

BSA Leave No Trace Basics Course Guide



BSA Outdoor Ethics & Conservation Subcommittee

Revision Dates

Original - February 21, 2010

Latest Revision – November 6, 2015

Minor Edits – 2019, June 2022, October 10, 2023, January 5, 2024

BSA Leave No Trace Basics **Course Guide**

Introductory Guidelines for Instructors

Course length: 3 or more hours, timing for each section is provided as a guideline only.

Instructor: Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor or Level 2 Instructor

Learning Objectives:

- Knowledge of Leave No Trace Seven Principles
- Understanding the importance of Leave No Trace in outdoor activities
- Where to locate additional Leave No Trace resources and opportunities for further Leave No Trace training

Materials Needed:

- Flip Chart or white board
- Markers
- A Leave No Trace ethics reference card (hang tag)
- BSA *Teaching Leave No Trace* manual available for download from the BSA web site, www.scouting.org
- BSA Leave No Trace Basics Cards
- Props for specific Leave No Trace activities
- List of Cub Scout, Scouts BSA, and Venturing awards that involve Leave No Trace

In this Guide, information that is intended to be provided to the course participants appears in regular type face. Instructions for the Instructor leading the course are provided in *italics*.

Course Outline

Introduction and Welcome (10 minutes)

Instructor and staff will provide content outline and expectations of the course. *(It is recommended that you try a brief icebreaker or game to warm up group before heading into next session).*

Brief History of Leave No Trace (10 minutes)

The points below should be taught through a combination of lecture and questions and answers. Many BSA members are already familiar with some of the Leave No Trace message. Draw upon that knowledge to build their interest in learning more.

The Leave No Trace concept is over 40 years old. Leave No Trace was formally conceived of by the US Forest Service in the 1960's. However, as public land use expanded and land managers witnessed the adverse effects of this use, the US Forest Service along with the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management developed early wilderness ethics practices.

In the late 1970s, the Boy Scouts and other groups began to introduce the concept of “minimum-impact camping.”

By the mid-1980’s, the US Forest Service had a formal “No-Trace” program emphasizing the cultivation of new wilderness ethics and sustainable no-trace travel and camping practices.

In the early 1990s, the agencies formed an independent nonprofit organization called Leave No Trace, Inc. The organization was incorporated to develop and expand Leave No Trace training and educational resources, and to spread the general program components. Around the middle 1990s, the Boy Scouts began to introduce the language of Leave No Trace into its publications and program. The organization’s name was changed in 2001 to the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, and in 2021 was simplified to just Leave No Trace.

In 2005, Leave No Trace and the Boy Scouts of America entered into a formal agreement for the BSA to train its own Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructors to further the BSA’s involvement in Leave No Trace.

The Need for Leave No Trace in Scouting (10 minutes)

Scouting has a long tradition of conservation leadership and environmental protection enshrined in the Outdoor Code, Distinguished Conservation Service Award program, and in innumerable publications and training. Leave No Trace offers a cutting-edge approach to integrating Scouting’s ethical and decision-making focus into the outdoors environment, providing Scouting members with a principled framework to assist in arriving at proper, ethical decisions in the outdoors. These practices apply to all outdoor activities, including those at Scout camps, camporees, and on all types of public or private lands.

As cities grow and populations encroach upon protected natural areas, we must do more than just pick up the litter and extinguish campfires. In 1992, combined visitation to undeveloped public lands was estimated at 670 million. By 1999, the US Forest Service recorded 900 million visits, and the National Park Service had 287 million visitors. (Marion, 2001). As visitation continues to increase, we must learn how to maintain the integrity and character of the outdoors for all living things. Leave No Trace is not simply a program for camping, it is the cutting edge of Scouting values. Learning about Leave No Trace begins with you and your unit, in your backyard, and even inside your home.

The knowledge and concepts enabling visitors to leave no trace are easily taught both before and during outings. This course is devoted to helping you understand and pass on the value of natural areas and the methods we can use to help protect and conserve these areas for future generations.

Ask the participants to identify areas where they have seen recreational impacts. What do they think of that? What should our response be?

Teaching the Leave No Trace Seven Principles (1 hour 30 minutes)

Resource: BSA, *Teaching Leave No Trace*
BSA, *BSA Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor Course Manual*
BSA, *Scouts BSA Handbook*

Additional Resource:
Leave No Trace, *101 Ways to Teach Leave No Trace*

Course Requirements:

Each Principle should be allotted 10 to 15 minutes. The principles can be discussed in any order. Try to mix teaching styles to accommodate different learning styles. At least two of the principles must be taught using an *experiential* technique. An experiential technique means that the instructor will guide the participants through completing a Leave No Trace related activity. A good example, and one which is recommended, is teaching how to properly site, dig, and cover a cathole.

