

A Scouting Guide to Leave No Trace Ireland



IRELAND
leave no trace



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A message from Leave No Trace Ireland and Scouting Ireland

Leave No Trace Ireland is proud to partner as official members of Scouting Ireland to provide a series of Leave No Trace Ireland environmental resources for Scouts and Scouting leaders. Both organisations are concerned with ensuring the protection of the environment and the promotion of personal and communal Environmental Responsibility. The goal of this partnership is to provide fun and informative resources for Scouting Ireland youth members, which enables them to explore and implement the seven Leave No Trace Ireland principles. It will form part of Scouting Ireland's environmental programme which is informed by the World Scout Environmental Programme. This partnership will provide resources and materials that, in time, will affect thousands of youths and adults, impressing upon them proper respect and care for the environment.



Practicing outdoor skills and Leave No Trace Ireland

Another way to help take care of the world

Leave No Trace Ireland is an international and national programme designed to help us all make good decisions about how to improve and practice outdoor skills.

Leave No trace Ireland (LNT) principles are a very good fit for what we strive to do in Scouting Ireland.

The seven principles of Leave No Trace Ireland:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable ground
3. Dispose of waste Properly
4. Leave What you Find
5. Minimise Campfire impact
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of others



Through education and training, we can all learn more about the impact our actions have on the natural world. Some are obvious – our waste pollutes the countryside and loud noises can disturb animals. Some are learned only through science- burning plastic can release potentially very harmful chemicals into the environment. Some are less obvious but not difficult to understand- repeated camping or travelling on the same spot erodes the soil.

The more we practice the Leave No Trace Ireland techniques, the more our natural areas can withstand the ever increasing flow of people. While practicing Leave No Trace Ireland techniques is not the final solution to dealing with the large numbers of people in the outdoors, it can be a very useful tool. Scouters can introduce the concept of responsible stewardship and good citizenship to our youths while still pursuing the “out” in “scouting”.

When thinking about LNT and ways to introduce its concepts to scouts, it is a good idea to think of them as advanced camping skills. If the seven principles are presented only as a set of rules, real understanding may never really be achieved. By exploring and practicing the principles in an applied way in the outdoors, Scouts will be able to learn how to implement Leave No Trace.

Leave No Trace Ireland

Skills can become second nature, an unconscious part of every decision we make. Subtly enhancing our enjoyment of the great gift which is our natural world, these skills can help us to be more comfortable, both physically and mentally while outdoors. Knowing our actions and habits do not distract from other people’s enjoyment of wild places, can also be rewarding. As scouters, the idea that not only those who we spend time with now will better enjoy the experience, but so will those who come after us, is very appealing.

For more information on Leave No Trace Ireland, our concept, the research and ideas for activities on how to present our seven principles to our youths, please visit the Leave No Trace Ireland website at www.leavenotraceireland.org or Email: info@leavenotraceireland.org.

Learning by Doing

Learning by Doing is one of the main parts of Scouting Ireland’s methods. Young people learn through practical experience in scouting. Scouts can learn about how to implement Leave No Trace Ireland by exploring the principles and applying them to activities and in the rest of their lives.

Our use of the outdoors and the environment requires us to make informed decisions. Cutting down trees is indiscriminately bad, but we use wood to build our homes and create books for knowledge. Making choices about how we use the outdoors and Leave No Trace Ireland principles requires critical thinking. By incorporating Leave No Trace in a practical way, scouts learn not only skills but develop knowledge also.

We should always take the Plan, Do, Review approach to exploring Leave No Trace Ireland principles:

Plan: introduce and explore the ideas.

Do: put it in practice in your activities.

Review: evaluate how you did this and reflect on how you can implement it in the future.





Plan ahead and prepare

When hiking along a path, how do we avoid a mud puddle? Do we walk around it, causing a greater impact on the outdoors? To follow the principles of LNT we should walk through it. But before we can do that we should have the right gear. Proper footwear is crucial, runners just don't do it. So, before we go out we need to plan for eventualities and ensure we are prepared to face what may be presented to us.

For Scouts to follow the Leave No Trace Ireland process, they need to engage with it from the planning stage. Awareness of the seven principles is crucial for a successful outdoor LNT experience. During the planning stage, youth members should discuss what they could encounter that may require special attention. Some of these may be minor hazards or inconveniences, while others may be serious obstacles, such as thick forest or raging streams. In their small groups, the scouts should prepare a list of potential problems and a list of solutions, as well as gear that may be needed to overcome them. Weather issues and emergency shelters need to be planned and prepared for as well.

