

# The Leave No Trace Seven Principles

## For Adults

### 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

Proper trip planning and preparation helps hikers and campers accomplish trip goals safely and enjoyably while minimizing damage to natural and cultural resources. Campers who plan ahead can avoid unexpected situations, and minimize their impact by complying with area regulations such as observing limitations on group size. Schedule your trek to avoid times of high use. Obtain permits or permission to use the area for your trek.

Proper planning ensures

- Low-risk adventures because campers obtained information concerning geography and weather and prepared accordingly
- Properly located campsites because campers allotted enough time to reach their destination
- Appropriate campfires and minimal trash because of careful meal planning and food repackaging and proper equipment
- Comfortable and fun camping and hiking experiences because the outing matches the skill level of the participants

## For Kids

### 1. Know Before You Go

(point to your head, then straight ahead)

Be prepared! Bring clothes to protect you from cold, heat, or rain. Use maps to show you where you'll be going so you won't get lost. Learn about the areas you visit. Read books and talk to people before you go. The more you know, the more fun you'll have.



- Bring the Six/Scout Essentials
  - ▶ Water Bottle
  - ▶ Trail food
  - ▶ Sun protection (hat, sunscreen, sunglasses)
  - ▶ Whistle
  - ▶ Flashlight
  - ▶ First-Aid Kit

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- ▶ Map and Compass
- ▶ Extra clothing
- ▶ Matches and Fire Starters (*if have Firem'n Chit*)
- ▶ Pocketknife (*If did Knife Safety*)
- ▶ Rain gear
- Wear weather appropriate clothes and shoes
- Be prepared! Know what to do if you get lost - S. A. W. and S. T. O. P.! (see separate information page)
- Look at the map beforehand

## 2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Damage to land occurs when visitors trample vegetation or communities of organisms beyond recovery. The resulting barren areas develop into undesirable trails, campsites, and soil erosion.

### Concentrate Activity, or Spread Out?

- In high-use areas, campers should concentrate their activities where vegetation is already absent. Minimize resource damage by using existing trails and selecting designated or existing campsites. Keep campsites small by arranging tents in close proximity.
- In more remote, less-traveled areas, campers should generally spread out. When hiking, take different paths to avoid creating new trails that cause erosion. When camping, disperse tents and cooking activities and move camp daily to avoid creating permanent-looking campsites. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning to show. Always choose the most durable surfaces available: rock, gravel, sand, compacted soil, dry grasses, or snow.

These guidelines apply to most alpine settings and may be different for other areas, such as deserts. Learn the Leave No Trace techniques for your crew's specific activity or destination. Check with land managers to be sure of the proper technique.

## 2. Choose the Right Path (walk two fingers down your arm)



Stay on the main trail to protect nature and keep from wandering off by yourself. Steer clear of flowers or small trees. Use existing camp areas - camp at least 100 big steps from roads, trails, and water.

- What are the durable surfaces that “right paths” consist of?
  - ▶ *Established trails, campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses, snow*
- If there is mud on the trail, what do we do?
  - ▶ *Go through it!*



### 3. Dispose of Waste Properly

This principle reminds back-country visitors to take their trash home with them. It makes sense to carry out of the backcountry the extra materials taken there by your group or others. Inspect your campsite for trash or spilled foods. Accept the challenge of packing out all trash, leftover food, and litter.

#### Sanitation

Backcountry users create body waste and wastewater that require proper disposal.

**Wastewater.** Help prevent contamination of natural water sources: After straining food particles, properly dispose of dishwater by dispersing at least 200 feet (about 80 to 100 strides for a youth) from springs, streams, and lakes. Use biodegradable soap 200 feet or more from any water source.

**Human Waste.** Proper human waste disposal helps prevent the spread of disease and exposure to others. Catholes 6 to 8 inches deep in humus and 200 feet from water, trails, and campsites are often the easiest and most practical way to dispose of feces.

### 3. Trash Your Trash (use three fingers to “shovel” dirt over your shoulder)

Pack it in, pack it out. Put litter, even crumbs, in trash cans or carry it home. Use bathrooms or outhouses when available. If you have to “go”, act like a cat and bury poop in a small hole 6-8 inches deep and 100 big steps from water. Place your toilet paper in a plastic bag and put the bag in a garbage can back home. Keep water clean. Keep soap, food, and poop out of lakes and streams.

## 4. Leave What You Find

Allow others a sense of discovery, and preserve the past. Leave rocks, plants, animals, archaeological artifacts, and other objects as you find them. Examine but do not touch cultural or historical structures and artifacts. It may be illegal to remove artifacts.

