

Ready for adventure. Ready for life.

Learn useful skills. Put them into action.
Help someone else grow.



7 areas · 66 skills · Real practice at every step

GainesvilleYouth.com

Make this guide your own.

Start with a skill you need. Read the lesson, practice with appropriate help, demonstrate it, use it in a real situation, and teach someone else. You do not need to read in order or rush to finish.

Learn

I read the lesson and can explain its purpose and limits.

Practice

I practiced the steps with the appropriate help.

Demonstrate

I showed the checkoff skills to a mentor and discussed feedback.

Apply

I completed the In Action challenge in an approved real setting.

Teach

I helped someone else learn within my ability and supervision limits.

Practice with care

Choose tasks suited to your age, ability, and permission. Qualified adults supervise technical activities. A checked box is a learning record, not certification or permission to undertake a hazardous activity.

Use fictional examples for private or sensitive topics. You may pass on sharing personal experiences. Ask a trusted adult for support when a situation is beyond your skills.

Website and video companion

The website includes searchable lessons, interactive exercises, videos loaded only when requested, and signed-in learning records. Video links in this PDF open YouTube; availability can change. Publisher materials complement supervised practice.

AI tools are optional. Paper exercises work too. Follow tool age requirements and school, family, and program rules; keep private information out of practice prompts.

About this edition

Original program lessons draw on outdoor education, practical skills, developmental relationships, financial education, and AI literacy references linked in each lesson. Original AI illustrations provide context; they are not technical safety diagrams. The guide is not affiliated with or endorsed by the reference publishers.

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PART 1

Character and judgment

Keep your word, own mistakes, handle frustration, and know when to ask for help.



4 skills to learn, practice, and put into action.

Keeping your word

Make commitments you can keep, and communicate early when plans change.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Dependability grows through small promises: bringing the cooking pot, arriving on time, or finishing cleanup when nobody is watching. Your crew should know what they can count on you to do.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- A useful commitment names a task, a person, and a deadline.
- Saying yes before checking your time can create work for someone else.
- A changed plan needs a message before the deadline, not an explanation afterward.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Choose one real responsibility this week. Write what finished looks like and when it is needed.
2. Check your calendar, equipment, and transportation before agreeing.
3. Tell the person relying on you: I will do this by this time. Ask them to confirm the details.
4. Set a reminder early enough to act. If a problem appears, explain it and propose a realistic alternative.
5. Finish the task, check its quality, and tell the person it is done.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Wait until the meeting to explain.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your ride changes and you will miss setup. What do you do?

- Wait until the meeting to explain.
- Tell the organizer now and help arrange a realistic alternative.

Discuss after choosing: Early notice gives the crew time to adjust; a late explanation cannot prepare the equipment.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can turn a vague promise into a specific commitment.
- ☐ I completed a responsibility or renegotiated it before the deadline.
- ☐ I checked that my work met the other person's needs.

Mentor notes

- Let a younger member own a manageable job instead of taking over.
- Ask what support they need and agree on a check-in time.
- Discuss missed commitments privately and focus on the next action.

Reference shelf

Search Institute: developmental relationships

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Scouting America: aims and methods

<https://troopleader.scouting.org/general-troop-information/scoutings-aims-and-methods/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

One promise, followed through

Own one useful job for the next meeting. Agree on the result and deadline with the person relying on you.

Success looks like: Show the finished work and explain how you kept the other person informed.

Talk it through: Which part of your plan made follow-through easier?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help a newer member plan their own commitment without doing it for them.

Owning mistakes and making repairs

Tell the truth, apologize clearly, and follow through on a repair.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

You will forget things, misunderstand people, and sometimes make poor choices. Character shows in what you do after that moment. A good apology makes room for the other person's experience.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- An explanation can provide context; it does not erase the impact.
- An apology does not require the other person to forgive you immediately.
- Repair may mean replacing something, correcting information, or changing a habit.

A conversation you can practice

- Describe: Name the specific situation and what you need, without attacking the other person's character.
- Listen: Invite their view and summarize it. Ask whether you understood before proposing a solution.
- Agree: Choose a workable next step, say who will do what, and decide when you will check back. Get adult support when safety or boundaries are involved.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Describe what you did without blaming someone else: I left the equipment outside.
2. Name the impact: That made extra work and could have damaged it.
3. Say you are sorry without adding a but. Listen to the response.
4. Offer a specific repair and ask whether it would help. Do not promise what you cannot deliver.
5. Make the repair and choose a prevention step, such as a return checklist.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Return it quietly and hope nobody notices.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You damaged a borrowed item. What starts a useful repair?

- Return it quietly and hope nobody notices.
- Tell the owner what happened and discuss a realistic repair.

Discuss after choosing: Honesty lets the owner make informed choices and starts rebuilding trust.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I practiced an apology that names both the action and impact.
- ☐ I proposed a realistic repair.
- ☐ I can accept that trust may take time to rebuild.

Mentor notes

- Model a real, appropriate apology for your own mistake.
- Use fictional examples; nobody must disclose a personal conflict to the group.

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04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Make a repair

Role-play forgetting a borrowed item in the rain. Give an apology and propose a repair you can actually complete.

Success looks like: Your partner can identify the action, its impact, your apology, and the repair.

Talk it through: What changes when you leave excuses out of an apology?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Use the approach privately after a real mistake; discuss only what you are comfortable sharing.

Handling frustration and setbacks

Notice your reaction, take a pause, and choose a useful next step.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A wet tent, a missed shot, or a difficult conversation can test your patience. Feeling frustrated is normal. You can practice responding in a way that protects yourself and the people around you.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Tight shoulders, a raised voice, and rushing can be early signs of frustration.
- Taking a break can be responsible; tell someone where you are going and when you will return.
- Persistent distress deserves support from a trusted adult or a qualified professional.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Name the feeling and one physical sign you notice.
2. Put down tools, step away from the immediate task if safe, and take a few comfortable breaths.
3. Tell a partner: I need a short pause. Agree on a time to come back.
4. Separate what you can change from what you cannot. Pick one small next action.
5. Return, try that action, and ask for help if you remain stuck.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Pull harder and blame the partner who folded it.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A tent will not fit in its bag and you are getting angry. What next?

- Put it down safely, request a short pause, and retry with help.
- Pull harder and blame the partner who folded it.

Discuss after choosing: A pause protects people and equipment and makes room for a different approach.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can name an early sign of my frustration.
- ☐ I practiced asking for a pause without abandoning my partner.
- ☐ I chose a constructive next step in a practice setback.

Mentor notes

- Offer choices such as a quieter role, a partner, or a short pause.
- Do not make calmness a competition or mock someone for needing help.

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04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Pause and try again

Work on a mildly frustrating practice task, such as packing a tent. Notice frustration and practice asking for a pause.

Success looks like: Return at the agreed time and choose a useful next step with your partner.

Talk it through: What early signal told you to pause?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help your crew agree on a respectful way to request a break.

Good judgment and asking for help

Pause, check the facts, consider consequences, and speak up.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Confidence includes knowing the limits of your knowledge. A dependable person can say I do not know, stop an unsafe plan, and find someone qualified to help.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Urgency and peer pressure can make a poor option seem necessary.
- A reversible decision allows a safe trial; an irreversible one deserves more care.
- Any member may call for a pause when something seems unsafe.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. State the decision in one sentence and separate facts from assumptions.
2. List two possible actions, including waiting or asking for help.
3. For each action, consider who could be affected and what could go wrong.
4. Choose a safe next step within your ability and permission. Ask a specific question when you need help.
5. Afterward, compare the result with your expectation and identify what you would change.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Stay quiet because the group seems confident.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Everyone wants to continue, but you do not understand the safety plan. What next?

- Stay quiet because the group seems confident.
- Ask the leader to pause and explain it.

Discuss after choosing: Other people's confidence does not replace information or your right to raise a concern.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I distinguished a fact from an assumption in a scenario.
- ☐ I named a reason to stop and ask for qualified help.
- ☐ I explained a decision and its likely consequences.

Mentor notes

- Thank the person who raises a concern, even when the plan is eventually safe.
- Ask what information would change the group's decision.

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04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Make the call

Compare continuing, changing, and stopping an imaginary outing when the forecast changes. Identify what information is missing.

Success looks like: Explain a decision, its consequences, and who needs to be consulted.

Talk it through: What new information would change your decision?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Facilitate another scenario and invite a quieter person's perspective.

PART 2

Taking care of yourself

Build daily routines, feed your crew, care for your clothes, and make time for what matters.



5 skills to learn, practice, and put into action.

Daily care and healthy routines

Look after your body, belongings, and shared spaces.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Being ready for other people starts with daily care. Build a routine you can actually follow at home and adapt it for camp, travel, and busy school days.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Personal supplies for the task · A simple written plan

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Basic hygiene, clean clothes, regular meals, and organized supplies support daily readiness.
- A routine works best when it is linked to a predictable cue, such as finishing breakfast.
- People have different health, sensory, and access needs; choose practical adaptations with a trusted adult.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. List your morning essentials: wash, brush teeth, dress, eat, and check what the day requires.
2. Set out supplies the night before and give frequently used items a consistent home.
3. Choose a short evening reset: put away belongings, prepare tomorrow's bag, and tidy shared space.
4. Try the routine for several days. Move one step if you keep missing it.
5. Build a small travel kit and check that it has the supplies you personally need.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Rely on trying harder to remember during the rush.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You keep forgetting the same item in the morning. What would help?

- Give it a fixed place and pack it during the evening reset.
- Rely on trying harder to remember during the rush.

Discuss after choosing: A consistent cue and location reduce the number of things you must remember under pressure.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I assembled a useful personal-care kit.
- ☐ I followed and adjusted a realistic daily routine.
- ☐ I left a shared space ready for the next person.

Mentor notes

- Teach routines without commenting on someone's body, smell, or family circumstances in public.
- Offer spare supplies discreetly and make adaptations normal.

Reference shelf

Art of Manliness: practical skills

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/>

Search Institute: developmental relationships

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Ready for tomorrow

Make and try a short evening routine that prepares your bag, clothes, and personal-care supplies.

Success looks like: Show your checklist after several days and one adjustment you made.

Talk it through: Which cue helped you remember without being reminded?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Adapt your routine for an overnight trip.

Rest, movement, and readiness

Build steady habits that prepare you for the activities you enjoy.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

You do not need to be the fastest person in the group to be ready for adventure. Consistent movement, enough rest, food, and gradual practice matter more than proving yourself on one hard day.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Personal supplies for the task · A simple written plan

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- CDC sleep guidance is 9–12 hours for ages 6–12 and 8–10 hours for ages 13–17.
- Build activity gradually and adapt it to your body and any guidance from your healthcare team.
- Pain, dizziness, or feeling unwell is a reason to stop and tell an adult, not a test of toughness.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Choose an activity you enjoy and a realistic time to do it this week.
2. Work backward from your wake-up time to allow enough sleep and a quiet wind-down.
3. For an upcoming hike, start with an easy walk and practice in the footwear you will use.
4. Notice how you feel afterward. Increase difficulty gradually with adult guidance.
5. Review your plan after a week and make one change that helps you keep it.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Keep going to show determination.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A practice walk causes pain and dizziness. What should you do?

- Keep going to show determination.
- Stop, tell the supervising adult, and get appropriate help.

Discuss after choosing: Symptoms need attention; pushing through is not a demonstration of readiness.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I made a realistic sleep and movement plan.
- ☐ I can explain when to stop an activity and ask for help.
- ☐ I practiced at an appropriate level for my next outing.

Mentor notes

- Provide different distances, paces, and useful roles so everyone can participate.
- Praise preparation and consistency; avoid weigh-ins or public fitness rankings.

Reference shelf

[CDC: sleep by age](https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about/)
<https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Build a sustainable week

Plan a week with age-appropriate sleep time and movement you enjoy. Try an easy practice outing suited to your abilities.

Success looks like: Explain how your plan allows rest and when you would stop and ask for help.

Talk it through: What made your plan realistic rather than impressive on paper?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Plan an inclusive practice activity with more than one pace or role.

Feed your crew

Plan, shop, cook, serve, and clean up a meal for six.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Feeding people is a practical act of care. This challenge combines a budget, a timeline, a safe workspace, and a team that leaves the kitchen ready for the next meal.



Before you begin · About 90 minutes

Bring: Personal supplies for the task · A simple written plan

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Ask privately about allergies and dietary needs before choosing the menu.
- Keep raw ingredients and their utensils separate from food that is ready to eat.
- Food safety includes clean hands, appropriate cooking temperatures, and prompt chilling; use the linked official chart for the food you choose.
- A simple meal done well is better than a complicated meal nobody has time to finish.

The whole meal is the project

- Plan: Confirm people and dietary needs, choose quantities, set a budget, and make a shopping and timing plan.
- Prepare: Assign roles, wash hands, separate raw-food equipment, and use the recipe and safe-temperature guidance with adult supervision.
- Close out: Serve the crew, store leftovers safely, clean and return equipment, then compare timing and cost with your plan.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Choose a simple menu with your adult supervisor, such as beans, rice, vegetables, and fruit. Confirm six portions and all dietary needs.

2. Check supplies already available. Write ingredient quantities, estimated prices, and a spending limit; include shared basics such as oil.
3. Shop from the list and compare total prices for the amounts you need. Keep the receipt and refrigerate perishables promptly.
4. Write a backwards timeline from serving time. Assign prep, cooking, setting the table, and cleanup, with adult supervision for heat and knives.
5. Wash hands with soap and water. Prepare a stable workspace and follow the recipe and official safe-temperature guidance for each ingredient.
6. Serve everyone, cool and store leftovers safely, wash and put away equipment, and compare the actual cost with the plan.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Remove the visible pieces from their serving.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You discover a crew member cannot eat a planned ingredient. What next?

- Stop and revise the menu and handling plan with the adult and that person.
- Remove the visible pieces from their serving.

Discuss after choosing: An ingredient may remain in the food or on equipment; do not improvise around an allergy.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I produced a menu and shopping list that met the crew's needs.
- ☐ I explained the food-safety plan before cooking.
- ☐ I helped serve the meal on time and leave a clean kitchen.
- ☐ I compared the receipt total with the budget.

Mentor notes

- Demonstrate one unfamiliar task, then let the learner do it with appropriate supervision.
- Ask the crew what they would change about portions, timing, cost, and cleanup.

Reference shelf

FoodSafety.gov: food safety steps

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/4-steps-to-food-safety>

National Park Service: cooking in camp

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/camping/cooking-in-camp.htm>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Dinner for six

With an adult, plan and serve a meal for six within an agreed budget. Include shopping, safe preparation, serving, and cleanup.

Success looks like: Bring the menu, quantities, receipt total, and timeline to a short debrief. Ask the crew whether the meal met their needs.

Talk it through: What would you change about cost, portions, timing, or cleanup?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Teach a newer cook one task, then let them lead it next time.

Laundry and caring for clothes

Read care labels, wash a load, and put everything away.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Looking after clothes keeps you comfortable and extends their useful life. Learning your household's machines and each garment's care label is more useful than memorizing one setting for everything.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Personal supplies for the task · A simple written plan

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Care labels override a general routine; wool, waterproof layers, and delicate items may need special care.
- Detergent is concentrated: follow its label and keep it away from younger children.
- Some stains set with heat, so check before using a dryer.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Empty pockets and read garment labels. Separate items as your household and fabric instructions require.
2. Ask an adult to show the machine controls, detergent amount, and safe loading level.
3. Choose a compatible wash cycle. Never mix cleaning products.
4. Check stains and follow drying instructions. Clean the dryer lint screen as taught before the load.
5. Fold or hang dry items, match socks, and return everything to its place.

Common mistakes to avoid

- The setting used for every other load.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A jacket has a special care label. What governs the wash?

- The garment and equipment instructions.
- The setting used for every other load.

Discuss after choosing: The wrong cycle or product can damage a garment even when ordinary clothes tolerate it.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I explained the care label on two different garments.
- ☐ I completed a supervised wash-and-dry cycle correctly.
- ☐ I put the whole load away.

Mentor notes

- Use a practice garment for reading labels and sorting.
- Help someone make a simple machine-specific checklist.

Reference shelf

Art of Manliness: practical skills

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/>

Search Institute: developmental relationships

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

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04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A load from start to finish

With permission, wash a compatible load using the garment labels and your household's equipment instructions.

Success looks like: Explain your sorting and settings, then put the entire load away.

Talk it through: Which label changed how you handled an item?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Make a short checklist for a different household member using the same machine.

Managing your time

Plan a week with room for obligations, rest, and changes.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A calendar helps you make choices before everything feels urgent. Start with a few commitments and a realistic next step rather than filling every minute.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Personal supplies for the task · A simple written plan

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- A task needs work time, preparation time, and sometimes travel time.
- Large projects become easier when the next action is specific.
- Leaving open time makes a plan more resilient.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Put fixed commitments and sleep on a weekly calendar first.
2. Choose three important tasks and break each into a first action you can finish in one sitting.
3. Estimate preparation and travel time, then give yourself a buffer.
4. Check tomorrow's plan each evening. Move unfinished work deliberately instead of forgetting it.
5. At week's end, compare estimates with reality and adjust one habit.

