

Watch Your Step

- Group Size:** Any size
Age Group: 6 to 12 years
Time: 20-45 minutes
Objective: To understand why we want to “Choose the Right Path” when enjoying the outdoors. To help students understand that living organisms can be found everywhere.
Materials: Pre-made flip chart
Paper and pencil for each pair or group of three.
Several pieces of rope or string (6-10 feet long) to make individual loops.



Preparation

Set up a flip chart with the Leave No Trace Seven Principles

Introduction (5 minutes)

Introduce yourself and welcome participants to the PEAK program. **Ask** how many participants 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. trails, parks, forests, campgrounds, rivers, national parks 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 (15–25 minutes)

Explain that you’d like to play a game that will focus on the Leave No Trace Principle “Choose the Right Path.” Gather the group in a “natural” outdoor location that appears to have a good number of visible living organisms such as grass, insects, etc. Split the group into pairs or groups of three and give each group a piece of rope or string. Instruct them to find a spot that would look good for camping or hiking, and then place the loop of rope or string on the ground. (**Teaching tip:** For younger groups, identify their spot for them.) Check and make sure each group has made a full circle with their loop. Give each pair or group a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.

The **goal** is to count and identify the number of living plants and animals participants can find within the rope. The identification can be as simple as a plant with four leaves, or a black beetle, or a strand of grass, etc. Each group should have a scribe to write down (or for younger groups, draw a picture of) the number and identifications for each group. **Encourage** the students to get low to the ground to see everything inside of the rope circle. Allow 5-15 minutes and reconvene when the time is up.

Discuss each group’s findings. **Explain** that we want to be careful about where we put our foot or our tent and to choose the places that have fewer organisms. Traveling and camping on areas with less organisms causes less impact. These locations are likely to be established trails and campsites. Relate this discussion back to the Leave No Trace Principle “Choose the Right Path” on your flip chart.

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Explain how the 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!