Track 3: Nature and Conservation

SESSION 1: LEAVE NO TRACE

Overview: Leave No Trace introduces youth to the principles of responsible outdoor ethics. This session helps participants understand how their actions impact the environment and how to minimize those impacts while enjoying nature. Through interactive activities and real-world examples, youth learn how to respect wildlife, protect natural spaces, and become stewards of the outdoors.

Objectives
- Learn the seven principles of Leave No Trace.
- Practice applying Leave No Trace in outdoor scenarios.
- Understand the importance of minimizing human impact on nature.

Supplies
- Leave No Trace principles cards or posters
- Scenarios (for example, campsite, hiking trail, and picnic area)
- Trash bags and gloves (for optional cleanup)
- Clipboards and pens

Advisor Notes
- Emphasize that Leave No Trace is about respect, not rules.
- Use real-life examples youth can relate to.
- Encourage discussion and reflection during activities.
- Optional: Partner with a local park ranger or conservation group.

SESSION OUTLINE

Welcome and Icebreaker Activity: Impact Matchup (10-15 min)
- Welcome participants and introduce the theme: Leave No Trace. Explain the importance of outdoor ethics and how small actions can have big impacts. Share a personal story or example of environmental impact.
- Youth match common outdoor actions with their environmental impacts.
- Distribute cards with common outdoor actions and their environmental impacts.
- Youth find their match and discuss the connection.
- Debrief with the group: What surprised you about these connections?

Safety Moment: Respecting Wildlife (2-3 min)
- Discuss why feeding or approaching animals can be harmful. Explain how human interaction can disrupt natural behaviors and cause harm.
- Tip: Observe wildlife from a distance using binoculars.

Leave No Trace Principles (20-30 min)
1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impact
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors
- Explain that these principles are guidelines for respect.

Activity: Scenario Stations
- Set up stations with different outdoor scenarios.
- Youth identify which principles apply and discuss actions to minimize impact.

Mini Cleanup Challenge (optional, 15-20 min)
- Youth clean up a small area and reflect on the experience.
- Explain the purpose of the challenge: Making a positive impact.
- Distribute trash bags and gloves.
- Youth clean up a designated area for 10 minutes.
- Reflect: How did it feel to leave the space better than you found it?

Resources
- Scan or click to learn more about the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics:
- Scan or click for Scouting America's Leave No Trace resource page:

REFLECTION SECTION

Advisor note: These are sample questions. They are designed to help the participants apply what they have learned to their own interests. You are welcome to use these questions or develop your own questions.

Focusing Questions
- Which Leave No Trace principle stood out to you?
- What surprised you about human impact on nature?

Analysis Questions
- How did your team apply the principles in the scenarios?
- What actions can reduce impact while camping or hiking?

Generalization Questions
- How can you practice Leave No Trace at home or school?
- Why is it important to protect natural spaces?

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PRINTABLE HANDOUT: IMPACT MATCHUP CARDS

Instructions: Match common outdoor actions with their environmental impacts.

Action: Leaving trash behind	**Action:** Not burying human waste	**Action:** Feeding wildlife	**Action:** Starting fires in undesignated areas
Action: Cutting switchbacks	**Action:** Walking off trail	**Action:** Picking wildflowers	**Action:** Leaving food out overnight
Action: Making loud noises	**Action:** Washing dishes in a stream	**Impact:** Pollution and harm to wildlife	**Impact:** Contamination of water sources
Impact: Animals become dependent on humans	**Impact:** Risk of wildfires	**Impact:** Trail erosion and habitat damage	**Impact:** Damage to vegetation and soil
Impact: Disruption of local ecosystems	**Impact:** Attracts animals and creates safety risks	**Impact:** Disturbance to wildlife and visitors	**Impact:** Pollutes water and harms aquatic life

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PRINTABLE HANDOUT: LEAVE NO TRACE SCENARIOS

Hiking Trail Trash
- You're hiking with friends and notice snack wrappers and water bottles left along the trail.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do?

Campfire Safety
- Your group wants to build a campfire at a campsite, but there's no designated fire ring and it's a dry season.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do?

Wildlife Encounter
- You see a deer near your campsite and someone suggests feeding it to get a closer look.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do?

Picnic in the Park
- After a picnic at a local park, your group leaves behind food scraps and napkins.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do?

Trail Shortcut
- While hiking, someone suggests cutting through the woods to save time instead of staying on the marked trail.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do?

Collecting Souvenirs
- You find cool rocks and flowers during your hike and want to take them home as souvenirs.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do?

Loud Group at Campsite
- Your group is playing loud music and shouting at a shared campsite where other campers are nearby.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do?

Improper Waste Disposal
- Someone in your group buries food waste near the campsite instead of packing it out.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do?

Washing Dishes in a Stream
- You're camping with friends and decide to wash your dishes directly in the nearby stream. The soap and food particles flow into the water.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What should you do instead to minimize impact?

Leaving Food Out Overnight
- After dinner at your campsite, you leave leftover food and snacks out on the picnic table overnight. In the morning, you find wrappers scattered and signs of animal activity.
- Which Leave No Trace principles apply?
- What steps can you take to store food properly and protect wildlife?