Common mistakes to avoid

- A reminder to hurry.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your plan leaves five minutes between school and a distant meeting. What is missing?

- A reminder to hurry.
- Travel and preparation time, plus a realistic buffer.

Discuss after choosing: A workable plan includes the transitions, not just the events.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I created a realistic weekly plan.
- ☐ I broke a large task into a concrete next action.
- ☐ I communicated a scheduling conflict early.

Mentor notes

- Plan a meeting with youth assigning their own preparation deadlines.
- Ask what can be simplified when the schedule is overloaded.

Reference shelf

Art of Manliness: practical skills

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/>

Search Institute: developmental relationships

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Plan a real week

Map your commitments, preparation, travel, rest, and three important tasks for the coming week.

Success looks like: At the end of the week, show one estimate you adjusted and one conflict you communicated early.

Talk it through: Where did you need more buffer?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Use the same method to plan the next crew meeting.

PART 3

Outdoor adventure

Prepare for the trail, care for wild places, and develop sound judgment through adventure.



29 skills to learn, practice, and put into action.

Trip planning

Goals, permissions, schedules, and backup plans before you leave town.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Good trips start at the kitchen table, not on the trailhead. Planning keeps the group safe, on time, and ready for weather or surprises.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Trip plan · Packing list · Your outing equipment

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Every outing needs a written plan: where you are going, who is coming, how long you will be gone, and how adults will stay in contact.
- Match the trip to the group's abilities and experience; choose a pace and plan everyone can sustain safely.
- Check land manager rules for the area (permits, group size, fire restrictions, cave closures). Leaders hold the official permits.
- Build in turnaround times: if you are not at a checkpoint by a set time, you change plans — do not push into darkness or storms.
- Share the plan with parents and the adult leader team before departure.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. List the trip purpose (training hike, service camp, river day) and three learning goals.
2. Draft a simple timeline: meet, travel, on-trail hours, meals, sleep, return.
3. Identify risks (heat, cold water, cliffs, traffic) and one mitigation for each.
4. Pack a contact card: leader phones, meeting point, and emergency meet-up location.
5. Run a five-minute gear check with your crew the night before.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Assume the crew will move faster.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your route estimate leaves no time for delays. What should change?

- Assume the crew will move faster.
- Shorten the plan or add realistic time and a turnaround decision.

Discuss after choosing: A usable plan accounts for the actual group and foreseeable delays.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can write a one-page trip plan with times and contacts.
- ☐ I know who the adult leaders in charge are for this outing.
- ☐ I can name two reasons we might turn back early.

Mentor notes

- Assign roles early: navigator, first-aid kit, water filter, camp setup lead.
- Use a whiteboard or shared doc so everyone sees the same plan.
- Ask quieter members what they are worried about — address it before the van leaves.
- Debrief within 48 hours: what worked, what to change next trip.

Reference shelf

NOLS: [expedition learning](https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/)

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Build a usable trip brief

Plan an approved day hike with route, timing, transport, equipment, weather check, and emergency contacts kept privately.

Success looks like: A partner can explain the route and turnaround plan from your brief.

Talk it through: Which assumption did you have to verify?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Present two route options and explain the tradeoffs to the crew.

Gear basics

Core equipment for day hikes, overnights, and travel days.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Gear does not need to be expensive, but it must fit, work, and be appropriate for the activity. Test new gear at home or on a short practice outing first.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Trip plan · Packing list · Your outing equipment

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- The ten essentials mindset: navigation, sun protection, insulation, illumination, first-aid supplies, fire starter, repair kit, nutrition, hydration, emergency shelter — adapted to the trip.
- Borrowed gear must be returned clean and dry; report damage immediately.
- Sharp tools (knives, axes) stay with adults or trained youth under direct supervision.
- Group gear (tents, stoves, ropes) is shared property — treat it better than your own.

Explore a packed bag

- Quick access: Keep items you may need during the day easy to reach: rain protection, a light, snacks, and your navigation tools. Your trip list determines the actual contents.
- Stable center: Place denser equipment close to your back and secure it so it cannot shift. Test the loaded pack with your leader and adjust for comfort.
- Protected bottom: A sleeping bag is often packed low in the bag inside a dry liner. Protect anything that must stay dry and avoid loose items swinging outside.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Lay out gear on a tarp at home; eliminate duplicates your team does not need.
2. Label your bag and water bottles with your name.

3. Practice setting up tent and stove before a big trip.
4. Pack rain cover for pack and a dry bag for sleep clothes.
5. Weigh your pack; ask a leader if you are unsure about weight for the route.

Watch & discuss online

How to pack a backpack — REI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBDido6uX9k>

Notice how weight and quick-access items are placed, then test your own pack.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Pack it and hope it works.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Borrowed equipment has a broken fastener. What next?

- Pack it and hope it works.
- Tell the owner and leader before relying on it.

Discuss after choosing: A defect needs assessment before the group depends on the equipment.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I own or can borrow a working headlamp with spare batteries.
- ☐ I can pack my bag without forgetting rain layer and water.
- ☐ I know where group gear is stored and how to check it out.

Mentor notes

- Run a gear swap table so newer members see good budget options.
- Teach the difference between cotton and synthetic for active layers.
- Keep a shared checklist photo in the group chat for each trip type.

Reference shelf

NOLS: expedition learning

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Borrow, inspect, prepare

Lay out the equipment for a planned outing and inspect borrowed items with the owner.

Success looks like: Identify an essential item, an optional item, and a defect that needs attention.

Talk it through: What could you borrow instead of buy?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help a newer member choose suitable gear without pushing expensive options.

Clothing and layering

Dress for sweat, wind, rain, and cold — especially in North Georgia hills.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Weather in the mountains changes fast. Layering lets you cool off on climbs and warm up at camp without soaking your clothes in sweat.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Trip plan · Packing list · Your outing equipment

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Base layer moves moisture (synthetic or wool — avoid cotton for active wear).
- Mid layer traps warmth (fleece or light puffy).
- Shell blocks wind and rain (breathable rain jacket).
- One warm hat and light gloves weigh little and help a lot at night.
- Wet cotton steals body heat — change into dry clothes before evening chill.

Three jobs for your layers

- Manage moisture: The layer near your skin should help manage perspiration. Adjust your pace and clothing before you become soaked with sweat.
- Hold warmth: An insulating layer traps warm air. Add it at cool stops and keep a dry reserve appropriate for your forecast.
- Block weather: The outer layer protects against wind or rain. Ventilate and adjust it as conditions change; one outfit will not suit the entire day.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Wear your trail clothes on a practice walk; adjust before trip day.
2. Pack an extra dry shirt and socks in a zip bag.

3. Learn to strip a layer before you start sweating hard uphill.
4. Bring sun hat and sunscreen even on cloudy days.
5. Break in boots or trail shoes weeks ahead — not on a long hike.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Keep every layer on until you are soaked.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You are sweating on a climb before a cold stop. What helps?

- Keep every layer on until you are soaked.
- Adjust layers early and keep a dry layer ready for the stop.

Discuss after choosing: Managing moisture and insulation is easier before you become wet and chilled.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can explain base, mid, and shell layers with my own gear.
- ☐ My boots or shoes are broken in and laced for downhill control.
- ☐ I carry rain layer even when the forecast looks clear.

Mentor notes

- Demonstrate layering at a meeting with real jackets, not just slides.
- Call a clothing check at the trailhead — polite but firm.
- Pair experienced hikers with newer members to review layers quietly.

Reference shelf

NOLS: expedition learning

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Dress for a changing day

Choose layers for a cool start, warm climb, and rainy rest stop. Explain when you would add or remove each.

Success looks like: Demonstrate a dry backup system and adjust layers before becoming chilled or overheated.

Talk it through: Which layer would you need first at a windy stop?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Teach your partner using three different forecast cards.

Packing lists

Day pack, overnight, river, cave, and travel lists you can reuse.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Use a list every time. Memory fails when you are rushing out the door at 5 a.m.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Trip plan · Packing list · Your outing equipment

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Day hike: water, snacks, rain layer, first-aid kit, map/phone, headlamp, sun protection.
- Overnight add: shelter, sleep system, stove fuel, bear-safe food storage where required, camp clothes.
- River or lake days need PFDs as leaders direct, dry bags, and closed-toe water shoes — no cotton shorts only.
- Cave trips are leader-planned only; never add gear on your own without approval.
- Travel days need modest, clean clothes for stops and a book or card game without phones driving the mood.

Explore a packed bag

- Quick access: Keep items you may need during the day easy to reach: rain protection, a light, snacks, and your navigation tools. Your trip list determines the actual contents.
- Stable center: Place denser equipment close to your back and secure it so it cannot shift. Test the loaded pack with your leader and adjust for comfort.
- Protected bottom: A sleeping bag is often packed low in the bag inside a dry liner. Protect anything that must stay dry and avoid loose items swinging outside.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Print or copy the list for your trip type from this guide or leader packet.
2. Check off items as they go into your pack — not after the zipper is closed.
3. Stage your pack the night before; put food in the fridge until morning.
4. Weigh optional items; cut luxury if your shoulders tell you to.
5. Do a buddy check — two sets of eyes catch forgotten water filters.

Watch & discuss online

How to pack a backpack — REI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBDido6uX9k>

Notice how weight and quick-access items are placed, then test your own pack.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Leave it because it technically fits.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Rain gear is buried beneath everything. What should change?

- Leave it because it technically fits.
- Repack it where you can reach it quickly.

Discuss after choosing: Packing includes access when conditions change, not just fitting items inside.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I use a written list for every outing.
- ☐ I completed a buddy gear check on my last trip.
- ☐ I know which items are never allowed (leaders will brief weapons, drones, etc.).

Mentor notes

- Publish trip-specific lists in the group chat one week out.
- Collect photos of packed bags from new members for coaching.
- Keep a bin of spare batteries, duct tape, and zip ties for last-minute fixes.

Reference shelf

NOLS: expedition learning

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Pack, find, repack

Pack from the actual trip list. Ask a partner to name three items you need to find quickly.

Success looks like: Retrieve rain gear, water, and a light without emptying the whole pack; explain what stays dry.

Talk it through: What did the retrieval exercise reveal?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Build a shared-equipment list so the crew avoids unnecessary duplicates.

Campsite selection

Pick durable surfaces, manage drainage, and respect neighbors.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A good site makes camp chores easy and protects the forest for the next crew.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Tent, pad, and sleeping bag · Site rules · Approved practice space

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Use existing campsites when available; avoid trampling new vegetation.
- Stay 200 feet from lakes and streams when rules require it — leaders know local rules.
- Look up for dead branches; avoid ravines that flash-flood in rain.
- Wind breaks are nice but not under leaning trees or cliff edges.
- Group size and land rules may limit where you may camp — follow the permit.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Arrive with daylight to choose site calmly.
2. Place tents on level ground with head slightly uphill if possible.
3. Store food and scented items as leaders direct (bear bag, canister, vehicle).
4. Identify bathroom area and dishwashing spot away from tents and water.
5. Walk the site perimeter for glass, holes, or trash before settling in.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Pitch quickly before dark.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A flat campsite has a damaged branch overhead. What next?

- Reject it and ask the leader to assess another site.
- Pitch quickly before dark.

Discuss after choosing: Convenience does not remove an overhead hazard.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can name three things wrong with a bad campsite.
- ☐ I set up tent without damaging plants under the footprint.
- ☐ I know our food storage plan for this trip.

Mentor notes

- Send two scouts to compare two sites, then decide as a crew.
- Rotate who picks kitchen vs. tent zones so everyone learns.
- Leave a site cleaner than you found it — model picking up micro-trash.

Reference shelf

National Park Service: setting up camp

<https://home.nps.gov/subjects/camping/finding-and-setting-up-a-campsite.htm>

Leave No Trace: outdoor ethics

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Choose between two sites

Compare two approved sites or photographs for drainage, overhead hazards, durability, and local rules.

Success looks like: Explain why you chose one and what would make you reject both.

Talk it through: Which hazard was easiest to overlook?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Lead a site walk with the adult making the final approval.

Tents and shelters

Setup, stakes, rainflies, and care for shared tents.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Tents are teamwork. Fast, calm setup beats a rushed job in the rain.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Tent, pad, and sleeping bag · Site rules · Approved practice space

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Read the pitch diagram before you pull poles out.
- Stake corners at a low angle; guylines matter in wind.
- Keep mud and boots outside the vestibule when possible.
- Never cook inside a tent — carbon monoxide and fire risk.
- Dry tents completely at home to prevent mold.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Lay footprint or ground cloth without sticking out past the rainfly.
2. Assemble poles; clip body; stake downwind side first in breeze.
3. Tighten rainfly evenly; check ventilation.
4. Store sharp stakes in a bag so they do not tear the tent in the stuff sack.
5. Practice breakdown: shake dirt out, roll loosely, stuff sack.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Seal it away until the next trip.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

The packed tent is still wet. What next?

- Arrange prompt drying before long-term storage.
- Seal it away until the next trip.

Discuss after choosing: Wet storage can damage fabric and create mildew; closeout is part of the job.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can pitch our common tent style with a partner.
- ☐ I stake and guyline for wind without being told.
- ☐ I dry and return group tents on schedule after a trip.

Mentor notes

- Pair one experienced and one newer member per tent.
- Time a setup drill at a meeting — celebrate improvement, not speed alone.
- Inspect returned tents and log damage on a shared sheet.

Reference shelf

National Park Service: setting up camp

<https://home.nps.gov/subjects/camping/finding-and-setting-up-a-campsite.htm>

Leave No Trace: outdoor ethics

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Pitch, check, leave ready

With permission, pitch the crew's tent on an approved surface using its instructions, then inspect and pack it.

Success looks like: Show a stable pitch, clear entrance, and dry, complete packed equipment.

Talk it through: What would you change before rain arrives?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Coach a newer partner through the setup without taking over.

Sleep systems

Pads, bags, quilts, and staying warm without overheating.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Sleep fuels the next day. Cold or poor sleep leads to mistakes on trail.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Tent, pad, and sleeping bag · Site rules · Approved practice space

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Insulation under you (pad) matters as much as insulation on top (bag or quilt).
- Match bag rating to expected low temp; wear dry base layers to bed.
- Vent the tent slightly to reduce condensation.
- Keep tomorrow's clothes in the bag if cold — not wet socks.
- Inflatable pads can puncture — carry a patch kit or foam backup on long trips.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Inflate pad firm enough you do not touch ground when on your side.
2. Fluff sleeping bag before bed; zip fully in cold, vent in heat.
3. Use a liner or wear clean base layers — body oils reduce loft over time.
4. Store food-scented items out of the tent.
5. In morning, air bag before stuffing if time allows.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Only an extra pillow.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A warm sleeping bag has no insulating pad beneath it. What is missing?

- Only an extra pillow.
- Ground insulation suited to the conditions.

Discuss after choosing: A sleep system includes insulation below the sleeper as well as around them.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I slept warm on my last campout or fixed my setup.
- ☐ I know my bag's comfort rating and how to vent it.
- ☐ I keep sleep clothes dry in a zip bag.

Mentor notes

- Teach the sit-kneel-lie test for pad thickness on loaner gear.
- Check that everyone has something under them — not just a blanket on tent floor.
- Remind crew about quiet hours and headlamp courtesy.

Reference shelf

National Park Service: setting up camp

<https://home.nps.gov/subjects/camping/finding-and-setting-up-a-campsite.htm>

Leave No Trace: outdoor ethics

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Build a dry sleep setup

Lay out a pad, suitable bag, and dry clothing for the planned overnight forecast.

Success looks like: Explain insulation beneath you and how the bag stays dry during travel.

Talk it through: What would you do if the bag got wet before bedtime?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help inspect the group's sleep equipment before departure.

Leave No Trace

Seven principles adapted for our trips and service mindset.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

We leave places better because good stewardship shows in action — on trails, rivers, and neighbors' yards.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Tent, pad, and sleeping bag · Site rules · Approved practice space

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Plan ahead and prepare — reduces rescue impact and resource damage.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly — pack it out, including food scraps in many forests.
- Leave what you find — rocks, plants, artifacts stay put.
- Minimize campfire impacts — use stoves when fire risk is high.
- Respect wildlife — store food, observe from distance.
- Be considerate of other visitors — quiet voices, yield on trail.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Pick up trash you did not drop when it is safe to do so.
2. Use established fire rings only when fires are allowed.
3. Dig catholes correctly where toilet paper must be packed out — leaders brief local practice.
4. Stay on trail through mud; do not cut switchbacks.
5. Photograph nature instead of collecting souvenirs.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Leave it for wildlife.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A small food scrap is biodegradable. What should you do?

- Pack it out according to the site's rules.
- Leave it for wildlife.

Discuss after choosing: Food waste changes animal behavior and affects other visitors.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can list all seven Leave No Trace principles.
- ☐ I packed out all my trash and micro-trash on my last trip.
- ☐ I stayed on trail even when muddy.

Mentor notes

- Assign a “trash sweep” line before leaving camp.
- Teach one LNT principle per meeting for a month.
- Call out good examples publicly; coach privately when someone forgets.

