



LEAVE NO TRACE ETHICS – BACKCOUNTRY SNOWSPORTS

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

- **Practice Safety First.** Be prepared; plan your trip and be self-reliant. Have extra warm layers, carry first aid, emergency gear, headlamp, whistle, watch, and a lighter or matches. Check the weather and snow conditions, and set and stick to a turnaround time. Know your equipment and its limits, have extra food and water, get training in wilderness first aid and avalanche safety. Never fully depend on any electronic device, especially a cell phone, personal locator beacon or GPS. Carry extra batteries or other means to recharge critical electronic devices. Plan for changes in weather, and have the gear to survive a night in the mountains.
- **Know where you are going.** Have a map, compass, and GPS and know how to use them; mark a waypoint at the trailhead or backcountry access point. Study area maps in advance of your adventure; consider going with someone with experience in the area. Allow plenty of time for your adventure. Know emergency exit routes, and be sure to tell someone where you are going, when you plan to return, and stay with that plan.
- **Know your own and your group's limits, and minimize risks.** Always default to the least skilled member's ability for maximum safety. Groups of three or more are encouraged but do not exceed group size limits for the area. Don't push yourself or others to take risks. Stay within your fitness and skill level. Stay together and use the buddy system. Check your watch and map regularly to keep track of your progress and location.

2. Travel on Durable Surfaces

- **Stay on deep snow cover whenever possible.** Respect springtime trail closures. Stay on snow, rock, or walk in the middle of the trail if conditions are muddy or icy to avoid creating new trails and damaging trailside plants. Consider additional traction and/or flotation as necessary for trail conditions. Travel away from avalanche paths, cornices, steep slopes, and unstable snow.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly

- **Pack It In, Pack It Out.** Pack out everything you bring with you. Burying trash and litter in the snow or ground is unacceptable. Pick up all food scraps, wax shavings, and pieces of litter. Pack out all trash: yours and others'. Bury human waste deep in snow at least 50' away from travel routes and at least 200 feet (70 adult steps) from water sources or pack it out with you.

4. Leave What You Find

- **Leave only tracks.** Leave all plants, rocks, animals, and historical or cultural artifacts as you find them. Take only pictures. Avoid introducing or transporting non-native or invasive species.

5. Minimize Campfire and Hut Impacts

- **Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a lantern or headlamp for light.** Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings. Keep fires small. Burn only downed wood that is smaller than your wrist. Never cut live plants. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, and leave a clean fire site.
- **Leave huts and cabins in better shape than how you found them.** It is always best to cook outside whenever possible. Use extra care when cooking or heating inside huts. Be considerate of other users and observe any rules or instructions related to the shelter. Clean up before leaving. Don't leave food or other trash behind – it only encourages the mice!

6. Respect Wildlife

- **Observe wildlife from a distance.** Do not follow or approach wildlife. Winter is an especially vulnerable time for animals.
- **Never feed wildlife or leave food behind to be eaten.** Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- **If you choose to bring your dog keep it under control and do not let it harass wildlife.** Consider leaving pets at home.

7. Be Considerate of Others

- **Respect landowners, both public and private.** Ask permission before entering private land and stay clear of homes, buildings, and equipment. Respect all land postings. Leave access gates as they are found.

- **Respect other skiers/riders and all other users.** Keep noise to a minimum when near others, and let nature's sounds prevail. Promote friendly cooperative attitudes, share safety information, and help others if needed. Please keep your journey's end celebration activities respectful. In popular areas, "spoon" downhill tracks to conserve opportunities for others to enjoy fresh snow.
- **When ascending trails, keep clear and yield to downhill traffic. When descending always stay in control, go one at a time, and slow down near others.** Avoid booting and snowshoeing in skin or ski tracks. Ski and ride conservatively to avoid accidents.
- **Respect designated areas, signs, and wildlife.** Obey local guidelines, follow ski area boundary rules, and stay out of sensitive natural areas. Park in designated areas; do not block gates, roads or driveways, and car pool if possible. Respect other activities.

This information was adapted from the Seven Leave No Trace Principles in conjunction with the Winter Wildlands Alliance and the Vermont Backcountry Alliance, both partners of the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics.