

# LEAVE NO TRACE FOR EVERY KID™ PROGRAM QUALITY ASSESSMENT

STAFF  
RESOURCE



The following assessment will help establish a baseline for where your program currently sits regarding six key areas of Leave No Trace: foundations, staff instruction and support, staff training, youth engagement, program delivery, and learner outcomes.

## WHO SHOULD COMPLETE THIS ASSESSMENT

The assessment should be independently completed by two or more staff members. Having at least two staff perspectives will help provide an accurate view of program quality. Those completing this assessment should be individuals who are familiar with the programming and operations— this includes directors, managers, lead staff, and program leads.

## HOW TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT TOOL

Each of the six categories mentioned above have a number of related subtopics. For each of those subtopics, circle the statement that represents the current quality of your program. There will be a space for you to provide examples or evidence about these



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criteria. Siting evidence will help strengthen your selection. See the example below. Certain aspects of the self-assessment might require you to go and observe areas within your program.

## WHEN YOU'VE COMPLETED THE ASSESSMENT

Once each person has completed their assessment, compare results and discuss.

|                         | Needs Improvement   | Demonstrating Excellence   | Examples / Evidence  |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| Interaction with Nature | Learners are not encouraged to responsibly touch, feel and interact with certain objects in the natural world | Learners are sometimes, but not always encouraged to responsibly touch, feel and interact with certain objects in the natural world (e.g., some staff encourage interaction with natural objects while others do not). | Learners are always encouraged to responsibly touch, feel and interact with certain objects in the natural world (e.g., learners have the opportunity to touch certain trees, plants, rocks, soil, etc.).  |
|                         |   |  | Some staff members encourage kids to responsibly interact with objects in nature and others discourage it. We need to identify why certain staff believe it's OK and why others believe that it is not— anything we can do during staff training?? |



## YOUTH PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

This resource comes from the Leave No Trace Youth Program Accreditation, which provides directors, managers, teachers, and other youth program staff leaders with essential tools and best practices for the administration of Leave No Trace programming. For more information visit: [lnt.org/accreditation](http://lnt.org/accreditation).

## Leave No Trace Foundations

|                                    | Needs Improvement ----- Demonstrating Excellence  |  | Examples / Evidence  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>Interaction with Nature</b>     | Learners are not encouraged to responsibly touch, feel and interact with certain objects in the natural world.  | Learners are sometimes, but not always encouraged to responsibly touch, feel and interact with certain objects in the natural world (e.g., some staff encourage interaction with natural objects while others do not). | Learners are always encouraged to responsibly touch, feel and interact with certain objects in the natural world (e.g., learners have the opportunity to touch certain trees, plants, rocks, soil, etc.).  |
| <b>Understanding the “Why”</b>     | Learners cannot explain why Leave No Trace concepts are important.  | Some, but not all, learners can reasonably explain why Leave No Trace concepts are important (e.g., some groups of youth can explain why and others cannot).   | All learners can reasonably explain why Leave No Trace concepts are important (e.g., youth participants can explain why each of the Seven Principles helps to reduce impacts in the outdoors).   |
| <b>Leave No Trace Skills</b>       | When talking about a Leave No Trace skill, learners are not engaged in a demonstration or have the opportunity to practice how to preform that skill. | When talking about a Leave No Trace skill, some, but not all, learners are engaged in a demonstration or get to practice how to preform that skill.  | When talking about a Leave No Trace skill (e.g., digging cat holes, the thumb trick with wildlife, using human waste disposal product, etc.), all learners are engaged in demonstrations or get to practice how to preform that skill (e.g., youth participants learning about human waste actually get the chance to dig a cat hole). |
| <b>Guidelines, Not Rules</b>       | Leave No Trace concepts are taught explicitly as the rules. (e.g., the Seven Principles are the rules of the outdoors).                               | Leave No Trace concepts are sometimes taught as guidelines for making good decisions <i>and</i> sometimes taught as the rules.   | Leave No Trace concepts are always taught as guidelines to make good decisions and not framed as “the rules” (e.g., The Seven Principles help learners make a decision when they are in an ethical situation in the outdoors).   |
| <b>If Negative Impacts Occur</b>   | Staff always shame the learner(s) when their actions create negative impacts in the outdoors.   | Staff sometimes engage the learner(s) in conversation and education, but also shame the learner(s), if actions of the individual or group create negative impacts to the outdoors.                                     | Staff always engage learners in conversation and education if actions of the individual or group create negative impacts to the outdoors (e.g., staff use an individual’s decision to hike across a switchback as a learning opportunity to educate the individual and the group).   |
| <b>Beyond the Seven Principles</b> | Leave No Trace concepts are only taught using the wording of the Seven Principles and their associated bullet points.                                 | Leave No Trace concepts are sometimes, but not always, taught beyond the exact wording of the Seven Principles and their associated bullet points to increase comprehension and understanding of the concepts.         | Leave No Trace concepts are always taught beyond the exact wording of the Seven Principles and their associated bullet points (e.g., learners get to hear the Seven Principles and then are asked why they are important for today’s activity).  |