Reference shelf

National Park Service: setting up camp

<https://home.nps.gov/subjects/camping/finding-and-setting-up-a-campsite.htm>

Leave No Trace: outdoor ethics

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Leave the site ready

Inspect an approved campsite or picnic area before and after your visit. Choose ways to reduce your impact.

Success looks like: Account for food scraps, rubbish, and any moved items while following local rules.

Talk it through: What effect could this visit have if a hundred groups did the same thing?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Teach one low-impact habit during your next outing.

Camp kitchen setup

Food prep zones, sanitation, and keeping critters out.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A tidy kitchen prevents illness and keeps animals away from your tent at night.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Menu · Kitchen kit · Handwashing and cleanup supplies

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Keep raw meat and its utensils separate from ready-to-eat foods on every trip.
- Wash hands with soap and safe water before preparing food and after bathroom breaks. Plan a proper handwashing station.
- Store food and trash in approved containers or vehicles as leaders direct.
- Grey water (dish water) should be strained and scattered away from camp and water sources per leader briefing.
- Knives stay supervised; cut away from your body on a stable surface.

The whole meal is the project

- Plan: Confirm people and dietary needs, choose quantities, set a budget, and make a shopping and timing plan.
- Prepare: Assign roles, wash hands, separate raw-food equipment, and use the recipe and safe-temperature guidance with adult supervision.
- Close out: Serve the crew, store leftovers safely, clean and return equipment, then compare timing and cost with your plan.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Set kitchen downwind of tents if smoke is a factor.
2. Hang or store food before dark.
3. Use a collapsible sink or pot system for dish line: wash, rinse, sanitize if needed.
4. Assign cook, assistant, and cleanup roles before you start.
5. Pack out all food waste when required — do not bury scraps.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Wipe it on a towel and serve.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A utensil used on raw food is needed for serving. What next?

- Use a clean utensil and clean the contaminated equipment appropriately.
- Wipe it on a towel and serve.

Discuss after choosing: Keep raw-food contamination away from food that is ready to eat.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I washed hands or sanitized before my last group meal.
- ☐ I know where food is stored at night on our trips.
- ☐ I can run dish cleanup with biodegradable soap properly.

Mentor notes

- Draw a simple kitchen map on a napkin for new crews.
- Rotate jobs so everyone learns cook and cleanup.
- Inspect coolers and ice plan before leaving town.

Reference shelf

National Park Service: cooking in camp

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/camping/cooking-in-camp.htm>

FoodSafety.gov: food safety steps

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/4-steps-to-food-safety>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Set up a working kitchen

Lay out food storage, handwashing, preparation, cooking, and dish-cleaning zones with an adult.

Success looks like: Walk a partner through the route from clean hands to safe food and cleaned equipment.

Talk it through: Where could dirty equipment cross into the clean area?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Run a cleanup rotation so everyone practices each job.

Trail food and meal planning

Calories, hydration, simple menus, and allergies.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Eat and drink steadily on trail days. Bonking from low calories makes navigation and teamwork harder.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Menu · Kitchen kit · Handwashing and cleanup supplies

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Active teens often need more snacks than they expect — plan extra.
- Balance carbs for energy, protein for recovery, and salt when sweating.
- Know every member's allergies and dietary needs before cooking for the group.
- Water treatment is required unless leaders say a source is pre-approved.
- Heavy glass and unnecessary packaging stay home.

The whole meal is the project

- Plan: Confirm people and dietary needs, choose quantities, set a budget, and make a shopping and timing plan.
- Prepare: Assign roles, wash hands, separate raw-food equipment, and use the recipe and safe-temperature guidance with adult supervision.
- Close out: Serve the crew, store leftovers safely, clean and return equipment, then compare timing and cost with your plan.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Pack lunch you can eat without stopping long in cold rain.
2. Pre-measure ingredients for group meals into zip bags at home.

3. Label allergen-free foods clearly.
4. Carry at least one spare meal bar in your pack.
5. Drink on a schedule — not only when you feel thirsty.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Assume a small portion is fine.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A food package has an unclear ingredient list for a known allergy. What next?

- Choose a verified suitable alternative with adult guidance.
- Assume a small portion is fine.

Discuss after choosing: Uncertainty about an allergen is a reason to stop and verify, not experiment.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can pack a full day of snacks and lunch for a hard hike.
- ☐ I know my crew's allergy restrictions.
- ☐ I treat or use approved water on every backcountry trip.

Mentor notes

- Build a shared menu with leaders and parent helpers.
- Make dietary precautions available privately to responsible cooks; do not publish personal health details.
- Teach “eat early, eat often” on hard climb days.

Reference shelf

National Park Service: cooking in camp

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/camping/cooking-in-camp.htm>

FoodSafety.gov: food safety steps

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/4-steps-to-food-safety>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

A day's food that works

Plan a day-hike menu around the actual crew's needs, carrying weight, water plan, and conditions.

Success looks like: Show portions, packaging, allergy precautions, and a reserve snack.

Talk it through: What would still be easy to eat in cold rain?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Compare two menu options for cost, weight, and preparation.

Campfires

When fire is allowed, how to build, tend, and extinguish safely.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Campfires are optional. Follow current land-manager restrictions without exceptions; use a stove only if that type of stove is also permitted.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Exact equipment manual · Adult-approved practice area · Fire control supplies

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Check fire restrictions every trip — they change with drought.
- Use existing fire rings; keep fires small and manageable.
- Never leave fire unattended; have water and shovel ready.
- Extinguish until coals are cold to the touch — drown, stir, repeat.
- Collect firewood only where rules allow; do not strip live trees.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Clear a zone of flammable material around the ring.
2. With adult supervision and permission, build with tinder, kindling, then fuel wood. Never use gasoline or liquid accelerants to start a campfire.
3. Keep hair and loose clothing away from flames.
4. Burn wood completely to ash when possible before leaving site.
5. Pack out foil and trash — do not burn plastic.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Let the leader make an exception.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A leader wants a fire but current restrictions prohibit it. What next?

- Let the leader make an exception.
- Follow the restriction and choose a permitted alternative.

Discuss after choosing: A group leader cannot override land-manager fire restrictions.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can explain when our group uses stoves only.
- ☐ I extinguished a practice fire until cold or observed a leader do so.
- ☐ I never cut live trees for firewood.

Mentor notes

- Assign a fire watch rotation with a clear handoff.
- Teach one-match fire only after basic stove skills are solid.
- Call full stop when wind picks up or group is tired.

Reference shelf

National Park Service: cooking in camp

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/camping/cooking-in-camp.htm>

Leave No Trace: outdoor ethics

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A fire decision and shutdown

Check current rules with a leader. Rehearse a fire setup without lighting it, or assist with an approved supervised fire.

Success looks like: Identify water, tools, boundaries, and how an adult will confirm the fire is fully out.

Talk it through: When would the right decision be no fire at all?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Teach a dry rehearsal to the crew before any ignition.

Stoves and fuel

Canister and liquid fuel basics under adult supervision.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Stoves cook dinner when fire bans are on and boil water fast. Treat fuel with respect — it is not a toy.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Exact equipment manual · Adult-approved practice area · Fire control supplies

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Fuel stays outside tents and away from heat sources.
- Use stoves outdoors on stable, non-flammable surfaces with manufacturer-specified clearances. Use a windscreen only if that stove manufacturer permits it; enclosing a canister can overheat it.
- Use only the fuel and connection procedure specified for the exact stove. An adult checks the equipment before use.
- Liquid fuel stoves need priming — youth use only after leader training.
- Carbon monoxide risk means stoves run only in open air.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Set up the cold stove according to its manual, outdoors away from tents and vestibules. Have an adult confirm stability and clearances before lighting.
2. Light with face and body clear of flare-up path.
3. Turn off fuel at the source when finished; let cool before packing.
4. Store fuel in marked containers away from food.
5. Report empty canisters to leaders for proper disposal.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Inside the tent vestibule for shelter.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Rain starts while you are using a stove. Where can it go?

- Inside the tent vestibule for shelter.
- Only an outdoor location allowed by the stove instructions and leader's plan.

Discuss after choosing: Stoves create fire and carbon-monoxide hazards; a tent or vestibule is not a cooking shelter.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can safely light and shut off our common stove model with supervision.
- ☐ I store fuel away from tents and food.
- ☐ I know never to use a stove inside a tent or enclosed shelter.

Mentor notes

- Run a stove clinic at a parking lot before backcountry trips.
- Keep a spare lighter and repair kit in the group bin.
- Log which stoves are due for maintenance.

Reference shelf

National Park Service: cooking in camp

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/camping/cooking-in-camp.htm>

Leave No Trace: outdoor ethics

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Know this stove

Read the exact stove's manual with an adult. Rehearse setup and shutdown cold; operate only under approved supervision.

Success looks like: Identify fuel compatibility, clearances, stability, and shutdown steps for that model.

Talk it through: Which instruction is specific to this stove?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help build a model-specific equipment checklist.

Map and compass

Read terrain, orient the map, and take a bearing.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Phones fail. Paper maps and a compass still work when batteries die or screens crack.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Local map · Compass · Offline map and charged phone

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Map scale shows distance; contour lines show steepness — close lines mean steep terrain.
- Orienting a map means turning it so north on the map matches north in the field.
- A bearing is a direction in degrees from north.
- Declination adjusts compass for true north vs. magnetic north — leaders provide local value.
- Always combine map, compass, and what you see on the ground.

Read the shape of the land

- Widely spaced: For the same contour interval, wider spacing means a gentler slope. Always check the map's scale and contour interval.
- Closely spaced: Close contour lines show a steeper slope. A short distance on the map can still be a demanding climb.
- Closed loops: Nested contours can describe a hill. Read the elevation labels and any depression markings before deciding what the feature is. This sketch shows a hill.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Identify trail junctions and landmarks on the map before you walk.
2. Practice taking a bearing to a visible object, then walk toward it with terrain checks.

3. Thumb your map — keep your thumb on your current location as you move.
4. If lost, STOP: stay put, observe, think, plan — then call leaders.
5. Protect map in a zip bag or case.

Watch & discuss online

How to use a compass — REI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cF0ovA3FtY>

Identify the compass parts and discuss declination with your instructor before field practice.

How to read a topographic map — REI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoVcRxza8nI>

Compare contour spacing with the shape and steepness of the terrain.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Walk farther until something looks familiar.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

The landmark does not match your assumed position. What next?

- Walk farther until something looks familiar.
- Stop together and recheck the map with the leader.

Discuss after choosing: Moving on can turn uncertainty into a larger navigation problem.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I oriented a map to north with a compass.
- ☐ I took and followed a simple bearing to a landmark.
- ☐ I can explain what contour lines show.

Mentor notes

- Run a backyard or parking-lot compass course before forest practice.
- Pair members for map quizzes at trail junctions.
- Rotate navigator role every hour on trail.

Reference shelf

REI: compass and map navigation

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/navigation-basics.html>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Know where you are

On an easy approved practice route, match a map to visible landmarks and orient it with a compass under instruction.

Success looks like: Point to your location and explain your next destination and a check landmark.

Talk it through: What would make you stop and recheck your location?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Coach a partner through the same short route.

Phone and GPS apps

Useful tools with limits — battery, accuracy, and distraction.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

GPS apps help, but they are not a substitute for map skills.
Use them as backup, not autopilot.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Local map · Compass · Offline map and charged phone

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Phone GPS uses battery fast — carry a power bank on long days.
- Download offline maps before you lose signal in the mountains.
- Location error can be large under cliffs or dense trees.
- Sharing live location with leaders may be required on some trips — follow the briefing.
- Walking while staring at a screen causes trips and falls.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Download the route area offline the night before.
2. Put phone in airplane mode and use GPS only to save power when leaders allow.
3. Stop to check the screen; do not navigate mid-stride on rough trail.
4. Mark camp and car as waypoints when you arrive.
5. Keep phone dry in a zip bag or waterproof pouch.

Common mistakes to avoid

- A brighter screen setting.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your phone has an online map but no service at the trailhead. What was missing?

- A brighter screen setting.
- A tested offline download and a backup navigation plan.

Discuss after choosing: A map must be available where it is needed, even without connectivity.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I downloaded offline maps for my last trip area.
- ☐ I stopped walking before reading my phone on trail.
- ☐ I carried backup power or shared a group charging plan.

Mentor notes

- Show which apps the program standardizes on.
- Set a rule: map out, phone in pocket unless stopped.
- Carry a group charger for multi-day trips.

Reference shelf

REI: compass and map navigation

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/navigation-basics.html>

NOLS: expedition learning

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Navigate without a signal

Download the approved map, open it offline, and rehearse finding your location while stationary.

Success looks like: Show the downloaded area, power plan, and a non-phone backup.

Talk it through: What would fail if the battery ran out?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help a partner test their offline map before departure.

Trail blazes and signs

Follow painted blazes, signs, and junction discipline.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Blazes are the trail's language. Learn the local colors and shapes before you hike.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Local map · Compass · Offline map and charged phone

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Blaze color and shape mean a specific trail — know yours for the day.
- Two blazes stacked can mean turn or caution depending on local custom — ask leaders.
- Signs at road crossings may use different symbols than forest trails.
- False trails and social paths exist — stay with the marked route unless scouting with leaders.
- The Appalachian Trail uses white blazes in many sections — still confirm with your map.

Read the shape of the land

- Widely spaced: For the same contour interval, wider spacing means a gentler slope. Always check the map's scale and contour interval.
- Closely spaced: Close contour lines show a steeper slope. A short distance on the map can still be a demanding climb.
- Closed loops: Nested contours can describe a hill. Read the elevation labels and any depression markings before deciding what the feature is. This sketch shows a hill.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Confirm blaze color at the trailhead sign.
2. At every junction, wait for the group before choosing a fork.

3. If blazes disappear, backtrack to last known good marker.
4. Log junction decisions on a notepad for debrief.
5. Report missing or confusing signs to land managers through leaders.

Watch & discuss online

How to read a topographic map — REI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoVcRxza8nI>

Compare contour spacing with the shape and steepness of the terrain.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Follow the freshest paint automatically.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A blaze points away from the route you expected. What next?

- Stop and verify the junction with the map and leader.
- Follow the freshest paint automatically.

Discuss after choosing: Markers are one clue; confirm the actual route rather than assuming.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I know today's blaze color and shape.
- ☐ I waited for the group at a junction on my last hike.
- ☐ I backtracked safely when unsure instead of guessing.

Mentor notes

- Quiz the crew at the first three junctions.
- Place a sweeper at the back so nobody misses a turn.
- Teach “halt at forks” as a crew habit.

Reference shelf

REI: compass and map navigation

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/navigation-basics.html>

NOLS: expedition learning

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Read the trail together

At an approved trailhead, compare the posted map with markers on a short supervised walk.

Success looks like: Identify a junction and explain how you confirm the route beyond a single blaze.

Talk it through: What would you do when a marker seems inconsistent?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Explain one junction to a newer hiker before the group proceeds.

Day hiking

Pace, hydration, trail etiquette, and group spacing.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Day hikes build fitness and teamwork without the weight of full backpacking.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Trip packing list · Suitable footwear · Water and food

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Start slower than you think — warm muscles prevent injury.
- Downhill hurts knees — shorten steps and use poles if leaders issue them.
- Yield to uphill hikers on narrow trail when safe.
- Stay in sight or sound of your assigned buddy pair.
- Turn back before exhaustion — leaders set turnaround times.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Eat a real breakfast; sip water every 20–30 minutes.
2. Use trekking poles on steep or wet trails if available.
3. Announce when passing: “On your left” with space.
4. Take short breaks on durable ground, not on fragile plants.
5. Log miles and how you felt for training records.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Let them catch up at the next distant stop.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A member is falling behind the crew. What next?

- Regroup and adjust the pace with the leader.
- Let them catch up at the next distant stop.

Discuss after choosing: A successful hike keeps the group accounted for and supported.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I kept hydration steady on my last day hike.
- ☐ I used buddy system without drifting out of contact.
- ☐ I yielded properly on a narrow section.

Mentor notes

- Set pace by conversation test — able to talk without gasping.
- Assign front, middle, and sweep with radios or whistle signals if needed.
- Plan water stops before the group is thirsty.

Reference shelf

NOLS: [expedition learning](https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/)

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A prepared day out

Join a leader-approved hike with the required equipment, buddy plan, and turnaround time.

Success looks like: Stay with the crew, check your needs early, and describe a decision that kept the group together.

Talk it through: When did the group need to change its pace?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help give the trailhead briefing on the next hike.

Backpacking

Load, hip belt, camp miles, and caring for feet.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Carrying your house on your back changes how you walk.
Train with weight before a big trip.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Trip packing list · Suitable footwear · Water and food

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Most pack weight should sit on hips via hip belt, not shoulders.
- Adjust straps every morning as load settles.
- Blister care early beats hiking in pain — stop at hot spots.
- Camp chores eat time — start hiking early after breakfast.
- Bear bags, canisters, or lockers depend on area — leaders decide.

Explore a packed bag

- Quick access: Keep items you may need during the day easy to reach: rain protection, a light, snacks, and your navigation tools. Your trip list determines the actual contents.
- Stable center: Place denser equipment close to your back and secure it so it cannot shift. Test the loaded pack with your leader and adjust for comfort.
- Protected bottom: A sleeping bag is often packed low in the bag inside a dry liner. Protect anything that must stay dry and avoid loose items swinging outside.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Pack heaviest items close to spine and mid-back.
2. Loosen hip belt when resting; snug when moving.

