

Principles

Leave No Trace provides a framework for outdoor recreation decision making, which is summarized in the following 7 principles:^[3]

1. **Plan Ahead and Prepare:** Poorly prepared people, when presented with unexpected situations, often resort to high-impact solutions that degrade the outdoors or put themselves at risk. Poor planning can result in improperly located [campsites](#) because groups failed to plan enough time to reach their intended destination, or improper [campfires](#) or excessive trash because of failure to plan meals or bring proper equipment.
2. **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces:** Damage to land occurs when surface [vegetation](#) or communities of organisms are trampled beyond repair. The resulting barren area leads to unusable [trails](#), campsites and soil [erosion](#).
 - In high-use areas, Leave No Trace suggests that people concentrate activity, which makes further damage unlikely.
 - In areas of very little or no use, Leave No Trace encourages people to spread out. Taking different paths when hiking off-trail will avoid creating new trails that cause erosion. Dispersing [tents](#) and equipment, and moving camp daily will avoid creating permanent-looking camp sites.
3. **Dispose of Waste Properly:** Though most trash and litter in the backcountry is not significant in terms of the long term ecological health of an area, it does rank high as a problem in the minds of many backcountry visitors. Trash and litter are primarily social impacts which can greatly detract from the naturalness of an area.^[4] Thus, Leave No Trace recommends that trash and litter should be packed out. Further, backcountry users create body waste and [waste water](#) which requires proper disposal according to Leave No Trace.



A cathole may be dug with a trowel

- Waste water: Avoiding [soap](#) and dispersing [dishwater](#) far away from natural water sources will prevent contamination.
- Human waste: Proper human waste disposal prevents spread of disease, exposure to others, and speeds decomposition. [Catholes](#), 6 to 8 inches deep and 200 feet from water, are often the easiest and most practical way to dispose of [feces](#).

- Human waste: There are areas where all waste must be packed out. These tend to be at high elevation where cold temperatures prevent decay. Alternately, in some location, a portable [urine diversion](#) toilet can be used so only nearly pathogen free urine is left behind. ^[5]
- 4. ***Leave What You Find:*** Leaving [rocks](#), [plants](#), [archaeological artifacts](#) and other objects as found will allow others a sense of discovery. Similarly, Leave No Trace directs people to minimize site alterations, such as digging tent trenches, hammering nails into trees, permanently clearing an area of rocks or twigs.
- 5. ***Minimize Use and Impact of Fire:*** Leave No Trace encourages people to use lightweight [camp stoves](#), instead of fires, because the naturalness of many areas has been degraded by overuse of fires and the increasing demand for [firewood](#). If a campfire is constructed, Leave No Trace suggests using an existing [fire ring](#) in a well-placed campsite or to use a [fire pan](#) or mound fire. True Leave No Trace fires show no evidence of having ever been constructed.
- 6. ***Respect Wildlife:*** If enough people approach or interfere with [wildlife](#), it can be disruptive to animal populations.
- 7. ***Be Considerate of Other Visitors:*** Following hiking [etiquette](#) and maintaining quiet allows visitors to go through the wilderness with minimal impact on other users.

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