



Tread Lightly

This activity center is part of the **Water Protection** theme.

What's the purpose of this activity?

Students will be introduced to the concepts of Leave no Trace through exploring a simulated campsite and discussing ways to minimize their impact on water sources while camping.

Key messages:

- Minimizing our impact while camping will keep our water sources clean for future use
- Litter and bacteria in the water can be harmful to animals and humans who live or camp in these areas
- Food left behind in the water or land attracts animals who may become dependent on human food.

Materials:

- Tent
- Blue tarp
- Biodegradable camp soap
- Conventional dish detergent
- Camp Stove
- Toilet Paper
- Garbage
- Cat-hole shovel
- Small strainer
- Large, long logs for "fire pit"
- Small sticks for "fire pit"
- Sunflower seeds

Activity Set Up:

A simulated campsite will create the backdrop to discussion about low impact camping practices.

- Pitch the tent in a clear area (on grass or

gravel)

- Lay out the blue tarp as a "lake". Near the "lake", scatter garbage, and toilet paper, place dish detergent bottle, and build a "campfire" out of large logs.
- Away from the lake, build a "campfire" out of small sticks in the existing fire pit, set up camp stove, and lay out strainer, biodegradable camp soap, and cat-hole shovel.

Self-Led Version:

Student supervisors will facilitate the learning at this activity centre. Use the numbered posted text found on stakes at various locations within the simulated campsite. The side with a number is intended to initiate discussion in the group around minimizing impacts while camping. On the back of the sign there is related information to enhance discussion.

Facilitated Version:

What will I be doing?

When groups arrive, welcome them and begin discussion by asking if anyone went camping this summer. Go around and allow kids to share their camping experiences. Explain to them that the type of camping we will be talking about today takes place in backcountry areas (places we can only access by foot or canoe, usually) BUT that the tips they will learn can apply to car camping with their families in provincial parks or camping out in their backyard. **Try to make connections between what they will be learning and the type of camping they are used to.**

Continue the discussion by asking if anyone knows what "low-impact" or "no-trace" camping means.

- Explain that it means using as few resources as possible and leaving little or no mark of your visit. **The saying, "take only pictures and leave only footprints" applies.**

Gesture to the "campsite" around you (**be sure to clarify that the tarp is the "lake"**) and tell the kids that two people with very different camping values have spent some time at this campsite recently: **Foolish Fred and Wise Wilma** (change names / titles

to reflect favourite characters as needed depending on the group).

- Fred made some poor (“uncool”) choices and Wilma made some good (“cool”) choices regarding low impact camping.
- Ask the kids to look around the site, pick an area or object and have them explain what is “cool” or “uncool” about that area / object.
 - The first thing that is noticed is normally the garbage near the lake, but make sure all the areas get covered (rotation does not matter too much).

Areas and objects of interest, and the dialogue associated with them are as follows:

Garbage: “Oh no! – Foolish Fred had lots of fun here but he forgot to pick up his garbage! Now it’s going to get in the lake – is that good for wildlife? (**ask them to tell you yes or no and why**).

- “Not only does the garbage harm wildlife, but do you know how long it will take to break down?” (pick up an item and get them to guess).
 - – even orange peels take a year to decompose
- Ask the group “What could have Foolish Fred done instead?”
 - Bring a garbage bag with him, like Wise Wilma did, and take his garbage with him”. (**Explain “pack it in, pack it out”**).

Soap and strainer: “Fred washed his dishes in the lake with Sunlight dish soap (**ask them to tell you if this is good or bad for the lake and why or why not**)

- Explain the effect of phosphates in the water; equate algae growth to a big blanket on the surface of the water which keeps the light from entering and starves the lake of oxygen.
- Food scraps in water can create human food dependence for wildlife. Human food is not good for most wildlife.
- “Wilma chose to use a different soap (**Show the biodegradable soap**).
 - What’s special about this soap? – it starts with a “B” --biodegradable!
 - Explain that we should wash our dishes in a big pot, walk 70 m. or more from the lake, and strain the dishwater to remove the bits of food left over, which are then thrown out.
 - **NEVER** wash in lakes or rivers with soap!
 - Even biodegradable only works well on land where there are more micro-

organisms to break it down.

Toilet Paper: (You may decide NOT to bring up the topic of pooping in the woods to every group – omit or be selective accordingly!). “Fred “did his business” with a nice view of the lake – **do you think this was ok, or not?**”

- Explain that bacteria from human waste can leach into the lake
 - “Where will the next camper at this site get their water?” ...Yes, from the lake
- Therefore we need to bury our waste and toilet paper, using the cat-hole shovel, at least 70 m. from the water source.
- Also, the toilet paper is like the garbage, and leaves a mess for the next person at the site.

Fire Pits and Camp Stove: “There are two fire pits here – **tell me what you see that is different about them?**”

- Explain that Fred’s fire pit, near the lake, built outside of an existing fire ring and with big logs, will leave a new fire scar and leave half-burnt logs for the next camper.
 - It will also damage the riparian area!
- Wilma’s fire, built in an existing ring, is safer, will not leave a new scar or damage the lake and riparian area.
 - It will also burn away completely because of the smaller sticks.
- “Wilma decided, however, that she also didn’t need to have a fire every night to cook her dinner on.
 - As awesome as her fire is, it still uses resources from the area (firewood).
 - Dead wood is needed in the forest as a source of future nutrients in the soil for future growth.
 - Introduce the camp stove as a wood-free alternative to fires.

Tent Set-Up: “This tent is set up in a cleared area that has also already been used for a tent. **What would happen if we had pitched the tent on grass or plants or small trees?**”

- Explain that this kills the vegetation allowing more rain runoff and erosion if close to water source.

Food on Ground: sunflower seeds will attract animals to the site and could create future problems for other campers. Also creates human food dependence for wildlife.

Conclusion:

Conclude with a question and answer period and thank

the group for coming by. Emphasize to use these tips next time they go camping for the well-being of the lakes and rivers.

Clean Up Procedures:

At the end of the day make sure all items for the presentation are carefully placed back into the bin and sealed. If there is any item that is wet, please let supervisors know and leave the wet item separated from the others, perhaps in a plastic bag. Leave the site as you found it for the next day's volunteers.