3. Change socks at lunch on wet days.
4. Break camp in reverse order of setup checklist.
5. Practice putting on pack without help — then learn team assists on steep ground.

Watch & discuss online

How to pack a backpack — REI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBDido6uX9k>

Notice how weight and quick-access items are placed, then test your own pack.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Assume it will become comfortable after more miles.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A loaded practice pack rubs painfully. What next?

- Assume it will become comfortable after more miles.
- Stop and adjust fit or load with help before the trip.

Discuss after choosing: A shakedown is the time to discover and fix problems.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I adjusted hip belt and shoulder straps correctly.
- ☐ I treated a hot spot before it became a blister.
- ☐ I helped break camp on time without rushing safety steps.

Mentor notes

- Weigh packs before departure; redistribute group gear fairly.
- Teach foot inspection at first camp night.
- Set realistic daily mileage for the slowest member.

Reference shelf

NOLS: expedition learning

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

A loaded practice walk

Pack for an approved overnight and take a short supervised shakedown walk before the trip.

Success looks like: Identify fit problems or unnecessary weight and adjust with a leader.

Talk it through: What was different once the pack was on your back?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help review shared loads so the crew distributes work fairly.

Weather awareness

Forecasts, clouds, wind, and when to change plans.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Mountain weather differs from Gainesville. Check forecasts for the trail elevation, not just town.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Official forecast · Route map · Shelter and turnaround plan

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Afternoon thunderstorms are common in North Georgia spring and summer — plan off summits early.
- Hypothermia can happen above 50°F when wet and windy.
- Heat illness hits on humid service days and exposed ridges — shade and water matter.
- Wind at ridge tops can knock you off balance — low center of gravity and optional turnaround.
- Leaders may cancel or shorten trips when lightning, flood, or ice risk is high.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Read forecast night before and morning of; note storm timing.
2. Watch building cumulus and sudden wind shifts on trail.
3. Before departure, identify a substantial enclosed building or enclosed hard-top vehicle reachable before storms. Trees, tents, and open picnic shelters are not safe lightning shelters.
4. At thunder, stop outdoor activity and go to the planned safe shelter. Wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder before resuming; do not delay shelter to manage equipment.
5. Add layers before you are shivering; remove before overheating.

Watch & discuss online

[Lightning safety — National Weather Service, Missoula](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oy197C4mhgg)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oy197C4mhgg>

Identify appropriate shelter and use the current NWS guidance linked below when planning your outing.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Wait under the open-sided picnic shelter.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You hear thunder near a picnic shelter. What is the plan?

- Wait under the open-sided picnic shelter.
- Go promptly to the planned substantial building or enclosed hard-top vehicle.

Discuss after choosing: Open-sided shelters and tents are not safe lightning shelters. If safe shelter cannot be reached in time, the outing plan must change beforehand.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I checked elevation-specific weather before my last trip.
- ☐ I can name signs a thunderstorm is building.
- ☐ I turned back or sheltered when leaders called it — or would have.

Mentor notes

- Assign a weather watcher to call five-minute checks on risky days.
- Practice turning the group around without drama — safety beats summit photos.
- Keep a written go/no-go checklist for river and cave days.

Reference shelf

[National Weather Service: lightning outdoors](https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-outdoors)

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-outdoors>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Make a weather plan

Read the forecast for the actual location and identify a substantial building or enclosed hard-top vehicle reachable before storms.

Success looks like: Explain the cancellation or turnaround decision and the 30-minute wait after the last thunder before resuming outdoors.

Talk it through: What if no safe shelter is reachable?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Brief the crew on why a changed plan can be a successful decision.

Terrain and environmental hazards

Slips, snakes, ticks, plants, and water crossings.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Awareness prevents most injuries. Look up, down, and ahead — not at your phone on rough ground.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Official forecast · Route map · Shelter and turnaround plan

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Wet rock and leaves are slick — test footholds; use hands when needed.
- Stay on trail in snake country; do not reach where you cannot see.
- Check for ticks after brushy hikes; shower and parent check as appropriate.
- Poison ivy has three leaflets — learn it before yard work and trail maintenance.
- Water crossings require qualified leader assessment. High, fast, or uncertain water means stop and choose an approved alternative; a rope does not make a hazardous crossing safe.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Wear ankle-support footwear on rocky trails.
2. Use trekking poles for balance on streams when leaders approve crossing.
3. Brush pants legs and use repellent when ticks are active.
4. Report unstable trees or trail damage to leaders.
5. Carry whistle for separation — three blasts means emergency in our practice.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Try it first to see how deep it is.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A stream is higher and faster than expected. What next?

- Try it first to see how deep it is.
- Stop and let the qualified leader reassess or turn around.

Discuss after choosing: A test crossing can become an emergency; changed conditions need a new decision.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I identified poison ivy or reviewed a photo before service season.
- ☐ I did a tick check after my last brushy hike.
- ☐ I crossed water only under leader direction.

Mentor notes

- Brief local hazards at trailhead each trip.
- Stop the line when someone struggles — regroup before continuing.
- Keep a tick kit and know disposal method in group first-aid supplies.

Reference shelf

National Weather Service: lightning outdoors

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-outdoors>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Walk and notice

On an approved short route, identify hazards from a safe distance and explain an avoidance plan.

Success looks like: Point out footing, overhead hazards, and a place where you would stop for leader guidance.

Talk it through: Which hazard changes most after rain?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Prepare a brief for the next group using verified local information.

First aid kit and common injuries

Blisters, sprains, cuts, and when to stop and treat.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

You are not a medic — you stabilize, comfort, and get adult help. Leaders hold training and authority.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Group first-aid kit · Clean practice supplies · Emergency plan

Practice with a trained adult. For a real emergency, get emergency help and give only care within your training. This lesson does not replace first-aid certification.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Group kits stay stocked — report used items after every trip.
- Clean small cuts with safe water; cover with bandage.
- Stop activity after a suspected sprain or fracture and get trained adult help; do not force movement or attempt to straighten an injured limb.
- Do not move someone with neck or back pain unless immediate danger — call for help.
- Know where epinephrine and inhalers are for members who need them — do not share meds.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Locate the group first-aid kit before each outing.
2. Practice blister tape on a practice foot at a meeting.
3. Carry personal meds in original labeled containers.
4. Write incident notes for leaders after any treatment.
5. Replace gloves and gauze you use.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Rush in without checking hazards.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Someone is injured in an unsafe area. What comes first?

- Check scene safety and get appropriate emergency help.
- Rush in without checking hazards.

Discuss after choosing: A second injured person makes rescue harder. Give only care within your training.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I know where the group first-aid kit is on trips.
- ☐ I can clean and bandage a small cut.
- ☐ I know to call 911 for serious injury and then notify leaders.

Mentor notes

- Assign a first-aid kit carrier each trip.
- Run a scenario: ankle twist at mile two — who does what?
- Check kit expiration dates quarterly.

Reference shelf

American Red Cross: first aid steps

<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid/performing-first-aid/first-aid-steps>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Find the kit, get help

With a trained adult, locate supplies and role-play responding to a minor injury using clean practice materials.

Success looks like: Check scene safety, get appropriate help, and demonstrate only care within your training.

Talk it through: What would make this an emergency instead of a minor problem?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help restock the kit and arrange a recognized first-aid course.

Emergencies and communication

911, location, signals, and staying calm.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Emergencies are rare when we plan well. Rehearse so panic does not waste minutes.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Group first-aid kit · Clean practice supplies · Emergency plan

Practice with a trained adult. For a real emergency, get emergency help and give only care within your training. This lesson does not replace first-aid certification.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Call 911 promptly for a life-threatening emergency. For a missing person, notify leaders immediately and contact emergency services promptly when safety is in doubt; do not delay for an improvised search.
- Give dispatch your best location: trail name, GPS coords, landmarks, and callback number.
- Satellite messengers or radios may be on trip — leaders assign who carries them.
- One person stays with the injured; others note time and conditions.
- Parent and leader contact list is in the trip plan — leaders fill exact numbers.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Practice saying your location out loud using map and phone coords.
2. Learn whistle and hand signals used by your crew.
3. If separated, STOP and wait unless leaders taught otherwise for that terrain.
4. Follow the adult-coordinated emergency plan. Do not send youth alone for help or split the group without supervision and a clear plan.
5. After incident, participate in debrief without blame focus.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Send a youth alone to search for reception.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

There is no phone signal during an emergency. What next?

- Send a youth alone to search for reception.
- Follow the prepared emergency plan with adult coordination and keep youth together.

Discuss after choosing: An emergency does not remove supervision and accountability requirements.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can read coordinates or describe location for rescue.
- ☐ I know our whistle signal for emergency.
- ☐ I stayed calm in a practice scenario or real minor incident.

Mentor notes

- Review emergency card at trailhead.
- Designate communicator role before hike starts.
- Run a table-top drill: lightning on an open ridge.

Reference shelf

[American Red Cross: first aid steps](https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid/performing-first-aid/first-aid-steps)

<https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid/performing-first-aid/first-aid-steps>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A practice call

Without calling a real emergency number, rehearse a report: location, what happened, hazards, people affected, and callback details.

Success looks like: A mentor can repeat your location and the help you are requesting.

Talk it through: What information was hard to find quickly?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help the crew run a tabletop scenario with a communications failure.

Swimming safety

Open water, buddies, PFDs, and cold water respect.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Lake Lanier and river swims are only with adult supervision and clear rules. Never swim alone.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Instructor-approved life jacket · Trip equipment list

Use a qualified instructor or guide and the program's approved supervision plan. This lesson is preparation, not permission or certification for an activity.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Cold water can shock your breathing — enter slowly; wear PFD when leaders require.
- Swim with a buddy and stay in designated areas.
- No diving into unknown depth — rocks and stumps hide below.
- Alcohol and swimming do not mix — our trips are dry.
- Lightning ends water time immediately.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Fit your PFD snugly; test float before leaving shore.
2. Establish a shore spotter when swimming from boats or docks.
3. Signal distress with one arm up — buddies alert adults.
4. Dry off and warm up before evening chill.
5. Hydrate even when you feel cool in water.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Swim because the buddy can watch.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your buddy is a strong swimmer but no qualified supervisor is present. What next?

- Swim because the buddy can watch.
- Stay out until the approved supervised session.

Discuss after choosing: A buddy complements qualified supervision; it does not replace it.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I wore a PFD when required on my last water day.
- ☐ I never entered water without adult supervision on program trips.
- ☐ I know our distress signal on water.

Mentor notes

- Count heads before and after every water session.
- Set clear boundaries with floats or landmarks.
- Pair strong swimmers with newer swimmers for buddy checks.

Reference shelf

US Coast Guard: wearing your life jacket

<https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/life-jacket-wear-wearing-your-life-jacket.php>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Before anyone enters

With the qualified supervisor, review boundaries, buddy procedures, signals, and required equipment from shore.

Success looks like: Explain who is supervising and when you must stay out or leave the water.

Talk it through: Why is a buddy not a substitute for qualified supervision?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help the supervisor run the before-and-after headcount.

Paddling basics

Canoe and kayak posture, strokes, and capsize mindset.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Paddling builds teamwork on flat water before any moving water trips.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Instructor-approved life jacket · Trip equipment list

Use a qualified instructor or guide and the program's approved supervision plan. This lesson is preparation, not permission or certification for an activity.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Wear PFD at all times on the water — buckled.
- Grip paddle with relaxed hands; torso rotation adds power.
- Bow sets rhythm in tandem boats; stern steers — communicate.
- Capsize plans are practiced in calm water with adults.
- Weather and motorboat traffic matter on Lake Lanier — stay visible.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Adjust foot braces and seat before launching.
2. Practice forward, reverse, and sweep strokes near shore.
3. Tuck spare paddle and whistle on boat.
4. Land into wind when possible.
5. Help unload boats without dragging plastic hulls on pavement.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Tighten it once you are far from shore.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your life jacket feels loose before launch. What next?

- Tighten it once you are far from shore.
- Have the instructor adjust or replace it before launching.

Discuss after choosing: Equipment fit is a pre-launch check.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I paddled with PFD buckled for a full session.
- ☐ I can name bow and stern roles in a tandem boat.
- ☐ I helped load and unload boats without damage.

Mentor notes

- Assign bow/stern pairs by skill and weight balance.
- Wet exits and rescue drills require a qualified instructor in a controlled session with appropriate safety support.
- Brief right-of-way rules for powered boats in plain language.

Reference shelf

[US Coast Guard: wearing your life jacket](https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/life-jacket-wear-wearing-your-life-jacket.php)

<https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/life-jacket-wear-wearing-your-life-jacket.php>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Ready on shore

With a qualified instructor, fit a life jacket and rehearse boat roles and paddle handling on shore before an approved session.

Success looks like: Demonstrate the equipment checks and follow instructor commands on calm water if cleared.

Talk it through: What would stop the launch?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help a partner prepare equipment under instructor supervision.

Whitewater basics and rafting safety

Outfitter trips, helmets, commands, and swim position.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Ocoee River and similar trips use licensed outfitters and guides. Your job is listen, paddle, and stay in the boat unless told otherwise.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Instructor-approved life jacket · Trip equipment list

Use a qualified instructor or guide and the program's approved supervision plan. This lesson is preparation, not permission or certification for an activity.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Commercial rafting follows guide commands — high side, lean in, paddle forward.
- Helmets and PFDs are required — outfitter fits them.
- If you swim, feet up, face up, toes not touching bottom in moving water — guides train this.
- Hold paddle properly — never swing at others.
- Trip timing is seasonal — leaders book windows when water and staffing are safe.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Listen to guide safety talk without talking over it.
2. Practice sitting brace in calm eddy if guide offers.
3. Secure glasses with strap; leave non-essential electronics ashore.
4. Paddle in sync with crew on commands.
5. Thank outfitter staff — they manage real risk.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Wait and copy the others during a rapid.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You do not understand a guide's safety command. What next?

- Ask for clarification before launching.
- Wait and copy the others during a rapid.

Discuss after choosing: Clarifying commands beforehand helps the whole boat respond together.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I attended a guide safety briefing on a rafting trip.
- ☐ I can describe passive swim position in whitewater.
- ☐ I wore helmet and PFD as directed without adjustment mid-rapid.

Mentor notes

- Confirm headcount on bus and at put-in twice.
- Pair nervous members with calm partners in same raft if guides allow seating input.
- Debrief feelings after rapids — normalize fear, praise listening.

Reference shelf

[US Coast Guard: wearing your life jacket](https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/life-jacket-wear-wearing-your-life-jacket.php)

<https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/life-jacket-wear-wearing-your-life-jacket.php>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Listen before the launch

At a qualified outfitter briefing, learn the trip's commands, equipment checks, and guide-directed emergency actions.

Success looks like: Repeat the guide's instructions accurately and explain whom you follow on the water.

Talk it through: Which command did you need clarified?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help your crew arrive prepared and attentive for the briefing.

Caving basics

Only with experienced leaders — helmets, lights, teams, and conservation.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Caves are fragile and disorienting. Our youth group enters caves only on leader-planned trips with qualified cave leaders. Never explore on your own.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Helmet · Three independent lights · Guide's equipment list

Use a qualified instructor or guide and the program's approved supervision plan. This lesson is preparation, not permission or certification for an activity.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Three independent light sources per person — helmet-mounted primary plus two backups.
- Helmet always; knee pads often; no loose scarves or dangling strings.
- Never go alone; minimum team size and turnaround times are set by leaders.
- Cave conservation: do not touch formations, stay on marked routes, pack out all trash.
- White-nose syndrome kills bats — follow decontamination steps leaders provide between sites and gear.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Complete leader-led cave orientation before any trip.
2. Test all lights before entry; spare batteries in dry bag.
3. Move slowly; three points of contact on slippery rock.
4. If light fails, stop and fix — do not proceed in darkness.
5. Decontaminate boots and gear per leader checklist after exit.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Enter with two because the trip seems short.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

One of your three lights fails before entry. What next?

- Enter with two because the trip seems short.
- Replace or fix it and pass the leader's check before entering.

Discuss after choosing: Backups exist for failures; do not start by spending the reserve.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I have three working lights for caving trips.
- ☐ I will not enter a cave without leader approval and qualified guides.
- ☐ I followed white-nose decontamination steps on my last cave trip.

Mentor notes

- Verify every member's lights and helmets at cave mouth.
- Assign experienced adult at front and rear; youth in middle.
- Stop for hypothermia signs — caves stay cool year-round.
- Log training dates for members allowed on vertical or tight passages.

Reference shelf

National Speleological Society: responsible caving
<https://caves.org/conservation/minimum-impact-caving/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Three working lights

Before an approved guided trip, test your helmet light and two independent backups, then review access, weather, and conservation rules.

Success looks like: Show three working lights and explain why a failed check can stop the trip.

Talk it through: What would you do if your primary light failed underground?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help a qualified leader perform the pre-entry equipment count.

Scuba introduction and certification path

What training involves and why only certified instructors teach it.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Scuba opens a new world underwater. All in-water scuba training happens through certified dive instructors — not peer teaching.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Course information · Instructor's requirements

Use a qualified instructor or guide and the program's approved supervision plan. This lesson is preparation, not permission or certification for an activity.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Open water certification includes classroom, pool, and open-water dives with skills checks.
- Medical form may require doctor sign-off — be honest about asthma, ears, and anxiety.
- Never hold breath on scuba; ascend slowly while breathing normally — instructors teach details.
- Rent or buy gear only with instructor fitting; buoyancy control takes practice.
- Our youth group participates only on leader-arranged courses and supervised fun dives.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Complete swim review if instructor requires before pool sessions.
2. Study hand signals and pressure concepts before first pool day.
3. Inspect mask and snorkel fit in shallow water.
4. Log practice hours and skills in your training record.
5. Ask instructors questions — there are no dumb safety questions.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Accept because the friend dives often.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A certified friend offers to teach you scuba in a lake. What next?

- Accept because the friend dives often.
- Arrange training through a certified instructor and the program's approved plan.

Discuss after choosing: Being a certified diver is not the same as being qualified to teach scuba.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I understand scuba training requires certified instructors.
- ☐ I completed or scheduled entry swim requirements.
- ☐ I can name three skills taught in pool session one (mask clear, regulator recovery, buoyancy).

Mentor notes

- Coordinate course dates and transportation with parents early.
- Track who completed medical forms and academic modules.
- Uncertified participants enter the water with scuba equipment only through an approved course with a certified instructor and within that course's limits.

Reference shelf

PADI: course paperwork and medical screening

<https://www.padi.com/downloads>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Plan the training path

With an adult, research an appropriate certified instructor's introductory course and list its prerequisites.

Success looks like: Explain the medical, academic, confined-water, and open-water steps required by that provider.

Talk it through: Which questions belong with the instructor rather than a friend?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help organize transport and preparation without teaching in-water scuba skills.

Trails and forests

Day hikes and overnights within a few hours of Gainesville.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

North Georgia offers ridges, waterfalls, and forest camps without flying west. Distances vary — leaders pick routes for the crew's experience.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Official land-manager or operator information · Trip plan

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Chattahoochee National Forest holds many maintained trails and dispersed camping only where rules allow.
- The Appalachian Trail crosses Georgia — popular day sections need parking planning and shuttles sometimes.
- Amicalola Falls State Park offers steep approaches and busy weekends — start early.
- Blood Mountain and nearby gaps can be rocky and exposed — weather moves fast.
- Trail registers and parking fees change — leaders confirm current info before trip.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Research trailhead driving time and parking limits with leaders.
2. Pack extra water for Georgia humidity on exposed ridges.
3. Practice Leave No Trace especially on high-traffic paths.
4. Log trail conditions after trip for the next crew.
5. Thank land managers and volunteers when you meet them.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Trust the popular post.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A popular post says a trail is open but the land manager lists a closure. What next?

- Follow the current official closure and choose another plan.
- Trust the popular post.

Discuss after choosing: The land manager's current access rules govern the visit.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I hiked a North Georgia trail with the group or studied one for a upcoming trip.
- ☐ I followed forest rules for camping and fires on that trip.
- ☐ I contributed a trail condition note to leaders.

Mentor notes

- Maintain a shared doc of favorite loops with difficulty notes — no exact mile claims unless surveyed.
- Rotate trailheads so members see variety.
- Coordinate carpools to reduce parking pressure.

Reference shelf

Leave No Trace: outdoor ethics

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

NOLS: expedition learning

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Research a nearby trail

Use official land-manager information to compare two possible outings with a leader.

Success looks like: Identify access rules, distance, conditions, facilities, and an appropriate backup.

Talk it through: What did the official source tell you that a photo could not?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Give the crew a short place briefing before an approved visit.

Rivers, lakes, and water trips

Lake Lanier, the Ocoee, and paddle days near home.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Water trips mix recreation and training. Current, traffic, and weather decide if a day is a go.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Official land-manager or operator information · Trip plan

Use a qualified instructor or guide and the program's approved supervision plan. This lesson is preparation, not permission or certification for an activity.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Lake Lanier is busy with boats — stay visible, use PFDs, and follow leader swim boundaries.
- The Ocoee River in Tennessee is a commercial rafting corridor — book through outfitters leaders trust.
- Smaller rivers and lakes near home work for paddle practice when wind is low.
- Cold rain upstream can raise levels quickly — leaders monitor gauges.
- Dam releases and schedules are not guesswork — adults read official sources.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Check wind and thunder forecast before paddle days.
2. Wear bright colors on open water.
3. Practice any rescue technique only under a qualified instructor in a controlled, approved session.
4. Rinse boats and PFDs after salt or mud.
5. Hydrate on shore — sun reflects off water.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Ignore upstream changes because the launch looks fine.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

The launch looks calm but upstream conditions changed. What next?

- Have the qualified leader reassess official conditions before launch.
- Ignore upstream changes because the launch looks fine.

Discuss after choosing: Local appearance alone cannot establish the safety of a water outing.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I wore PFD on a lake or river program day.
- ☐ I know who calls off a water day for weather.
- ☐ I helped clean and store boats after use.

Mentor notes

- Build relationships with outfitters and marinas through adult leaders.
- Keep a go/no-go chart for river levels posted in leader hub.
- Assign shore spotters on swim days.

Reference shelf

US Coast Guard: wearing your life jacket

<https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/life-jacket-wear-wearing-your-life-jacket.php>

National Weather Service: lightning outdoors

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-outdoors>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Know the water plan

With the qualified leader, review official conditions, weather, access, and supervision for a proposed water outing.

Success looks like: Explain the leader's launch criteria and what would cancel the session.

Talk it through: How can conditions upstream affect this location?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help organize a shore-based equipment check.

Caves and karst features

Why we only go with experts and how to protect bats.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Limestone regions near North Georgia and Tennessee hold caves. Many are gated or permit-only — our leaders handle access. This section is mindset, not a map.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Official land-manager or operator information · Trip plan

Use a qualified instructor or guide and the program's approved supervision plan. This lesson is preparation, not permission or certification for an activity.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Wild caves are not playgrounds — rockfall, drops, and flooding are real.
- Some caves are closed seasonally for bats — respect closures.
- Show caves exist for education — still follow guide rules.
- GPS does not work underground — navigation is route memory and markers leaders know.
- Decontamination for white-nose syndrome is mandatory between sites.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Attend only leader-approved cave trips.
2. Carry three lights and helmet without exception.
3. Stay on marked paths; never collect rocks or formations.
4. Report bat sightings to leaders for conservation logs.
5. Clean gear after every cave exit per protocol.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Visit quietly because the group is small.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A cave is closed to protect wildlife. What next?

- Respect the closure and use an approved alternative.
- Visit quietly because the group is small.

Discuss after choosing: A small group can still disturb protected wildlife and violate access rules.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I understand caves are leader-led only.
- ☐ I completed decontamination after my last cave trip or training demo.
- ☐ I will not share cave locations online.

Mentor notes

- Maintain roster of youth cleared for each cave tier.
- Partner with grotto or qualified cave leaders adults trust — names in leader packet.
- Never publish cave locations on public social media.

Reference shelf

National Speleological Society: responsible caving
<https://caves.org/conservation/minimum-impact-caving/>

Leave No Trace: outdoor ethics
<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Protect a fragile place

Research an approved guided cave visit using the operator or land manager's rules. Do not publish sensitive locations.

Success looks like: Explain access permission, conservation, and required gear cleaning.

Talk it through: How could one visitor affect the next group or wildlife?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Prepare a short conservation briefing for your crew.

PART 4

Practical competence

Use rope and hand tools, mend what you own, and understand your home and vehicle, and use AI with judgment.



11 skills to learn, practice, and put into action.

Essential knots

Square knot, bowline, taut-line, and when to use each.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Start with utility cord, a light bundle, and a mentor. This lesson teaches a square knot for noncritical bundles and introduces other utility knots; technical rope systems require qualified instruction.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Two colors of utility cord · Light practice bundle

Use utility cord and light, noncritical practice loads only. No climbing, lifting people, rescue rigging, or life-safety use. Technical rope work requires qualified instruction.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Square knot joins same-size ropes for non-critical bundles — not for climbing.
- A bowline forms a loop but can loosen under some conditions. Do not use these practice instructions for climbing, rescue, or supporting people.
- Taut-line hitch adjusts tension on guylines and tarp ridges.
- Two half hitches secure a rope to a post or ring.
- Climbing and rappelling knots require certified instruction — beyond this guide.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Choose two colors of utility cord. Wrap them around a light practice bundle and hold one end in each hand, leaving generous tails.
2. Cross the end in your right hand over the end in your left. Tuck that end under and bring both ends up to make the first half-knot.
3. Now cross the end in your left hand over the end in your right. Tuck it under to make the second half-knot in the opposite direction.
4. Draw all four strands snugly and arrange them neatly. A mentor checks the square-knot shape against the demonstration before you use it.

5. Untie and repeat slowly. Explain why this knot is only for suitable noncritical bundles and not for joining loaded ropes or supporting a person.
6. Learn a bowline or adjustable guyline hitch from a qualified demonstrator as a separate utility practice. Inspect every attempt together before use.

Watch & discuss online

Tie a square knot — Scout Life

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWcWb_UWkDY

Follow the two opposite crossings with colored utility cord. Use only for a suitable light, noncritical bundle.

Tie two half hitches — Scout Life

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5UI2oRpets

Practice attaching utility cord to a post with a mentor. No life-safety loads.

Tie a taut-line hitch — Scout Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPi6gEZtnsk>

Watch the adjustable hitch, then practice on an approved tent guyline with your mentor.

Tie a bowline — Scout Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0b0-OWSU2M>

Study the loop and dressing with a mentor using utility cord. This is not instruction for climbing or rescue.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Supporting a person or securing a climbing system.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You tied a square knot. Which job is appropriate?

- Supporting a person or securing a climbing system.
- A light noncritical bundle, inspected for the intended use.

Discuss after choosing: A square knot is not a life-safety knot and can spill or slip in unsuitable conditions.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I tied and inspected a square knot around a light practice bundle.
- ☐ I can explain why this practice knot is not for climbing or supporting people.
- ☐ I can teach square knot to a new member.

Mentor notes

- Run a knot ladder at meetings — rotate stations.
- Test with light load on bowline in supervised setup only.
- Keep short practice ropes in the gear bin labeled by length.

Reference shelf

Scout Life: knot demonstrations

<https://scoutlife.org/outdoors/176401/how-to-tie-the-7-basic-scout-knots/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Secure a practice bundle

Use two colors of utility cord to tie a square knot around a light bundle. Inspect it with a mentor and explain its limited use.

Success looks like: Tie, dress, inspect, and untie the knot; identify a job it must never be used for.

Talk it through: What changes if you repeat the same crossing instead of reversing it?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Teach a partner slowly; get their knot checked before putting it to use.

Rope care and storage

Protect fibers, avoid chemicals, and inspect for damage.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Rope weakens with dirt, UV, and sharp edges. Care extends expensive group gear life.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Two colors of utility cord · Light practice bundle

Use utility cord and light, noncritical practice loads only. No climbing, lifting people, rescue rigging, or life-safety use. Technical rope work requires qualified instruction.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Keep ropes off gritty ground when possible — use rope bags.
- Do not step on rope — grit cuts internal fibers.
- Chemicals (gas, solvents) weaken nylon — store away from garage fumes.
- Retire rope with flat spots, stiff sections, or core damage visible in a sheath bulge.
- Dynamic climbing ropes are not the same as utility line — leaders label gear.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Flake rope before use to avoid twists.
2. Pad sharp edges when rigging tarps under leader direction.
3. Wash rope only if manufacturer allows — air dry out of sun.
4. Coil using butterfly or mountaineer coil; tie off with strap.
5. Log heavy use trips on rope tag card.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Rinse it and assume it is strong.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A rope has an unknown chemical stain. What next?

- Rinse it and assume it is strong.
- Remove it from use and ask the responsible adult to assess it.

Discuss after choosing: Appearance alone cannot establish strength after possible chemical exposure.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I coiled rope without twists on my last trip.
- ☐ I reported or avoided stepping on shared rope.
- ☐ I can point out one sign a rope should be retired.

Mentor notes

- Inspect group ropes at start of each season.
- Teach proper coiling at end of every rope activity.
- Remove damaged rope from service immediately and label DO NOT USE.

Reference shelf

Scout Life: knot demonstrations

<https://scoutlife.org/outdoors/176401/how-to-tie-the-7-basic-scout-knots/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Inspect and store

Inspect a length of utility rope with an adult, flake it on a clean surface, and coil it for storage.

Success looks like: Identify damage that requires removing a rope from use and return it clean and labeled.

Talk it through: Why does unknown history matter for safety equipment?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help organize the utility-rope bin separately from technical safety equipment.

Vehicle basics

Know the manual, maintenance schedule, and when to call for roadside help.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Vehicles get crews to adventure. Learn maintenance skills on a practice car in a parking lot, not on a busy highway alone.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Owner's manual · Adult-approved practice equipment

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Park off road, hazards on, parking brake set before any roadside work.
- Jack points are specific — use owner manual or leader demonstration.
- Battery and jump-start procedures vary by vehicle. Use a qualified adult and the exact owner instructions; do not improvise from a generic terminal sequence.
- Identify fluid information in the owner manual with an adult. Never open a hot cooling system or touch unfamiliar components.
- Call roadside assistance or leaders when unsure — safety over pride.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Locate spare, jack, and lug wrench in family or leader vehicle.
2. Locate model-specific tire-change instructions with an adult; any demonstration must use a suitable planned site and the specified tools.
3. Do not practice jacking on a slope or use improvised supports. Never get underneath a vehicle supported only by a jack.
4. Wear visible vest on roadside work.
5. Log when oil was last changed — leaders may track trip vans separately.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Proving you can change it right there.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A tire fails beside fast traffic. What should guide your next action?

- Personal safety and qualified roadside help, not pressure to practice a repair.
- Proving you can change it right there.

Discuss after choosing: A planned practice location and a dangerous roadside are different situations.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I observed or helped a supervised tire change.
- ☐ I know to use model-specific instructions and qualified help for battery work.
- ☐ I checked fluids with an adult on a practice vehicle.

Mentor notes

- Schedule a skills day with parents who can donate driveway time.
- Keep gloves and reflective vests in trip van kit.
- Assign who calls for help if roadside fix fails.

Reference shelf

Art of Manliness: practical skills

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Know the practice vehicle

With the owner and engine off, find the manual, emergency equipment, tire information, and maintenance schedule.

Success looks like: Explain where to find model-specific instructions and when to call roadside assistance.

Talk it through: What makes a roadside location unsuitable for a repair?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Observe a qualified adult's planned maintenance demonstration in a safe location.

Basic home repair and yard tools

Safe use of common tools for service and home projects.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Aeration, flag routes, and camp fixes all use tools. Respect them like sharp trail gear.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Owner's manual · Adult-approved practice equipment

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Use the protective equipment specified by the tool manufacturer. Adults operate powered service equipment; youth practice approved hand-tool tasks.
- Extension ladders need three points of contact; do not overreach sideways.
- Know breaker panel location at home for emergencies — adults only reset breakers when safe.
- Shut off water before small plumbing fixes leaders approve.
- Return borrowed tools clean — rust starts overnight.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Read tool manual or leader demo before first use.
2. Carry nails and screws in pouch, not mouth.
3. Mark underground lines before digging — call appropriate locate service with adults.
4. Sweep work area; remove tripping hazards.
5. Store tools dry in labeled totes.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Push harder with the same tool.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A screw resists and the driver slips. What next?

- Stop and check the tool fit and task with an adult.
- Push harder with the same tool.

Discuss after choosing: More force can damage the fastener or cause injury when the tool is wrong.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I used the appropriate protection for my approved hand-tool task.
- ☐ I returned tools clean after service or camp repair.
- ☐ I asked for help before using an unfamiliar tool.

Mentor notes

- Tool talk at start of service season — aerator, flags, rakes.
- Pair youth with adult on first customer yard until consistent quality.
- Maintain tool inventory list in leader hub.

Reference shelf

[Art of Manliness: practical skills](https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/)

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

The right hand tool

With permission, choose the correct hand tool for a simple fastening or cleanup task and prepare the work area.

Success looks like: Explain your tool choice, complete the job safely, and return clean equipment.

Talk it through: When would using more force make the problem worse?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Demonstrate the task and supervise a partner within adult-approved limits.

Sew on a button

Make a small repair that keeps a garment useful.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A missing button is a good first repair: inexpensive, visible, and useful. Practice on scrap fabric before working on a favorite shirt.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Approved hand tools or sewing kit · Practice material · Safe workspace

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Match the replacement button to the buttonhole and nearby buttons.
- Keep needles and scissors in a container and count them back in afterward.
- Do not sew an item while someone is wearing it.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Lay the garment flat, mark the button position, and choose a suitable button. Ask a mentor to demonstrate with scrap first.
2. Thread a manageable length through the needle and knot the thread end. Bring the needle up from the back at the marked point.
3. Pass through one button hole and down through the opposite hole into the fabric. Repeat several times; for four holes, repeat through the remaining pair.
4. Leave enough space for the fabric to button comfortably. Follow the mentor's demonstration for a small thread shank if the garment needs one.
5. Secure the thread with small stitches on the back, trim it, test the buttonhole, and store every sharp item.

