

# OUTDOOR ETHICS IN THE BOY SCOUT PROGRAM

## Time Available

10 minutes

## Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand that outdoor ethics is deeply ingrained in the Scouting program.
2. Identify and compare the three components of outdoor ethics.
3. Identify resources to guide effective and appropriate outdoor ethics program.
4. Identify Outdoor Ethics Awareness and Action Award requirements.

## Suggested Presenter(s)

The council outdoor ethics advocate or an experienced troop outdoor ethics guide should present this topic. Alternately, a highly engaged district volunteer who has in-depth knowledge of outdoor ethics could present. Any presenter must be very familiar with the outdoor ethics program, the outdoor code, the principles of Leave No Trace, and Tread Lightly!

## Presentation Method

This presentation is tailored for Boy Scout leaders and provides a basic overview of the outdoor ethics program. It is best presented using a visual of some sort such as a white board, flip chart, or PowerPoint. Some discussion and Q&A time is encouraged. Further interest can be addressed after the meeting or in future meetings.

## BSA Reference Materials

- *Boy Scout Handbook*, 13th edition, No. 34554
- *BSA Fieldbook*, No. 34006

## Online Resources

- The Outdoor Code: [www.scouting.org/outdoorprogram/outdoorethics/outdoorcode/](http://www.scouting.org/outdoorprogram/outdoorethics/outdoorcode/)
- Seven Principles of Leave No Trace: [www.scouting.org/OutdoorProgram/OutdoorEthics/LeaveNoTrace/](http://www.scouting.org/OutdoorProgram/OutdoorEthics/LeaveNoTrace/)
- Outdoor Ethics Awards: [www.scouting.org/OutdoorProgram/OutdoorEthics/Awards/](http://www.scouting.org/OutdoorProgram/OutdoorEthics/Awards/)
- Tread Lightly!: [www.treadlightly.org](http://www.treadlightly.org)

## Presentation Content

### Outdoor Ethics and the Scouting Program

- Outdoor ethics is deeply ingrained in the BSA program. Scouting and Venturing have a long, proud tradition of conservation service to the nation.
- Outdoor ethics is not just for youth. Adult volunteers are encouraged to seek training in basic outdoor skills and even take specialized courses to learn Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! skills.
- The BSA offers outdoor ethics training as part of National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT) and National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience (NAYLE) for Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts, as well as Introduction to Outdoor Leadership Skills (IOLS) and Wood Badge for all adult volunteers with outdoor leadership responsibilities.
- Many councils have outdoor ethics advocates who provide leadership to their local units in learning and practicing good outdoor ethics.
- The three components of the outdoor ethics program are
  - The Outdoor Code
  - The principles of Leave No Trace
  - The principles of Tread Lightly!

All of the outdoor ethics components have been included in the *Boy Scout Handbook* and are part of the Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class rank requirements.

### The Outdoor Code

As an American, I will do my best to  
Be clean in my outdoor manners.  
Be careful with fire.  
Be considerate in the outdoors.  
Be conservation minded.

### The Principles of Leave No Trace (Second Class)

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.

## The Principles of TREAD Lightly (First Class)

- **Travel responsibly**—on land, by keeping to designated roads, trails, and areas. Go over, not around, obstacles to avoid widening the trails. Cross streams only at designated fords. When possible, avoid wet, muddy trails. On water, stay on designated waterways and launch your watercraft in designated areas.
- **Respect the rights of others**, including private property owners, all recreational trail users, campers, and others so they can enjoy their recreational activities undisturbed. Leave gates as you found them. Yield right of way to those passing you or going uphill. On water, respect anglers, swimmers, skiers, boaters, divers, and those on or near shore.
- **Educate yourself** prior to your trip by obtaining travel maps and regulations from public agencies. Plan for your trip, take recreation skills classes, and know how to operate your equipment safely.
- **Avoid sensitive areas** such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands, and streams. Stay on designated routes. This protects wildlife habitats and sensitive soils from damage. Don't disturb historical, archeological, or paleontological sites. On water, avoid operating your watercraft in shallow waters or near shorelines at high speeds.
- **Do your part** by modeling appropriate behavior, leaving the area better than you found it, properly disposing of waste, minimizing the use of fire, avoiding the spread of invasive species, and repairing degraded areas.

## Resources to Guide Effective and Appropriate Outdoor Ethics Program

- Troop Outdoor Ethics Guide
  - The outdoor ethics guide helps the troop plan and conduct an outdoor program that emphasizes effectively practicing the Outdoor Code, the Leave No Trace principles, and Tread Lightly! principles.
  - The guide works to help Scouts improve their outdoor ethics decision-making skills to help minimize impacts as they hike, camp, and participate in other outdoor activities.
  - He or she should support Scouts who are working to complete the relevant requirements for the Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks.
  - The senior patrol leader may appoint as a troop outdoor ethics guide a Scout who is at least a First Class, with the concurrence of the unit leader.
  - A Scout who has not yet completed outdoor ethics training may serve as the troop instructor teaching these skills until the recommended training has been completed.

