

Leave No Trace

Outdoor Ethics



*Promoting and inspiring
responsible outdoor recreation through
education, research and partnerships*



What is Leave No Trace

Leave No Trace is an Outdoor Ethics Education Programme designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. An ethic can be defined as knowing what the right thing to do is, and doing it, even if there is no one about to see you do it. Leave No Trace depends more on attitude and awareness than on rules and regulations.

Why Leave No Trace

As increasing numbers of people seek the beauty and exhilaration of outdoor recreation, our collective mark on the environment and its natural processes, increases. Litter, disturbance to vegetation, water pollution, wildlife, livestock and other people are all indicators of the need to develop a national ethic that protects both natural and cultural heritage. Techniques designed to minimise the social and environmental impacts to these areas are incorporated into the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics Education Programme as seven Principles.

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This information booklet was developed from the seven Leave No Trace principles.

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Principles

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Be Considerate of Others

Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

Leave What You Find

Dispose of Waste Properly

Minimise the Effects of Fire



Practicing a Leave No Trace ethic is very simple:
make it hard for others to see or hear you and
LEAVE NO TRACE of your visit.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

Because every outdoor activity is unique, environmental and safety concerns may vary from place to place. Before you go, check where possible, if access is allowed and your activity is permitted in the place you plan to visit. For instance, permits may sometimes be needed for certain activities such as camping, fishing or mountain biking on public lands.

Check the weather forecast and always be prepared for changing weather conditions. Wet, cold or unprepared visitors are more likely to abandon Leave No Trace techniques for safety's sake.

Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use. Visits to popular destinations during peak use periods, such as holidays and weekends, are often fraught with traffic, crowding, delays, and conflicts with other groups. Instead, visit at other times or, explore out-of-the-way places.

Look realistically at the capacity of local facilities. Is there adequate carparking so that gateways, forest entrances and narrow roads are not blocked, or narrow roads are not made impassable as the emergency services, land managers and local residents need access at all times.

For environmental and safety reasons, keep group numbers small; be prepared to split larger parties into smaller groups which will help minimise the impact you leave on the environment, local residents and other visitors.

2. Be Considerate of Others

Share our trails. We all enjoy the outdoors in different ways. Pay attention, expect to encounter others and be courteous. Yield to all. We all know how great our outdoor experiences can be. One discourteous person can ruin an outing. Make room for others.



If biking or horse riding, control your speed. Pass with care and let others know you are passing.

Treat another's property as you would treat your own. Respect "No Trespassing" signs.

Let Nature's Sound prevail. As much as possible, try to keep the noise level down, especially at night or in remote places.

Avoid the use of bright lights, mobile phones, radios, electronic games, and other intrusive urban devices. If you must carry something that makes noise, carry earphones in order to keep the noise to yourself. To some, technology is a necessity even in remote places. To others, it is inappropriate. Avoid conflicts by making a conscious effort to allow everyone his or her own choice in experience.



3. Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

As more and more people visit the outdoors, the wildlife in these areas are affected by visitors' presence. To help keep wildlife wild, it is best to give animals a wide berth and observe them from a distance. As a simple rule of thumb – if the animal moves in response to your presence, you are too close.

Never feed farm animals or wildlife. Feeding damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes wildlife to predators and other dangers.

Check signs and follow area dog regulations. Keeping your dog in control keeps people, dogs, livestock and wildlife safe. Other visitors may not appreciate your dog's company; if not sure, ask before allowing your dog to approach them. Keep your dog nearby, always in sight and under control. Carry and use a leash as required.

Please do not let your dog approach or chase farm animals or wildlife. When wildlife are chased or harassed, they change eating patterns and exert more energy that can result in poor health or death. Voice and sight control includes coming immediately on first command in every situation. If you are not sure your dog can comply with voice and sight control, please leash it, for the sake of theirs and others.



4. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

Stick to established trails. Give plants and wild animals their place in the outdoors. Creating new trails scars the landscape, causes erosion and intrudes on wildlife habitats.

