# A Trip Down The Trash Trail: An Outdoor Ethics Activity for Scouts and Scouters

Honorable Mention Winner, “Games”

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Tread Lightly Master Tread Trained

**Objective:** To provide a visual treasure hunt of Trash that can be found along any trail. And to provide an opportunity to introduce concepts in Disposing of Trash Properly and Leaving What You Find. Other Leave No Trace Principles may also present opportunities as participants travel down the Trash Trail.

**Materials:** A variety of Trail Trash examples: Cans, glass, plastic, found objects, items that do not belong in our natural environment. Also, examples of items that should be left in nature, such as shed antlers, historical artifacts, archaeological artifacts and the like. Invasive species can also be noted when found. About 25 items seems to be a sweet spot to hold interests.

**Audience:** Age ranges Cub Scouts on the low end, to Scouts, Venturers and Adults on the upper end. Size ranges from a Den or Patrol to a whole Camporee or event, although the larger events need to have scheduled times for Den or Patrol sized groups to participate in rotation.

**Directions**: Lay out a trail, along a real trail or simulate one by using a path string. Pink line can be used for the Path, with pink utility marking flags showing turning points. Blue flags can be used for “boundary flags” or the participants are told to search within 10 or 15 feet of the path center-line. Use Danger Red or Safety Orange to mark hazards along the trail, and the large tent stakes used for path layout. Your colors can vary, depending on what you have available to use. Items can be placed from embedded in the ground, to in trees or bushes, but not over adult height, unless the placement is unique and easy to spot.

If the path is a loop, then one trip is made around the loop to find the trash, and second loop is made to discuss it. If the trail is out-and-back, discussion can also take place on the return trip.

For the youngsters, such as the Cubs, each piece of trail trash is flagged, with the blue flags being used to also mark each item as laid out. For Scouts and Adults, the facilitator lays out a long measuring tape, 200 to 300 feet in length, with no item flagging. Distribution of items should be creative. The nearest foot perpendicular to the tape is noted by the facilitator on the master scoring log for each item to be found.

For Cubs, each Den is walked down the trail, and the facilitator and the Den Leaders talk with the Scouts about the bad things found as trash, and why items which should stay are to stay. For this age level, the facilitator should watch the engagement level of the Scouts, and if they are losing interest, speed up the progress or cut the lesson short. We don't want to bore the participants so that they don't pay attention and become disinterested in Leave No Trace.

For Scouts and Adults, if there is sufficient staff, each Scout or Adult is escorted through the trail, noting the nearest foot mark for the item found on a note pad or score sheet. A second loop on a loop trail or the walk back to the point of origin is the scoring portion, and all the items on the course are noted. If other things are found by participants, a bonus point is awarded, and the bonus item's location should be noted on the master/scoring list. The first time a bonus item is found, it is scored twice, and once for subsequent finders, as an ordinary item. This activity has never had a presentation where at least one bonus item was not found. To increase difficulty, smaller items can be used, and placement does not have to be at ground level. Unit scores are averaged by the number of participants. Winning unit in the scored trail has the highest score. If any Scout has an outstanding score, they should be recognized at the appropriate time.

**Duration:** The time to stroll the trail twice is each participant's (unit or individual}. If short staffed, a Patrol Oriented Police Line can be used to get the whole group through all at once. Normal Day Camp or Camporee activity intervals work well.

## Trash Trail Items

**Examples of Trash Trail Items Used - Trash:**

Pony Bead

Rusty Tin Can

Aluminum Can

Orange, Halo or Banana Peel

Silvered Mylar Film

Tabasco Bottle

Landscaping Fabric Chunk

Plastic Part from Fireworks Rocket

Ring from Neck of Soft-drink Bottle

Plastic Drink Bottle

Galvanized Nail

Metal Washer

Toothpick

Wooden Match

Cigarette Butts

Simulated CCA Wood Shavings (Really Green Dyed Cedar Animal Litter)

Simulated Poo in Crap Coupon (Baby Ruth Bar in Tissue – like in the Caddyshack Movie)

Binder Twine Tied to Branch

Golf Ball

Broken Golf Club Handle

Plastic Drink Bottle

Brick

Leather Pieces

Single Laminated Page from Patrol/Troop Cookbook

Duct Tape Applied to Natural Feature on Course

Fluorescent Throw Ring Used For Outdoor Games

Wad of Monofilament Fishing Line

Lost Laminated Page from a Patrol Cookbook

Weber BBQ Kettle Air Vent handle that rusted off the kettle

**Items Used – Non-Trash Artifacts:**

Antique Hoe Head

Shed Whitetail Deer Antler

Arrowhead – Artificial, Carved and Painted Wood

Old Time Door Key

Simulated Potsherd (piece of modern pottery with ancient design copied)