Watch & discuss online

Sew on a button — Treasurie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Du6gq3ks0SQ>

Watch how the button type changes the stitching, then practice on scrap fabric.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Force it through to finish quickly.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

The new button is secure but will not pass through the hole. What next?

- Check size and spacing, then redo the repair if needed.
- Force it through to finish quickly.

Discuss after choosing: A repair is successful when the garment works, not simply when the stitching is finished.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I attached a button securely on practice fabric.
- ☐ I checked that the garment buttons without pulling.
- ☐ I returned the needle and scissors safely.

Mentor notes

- Demonstrate slowly with a large button and contrasting thread.
- Let the learner undo and retry a stitch rather than completing it for them.

Reference shelf

Art of Manliness: practical skills

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Return a shirt to service

Attach a missing button to practice fabric, then repair an approved garment with supervision for sharps.

Success looks like: The button is secure, the buttonhole works, and all needles are accounted for.

Talk it through: What changed when you tested the fit before finishing?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Teach the repair using a large button and contrasting thread.

Know your home and when to stop

Find important information and recognize jobs for an adult or professional.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Being useful at home includes knowing what not to touch. Make a family readiness plan with an adult, using your own home's equipment and instructions.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Approved hand tools or sewing kit · Practice material · Safe workspace

An adult approves the task and supervises heat, sharp tools, and equipment. Follow the exact equipment instructions. Stop if the task exceeds your training or permission.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Electrical panels, gas equipment, roofs, and pressurized systems are not practice projects.
- Smoke or a suspected gas leak requires getting to safety and contacting emergency services from a safe location.
- Keep household access details and emergency information private.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Walk through the home with an adult to identify exits, the meeting place, and where emergency contacts are kept.
2. Locate smoke alarms, the water shutoff, and the electrical panel without operating equipment. Ask who is responsible for each.
3. Choose a safe maintenance job, such as checking flashlight batteries or tightening an approved cabinet handle with a hand screwdriver.
4. Select the correct tool, clear the area, and complete the task with the agreed supervision.
5. Check the result and return supplies. Report anything unexpected rather than improvising a repair.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Try switches and equipment to find the problem.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You notice a smell that may be gas during a home walkthrough. What next?

- Try switches and equipment to find the problem.
- Get to safety and seek emergency help from a safe location.

Discuss after choosing: A suspected gas leak is not a troubleshooting exercise; follow emergency guidance from safety.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can describe my household emergency meeting plan.
- ☐ I identified a task that needs a qualified professional.
- ☐ I completed a small approved maintenance job.

Mentor notes

- Use photos or mock equipment when a real installation would create risk.
- Explain the boundary between observing, assisting, and operating.

Reference shelf

Art of Manliness: practical skills

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A home readiness walk

With an adult, identify exits, the meeting place, and important equipment without operating it. Complete one approved low-risk maintenance job.

Success looks like: Describe your emergency plan and the boundary between a job you can do and one needing a professional.

Talk it through: What would make you stop midway through a repair?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Prepare a family flashlight and contact-information check without publishing private details.

AI and your own judgment

Use AI to extend your abilities while keeping responsibility for the result.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

When a tool can produce a polished answer in seconds, the important question becomes: is this useful, true, and appropriate? Your knowledge, taste, curiosity, and ability to work with people help you answer that question. Keep learning the underlying skill so you can recognize good work.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook or local practice tools · Fictional sample task · Calculator and primary sources

Paper and on-page exercises need no AI account. For live tools, follow age requirements and parent, guardian, school, and program rules. Use fictional data; keep people in control of real decisions and external actions.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Generative AI produces text, images, code, and other outputs from learned patterns. A fluent answer can still be invented, biased, outdated, or unsuitable.
- Taste means explaining what makes a result good for a particular person and purpose. Build it by studying strong examples, doing real work, and asking for feedback.
- AI capabilities and work opportunities change. Predictions about jobs are opinions about uncertain outcomes, not promises. Human accountability remains important.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Choose a low-risk task, such as drafting a meeting agenda. Write your own first attempt before using a tool.
2. Define three observable qualities of a good result: includes setup time, names a responsible role, and fits the meeting length.
3. Compare two sample drafts against those qualities. Explain your choice with evidence rather than saying one sounds better.
4. If using an approved AI tool, request another draft and compare it with your own. Identify one useful idea and one weakness.
5. Decide what to keep, revise, or reject. Explain the final plan without reading the AI response.

6. Practice one underlying skill without AI, then discuss when the tool helped and when your own effort mattered most.

Watch & discuss online

How I'm Preparing for the AI Revolution — Chamath Palihapitiya

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iI9uVDF0R4s>

Discussion starter: what makes good judgment valuable? Separate practical suggestions from uncertain forecasts. Includes adult language and adult financial examples; review with your mentor.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Trust the polished explanation over your observation.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

An AI answer sounds confident but conflicts with what you observed. What next?

- Trust the polished explanation over your observation.
- Check the claim against evidence and revise or reject it.

Discuss after choosing: Confidence and fluent wording do not establish correctness. Evidence and the needs of the task guide your decision.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I can explain why fluent output is not proof of truth.
- ☐ I defined quality criteria and defended a choice between two drafts.
- ☐ I can explain the final work and name a task I should do myself.

Mentor notes

- Use the linked video as a discussion starter about judgment, experimentation, and uncertain forecasts; it includes adult language and adult financial examples.
- Ask learners to distinguish a demonstrated capability, an opinion, and a prediction. Do not make a specific career forecast the lesson.

Reference shelf

UNESCO: AI competency framework for students

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students>

Common Sense Education: AI literacy lessons

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/collections/ai-literacy-lessons-for-grades-k-12>

FTC: how to avoid a scam

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam>

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Choose the better agenda

Compare two fictional meeting agendas using three criteria you wrote before reviewing them. Improve the chosen draft.

Success looks like: Explain two edits and why the revised agenda would work for the crew.

Talk it through: Did polish distract you from whether the plan was useful?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help a partner write quality criteria for a different task.

Give AI a useful brief

Describe the goal, context, limits, and standard for good work.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A useful brief is a small act of leadership: you explain what someone needs, what matters, and how the result will be judged. These communication habits help with people as well as AI. A longer prompt is not automatically a better one.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook or local practice tools · Fictional sample task · Calculator and primary sources

Paper and on-page exercises need no AI account. For live tools, follow age requirements and parent, guardian, school, and program rules. Use fictional data; keep people in control of real decisions and external actions.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- A practical brief includes the goal, relevant context, constraints, requested format, and success criteria.
- Ask the tool to identify missing information instead of silently inventing details. Its stated uncertainty still needs checking.
- Use invented names and numbers in practice. Do not include private conversations, customer addresses, passwords, health records, or account details.

Practice lab: write a useful brief

Goal: Plan a useful 45-minute crew meeting for six people.

Context: Fictional indoor meeting. We want to practice listening and teamwork.

Limits: No purchases or special equipment. Include setup and cleanup. An adult reviews the plan.

Output format: A table with minutes, activity, responsible role, and supplies.

What good looks like: Activities total 45 minutes. Everyone has a role. Flag missing information and

assumptions.

Return a draft for human review. Do not send messages, make purchases, or take external actions.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Choose a harmless task: a 45-minute indoor crew meeting with six people and no special equipment.
2. State the outcome: everyone practices a useful communication skill and helps clean up.
3. Add only the context needed. State time, equipment, access needs using fictional examples, and any adult approval requirements.
4. Specify the output: a table with minutes, activity, responsible role, and supplies. Define success: totals 45 minutes and includes setup and cleanup.
5. Ask for missing information and assumptions. Use the brief builder below to revise your instructions before copying.
6. Review a sample or approved-tool response against every requirement. Change one instruction and compare the next version.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Keep the invented number because the schedule looks good.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

The tool invents the number of people in your crew. What should change?

- Keep the invented number because the schedule looks good.
- Supply a fictional headcount for practice and require unknowns to be flagged.

Discuss after choosing: Relevant context and explicit unknowns reduce avoidable guessing, but the final output still needs review.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I wrote a brief with a goal, context, constraints, format, and success criteria.
- ☐ I identified an assumption the tool should not make.
- ☐ I revised an instruction after comparing the result with my criteria.

Mentor notes

- A paper exercise works without any AI account. One learner writes the brief and another drafts the response.
- Keep learners focused on clarity and evaluation; clever wording cannot guarantee a correct or safe answer.

Reference shelf

[UNESCO: AI competency framework for students](https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students>

[Common Sense Education: AI literacy lessons](https://www.commonsense.org/education/collections/ai-literacy-lessons-for-grades-k-12)

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/collections/ai-literacy-lessons-for-grades-k-12>

[FTC: how to avoid a scam](https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam)

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Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Brief a meeting helper

Create a reusable brief for a fictional crew meeting. Have a partner or approved AI tool draft a response.

Success looks like: The plan meets the stated time, supplies, roles, and cleanup requirements after your review.

Talk it through: Which missing detail caused the largest revision?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Trade briefs with a partner and explain one ambiguity kindly.

Check the answer before you use it

Trace claims, check calculations, and find what is missing.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Checking an AI answer means doing something outside the answer itself. Asking the same tool whether it is sure can produce another confident mistake. Follow the evidence back to an appropriate source and test whether the output works.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook or local practice tools · Fictional sample task · Calculator and primary sources

Paper and on-page exercises need no AI account. For live tools, follow age requirements and parent, guardian, school, and program rules. Use fictional data; keep people in control of real decisions and external actions.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- A citation can be invented, outdated, or real but unrelated to the claim. Open the original source and check what it actually supports.
- Separate facts, assumptions, estimates, opinions, and predictions. A forecast needs uncertainty, not a false guarantee.
- Look for omitted perspectives and unfair assumptions about people. A result can be numerically correct and still fail the people it serves.

Practice lab: find the flaws

Draft: Buy six notebooks at \$3 each and two packs of pencils at \$4 each. The total is \$22, under the \$25 budget. The National Youth Meeting Standard requires everyone to use a new notebook. No cleanup time is needed.

Mentor answer key:

- Check the math: $6 \times \$3 + 2 \times \$4 = \$26$ before any tax, so this exceeds the \$25 budget. Reduce quantities or find an approved alternative; do not pretend the total fits.
- Trace the source: The supposed National Youth Meeting Standard is deliberately invented for this exercise. A plausible name is not evidence. Remove the claim unless an actual relevant source supports it.

- Check the requirements: The draft assumes new notebooks are necessary and omits cleanup. Check existing supplies and the meeting brief, then reserve cleanup time in the schedule.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Underline every claim that matters to the decision. Label each as fact, assumption, estimate, opinion, or prediction.
2. Check important factual claims in current primary sources. Confirm the author, date, relevant passage, and whether it supports the claim.
3. Recalculate totals independently with a calculator. Check units, quantities, time, and the stated budget.
4. Test the response against your criteria. Ask whose needs or constraints were overlooked.
5. Mark any unresolved claim as unverified. Remove it, find stronger evidence, or ask a qualified adult before relying on it.
6. Revise the answer and keep a short record of the sources and checks you actually completed.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Repeat the citation because it looks professional.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A response includes a plausible citation you cannot find. What next?

- Repeat the citation because it looks professional.
- Treat the claim as unverified and locate a real supporting source.

Discuss after choosing: A citation-shaped string is not evidence. The source must exist and support the specific claim.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I checked a calculation independently.
- ☐ I verified that an original source actually supports a claim.
- ☐ I found an unsupported assumption or omitted need and corrected the result.

Mentor notes

- Use the intentionally flawed practice response below. Finding a mistake is success, not a contest to prove the tool useless.
- For outdoor safety, medical concerns, or real financial decisions, use current authoritative guidance and qualified adults; an AI answer is not permission.

Reference shelf

[UNESCO: AI competency framework for students](https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students>

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Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Audit a confident answer

Review a fictional AI-generated meeting supply plan. Find a calculation error, an unsupported source claim, and a missing requirement.

Success looks like: Show the corrected total and mark unresolved claims clearly instead of guessing.

Talk it through: Which error was easiest to miss because the response sounded polished?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Write a harmless flawed example and teach a partner how to audit it.

Privacy, honesty, and human boundaries

Protect people and be clear about how AI helped.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Using a tool responsibly includes respecting the people whose information or work might enter it. You remain responsible for what you submit, publish, or send. An AI conversation is not a replacement for a trusted relationship or qualified help.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook or local practice tools · Fictional sample task · Calculator and primary sources

Paper and on-page exercises need no AI account. For live tools, follow age requirements and parent, guardian, school, and program rules. Use fictional data; keep people in control of real decisions and external actions.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Use only tools allowed for your age and by your parent, guardian, school, or program. Providers have different data practices; do not assume a chat is confidential.
- Follow the assignment rules and disclose meaningful AI assistance. Do not submit generated work as your own thinking when that is prohibited.
- Synthetic voices, images, and messages can impersonate people. Do not create humiliating or deceptive media, and verify urgent requests through a known independent channel.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Review a fictional prompt containing a name, address, account number, and private message. Remove details that are unnecessary or private.
2. Replace real people and records with clearly invented examples. Never paste passwords, secret keys, or private information about someone else.
3. Check the rules for the task and tool before using it. If permission is unclear, use the paper exercise or ask the responsible adult.

4. Write an honest note: AI helped brainstorm the outline; I checked the claims and wrote the final explanation. Describe what actually happened.
5. Practice responding to a fake urgent voice message by pausing and contacting the person using a known number with adult support.
6. Keep humans in control of messages, purchases, account access, and public posts. Do not connect a practice helper to those actions.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Upload them because the AI promises to help.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A teammate suggests uploading customer addresses to get a better route. What next?

- Use an approved program workflow and keep real addresses out of the practice tool.
- Upload them because the AI promises to help.

Discuss after choosing: Convenience does not provide permission to share other people's data. Practice with invented records and use approved systems for real work.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I removed private information from a fictional prompt.
- ☐ I can explain when AI use needs permission or disclosure.
- ☐ I practiced verifying an impersonation attempt independently.

Mentor notes

- Never require learners to share real chats or private family information as evidence.
- If a youth encounters coercion, disturbing content, or a serious personal concern, support them in getting trusted human help rather than continuing an AI conversation.

Reference shelf

[UNESCO: AI competency framework for students](https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students>

[Common Sense Education: AI literacy lessons](https://www.common Sense Education.org/education/collections/ai-literacy-lessons-for-grades-k-12)

<https://www.common Sense Education.org/education/collections/ai-literacy-lessons-for-grades-k-12>

[FTC: how to avoid a scam](https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam)

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Make the prompt safe

Rewrite an invented prompt that exposes a neighbor's private details. Add a truthful disclosure for how AI would be used.

Success looks like: The revised prompt retains the task without identifying the neighbor or exposing records.

Talk it through: What information was unnecessary even though it seemed convenient?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Teach the crew a simple pause-and-verify response to a fictional impersonation scam.

Build and improve a small helper

Make something useful, test it, and keep a person in control.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A useful first AI project can be a reusable set of instructions, not an autonomous agent or a complicated app. Start with a small task you understand, learn from the mistakes, and improve it using evidence from real tests.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Notebook or local practice tools · Fictional sample task · Calculator and primary sources

Paper and on-page exercises need no AI account. For live tools, follow age requirements and parent, guardian, school, and program rules. Use fictional data; keep people in control of real decisions and external actions.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Start with a repeatable, low-risk task such as turning a fictional meeting plan into a supply checklist.
- A helper needs a clear job, allowed inputs, expected output, limits, and a way to signal missing information.
- Testing should include a normal case, an incomplete input, and a contradictory request. More automation requires more oversight, not less.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Describe the person you are helping and one small problem. Write how you would solve it manually.
2. Create a reusable brief with placeholders for nonprivate inputs. Tell it to flag missing or conflicting information and produce a reviewable draft.
3. Define three tests: a complete meeting plan, a plan without a headcount, and a plan whose activities exceed the time available.
4. Run the tests on paper with a partner or in an approved tool. Record what you expected and what happened.
5. Revise one instruction based on the failure, then repeat all three tests so an improvement does not break another case.

6. Have someone try the helper, compare it with doing the task manually, and decide whether it saves effort after review. Keep it disconnected from accounts and external actions.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Yes; connect it to send messages automatically.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your helper succeeds once. Is it ready to act on its own?

- Yes; connect it to send messages automatically.
- No; test missing and conflicting inputs and keep a person reviewing each draft.

Discuss after choosing: One successful example does not establish reliability. A practice helper should stay reviewable and disconnected from external actions.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I built a reusable brief with explicit limits.
- ☐ I tested a normal input, missing information, and a contradiction.
- ☐ I documented an improvement and explained when the helper should stop for human review.

Mentor notes

- Evaluate usefulness and the learner's explanation rather than how impressive the interface looks.
- Do not ask learners to create accounts, pay for tools, supply API keys, or grant access to personal files to complete the lesson.