Have them think about the food they are bringing and the waste they will need to dispose of, what method should they use? If they are camping, where will they set up camp? How will this impact their local environment? Are they going to need to build a fire to keep warm? What gear will they need to ensure they will be warm enough without the use of a fire?

Youth leaders will need to be educated in the regulations pertaining to where they are travelling. In some areas toilet waste will need to be packed out instead of digging a hole. As you face situations on the way, discuss previous preparations and what you have done, or should have done to prepare.

Upon completion of the activity, debrief by reviewing what happened, what you had foreseen about the situations and whether or not your preparation was sufficient, as well as how this experience will change how you approach future outdoor adventures.

Activity

Meet at a place such as a park or a favourite hiking ground. Begin by asking why we build pavements, how do they protect the land from many people? Divide the group into pairs and ask them to explore the area, identifying 5 different surfaces to rate from one to five for durability.

Give them five to ten minutes to complete the task.

When they return, ask them to list the various surfaces they found. Be sure that their lists includes fragile plants, muddy areas, aquatic environments and moss covered places, etc.

Do not forget any special conditions found in your area, such as areas near water, sensitive wetland areas, and sand dunes grasses etc.

Ask them to list places they would intend to stop at to eat a snack, cook a meal or set up camp.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each spot chosen?

End with a short game. Have a selection of photographs. You may use old calendar pictures, your own pictures, or public domain pictures found on the internet. Any of these can be used.

Ideally, each picture should be laminated or in a clear Polly pocket. The photographs should show a variety of durable and non-durable grounds and surfaces.

Have the participants come up to you in pairs, while you hold the photos out of sight.

Tell them that when you turn over the photo, they are to step on the durable surface photograph (as its been announced by you). The first person to step onto the correct photo wins the round and goes to one side, the other individual to the other side of you. The next pair does the same thing. Mix it up a bit as to whether or not you say durable or non-durable surfaces and the order of the photographs.

Once you have gone through all the pairs, have some elimination rounds with the winners, or just get them to mix it up and have everyone get another turn. Remember, the idea is not to build competitive spirit but to reinforce the difference between durable and non- durable surfaces in a fun way, with fun activity, rather than with a lecture.

Dispose of waste properly

Think about some of the issues concerning waste in the outdoors. This activity focuses on litter type waste but is mindful of body and food waste issues as well.

To prepare, collect an assortment of trash such as empty cans, cups (plastic, Styrofoam) plastic 6 pack holders, foil wrapping, crisp packets, vegetable peelings, food leftovers, and partly burnt rubbish.

Select an outdoor site and, before the group arrives, place the trash in various places- both obvious and obscure. The litter should be visible but not blatantly seen. When your group arrives, ask them to imagine they are at a beautiful hiking spot (if you are actually in one, all the better) and are just arriving at the place for a first nights camp out. Inform them that previous campers didn't do a good job of practicing Leave No Trace. Give them five to ten mins to clean it up.

Once gathered back together, examine and discuss what they have found. Why did it happen to be there? And what the people that brought it could have done with it, rather than leaving it behind. What can we do now to safely dispose of it?

Discuss what is the best way to dispose of this waste and have the group explain what they would do and why.

What can they do to ensure that they do not make a mess themselves and to deal with such messes when they find them. Separate the rubbish into two piles- recyclable and non-recyclable. Can everything be recycled?



Leave What You Find

The practice of picking up “hiking sticks” when we go for a walk has been with us forever; but is it good environmental practice? Usually the sticks are softwood, unsuitable for a hiking staff. Most often, instead of being used as a hiking staff or tool they get misused for hitting trees and bushes and then dumped far away from its original location. And what happens to the trees they are removed from? The leaves and the habitats that’s been disturbed during the activities? What better options can be chosen?

Remember, everything we disturb has an effect on the environment. What may seem a simple stick can be habitat for small mammals and insects.

We need to be informed about the choices we make regarding nature. There can be times to gather, but by thinking ahead of what we want to do and discussing the options, we can make those informed choices with regards to our actions. Our youth needs to experience nature, but at the same time need to respect the web of life.