### Minimize Site Alterations

Do not dig tent trenches or build lean-tos, tables, or chairs. Never hammer nails into trees, hack at trees with hatchets or saws, or damage bark and roots by tying horses to trees for extended periods. Replace surface rocks or twigs that you cleared from the campsite. On high-impact sites, clean the area and dismantle inappropriate user-built facilities such as multiple fire rings and log seats or tables.

Good campsites are found, not made. Avoid altering a site, digging trenches, or building structures.



## 4. Leave What You Find

(make a camera with your thumbs and forefingers)

Leave plants, rocks, and historical items as you find them so that the next person can enjoy them. Treat living plants with respect. Hacking or peeling plants can kill them. Good campsites are found, not made. Avoid digging trenches or building structures in your campsite.

## 5. Minimize Campfire Impacts

Some people would not think of camping without a campfire. Yet the naturalness of many areas has been degraded by overuse of fires and increasing demand for firewood.

Lightweight camp stoves make low-impact camping possible by encouraging a shift away from fires. Stoves are fast, eliminate the need for firewood, and make cleanup after meals easier. After dinner, enjoy a candle lantern instead of a fire.

If you build a fire, the most important consideration is the potential for resource damage. Whenever possible, use an existing campfire ring in a well-placed campsite. Choose not to have a fire in areas where wood is scarce—at higher elevations, in heavily used areas with a limited wood supply, or in desert settings.

True Leave No Trace fires are small. Use dead and downed wood that can be broken easily by hand. When possible, burn all wood to ash and remove all unburned trash and food from the fire ring. If a site has two or more fire rings, you may dismantle all but one and scatter the materials in the surrounding area. Be certain all wood and campfire debris is dead out.

## 5. Be Careful with Fire

(wiggle five fingers with one hand. Use your other hand to make a firepit) *“Sparks”*



Use a camp stove for cooking. It's easier to cook on and clean up than a fire. Be sure it's ok to build a campfire in the area you're visiting. Use an existing fire ring to protect the ground from heat. Keep your fire small. Remember, campfires aren't for trash or food. Avoid snapping branches off live, dead, or downed trees. Instead, collect loose sticks from the ground. Burn all wood to ash and be sure that the fire is completely out and cold before you leave.

## 6. Respect Wildlife (same for both) (use three fingers on each hand to make ears or antlers)

**Adults:** Quick movements and loud noises are stressful to animals. Considerate campers practice these safety methods:

- Observe wildlife from afar to avoid disturbing them.
- Give animals a wide berth, especially during breeding, nesting, and birthing seasons.
- Store food securely and keep garbage and food scraps away from animals so they will not acquire bad habits. Never feed wildlife. Help keep wildlife wild.

You are too close if an animal alters its normal activities.

**Kids:** Observe animals from a distance and never approach, feed, or follow them. Human food is unhealthy for all animals and feeding them starts bad habits. Protect wildlife and your food by storing your meals and trash. Control pets at all times or leave them at home.



## 7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Thoughtful campers respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.

- Travel and camp in small groups (no more than the group size prescribed by land managers).
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Keep the noise down and leave radios, tape players, and pets at home.
- Select campsites away from other groups to help preserve their solitude.
- Always travel and camp quietly to avoid disturbing other visitors.
- Make sure the colors of clothing and gear blend with the environment.
- Respect private property and leave gates (open or closed) as found.

Be considerate of other campers and respect their privacy.

## 7. Be Kind to Others (peace sign with one hand and wave with the other)

Make sure that the fun you have in the outdoors does not bother anyone else. Remember that others are there to enjoy the outdoors. Listen to nature. Avoid making loud noises or yelling. You will see more animals if you are quiet.

- Know your right of way. Keep to the right. Check signs on the path and follow their directions.
- Uphill has right of way. If it's a flat area, be the first to step aside and give space for others to pass.
- Bicyclists yield to walkers/hikers.
- Be mindful of the plants or animals that are near the trail if you must step off the trail.
- Make yourself known. When you encounter other people, offer a friendly "hello." This helps create a friendly atmosphere on the path. If you approach another walker from behind, announce yourself in a friendly, calm tone and let them know you want to pass.
- Take time to listen. Be respectful of both nature and the other users and keep the noise from electronic devices off.
- Be aware of your surroundings. It will help keep you and any members of your group safe. Know the rules for walking on your trail or path.

