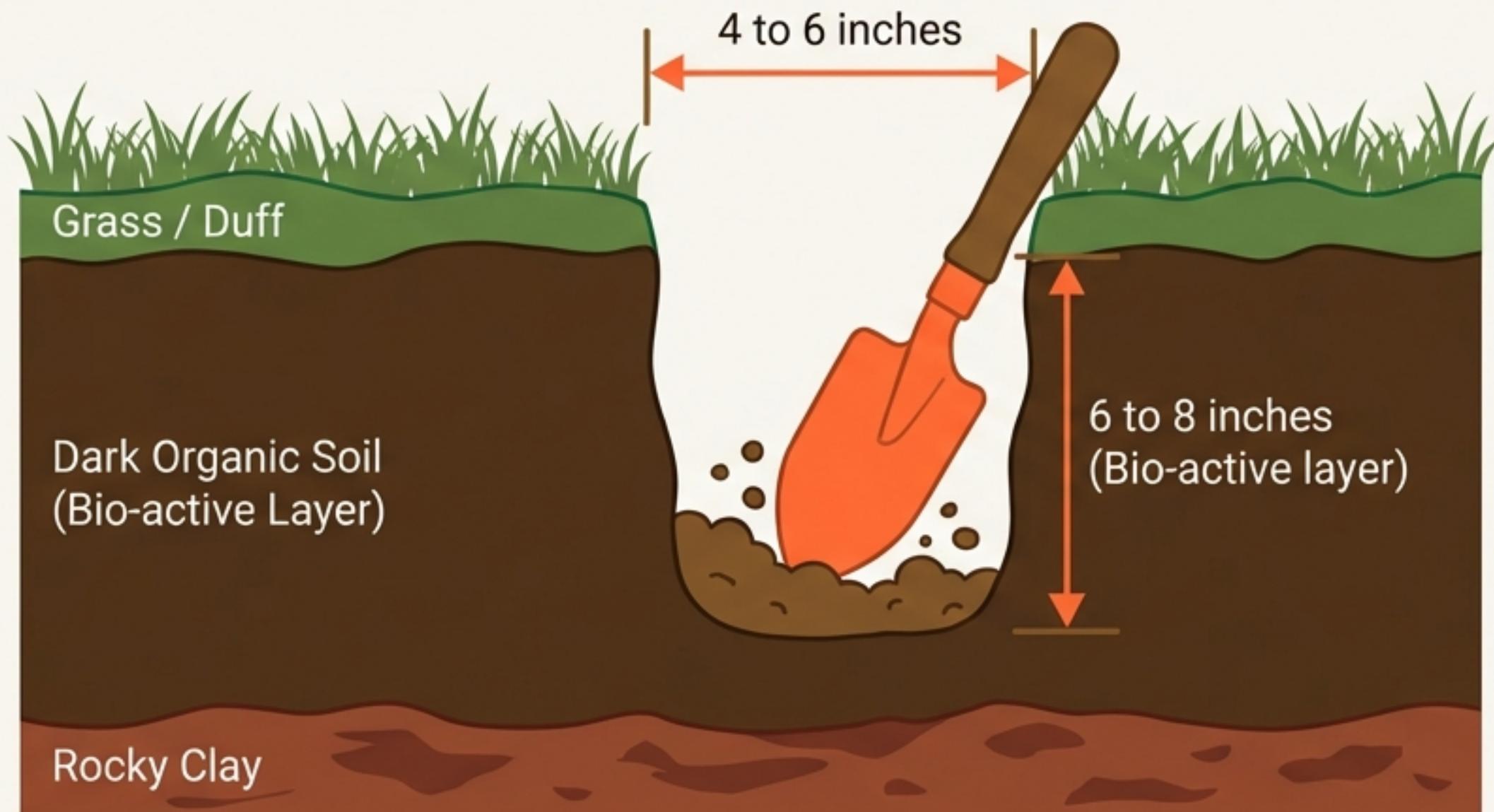


Criteria for the Perfect Spot

- **Distance:** At least 200 feet from water, trails, and campsites.
- **Soil:** Rich, organic, loose soil decomposes waste faster.
- **Sunlight:** A sunny spot speeds up decomposition (heat aids bacteria).
- **Privacy:** Underbrush is good, but ensure you can find your way back.
- **Novelty:** Do not go to the same place twice; disperse activity.