The Leave No Trace Seven Principles (all must be addressed):

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Suggested lesson plans for each principle may be found in *Teaching Leave No Trace* and in *BSA Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor Course Manual*.

Teaching the Leave No Trace Seven Principles can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The Instructor should be encouraged to be creative in the delivery of these topics. A round robin format could be used for large groups and discussion groups could be used for smaller sized groups. Remember: hands-on (or experiential”) activities help people learn and retain more than just lecture!

Background on the Leave No Trace Seven Principles

Often, before people can decide to minimize impacts—to “leave no trace”—they must feel a personal connection to the land; they need a reason to care. Caring can take many forms: a love of beauty, an enjoyment of wild plants and animals, an interest in learning about the natural world, a feeling of oneness with nature, a desire for fun and leisure, the excitement of discovery, or even a need to be challenged. All these examples help illustrate how we are a part of the web of life that surrounds us.

An understanding of how the natural world functions—and our ability to change this world—raises many considerations about Leave No Trace. Before teaching Leave No Trace, leaders are encouraged to help people make a personal connection with the natural world. Simultaneously, as the individual nurtures this connection, a commitment to protecting the natural world also takes shape. This section helps set the stage for promoting Leave No Trace and reminds us that humans are part of the natural world.

Before teaching this course, it is essential to feel comfortable and knowledgeable. The instructor should be thoroughly familiar with the principles before proceeding with the activities. After becoming comfortable with the principles in general, then, review the appropriate information for each principle before conducting the specific activity related to the principle.

<BREAK> (15 minutes)

Two hands-on sessions (15 minutes each – 30 minutes total)

The instructor must choose two activities from the BSA *Teaching Leave No Trace* manual or Leave No Trace’s *101 Ways to Teach Leave No Trace* and ensure that all the participants have an opportunity to participate in each activity. One of these sessions must address human waste disposal. *These are the “experiential” elements mentioned in the Course Requirements section.*

BSA Advancement / Outdoor Ethics Awards (10 minutes)

Presenter will review the advancement requirements for the program areas within Scouting and the Outdoor Ethics Awareness/Action awards. Focus on the awards most relevant to the group you are working with.

Next Steps: Leave No Trace Resources and Additional Training

The presenter should present information about how to learn more about the Leave No Trace Seven Principles for those interested in deeper knowledge. The presenter should suggest a Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor course – a minimum 16-hour course – or a Leave No Trace Level 2 Instructor course – a 5 days / 5 nights course. Any Scouter 18 years of age or older is eligible to take a Level 1 Instructor course; any Scouter 18 years of age or older is eligible to take a Level 2 Instructor course. Participants should be directed to Leave No Trace’s website, LNT.org for more Leave No Trace information and materials, and to scouting.org/outdoor-programs/outdoor-ethics for BSA-related resources.

Wrap-up Question and Answer and Present Basics Cards (5 minutes)

At the conclusion of the course, the instructor should present each attendee who participated in a meaningful way with a “[BSA Training Pocket Certificate](#)” SKU 615012. They can be ordered from National Supply or provided from your local Scout Service Center. Alternatively you may download and print on card stock the “BSA Leave No Trace Basics” training cards from the link on Outdoor Ethics Recourses page at scouting.org/outdoor-programs/outdoor-ethics/resources.

Course Reporting

Upon completion of the Leave No Trace Basics course, the Level 1 Instructor conducting the course is responsible for preparation of the host council’s standard training report listing all the successful participants who completed the course. This report should be submitted to the host council for entry into ScoutNET. The ScoutNET code for Leave No Trace Basics training is D74. A copy of the report should also be provided to the host council Outdoor Ethics Advocate for use in preparing the annual progress report.

Alternative Formats for the BSA Leave No Trace Basics Course

A Leave No Trace Level 1 Instructor is not obligated to conduct the entire BSA Leave No Trace Basics course in a single three-hour session. Instead, the training may be split over a number of meetings or outings **within a reasonable period (30 days or less)**, provided that all of the course components are covered and course requirements are met.

An example would be to teach the Introduction, the History of Leave No Trace, and the introduction to the Leave No Trace Seven Principles at a unit meeting or two and then teach the hands-on activities during the unit outing later the same or next month. This helps the participants reflect upon the message and then reinforce the message by practicing the principles. Of course, remind the participants that Leave No Trace should be practiced on all outings, not just the outing where it is the planned program!

Other opportunities for teaching the BSA Leave No Trace Basics course could be a University of Scouting, a merit badge college, as part of a summer camp “alternative program” for Scouters and Scouts not involved in merit badge activities, or at a camporee with a conservation or Leave No Trace theme.