Reference shelf

[UNESCO: AI competency framework for students](https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-students>

[Common Sense Education: AI literacy lessons](https://www.commonsense.org/education/collections/ai-literacy-lessons-for-grades-k-12)

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/collections/ai-literacy-lessons-for-grades-k-12>

[FTC: how to avoid a scam](https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam)

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

A checklist assistant

Build a reusable instruction sheet that turns a fictional meeting plan into a supply checklist. Test it with three cases and improve it.

Success looks like: A partner can use the brief, see missing information clearly, and review the result before acting.

Talk it through: Did the helper save effort after you included checking and corrections?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Share the instructions and test cases with a partner so they can improve the helper without your supervision.

PART 5

Money and work

Plan spending, understand a paycheck, earn trust at work, and recognize scams.



5 skills to learn, practice, and put into action.

Budgeting and saving

Trip costs, gear funds, and giving back to the group.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Adventures cost money. Learning to plan expenses now helps you afford trips without surprise.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional budget or sample documents · Calculator · Notebook

Use fictional examples. Keep private financial records out of group activities and review real accounts or employment decisions with a trusted adult.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Separate needs (food, required gear) from wants (extra snacks, premium gadgets).
- Track spending for a month — small purchases add up.
- Trip accounts may use shared fundraising — know how credits apply to your balance.
- Save early for big items like boots or certification fees.
- Charitable giving is personal — leaders do not pressure amounts.

Practice lab: a budget that balances

Use fictional amounts. Available: \$____. Needs: \$____. Savings: \$____. Flexible spending: \$____.

Available – needs – savings – flexible spending = \$____ unassigned. If negative, revise before committing. Now try an unexpected \$10 expense.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Write a simple budget: income (jobs, allowance, fundraiser credit) minus planned expenses.
2. Set a savings target for next major trip.
3. Compare prices before buying gear — borrow when sensible.
4. Keep receipts for reimbursements leaders approve.
5. Review budget with a parent or mentor quarterly.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Assume future earnings will cover it.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your planned spending exceeds the money available. What next?

- Assume future earnings will cover it.
- Reduce flexible costs or change the timeline before committing.

Discuss after choosing: A usable budget distinguishes reliable money from hoped-for money.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I wrote a one-month spending log.
- ☐ I know my current trip account balance or how to ask leaders.
- ☐ I set a savings goal for gear or a course.

Mentor notes

- Share a sample budget worksheet at a meeting.
- Celebrate members who hit savings goals without shaming others.
- Explain how trip scholarships work if your group offers them — leaders fill details.

Reference shelf

CFPB: youth financial capability

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/learn/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Fund a real goal

Choose a modest goal, estimate reliable money available, and write a plan for needs, savings, and flexible spending.

Success looks like: Show that allocations fit the money available and revise after a sample unexpected expense.

Talk it through: What can change without sacrificing an essential need?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Explain a fictional budget to a younger member without sharing private finances.

Earning money and fundraisers

How service routes fund adventure — aeration, flags, and work ethic.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Our fundraisers are real work for real pay that supports the whole program. Show up on time and finish the route.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional budget or sample documents · Calculator · Notebook

Adult-led program activity with approved youth roles. Adults alone operate, load, and haul aerators and drive vehicles. Stay out of homes and clear of moving equipment.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Aeration and holiday flags are skilled labor — quality matters for repeat customers.
- Payments flow through the program's systems — leaders explain splits and trip credits.
- Door knocking for sign-ups follows etiquette in the Service section.
- Tips may be allowed — follow leader guidance on reporting.
- Tax and paperwork questions go to parents and leaders — not guesses in the field.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Sign up for shifts you can finish; swap early if plans change.
2. Wear uniform or agreed shirt; bring water and sun protection.
3. Complete checklist per home before marking done in app or sheet.
4. Report problems (missed sprinkler, locked gate) to adult leader same day.
5. Thank customers politely — reputation brings next season's jobs.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Yes, after watching a demonstration.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

The crew needs an aerator operator. Can a youth volunteer operate it?

- Yes, after watching a demonstration.
- No. Adults operate, load, haul, and drive; youth use approved support roles.

Discuss after choosing: The program's adult-only equipment rule applies even during a busy shift.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I completed a full service shift without skipping steps.
- ☐ I understand how my earnings connect to trip costs — asked leaders if not.
- ☐ I swapped a shift responsibly when I had a conflict.

Mentor notes

- Post season calendar and earning goals clearly.
- Train youth on approved support roles. Adults alone operate, load, and haul aerators and drive vehicles.
- Debrief revenue and trip funding at youth meetings — numbers transparent to members.

Reference shelf

CFPB: [youth financial capability](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/learn/).

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/learn/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A dependable shift

Take an approved youth role on a service shift, prepare your supplies, and complete the assigned work.

Success looks like: Explain how revenue supports the program and show an accurate task handoff to the leader.

Talk it through: What did another person depend on you to do?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help orient a new volunteer to the youth roles and boundaries.

Banking and your first paycheck

Understand a sample pay stub and compare account features.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

The amount you earn and the amount deposited may differ. Practice with fictional numbers and documents so you can ask useful questions when you receive your own paycheck.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional budget or sample documents · Calculator · Notebook

Use fictional examples. Keep private financial records out of group activities and review real accounts or employment decisions with a trusted adult.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Gross pay is earnings before deductions; net pay is what remains afterward.
- Account fees, minimum balances, access, and overdraft terms can matter more than a promotion.
- A guardian may need to help a minor open an account; requirements vary by provider.
- Do not put account numbers, passwords, or personal pay records into a group worksheet.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. On a fictional stub, locate the pay period, hours, rate, gross pay, deductions, and net pay.
2. For a simple practice example, multiply 10 hours by \$12, then subtract \$15 in fictional deductions. Explain the \$105 net result.
3. Compare two sample accounts for fees, access, and overdraft terms with a trusted adult.
4. Plan how part of a deposit will cover spending and part will go toward a goal.
5. Explain how you would report a pay discrepancy to the employer or an unfamiliar transaction to the bank through a verified contact.

Common mistakes to avoid

- \$120 because that is what was earned.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A sample stub shows \$120 gross and \$15 deductions. What is available to allocate?

- \$120 because that is what was earned.
- \$105 net pay.

Discuss after choosing: Deductions reduce the amount received. A spending plan must use the money actually available.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I distinguished gross pay from net pay on a sample stub.
- ☐ I compared account terms beyond the headline offer.
- ☐ I know whom to contact about a payment problem.

Mentor notes

- Use invented documents and avoid asking anyone to share family income.
- Invite questions without treating unfamiliarity as a failure.

Reference shelf

CFPB: [youth financial capability](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/learn/)

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/learn/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Follow a fictional paycheck

Use a sample of 10 hours at \$12 with \$15 in fictional deductions. Allocate the net amount among spending and savings.

Success looks like: Show the gross-to-net calculation and compare two sample account fee schedules.

Talk it through: Which account feature matters most for how you would use it?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Explain the sample stub to a partner using no private financial information.

Getting and keeping a first job

Describe your experience, ask useful questions, and be reliable at work.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

You may already have experience worth describing: finishing a service route, caring for equipment, helping a neighbor, or organizing a group meal. Explain what you did and how it helped.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional budget or sample documents · Calculator · Notebook

Use fictional examples. Keep private financial records out of group activities and review real accounts or employment decisions with a trusted adult.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- A short, truthful description of experience is stronger than an exaggerated title.
- An adult should help check age restrictions, transportation, hours, and job safety before you accept work.
- A job offer should clearly explain duties, pay, schedule, and who supervises you.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Write three examples using task, action, and result. Leave out private customer information.
2. Create a short introduction: who you are, what you can contribute, and when you are available.
3. Practice answering a question about reliability with a specific example.
4. Ask about duties, training, supervision, hours, and pay. Review the offer with a trusted adult.
5. For a practice shift, arrive prepared, clarify the task, report obstacles early, and check your work before leaving.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Accept first and figure it out on the shift.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A job description is unclear about equipment you would operate. What next?

- Accept first and figure it out on the shift.
- Ask about duties and supervision and review with a trusted adult.

Discuss after choosing: Clarifying expectations and age-appropriate duties comes before agreeing to the work.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I described real experience truthfully.
- ☐ I asked questions about a job's expectations and safety.
- ☐ I completed a mock interview and used feedback.

Mentor notes

- Run a supportive mock interview and give one strength and one improvement.
- Let the learner try again after feedback.

Reference shelf

CFPB: [youth financial capability](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/learn/)

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/learn/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A first interview

Prepare three truthful examples of work or service and practice a short interview with a mentor.

Success looks like: Explain one result you helped achieve and ask about duties, training, pay, and supervision.

Talk it through: Which example best showed your reliability?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Revise your introduction after feedback and practice again with another adult.

Recognizing scams and pressure

Pause before paying, sharing information, or following a surprise link.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Scammers try to make you act before you think. Being careful means checking independently, even when a message looks familiar or promises an easy reward.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional budget or sample documents · Calculator · Notebook

Use fictional examples. Keep private financial records out of group activities and review real accounts or employment decisions with a trusted adult.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Pressure, secrecy, unexpected prizes, and unusual payment demands are warning signs.
- A familiar name or logo does not prove a message is genuine.
- If you sent money or information, tell a trusted adult promptly; shame makes it harder to get help.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Read a fictional suspicious message and underline what it asks you to do.
2. Pause. Do not use the message's link or phone number to verify itself.
3. Contact the organization or person using a known, independently found channel.
4. Talk with a trusted adult before paying or sharing sensitive information.
5. If something was sent, contact the payment provider promptly through verified channels and follow official reporting guidance.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Pay quickly to avoid the threatened consequence.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A message says to pay urgently and tell nobody. What next?

- Pay quickly to avoid the threatened consequence.
- Pause and verify independently with trusted help.

Discuss after choosing: Pressure and secrecy are warning signs. Verify outside the message's own links and numbers.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I found two warning signs in a sample message.
- ☐ I described an independent way to verify a request.
- ☐ I know to seek help quickly after a suspected scam.

Mentor notes

- Use invented examples and never ask youth to visit a live suspicious link.
- Praise early reporting, including when someone already made a mistake.

Reference shelf

FTC: how to avoid a scam

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam>

CFPB: youth financial capability

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/youth-financial-education/learn/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Spot the pressure

Review three fictional messages: an urgent payment, an unexpected prize, and a normal reminder. Decide how to verify each.

Success looks like: Point out the request, warning signs, and an independent verification channel.

Talk it through: What feeling was the suspicious message trying to trigger?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Create a fictional example and teach a partner how to check it safely.

PART 6

Relationships and communication

Listen carefully, resolve disagreements, respect boundaries, and be a dependable friend online and off.



5 skills to learn, practice, and put into action.

Listening so people feel heard

Give attention, check your understanding, and ask before offering advice.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A useful teammate listens to understand. You do not have to agree with every opinion to treat the speaker respectfully.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional scenario cards · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Listening includes words, tone, and the possibility that you misunderstood.
- Eye contact is not comfortable for everyone; attention can be shown in other ways.
- People sometimes want help solving a problem and sometimes want someone to listen.

A conversation you can practice

- Describe: Name the specific situation and what you need, without attacking the other person's character.
- Listen: Invite their view and summarize it. Ask whether you understood before proposing a solution.
- Agree: Choose a workable next step, say who will do what, and decide when you will check back. Get adult support when safety or boundaries are involved.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Put distractions aside and ask whether now is a good time to talk.
2. Let a partner explain a harmless topic for one minute without interrupting.
3. Summarize in your own words and ask: Did I get that right?
4. Ask an open question, such as What was the hardest part?
5. Before advising, ask whether they want ideas or simply a listening ear. Switch roles.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Explain why your interpretation is right.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your partner says your summary missed their point. What next?

- Ask them to clarify, then try again.
- Explain why your interpretation is right.

Discuss after choosing: The speaker's correction is useful information, not a challenge you need to defeat.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I listened without interrupting during practice.
- ☐ My partner confirmed or corrected my summary.
- ☐ I asked before giving advice.

Mentor notes

- Invite quieter voices without putting anyone on the spot.
- Model changing your understanding when someone corrects you.

Reference shelf

[Search Institute: developmental relationships](https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework)

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Listen, then summarize

Take turns explaining a harmless recent challenge for one minute. The listener summarizes before offering advice.

Success looks like: The speaker confirms the summary or offers a correction that the listener accepts.

Talk it through: What did you learn only after asking a question?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Use the technique during your next crew planning discussion.

Working through a disagreement

Name the problem, listen to both needs, and agree on a next step.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Two people can both care about the crew and still disagree about how to run it. The goal is to solve the problem while keeping each person's dignity intact.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional scenario cards · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Describe a specific action rather than labeling someone's character.
- A compromise is not appropriate when it would violate safety, consent, or a person's boundaries.
- Threats, harassment, or an unsafe power imbalance need trusted-adult support rather than peer mediation.

A conversation you can practice

- Describe: Name the specific situation and what you need, without attacking the other person's character.
- Listen: Invite their view and summarize it. Ask whether you understood before proposing a solution.
- Agree: Choose a workable next step, say who will do what, and decide when you will check back. Get adult support when safety or boundaries are involved.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Choose a fictional disagreement, such as two people wanting the same cooking role. Wait until both can talk calmly.
2. Say what happened, how it affected the task, and what you need: When the jobs changed without telling me, I could not prepare. I need a clear plan.
3. Invite the other person to explain. Summarize their view before responding.

4. List two workable options. For example, split preparation and cooking today, or rotate roles at the next meal.
5. Agree who will do what and when to check back. Ask a leader for help if you cannot find a respectful solution.
6. Review whether the agreement worked. If you caused harm, acknowledge it and make a specific repair.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Let the loudest person decide.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Both people want to cook. What helps first?

- Hear each person's need and explore a clear role or rotation plan.
- Let the loudest person decide.

Discuss after choosing: A workable agreement needs understanding and specific responsibilities.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I described a problem without an insult or accusation.
- ☐ I accurately summarized the other person's need.
- ☐ We agreed on a specific next step and a check-in.
- ☐ I can identify a situation that needs adult intervention.

Mentor notes

- Coach the conversation without choosing a winner immediately.
- Use fictional situations and allow participants to pass; never require public personal disclosures.

Reference shelf

[Search Institute: developmental relationships](https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework)

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Two people, one cooking role

Role-play a disagreement over who will cook. State both needs, explore options, and agree on roles and a check-in.

Success looks like: Your partner can describe the plan without feeling insulted or pressured.

Talk it through: What helped you move from defending yourself to solving the problem?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Coach a fictional disagreement while leaving the decision with the participants.

Respect, consent, and boundaries

Ask clearly, accept a no, and speak up when someone feels unsafe.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Respect shows in everyday choices: asking before borrowing equipment, taking a photo, sharing a story, or touching someone. The same care belongs in friendships and dating.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional scenario cards · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Consent must be freely given and specific; silence or pressure does not make an agreement.
- Someone can change their mind. A previous yes is not permission for a different situation.
- You may leave an uncomfortable interaction and talk to a trusted adult. Keep asking for help if the first person does not respond.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Practice asking permission in a simple scenario, such as borrowing a jacket or posting a group photo.
2. Practice accepting no with a brief, respectful response and no argument.
3. State a boundary clearly: Please stop. I do not want that shared.
4. If a boundary is ignored, move to a safer setting and involve a trusted adult. For immediate danger, contact emergency services.
5. Discuss how to support a friend without pressuring them to tell the group private details.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Post it because they agreed to the photograph.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A friend agreed to a photo but says not to post it. What next?

- Keep it off the internet and respect their choice.
- Post it because they agreed to the photograph.

Discuss after choosing: Permission for taking a photo is not permission for publishing it.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I asked for permission and accepted a no in practice.
- ☐ I stated a boundary without apologizing for having it.
- ☐ I identified a trusted adult I could approach privately.

Mentor notes

- Keep practice age-appropriate, fictional, and optional to speak in.
- Follow the program's safeguarding procedures for disclosures; do not promise secrecy or investigate personally.

Reference shelf

Search Institute: [developmental relationships](https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework)

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Ask and accept the answer

Practice three fictional requests: borrowing an item, taking a photograph, and posting it. Include a no and a changed mind.

Success looks like: Ask clearly, accept the answer without pressure, and name how to get help if a boundary is ignored.

Talk it through: Why is a previous yes not permission for everything?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help your crew agree on a photo-sharing rule that respects everyone's choice.

Good judgment online

Protect privacy, check information, and treat people well in group chats.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

A message can travel farther and last longer than you intended. Pause before posting and make your online behavior match how you want to treat people face to face.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional scenario cards · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- A screenshot can outlive a disappearing message.
- Permission to take a photo is separate from permission to publish it.
- Group chats should not expose customer addresses, private conversations, or someone's personal difficulties.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Review a fictional post for personal information, location clues, and other people's consent.
2. Before sharing a claim, find its original source and check the date and context.
3. Practice disagreeing with an idea without attacking the person.
4. For bullying or threats, avoid joining in, preserve appropriate evidence, and ask a trusted adult for help; use platform reporting tools.
5. Review privacy settings with a trusted adult and enable stronger account protection where available.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Post it only in the group chat.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A funny screenshot includes a customer's address. What next?