Travel in the middle of the trail. Studies show that when we trample vegetation on the side of the trail, there is a greater chance weeds will replace the native plants. While stepping through mud is a good option, if you don't want to be concerned about slipping, trampling vegetation or getting muddy, choose a different dry trail or hard surface — just until the trail dries!

Please avoid areas that are unmarked, closed for revegetation or signed as sensitive. We can all have fun in our natural areas and share with wildlife if we just stick to the trail.



Good campsites are found, not made. The best campsites are often well away from water sources and trails. If you need to alter a site to make camp, there is probably a better site nearby. If not, make your best choice and naturalise the area with leaves or other available cover upon your departure.



5. Leave It as You Find It

Conserve the past; archeological and historical artifacts such as old walls, holy wells, old mine workings, hilltop cairns are reminders of the rich human history of the landscape and belong to all people for all time. Structures, dwellings and artifacts should not be disturbed. Observe but do not touch them.



Leave natural objects undisturbed – load your camera, not your packs. Let photos, drawings and memories comprise your souvenirs. Fallen trees are a valuable wildlife habitat and should not be removed or used for firewood.

Objects in nature derive much of their beauty from their surroundings and never look quite the same back home.

Be careful not to disturb the equipment of farmers, anglers, foresters, beekeepers and others who derive their income from the land; leave gates as you find them, open or closed.

6. Dispose of Waste Properly

Please take out all litter — yours and others. Even biodegradable materials, such as orange peels, apple cores and food scraps take years to break down, and attract scavengers that harm other wildlife. Waste is unsightly and ruins everyone's outdoor experience. Studies have shown that we attract scavenging birds and mammals that drive away or kill native birds.



Let's all enrich everyone's outdoor experience and take out all litter.

Although the topic of human waste can be a particularly uncomfortable issue with visitors to the outdoors, it is very important to address it directly.

Never miss an opportunity to use a proper toilet facility. If you must go in the outdoors, deposit solid human waste in a hole dug 10-12 cm deep at least 30 metres (70 steps) from water, campsites, and trails. This will promote decomposition of the waste and reduce the likelihood that other visitors may have unpleasant encounters. Cover and disguise the hole when you are finished and be sure to pack out all used toilet paper and hygiene products in an impermeable plastic bag.



7. Minimise the Effects of Fire

Even though campfires have been a part of the outdoors for a long time, the legacy of campfires and barbeques too often are charred park benches and rocks, large rubbish-filled fire rings, damaged trees, and uncontrolled wildfires. Fires can cause lasting impacts and be devastating to forests, natural habitats and farmland.

Know and follow local fire regulations and rules. Where fires are permitted and appropriate, use techniques to reduce your impact on the land and avoid leaving unsightly and ecologically damaging fire scars such as placing your disposable b-b-q on sand or elevating it off the grass to avoid burning the ground below. Remember every teaspoon of soil is home to hundreds of micro-organisms!

Instead of building your own, use established fire rings, fire grates, fire pans or mound fires, or a lightweight stove for cooking when camping.

Be sure to keep your campfire small and under control. For firewood, use small sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand. Do not use growing vegetation for use as firewood. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out the campfire completely, then scatter cool ashes. A little bit of effort can go a long way in preventing campfire impacts.





IRELAND

Leave No Trace Ireland is a network of organisations and individuals with an interest in promoting the responsible recreational use of the countryside and wild places. It currently is both funded and supported by the following organisations.

coillte



The Countryside
Access & Activities Network
for Northern Ireland



THE DEPARTMENT OF
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AN
CHOMHAIRLE
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THE
HERITAGE
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*“... the person who goes with reverent feet
through the hills and valleys, accompanied
by neither noise nor dust to scare away wild
creatures, stopping often, watching closely,
listening carefully. Only thus can they, at length,
feel at one with what is, after all,
their natural environment”.*

— Robert Lloyd Praeger, 1937