Step 2: Excavation – Anatomy of a Cathole



Tool Usage & Contingencies

Tool Usage: Use a camp trowel, a stick, a rock, or a boot heel.

⚠ The Hard Ground

Contingency: If the ground is too rocky to dig, lift a rock and use the surface underneath, then replace the rock. **(Or, better yet, pack it out).**

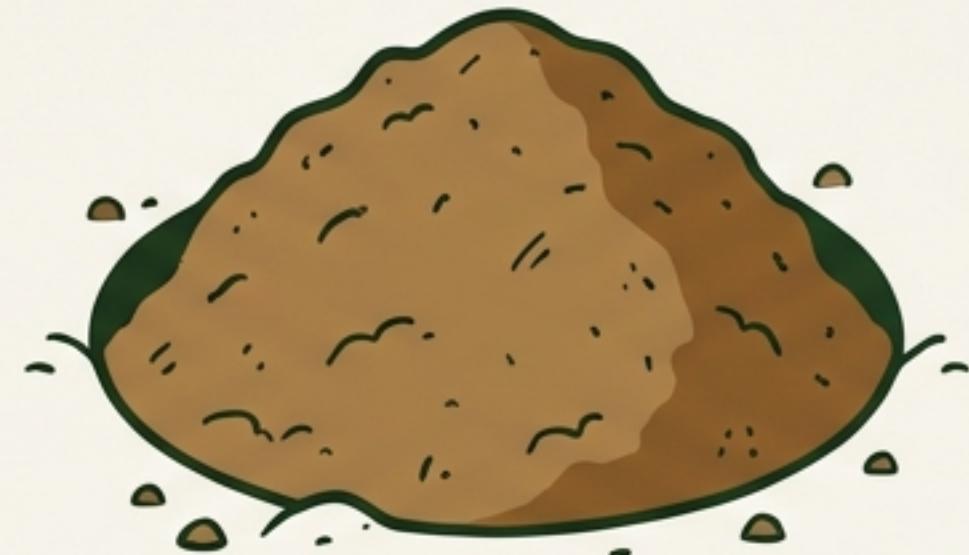


Step 3: Stir, Fill, and Camouflage



1. Stir

Use a stick to mix the waste with a little soil. This kickstarts the decomposition process by increasing contact with bacteria.



2. Fill

Fill the cathole with the original dirt you dug out.



3. Tamp & Hide

Tamp it down. Disguise with leaves or a rock. Place an upright stick in the disturbed earth to signal: "Do not dig here".



The Toilet Paper Protocol

Burial (Old School)



Only where permitted. Use as little as possible. Must be buried deep (bottom of 6-8 inches). Do not burn (wildfire risk).

Pack It Out (Gold Standard)



Places where burying TP is allowed are becoming scarce. Animals often dig it up. Best practice: Place used TP in a sealable bag and carry it out.

Natural Alternatives: Large leaves (check for poison ivy!), smooth stones, or snowballs.



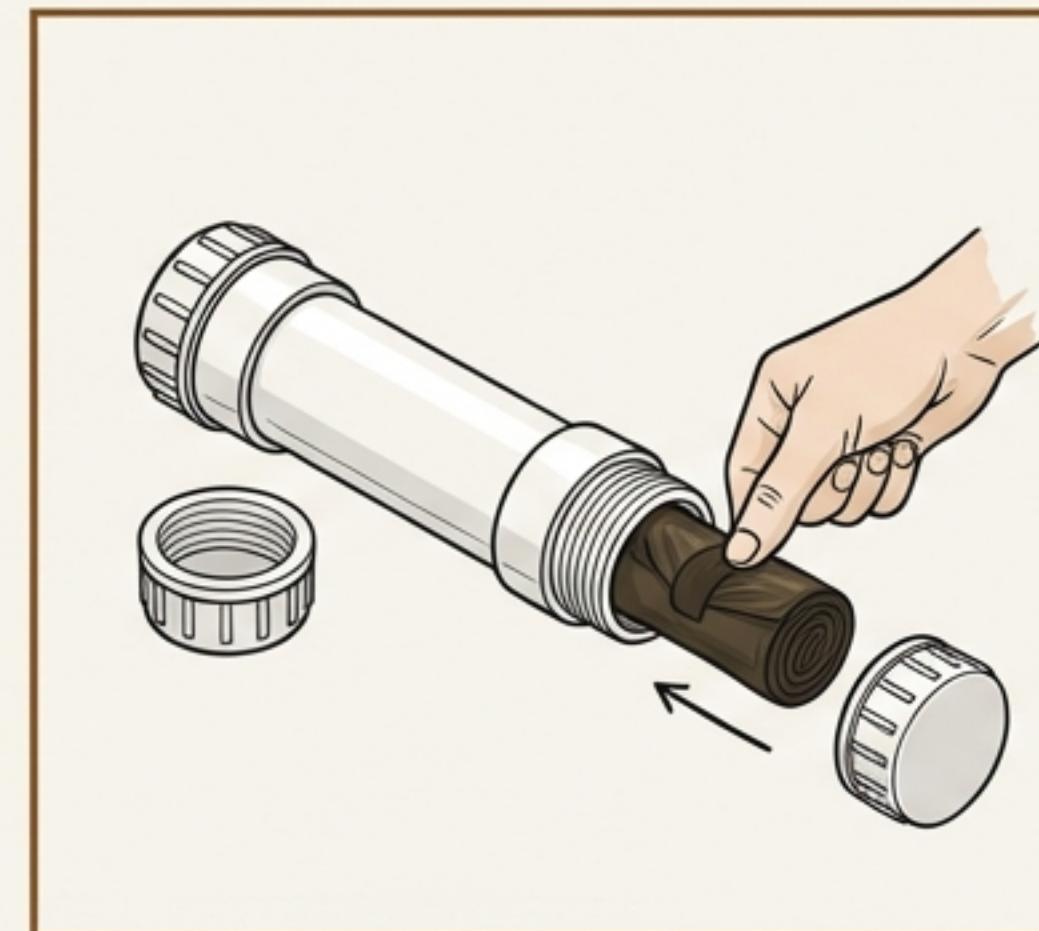
How to Pack It Out (Without the "Yuck" Factor)

The Double Bag



A sturdy and accessible method using readily available materials.

The Poop Tube



Rigid tube prevents crushing and odors inside backpack.

The Blue Bag System



Commercial kits with gelling agents. Mandatory in many National Parks.



The Contamination Circle



The Sanitizer Rule !

1. Carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Use it vigorously immediately after finishing.
3. Use it again before handling any food.
4. Rubbing action is just as important as the chemical action.



Washing Up: Protect the Water Source



Hazard Check: Leaves of Three, Let It Be



Poison Ivy - Three
glossy leaflets



Poison Oak - Lobed leaves,
groups of three

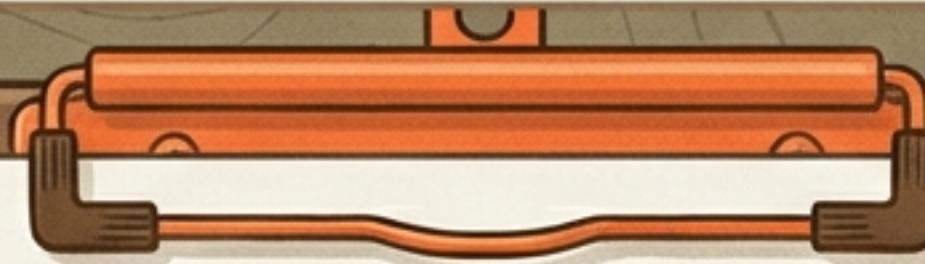


Poison Sumac - 7-13
leaflets, red stems

WARNING: If you choose to use natural objects for hygiene, you **MUST** identify these plants first. Using these will end your trip immediately.

Do not drop wet wipes or menstrual products in a cathole. These **MUST** be packed out.

The “Go-Bag” Checklist



GO-BAG ESSENTIALS

- Trowel** (Lightweight, sturdy)
- Toilet Paper** (In a dry bag)
- Waste Bags** (Blue bags or Ziplocs)
- Hand Sanitizer** (Full bottle)
- Regulations Checked** (Cathole vs. Pack-Out?)
- Metric Memorized** (200 Feet / 70 Steps)

Nature calls. Answer responsibly.