



## Discovering the Leave No Trace Principles

**Group Size:** 6 or more

**Age Group:** 7 or older

**Time:** 45-60 minutes

**Materials:** Flip chart & markers

Leave No Trace Kids plastic reference cards (1 per participant, not required)

Various pieces of outdoor gear (see activity).

### Preparation

- Dress as if you just returned from a day hike
- Set up a flip chart with a blank page and another with the Leave No Trace Seven Principles as backup
- Place trash items (wrappers, orange peels, etc.) in a plastic bag

### Introduction (3–5 minutes)

**Introduce** yourself and welcome participants to the PEAK program. **Ask** how many have been hiking, camping, fishing, boating or on a picnic? **Ask** participants if they have a favorite place they visit and why. **Ask** who knows how to Leave No Trace while outdoors? **Explain** that Leave No Trace is information and skills that help people protect themselves and also the areas that they visit (e.g. state parks, campgrounds, etc.). Leave No Trace is about making good decisions to protect the world around you—the world we all enjoy. **Read** each Principle.

### The Discussion/Activity (30 minutes)

- **Start** by removing your outer garments (jacket, gloves, hat, etc.). Let them know that before you left, you checked the weather conditions and made sure you had proper clothing. You also brought a map of the trail, which you reviewed last night when you planned your routes. Ask if participants have any other suggestions on how to plan for an outdoor activity. All these activities illustrate the first Principle. **Write** the Principle on the flip chart "**Know Before You Go.**"
- **Remove** your boots and brush off any "mud" from them. **Explain** that while you were out, you encountered some muddy parts of the trail. It's important to stick to the trail even if it's muddy. **Ask** participants why this is important. (Answer: Otherwise you may make the trail wider and possibly damage plants). By doing this, you "**Choose the Right Path.**" **Write** this Principle on the flip chart.
- **Empty** your pockets and pull out the trash. **Explain** that this is your trash from the day and that you always carry a plastic bag with you to carry out your trash. **Ask** what types of trash they've carried out before. **Write** this principle on the flip chart "**Trash Your Trash.**"

### Now Begin to Unpack the Daypack

- **Remove** your essentials (compass, maps, sunscreen, hat, etc.). Explain that these are all part of the "**Know Before You Go**" Principle, which you already discussed.
- **Optional** (for older kids). **Remove** the trowel and toilet paper. Tell them that you always look for an outhouse or port-a-potty at the trailhead, but sometimes while hiking you need to "act like a cat" and dig a hole. This also helps to "**Trash Your Trash.**"





- **Tell** them how great the views were—perhaps the fall colors were really pretty or some new spring wildflowers were just popping up. However, you know you shouldn't take the leaves or flowers, so you brought along a camera, (**pull** camera out). Even if you don't bring a camera, it's best to always "**Leave What You Find.**" **Write** this Principle on chart. **Have** the participants offer suggestions on why this is important—(some good answers: animals might use sticks, leaves or rocks for their homes, or so the next person might also enjoy).
- **Remove** the stove—explain that you would use it to cook a meal instead of making a campfire. An improper campfire can be dangerous, scar rocks, or kill plants and trees. It's never a good idea to burn your trash or food when you're camping—in other words, "**Be Careful with Fire.**" **Write** this Principle on the flip chart. **Ask** why you wouldn't burn food or trash. (Trash doesn't always burn and may attract wildlife to human food.)
- **Pull** out the binoculars. Today you saw some really cool wildlife (e.g. a doe with her fawn) in a nearby meadow. You didn't want to disturb or frighten them so you stayed back and used the binoculars to get a better look. And, although you encountered some hungry chipmunks along the way you didn't feed them. **Ask** why not. (Human food is unhealthy for animals; it also changes the way they find food naturally.) By doing these things you "**Respect Wildlife.**" **Write** this Principle on flipchart.



## Now the Backpack Should be Empty

**Describe** some of the different trail users—mountain bikers, people riding horses, other hikers. You always do your best to "**Be Kind to Other Visitors.**" **Write** this Principle on chart. This means that you or your actions shouldn't disturb, hurt or annoy anyone else. You didn't yell to your buddy, or make loud noises. When sharing trails with horses, you stepped to one side of the trail and said hello to the rider in a quiet voice. **Ask** participants why you did this (It gave the horse and rider room to pass. By speaking quietly, you didn't spook the horse).

## Wrap Up (3–5 minutes)

**Explain** how these Leave No Trace Seven Principles teach people to care for the environment while enjoying outdoor activities. Recreation can sometimes cause impacts (damage) to the land, but by following these Principles, we can enjoy our favorite places every time we visit. **Point** to the flip chart and **read** the Principles again. **Hand** out a small reference card to each participant. **Tell** them to keep these cards, and **use** them as a reminder of how they can enjoy outdoor activities more wisely. **Ask** for any last questions. Thank them for their time and attention, and tell them you hope to see them again!