- Do not share it; protect the person's private information.
- Post it only in the group chat.

Discuss after choosing: A private chat can still be copied, forwarded, or viewed by others.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I identified private information in a sample post.
- ☐ I checked a claim's source and context.
- ☐ I know how to get help for an unsafe online interaction.

Mentor notes

- Agree on a small set of group-chat norms with the youth.
- Never project private messages or real account details during a lesson.

Reference shelf

[Search Institute: developmental relationships](https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework)

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

[FTC: how to avoid a scam](https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam)

<https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-avoid-scam>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Before you post

Review an invented trip post for privacy, consent, source accuracy, and location details. Rewrite it safely.

Success looks like: Explain what you removed or verified and why.

Talk it through: Who besides the intended audience could see this?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Lead a short discussion to agree on group-chat norms.

Being a dependable friend

Include people, offer useful support, and know your limits.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Belonging often starts with a small invitation. Notice who is left without a partner, who needs a clear explanation, and who might appreciate someone checking in.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Fictional scenario cards · Practice partner

Use fictional situations and choose what you share. You may pass or speak privately with a trusted adult. Unsafe behavior or a serious concern needs adult support.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Support begins with asking what would help instead of making assumptions.
- You can care about someone without being available every minute or solving every problem.
- Serious concerns about safety belong with a trusted adult; do not promise to keep danger secret.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Invite someone to join a task or conversation without pressuring them.
2. Ask an open question and listen to their answer.
3. Offer one specific form of help, such as explaining the packing list or working together on cleanup.
4. Respect a declined invitation and keep the door open for another time.
5. If you are worried about someone's safety, tell a trusted adult promptly and get emergency help for immediate danger.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Keep asking until they agree.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Someone declines your invitation to join a game. What next?

- Accept it and leave a friendly opening for another time.
- Keep asking until they agree.

Discuss after choosing: An invitation should create a choice, not another source of pressure.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I practiced making an inclusive invitation.
- ☐ I offered help without taking over.
- ☐ I explained the difference between supporting a friend and keeping an unsafe secret.

Mentor notes

- Use changing pairs and meaningful roles so the same people are not always excluded.
- Make accommodations normal and ask privately what support is useful.

Reference shelf

[Search Institute: developmental relationships](https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework)

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Make room for someone

At an approved group activity, offer an inclusive invitation and one specific form of help without pressuring anyone.

Success looks like: Describe your approach to a mentor without sharing the other person's private information.

Talk it through: How did you leave the other person free to choose?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Design a group task with useful roles for different strengths and access needs.

PART 7

Service and leadership

Notice a need, lead and follow well, teach a skill, and contribute to your community.



7 skills to learn, practice, and put into action.

Lawn aeration

Crew roles, clay soils, and customer respect.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Core aeration pulls plugs from compacted soil so water and roots breathe. North Georgia clay benefits when done in the right season — leaders set schedules.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Approved work order · Youth role checklist · Water and appropriate clothing

Adult-led program activity with approved youth roles. Adults alone operate, load, and haul aerators and drive vehicles. Stay out of homes and clear of moving equipment.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Walk the yard first — mark sprinklers, wires, and dog waste hazards.
- Adults run the aerator. Youth never operate, load, or haul the machine, and never drive.
- Youth jobs: spotter (flag hazards, walk ahead, stay clear of tines), raker (clear plugs off hardscape, hang door hangers), and navigator (addresses, time on site).
- Close gates; return hoses and toys you moved.
- If soil is too dry or wet, leaders may postpone — do not force poor results.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Verify the address and work order with your leader before the machine starts.
2. Wear closed-toe shoes, eye protection, and hearing protection as provided. Stay clear of the tines.
3. Flag or avoid tree roots and irrigation heads.
4. Leave plugs on lawn to break down unless customer asked otherwise.
5. Photo problem areas for leader follow-up if needed.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Run beside the tines to move the obstruction.

- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A sprinkler hazard is noticed while equipment is moving. What next?

- Run beside the tines to move the obstruction.
- Signal from a safe distance and let the adult stop and assess it.

Discuss after choosing: Youth stay clear of moving machinery; the adult controls equipment and restart.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I walked a yard for hazards before aerating.
- ☐ I helped identify yard hazards while staying clear of the adult-operated machine.
- ☐ I kept clear of equipment and helped check the finished site after the adult made the area safe.

Mentor notes

- Two adults present whenever youth help. Only adults load, haul, and run the machine.
- Assign checker who walks behind for missed strips.
- Log machine hours and report maintenance issues same day.

Reference shelf

Scouting America: aims and methods

<https://troopleader.scouting.org/general-troop-information/scoutings-aims-and-methods/>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

Prepare the yard safely

With the adult crew, confirm the address and help identify hazards from a safe distance before equipment starts.

Success looks like: Explain the youth roles and adult-only machine operation, then help check the finished site when the machine is off and the adult clears the area.

Talk it through: Which hazard required an adult decision?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Teach a new helper the safe boundaries without approaching moving equipment.

Holiday flag placement and retrieval

Respectful display, weather calls, and neat yards.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Families hire us to honor holidays with flags in their yards.
Precision and respect matter more than speed.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Approved work order · Youth role checklist · Water and appropriate clothing

Adult-led program activity with approved youth roles. Adults alone operate, load, and haul aerators and drive vehicles. Stay out of homes and clear of moving equipment.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Use only provided stakes and flags — do not mix customer sets.
- Placement spot is usually front yard near walk — follow route card.
- Follow the scheduled retrieval plan; adults postpone or stop for lightning and other unsafe conditions.
- Damaged flags go to leaders — do not throw in customer trash without asking.
- Never enter a home or garage without explicit permission and adult present.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Carry flags upright; do not drag on ground.
2. Step on sod carefully; avoid flower beds.
3. Straighten flag on stake; check from sidewalk for appearance.
4. Record completion in app or checklist per stop.
5. Stay clear of moving vehicles and follow the adult driver's safe loading and unloading plan.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Make a new hole wherever it looks best.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

The planned flag location is unclear. What next?

- Make a new hole wherever it looks best.
- Pause and ask the adult leader to confirm it.

Discuss after choosing: Placement requires permission and an approved location, including underground-hazard checks.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I placed flags per route card without damaging landscaping.
- ☐ I retrieved flags on the assigned day.
- ☐ I reported a damaged flag or unhappy customer to leaders promptly.

Mentor notes

- Sort flags by route the night before.
- Pair new member with experienced driver for first holiday.
- Weather cancel policy comes from leaders — communicate early to customers via office.

Reference shelf

[Scouting America: aims and methods](https://troopleader.scouting.org/general-troop-information/scoutings-aims-and-methods/)

<https://troopleader.scouting.org/general-troop-information/scoutings-aims-and-methods/>

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04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A careful flag stop

On an approved supervised route, confirm the marked location, assist with the assigned placement or retrieval, and check the yard.

Success looks like: Record the correct stop, leave landscaping tidy, and report any uncertainty before proceeding.

Talk it through: What would you do if the placement location was missing?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help sort and inspect flags for the next route.

Talking to neighbors and door etiquette

Polite sign-ups, safety, and representing the youth group well.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

You are the face of the program on door routes. Courtesy opens doors; pushiness closes them.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Approved work order · Youth role checklist · Water and appropriate clothing

Adult-led program activity with approved youth roles. Adults alone operate, load, and haul aerators and drive vehicles. Stay out of homes and clear of moving equipment.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Travel in pairs with adult leader nearby on knocking days.
- Identify yourself by name and youth group; mention adult leader if asked.
- No entering homes; stay on porch or driveway.
- If someone says no, thank them and leave — no debating.
- Do not knock after posted quiet hours leaders set.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Practice intro script with leader until natural.
2. Hold materials so address is visible for accuracy.
3. Step back from doors with dogs barking until owner controls pet.
4. Mark results honestly in tracker — do not knock again same day if marked do-not-knock.
5. Wear clean shirt and smile — nonverbal respect counts.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Keep explaining until they change their mind.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A resident says no thank you. What next?

- Thank them, leave politely, and log the result accurately.
- Keep explaining until they change their mind.

Discuss after choosing: Respecting a refusal protects the resident's choice and the program's reputation.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I used the approved intro on a knocking shift.
- ☐ I accepted a 'no' politely and moved on.
- ☐ I logged each stop accurately in the tracker.

Mentor notes

- Brief boundaries map before each street.
- Debrief tough conversations without mocking residents.
- Rotate who speaks so everyone builds confidence.

Reference shelf

[Scouting America: aims and methods](https://troopleader.scouting.org/general-troop-information/scoutings-aims-and-methods/)

<https://troopleader.scouting.org/general-troop-information/scoutings-aims-and-methods/>

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04 / APPLY · IN ACTION

A respectful doorstep

Role-play a greeting, a question you cannot answer, and a polite refusal before an approved paired route.

Success looks like: Introduce the program, stay outside, accept no, and log only the needed information.

Talk it through: How can you be friendly without pressuring someone?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Coach a newer partner and rotate who speaks.

Leading a crew

Assignments, check-ins, and keeping morale up.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Crew lead is service, not bossing. You help adults move the group safely and kindly.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Task plan · Role cards · Practice crew

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Leaders set authority; youth crew leads coordinate tasks within that frame.
- Clear, short instructions beat long speeches on trail.
- Watch energy levels — food, water, and breaks prevent grumpy crews.
- Include quiet members with specific roles.
- Admit when you do not know — ask an adult leader.

A clear task handoff

- Brief: Explain the result, each person's role, the boundaries, and the stop conditions. Ask people to explain their task back.
- Support: Check progress, listen for obstacles, and adjust with the supervising adult. Let people do the work they can safely own.
- Review: Inspect the result, return equipment, notify the person relying on the work, and ask what the crew learned.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Hold a two-minute huddle: goal, roles, turnaround time.
2. Count heads at junctions and after breaks.

3. Praise in public; correct gently one-on-one.
4. Carry extra snacks to share when someone forgot.
5. Hand off lead role when tired — rotation is strength.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Assume they will work it out.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A member cannot explain their task after your briefing. What next?

- Clarify the task and ask them to describe the plan back.
- Assume they will work it out.

Discuss after choosing: A briefing succeeds when people understand their work and boundaries.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I led a huddle before a service or trail block.
- ☐ I included every member in a task rotation.
- ☐ I asked an adult when a decision was above my training.

Mentor notes

- Model calm when weather or plans change.
- Debrief what you did well and one improvement after each lead stint.
- Ask adults for feedback weekly during busy seasons.

Reference shelf

NOLS: expedition learning

<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

Search Institute: developmental relationships

<https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Original program lesson. Edition updated 2026-09-28. Current equipment instructions, local rules, and qualified supervision govern technical practice.

Lead one small job

With an adult, lead a manageable crew task: explain the result, assign roles, confirm understanding, check progress, and close out.

Success looks like: Each person can name their role, stop conditions, and who needs the finished work.

Talk it through: When did listening change your plan?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Let another member lead the next task while you practice being a reliable follower.

Planning an activity

From idea to calendar item with safety and fun balanced.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Youth can propose hikes, skills nights, and service projects. Adults approve, but your planning work makes it happen.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Task plan · Role cards · Practice crew

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- SMART-ish goals: specific activity, measurable outcome, agreed date, realistic for group, time-bound evening or day.
- Permits, transportation, and parent communication are adult tasks you assist.
- Backup indoor plan for weather-dependent ideas.
- Budget line items: food, fuel, rentals.
- Promotion: one clear message in group chat beats ten reminders.

A clear task handoff

- Brief: Explain the result, each person's role, the boundaries, and the stop conditions. Ask people to explain their task back.
- Support: Check progress, listen for obstacles, and adjust with the supervising adult. Let people do the work they can safely own.
- Review: Inspect the result, return equipment, notify the person relying on the work, and ask what the crew learned.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Write one-page proposal: what, why, who, when, cost, risks.

2. Present at a Wednesday planning meeting for feedback.
3. Build equipment list from Field Guide sections.
4. Confirm adult coverage before announcing date.
5. Send reminder 48 hours and morning of with meet location pin.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Wait until everyone arrives to improvise.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

Your plan has no alternative for rain. What next?

- Wait until everyone arrives to improvise.
- Add an approved backup and a decision time.

Discuss after choosing: A backup gives people, supplies, and transport time to adapt.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I wrote an activity proposal and shared it with leaders.
- ☐ I listed risks and mitigations for my idea.
- ☐ I helped run an activity that happened on the calendar.

Mentor notes

- Coach younger members through their first proposal draft.
- Use a template slide leaders keep in shared drive.
- Celebrate executed plans even if weather shortened them.

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A meeting people can run

Plan a short approved activity with a purpose, supplies, timing, roles, adaptations, and a backup.

Success looks like: Give the plan to a partner who can explain how to run it.

Talk it through: Where is the plan most likely to run late?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Run the activity and revise the plan from participant feedback.

Teaching a skill

Demonstrate, practice, review — the teaching loop.

[Interactive lesson](#) ↗ · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Teaching reinforces your own skills. Go slow, let others try, and fix one thing at a time.



Before you begin · About 25 minutes

Bring: Task plan · Role cards · Practice crew

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Tell, show, do, review — four steps keep lessons short.
- One main skill per session (one knot, one map skill).
- Safety stops the lesson if gear or weather is wrong.
- Praise effort; correct technique without insults.
- Some skills (scuba, caves, whitewater) are instructor-only — know the line.

A clear task handoff

- Brief: Explain the result, each person's role, the boundaries, and the stop conditions. Ask people to explain their task back.
- Support: Check progress, listen for obstacles, and adjust with the supervising adult. Let people do the work they can safely own.
- Review: Inspect the result, return equipment, notify the person relying on the work, and ask what the crew learned.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Prepare materials the night before.
2. Demonstrate twice — once slow, once normal speed.

3. Let each person try while others watch one correction at a time.
4. End with checkoff items from this guide.
5. Ask adult leader to add anything you missed.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Take over and finish the task for them.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

A learner makes a harmless mistake during practice. What next?

- Take over and finish the task for them.
- Give specific feedback and let them try again.

Discuss after choosing: Practice and feedback build ability; watching someone else finish does not.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I taught a skill using tell-show-do-review.
- ☐ I stopped practice when safety gear was missing.
- ☐ I used checkoff items to close the lesson.

Mentor notes

- Assign teaching slots in monthly meetings.
- Video record demos only if parents consented for media policy.
- Pair teacher with assistant who watches time and safety.

Reference shelf

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<https://www.nols.edu/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

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Teach one useful thing

Choose a low-risk skill you can demonstrate correctly. Explain it, show it slowly, guide practice, and let the learner try.

Success looks like: The learner demonstrates the skill and can explain a common mistake.

Talk it through: What did you change when your first explanation did not work?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Invite the learner to teach it back to you.

Being useful in your community

Understand a local need and contribute with the people affected.

[Interactive lesson](#)  · My stage: ☐ Learn ☐ Practice ☐ Demonstrate ☐ Apply ☐ Teach

Good service starts by listening. A project should be useful to the people receiving it, fit the group's abilities, and leave responsibility clear when the work is finished.



Before you begin · About 90 minutes

Bring: Project plan · Approved community contact

Choose an age-appropriate task with your leader or trusted adult. Outdoor practice follows the approved route, buddy, and supervision plan; adapt the challenge to your abilities.

01 / Learn · Understand the skill

- Ask people what they need before deciding what help should look like.
- Public spaces, organizations, and private property may need permission for a project.
- Represent the program respectfully and protect the privacy of the people you serve.

A clear task handoff

- Brief: Explain the result, each person's role, the boundaries, and the stop conditions. Ask people to explain their task back.
- Support: Check progress, listen for obstacles, and adjust with the supervising adult. Let people do the work they can safely own.
- Review: Inspect the result, return equipment, notify the person relying on the work, and ask what the crew learned.

02 / Practice · Try it step by step

1. Identify one local need through a conversation with an adult-approved community contact.
2. Write who benefits, what they requested, and what permission is needed.
3. Plan a small project with roles, supplies, supervision, accessibility, and a cleanup plan.
4. Complete the agreed work and ask the recipient whether it met the need.

5. Thank everyone involved and share a factual, privacy-respecting account of what you learned.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Buy supplies and surprise them.
- Treating a successful practice attempt as permission to skip the supervision or checks for a real task.

Make the call

You have a service idea but have not asked the recipient. What next?

- Buy supplies and surprise them.
- Ask what would be useful before planning the project.

Discuss after choosing: Useful service starts with the needs and permission of the people affected.

03 / Demonstrate · Show what you can do

- ☐ I asked about a real need before proposing a solution.
- ☐ I helped plan and complete an approved contribution.
- ☐ I gathered feedback and identified a useful next step.

Mentor notes

- Give youth real planning responsibilities with adult oversight.
- Measure usefulness by the recipient's feedback, not just hours or photographs.

Reference shelf

Scouting America: aims and methods

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Ask what would help

With adult support, speak with a community contact, agree on a small useful project, and follow through.

Success looks like: Show the agreed need, permissions, plan, and recipient feedback without private details.

Talk it through: How did listening change your original idea?

05 / Teach · Take it further: Help a newer member take responsibility for the next project.