- Council Outdoor Ethics Advocate:

- The council outdoor ethics advocate is a volunteer position that coordinates the local council's Leave No Trace training and similar outdoor ethics programs for BSA youth and adult members. This training is meant to enrich the Scouting experience for the members, help reduce our impact on the land consistent with Scouting's historic message, and help ensure continuing access to public lands for Scouting purposes.
- The council outdoor ethics advocate should coordinate with the council's training, camping, conservation, and/or program committees.
- Where appropriate, the council outdoor ethics advocate may also serve on one or more of these committees.
- Prior training as a Leave No Trace master educator or trainer is preferred, but it is not required if the individual commits to obtaining the training.

## Outdoor Ethics Awareness and Action Award Requirements

Guided by the Outdoor Code, Leave No Trace, and Tread Lightly! principles, millions of Scouts have enhanced their awareness of the natural world around them, minimizing impact to the land. If you are prepared to venture down the path of really becoming aware of your surroundings, of building the skills that will allow you to leave no trace on the land, then the Outdoor Ethics Awareness and Action Awards are for you.

- Outdoor Ethics Awareness Award
  - Boy Scouts and Scouters interested in learning more about outdoor ethics should begin by exploring the Outdoor Ethics Awareness Award. The requirements are as follows:
    1. Recite from memory and explain the meaning of the Outdoor Code.
    2. Watch the National Park Service Leave No Trace video at <https://lnt.org/learn>. It's on the right side of the page.
    3. Complete the Leave No Trace online youth course at <https://lnt.org/learn/online-awareness-course>. Print the certificate.
    4. Complete the TreadLightly! online course at [www.treadlightly.org/education/learn/online-awareness-course](http://www.treadlightly.org/education/learn/online-awareness-course). Print the certificate.
    5. Participate in an outdoor ethics course, workshop, or training activity facilitated by a person who has completed the BSA outdoor ethics orientation course or is a BSA outdoor ethics trainer or master.

## Outdoor Ethics Action Award

The Outdoor Ethics Action Award challenges Scouts and Scouters to take affirmative steps to improve their outdoor skills. The requirements for the award are as follows:

- Boy Scout Action Award Requirements

1. Do the following:
  - a. Unless already completed, earn the Outdoor Ethics Awareness Award.
  - b. Complete the BSA outdoor ethics orientation course.
  - c. Explain how each of the four points of the Outdoor Code guides your actions when outdoors.
2. Do the following:
  - a. Read chapter 7 of the *Boy Scout Handbook* on Outdoor Ethics.
  - b. Teach a skill related to the Outdoor Code or Leave No Trace to another Scout in your troop or another Scouting unit.
3. Complete one of the following:
  - a. Successfully complete a term as your troop outdoor ethics guide.
  - b. Participate in an outing that emphasizes the complete set of Leave No Trace principles ([www.treadlightly.org/education/learn/tread-principles-2](http://www.treadlightly.org/education/learn/tread-principles-2)).

All members of the troop participating in the outing should use outdoor ethics and the specific skills needed to minimize impacts from their use of the outdoors.
4. Follow the Outdoor Code, Leave No Trace, and Tread Lightly! principles on three outings. Write a paragraph on each outing explaining how you followed the Outdoor Code, Leave No Trace, and Tread Lightly! Share it with your unit leader or an individual who has completed the BSA outdoor ethics orientation course.
5. On a troop outing, help your troop on a service activity that addresses recreational impacts related to that type of outing. The project should be approved in advance by the landowner or land manager and lead to permanent or long-term improvements.
6. Participate in a report at a court of honor or similar family event on the service activity in requirement 5.

## Scouter Action Award Requirements

1. Do the following:
  - a. Earn the Outdoor Ethics Awareness Award.
  - b. Complete the BSA outdoor ethics orientation course.
  - c. Discuss with your troop how each of the four points of the Outdoor Code guides your actions when outdoors.
2. Read the North American Skills & Ethics booklet to learn about the Principles of Leave No Trace (<https://lnt.org/learn/7-principles>). Review the principles of Tread Lightly! ([www.treadlightly.org/education/learn/tread-principles-2](http://www.treadlightly.org/education/learn/tread-principles-2)). Review chapter 7 of the *Boy Scout Handbook* regarding Outdoor Ethics and the *Fieldbook* chapters about Leave No Trace, using stoves and campfires, hygiene and waste disposal, and traveling and camping in special environments.
3. Facilitate your troop's leadership in planning and leading an outing that emphasizes the complete set of Leave No Trace or Tread Lightly! principles. All members of the troop participating in the outing should use outdoor ethics and the specific skills to minimize impacts from their use of the outdoors.
4. Help plan and participate in at least three outings where your troop can follow the Outdoor Code and practice the principles of Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! Facilitate a discussion at the end of the outings.
5. Assist your unit in arranging for a service project emphasizing outdoor ethics with a local landowner or land manager. The project must be approved by the landowner or land manager in advance. Participate in that project. The project should lead to permanent or long-term improvements.
6. Make, or facilitate youth in making, a presentation at a roundtable or similar gathering about what your troop did for requirement 4.
7. Help at least three Boy Scouts to earn the youth Outdoor Ethics Action Award.