



Bureau of Land Management
Environmental Education
Homepage



Teaching Leave No Trace

Principle #1: Plan Ahead and Prepare.

Adequate trip planning and preparation helps backcountry travelers accomplish trip goals safely and enjoyably, while simultaneously minimizing damage to the land.

Pre-Trip Planning

Poor planning often results in miserable campers and damage to natural and cultural resources. Rangers often tell stories of campers they have encountered who, because of poor planning and unexpected conditions, degrade backcountry resources and put themselves at



risk.

Why is Trip Planning Important? You may want to add additional answers to this list:

- It helps ensure the safety of groups and individuals.
- It prepares you to Leave No Trace and minimizes resource damage.
- It contributes to accomplishing trip goals safely and enjoyably.
- It increases self-confidence and opportunities for learning more about nature.

Seven Elements to Consider When Planning a Trip

1. Identify and record the goals (expectations) of your trip.
2. Identify the skill and ability of trip participants.
3. Select destinations that match your goals, skills, and abilities
4. Gain knowledge of the area you plan to visit from land managers, maps, and literature.
5. Choose equipment and clothing for comfort, safety, and Leave No Trace qualities.
6. Plan trip activities to match your goals, skills, and abilities.
7. Evaluate your trip upon return note changes you will make next time.

Other Elements to Consider When Planning a Trip. You may want to add your own ideas to this list:

- weather
- terrain
- regulations/restrictions
- private land boundaries
- average hiking speed of group n anticipated food consumption (leftovers create waste which leaves a trace!)
- group size (does it meet regulations, trip purpose and Leave No Trace criteria?)
- all Leave No Trace principles

Meal Planning: Meals are another element to trip planning that can have a profound effect on the impact a group has on a backcountry area.

Benefits of Good Meal Planning:

- Reduced trash.
- Reduced pack weight, resulting in faster hiking times and less fatigue.
- Reduced dependence upon campfires for cooking.

What are Some Examples of the Results of Poor Trip Planning?



- A group that is inexperienced or unfamiliar with the geography of an area may put people at risk by traveling through areas susceptible to flash floods or along ridge tops vulnerable to lightning activity. Groups traveling arid lands often fail to carry adequate water or a way of purifying water from natural sources. Checking with local land managers and studying maps and weather conditions can contribute to a low-risk existence.
- A poorly prepared group may plan to cook meals over a campfire only to discover upon arrival

at their destination that a fire ban is in effect or that firewood is in scarce supply. Such groups often build a fire anyway breaking the law or impacting the land simply because they have not planned for alternatives. Fire bans and scarce wood supplies are signs that an area is experiencing the cumulative effects of heavy recreation use.

- A group that has failed to develop good travel plans may be unable to travel as fast as expected. The terrain may be too steep or the trails too rugged. These groups often resort to setting up camp late at night, sometimes in an unsafe location. Poor campsite selection usually leads to unnecessary resource damage. In addition, the group may never even reach their planned destination.

One-Pot Meals and Food Repackaging:

- Planning for one-pot meals and light weight snacks requires a minimum of packing and preparation time, lightens loads and decreases garbage. One-pot meals require minimal cooking utensils and eliminate the need for a campfire. Two backpack stoves can be used to cook all meals for large groups if you have

two large pots (one large pot can be balanced on two stoves when quick heating is desired). Remember, a stove Leaves No Trace.

- Most food should be removed from its commercial packing and placed in sealable bags before packing your backpacks. Sealable bags secure food and reduce bulk and garbage. Empty bags can be placed inside each other and packed out for reuse at home. This method can reduce the amount of garbage your group must pack out at the end of the trip and eliminate the undesirable need of stashing or burying unwanted trash.