On your next hike or activity, have the group take photographs of the environment along the way. Look at “dead” trees and see what may be growing out of them, or look for fragile smaller plants. Record any ideas these pictures evoke. Look under rocks. Before leaving, roll the rock back to where it was before. If the group is moving off the beaten path to look at something, make sure they are aware of where they are going and the potential impact of their actions.

At the following section meeting, have each small group show and explain their pictures, what they were seeing, and why they chose to take the picture.



Minimise Campfire impacts

Humans have always had a fascination with fire and in Scouting Ireland we enjoy our fires while out camping, but is it the best choice? It is an important decision for Scouting Ireland camps. So how do we make a better, more informed decision about the use of fire?

In camp sites there will be campfire areas, but in other areas there won't be. How can we have a fire but minimise the impact? Think about the different ways we can safely light fires.

Top Tip: Have you practiced making mound fires? A mound fire is made by laying down a tarp and building a mound of sand on it to create insulation for the tarp from the fire. A fire is then built on the mound of sand.

Another issue is, where we are getting the fuel for our fire? Collecting wood in an area that has already been cleaned of dead wood can have a significant impact. Is there a ready source available? Or do we bring in fuel to burn? If we are travelling some distance away this can be the easier answer.

Other alternatives are to use a lantern or candle. For smaller groups, this can give us the effect without the impact, and we often have a candle lantern with us.

After the fire has completely died out, the clean ash can be scattered over a wide area. The materials from the mound can be returned to where they were taken from - Leaving No Trace.

Discussions can be had about how enjoyable the fire was, why the tarp is still in good shape and how the experience was lessened by Leaving No Trace.

Respect wildlife and farm animals

As stewards of our environment, we need to be aware of the other living things around us. We are usually aware of dogs, cats, other pets and how they react to different situations like noises, but how aware are we of our impact on wildlife when we are less likely to see them?

Before going out on a hike or an evening walk, discuss what wildlife you may encounter. Ask what effect a group of people may have as they approach deer, rabbits, etc. How might the animals feel? How would the group feel if they were suddenly approached by a herd of cattle or a pack of wolves? How can the group minimize the effects?

On a hike, bring some pictures of wildlife footprints and send a scouter ahead of the group to put them down on the trail. As they are discovered, discuss what prints they may be and the likelihood of seeing these animals on the activity. If seen, how should the group respond? Keep an eye out for animal's trails through undergrowth, etc. Watch for animal's traces such as prints and animal droppings. Look out for birds.

At the end of the hike, discuss observations. How did the birds react to the approach of the group? How did the group go about respecting any wildlife they saw? How effective was the event to observe wildlife compared to others?



Be Considerate of Others

Have you ever been sitting at a camp fire relaxing when suddenly, your peace has been shattered by a blaring stereo playing loud music you really dislike?

While on a hike, stop where you seem to be reasonably alone. Explain to the group that you are going to ask them to sit quietly for a few minutes so they can listen to the sounds around them. Instruct the group that they are not to talk to one another or make sounds, just to sit and listen.

Spread the group out over an area of about 5 or 6 meters apart. After a few minutes gather them all back again into a group and ask them to discuss what sounds they may have heard. Sounds like wind in the trees, insects and birds are quite common.

Depending on where you are, sounds like cars or planes may be heard. Other people may be heard as well. If there are "interruptions", ask the group how this made them feel, particularly if they had some time to appreciate the "silence" of nature.

Are we aware of the noise we make? Can we try to be quieter?



Seven Principles of Leave No Trace Ireland

1. Plan ahead and prepare

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you will visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups, split larger parties into groups of 4-6.
- Repackage food to minimise waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

2. Travel and camp on durable grounds and surfaces.

- Durable surfaces include established trails, campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping 70 metres from lakes, rivers and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Alternating a site is not necessary in popular areas.
- Concentrate on using existing trails and campsites.
- Walk in single file in the middle of the trail even if it may be wet and muddy.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent. Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

3. Dispose of waste properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover foods and litter.
- Dispose solid human waste in cat holes dug 15 to 20 centimetres deep and about 70 meters from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cat hole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 70 meters away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

4. Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past. Examine, but, do not touch, cultural or historic structures, surfaces and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non- native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

5. Minimise Campfire impact.

- Campfires can cause lasting damage to the countryside. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mounds fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, then scatter cool ashes. Put out campfires completely.

6. Respect Wildlife.

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages its health, alters natural behaviours, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: Mating, nesting, raising young or winter.

7. Be Considerate of Others.

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step on the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.



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