

# Leading a Nature Hike

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*Nature is everywhere A nature walk or program is less dependent on the location than on the ability of the leader to make the most of the available resources and to provide the right learning atmosphere for a meaningful experience.*

When taking students on adventures outside....

- Be Prepared      *\*Plan activities in advance*
- Know the trail    *\*Review the trail guides*
- Leave no Trace   *\*Review LNT principles*

## **Leader backpack contents** *\*optional*

- Emergency contact numbers for students
- Pertinent student health information
- First Aid Kit
- Toilet Paper
- Umbrella / rain poncho
- Whistle
- Garbage bag
- Extra food & water
- Trail map
- \*Compass*
- \*Field Guides*
- \*Magnifying lenses*
- \*Bandanas (blindfolds)*

## **Student backpack contents**

- Notebook & Pencil
- Food & Water
- Clipboard
- Hat
- Good hiking shoes *(close-toed only)*
- Extra layers to keep warm
- Plastic bag *(for sitting if wet outside)*



## **Safety / Hazards in the Tillamook State Forest**

Trails may have roots, large rocks, steep inclines and can be slippery when wet. Your group might encounter other hikers, fisher people and mountain bikers. Stinging and biting insects (including ticks) are most prevalent in the spring and summer. Poison ivy and stinging nettle are here (please advise students to stay on the trail and ID those plants to students if possible). There are no venomous snakes.

## **Using the Senses**

Set the mood for your students before you hike. Encourage students to use their senses and be silent so the opportunity to see wildlife is greater.



## **Things to think about...**

- Familiarize yourself with the trail and its special features—take note of safety considerations, good activity sites, length of trail, timing for the activities and hike, and good areas to stop the group. Use the trail guides as reference.
- Place one adult at the front of the line and another adult at the end of the line (you can refer to this as “making a sandwich” with the adults as the “bread” and the students as “the fixings”).
- Ask questions. Let the group explore and try to come with the answers to: Why is a certain plant growing in one spot and not the other? Do you notice anything different about that tree? Etc.
- Look under things like leaves, rocks, etc. Remember to roll logs and rocks away from your body and always return these to their original position.
- Please do not allow students to pick plants or use walking sticks.
- Look for evidence of animal life: scat (droppings), owl pellets, nut shells, chewed bark or twigs, homes, parts of the animal, tracks, etc.
- Look for different textures and make rubbings of examples found.
- Search for evidence of earlier use of the land: old foundations, orchards, daffodils, or other cultivated plants?
- Take advantage of teachable moments. Students may see something that interests them. Take time out of the activity or lesson to take a closer look at what their interest is.
- Enjoy yourself. Be observant! There is always something new and exciting.

## Things to do on the trail...

### Scavenger Hunts

Habitats  
Wildlife Homes  
Wildlife evidence  
Plants  
Fungus  
Tracks  
Shapes & patterns in nature



### Sketch

Communities  
Food chains  
Favorite plant or tree  
Something you think is important to the forest community



### Plot study

For younger students use a hula hoop to help them concentrate on a small area. Create a sheet or have them explore the area inside the hula hoop, searching for wildlife and plant evidence. They can move the hula hoop to another area and compare habitats (field, forest, and stream).

### Sensory awareness activities

Have students partner up or walk alone with a blindfold over their eyes, walking slowly through a field or on the trail.

Have students sit alone in an open area and map out all the sounds they hear around them.

### Plant / tree ID

Hand out a dichotomous key to students and parents. Have the students report special information about a plant / shrub / tree observed such as cultural use, animal use, etc.

### Silent walk

Older students have the chance to walk "by themselves" along a section of the trail. Designate a leader to hike ahead of the group. A second adult send the students one at a time (30 seconds—2 minutes) spaced between one another. Students walk quietly down the trail to the first adult and are able to observe their surroundings as well as have a little time for themselves.

### Sit Spot

Find a location in the forest free of stinging plants where students can sit (a meadow, the forest floor, etc.). Have students find a spot in the designated area where they will sit and observe. Students can draw or write during this activity. Time the activity so that it is age appropriate (amount of minutes = age of student).