## Staff Instruction and Support

|                                     | Needs Improvement ----- Demonstrating Excellence  | Examples / Evidence  |   |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Age Appropriate Instruction</b>  | Instruction methods are not age appropriate for learners.   | Instruction methods are sometimes, but not always, age appropriate for learners (e.g., young children learn <i>Plan Ahead and Prepare</i> broadly, but the concepts try to relate the principle to higher order themes and contexts beyond that class, program, or timely experience).   | Instruction and methods are always age appropriate for learners (e.g., young children learn about <i>Plan Ahead and Prepare</i> concepts that relate to that specific class, program, or activity).   |  |
| <b>Needs of Learners</b>            | The needs of diverse learners, including cultural and varying ability, are not met when providing outdoor-related Leave No Trace education.                                   | The needs of diverse learners, including cultural and varying ability, are sometimes, but not always, met when providing Leave No Trace education (e.g., staff awareness of learner(s) allow staff to easily adopt the setting, but the activity materials require catching and throwing which are challenging for some learners). | The needs of diverse learners, including cultural and varying ability, are always met when providing Leave No Trace education (e.g., staff awareness of learner(s) strengths and challenges allow staff to easily adopt the settings, activities, and materials to include everyone). |  |
| <b>Group Size Experiences</b>       | Staff are not intentional about the group size that they are providing instruction to.  | Staff only teach Leave No Trace through large group experiences (e.g., Leave No Trace is only taught to groups of 25 or more as they rotate through different stations).   | Staff use a combination of small group and large group experiences to teach Leave No Trace (e.g., staff introduce the day's activity to the large group and then break up learners into smaller groups to facilitate the experience or debrief).                                      |  |
| <b>Preparation Time</b>             | Staff are not given adequate planning time to prepare for Leave No Trace programming before participants arrive.  | Staff are sometimes, but not always, given adequate time to prepare for Leave No Trace programming before participants arrive.   | Staff are always given adequate time to prepare for Leave No Trace programming before participants arrive (e.g., planning time each week that allows staff to account for education outcomes, location, activity, methods and specific group/learner needs).                          |  |
| <b>Access to Teaching Resources</b> | Resources and materials that aid in teaching Leave No Trace are not easily accessed by staff members or resources do not exist at this time.                                  | Resources and materials that aid in teaching Leave No Trace are sometimes, but not always, easily accessed by staff members (e.g., laminated materials that go along with Leave No Trace activities are stored in a centralized location, but are missing components or incomplete).   | Resources and materials that aid in teaching Leave No Trace are always easily accessible by staff members (e.g., multiple copies of laminated materials that go along with Leave No Trace activities are stored and accounted for in a centralized location).                         |  |
| <b>Safety and Risk Management</b>   | Staff who are teaching Leave No Trace through outdoor activities are not certified or qualified to apply appropriate safety and risk management considerations with learners. | Some staff, but not all, who are teaching Leave No Trace through outdoor activities are qualified to apply appropriate safety and risk management considerations with learners.  | All staff who are teaching Leave No Trace through outdoor activities are qualified to apply appropriate safety and risk management considerations with learners.  |  |

## Staff Training

|  | Needs Improvement ----- Demonstrating Excellence   |  | Examples / Evidence   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Training and Professional Development</b>           | The organization does not provide its own training or professional development opportunities to staff related to Leave No Trace.                   | The organization sometimes, but not always, provides staff with training or professional development opportunities related to Leave No Trace.  | The organization always provides staff with training or professional development opportunities related to Leave No Trace (e.g., Staff receive an hour-long development session at the beginning of a program season).   |
| <b>Fundamentals of Leave No Trace</b>                  | Training does not provide staff with explicit knowledge of what Leave No Trace is and why it matters.  | Training provides staff with a foundation for knowing only the <i>what</i> behind Leave No Trace, but not the <i>why</i> (e.g., staff only know that there are Seven Principles of Leave No Trace but not why they matter).  | Training provides staff with a foundation for understanding <b>both</b> what Leave No Trace is <i>and</i> why it matters (e.g., staff have learned about the Seven Principles and why they reduce impacts in the outdoors).   |
| <b>Facilitation Techniques</b>                         | Training does not provide staff with relevant educator or facilitation techniques for teaching Leave No Trace to youth participants.               | Training provides staff with relevant educator or facilitation techniques, but no opportunities to practice or refine these skills with their peers (e.g., Leave No Trace facilitation techniques are shown in a presentation-format only and does not include time for staff to practice the skills). | Training provides staff opportunities to practice using Leave No Trace educator or facilitation techniques with their peers (e.g. staff know how to facilitate Leave No Trace to a group of 13-year-old participants who are unfamiliar with the outdoors).   |
| <b>Training Resources and Materials</b>                | Resources and materials that help educators teach Leave No Trace are not included in staff training.   | Resources and materials that help educators teach Leave No Trace are sometimes, but not always included in staff training.   | Resources and materials that help educators teach Leave No Trace are always included in staff training (e.g., teaching materials, activity books, and required activity materials are present during training).   |
| <b>Practice Using Training Resources and Materials</b> | Staff do not have the opportunity to practice using Leave No Trace resources and materials during staff training.                                  | Staff are sometimes, but not always, given the opportunity to practice using Leave No Trace resources and materials during staff training.   | Staff are <b>always</b> given the opportunity to practice using Leave No Trace resources and materials during staff training. (e.g., staff practice using the teaching materials for specific games and activities that will be facilitated for learners).  |
| <b>Organization and Program Values</b>                 | During training, <b>no</b> explicit connections are made between Leave No Trace and other areas, activities, or values associated with the program | During training, explicit connections are <b>sometimes, but not always</b> , made between Leave No Trace and other areas, activities, or values associated with the program.   | During training, explicit connections are <b>always</b> made between Leave No Trace and values associated with the program (e.g., staff are engaged in creating linkages between the responsibility associated with Leave No Trace and the responsibility associated with the program's core values). |

## Youth Engagement

|                                 | Needs Improvement ----- Demonstrating Excellence  |  |  | Examples / Evidence |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|---------------------|
| <b>Intentional Reflection</b>   | Staff do not engage learners in the intentional process of reflecting on what it means to Leave No Trace.                                       | Staff engage some, but not all, learners in an intentional process of reflecting on what it means to Leave No Trace.   | Staff engage all learners in an intentional process of reflecting on what it means to Leave No Trace (e.g., verbal discussions, journaling, interpretation, sharing feelings about an experience).   |                     |
| <b>Youth Voice</b>              | Learners do not have the opportunity to provide feedback in a meaningful way in an effort to shape the Leave No Trace culture of their program. | Learners have limited opportunities to provide feedback to staff in a meaningful way in an effort to shape the Leave No Trace culture of their program.  | Learners have multiple opportunities to provide feedback to staff in a meaningful way in an effort to shape the Leave No Trace culture of their program (e.g., discussion forums, surveys, activities, and leadership groups that activate participant ideas, attitudes, knowledge, and actions).  |                     |
| <b>Links to Positive Values</b> | No comparisons are made between Leave No Trace and the values that exist beyond the outdoors.   | Only staff make comparisons between Leave No Trace and positive values that exist beyond the outdoors (e.g. staff make the comparisons for learners during discussions instead of allowing learners to make the comparisons themselves). | Learners make comparisons between Leave No Trace and positive values (e.g., responsibility, caring, respect, equity & social justice, integrity, honesty) that exist beyond the outdoors (e.g., learners relate the responsibility found in Leave No Trace to the idea of responsibility to their community, school, or the program itself). |                     |

## Program Delivery

|   | Needs Improvement ----- Demonstrating Excellence  |   |  | Examples / Evidence |
|---|---|---|--|---------------------|
| <b>Learning Opportunities in Outdoor Activities</b> | Leave No Trace learning opportunities are not currently built into a program's offerings.   | Leave No Trace concepts or values are sometimes, but not always included in the activities that engage learners in the outdoors (e.g., Leave No Trace is a component of hiking activities, but not any other outdoor activities). | Leave No Trace concepts or values are always included in the activities that engage learners in the outdoors (e.g., Leave No Trace is a component of outdoor activity areas like biking, hiking, and canoeing, field science, etc).    |                     |
| <b>Frequency of Learning Opportunities</b>          | Leave No Trace learning opportunities are not currently built into a program's offerings.   | Learners experience Leave No Trace concepts or values 1-2 times per week.   | Learners experience Leave No Trace concepts, education or values 3 or more times per week (e.g., Leave No Trace discussions are incorporated into various daily activities and programs).  |                     |
| <b>Learners Spend Time in the Outdoors</b>          | Learners do not have the opportunity to learn about Leave No Trace while in outdoor settings (e.g., a program only teaches Leave No Trace indoors). | Learners have the opportunity to learn about Leave No Trace while in an outdoor setting <b>one time per week</b> .  | Learners have the opportunity to learn about Leave No Trace while in an outdoor setting <b>two or more times</b> per week (e.g., a program takes learners into the green space next to the school or park two or more times per week). |                     |

## Learner Outcomes

|   | Needs Improvement ----- Demonstrating Excellence                                       |  | Examples / Evidence  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Development Outcome: Responsibility</b>      | Developmental outcomes are not measured by the program.                                | Leave No Trace education leads to less than half of learners demonstrating an increase in responsibility outcomes (e.g., Assessment through use of the American Camp Association’s Youth Outcomes Battery).  | Leave No Trace education leads to more than half of learners demonstrating an increase in responsibility outcomes (e.g., Assessment through use of the American Camp Association’s Youth Outcomes Battery).  |
| <b>Development Outcome: Affinity for Nature</b> | Development outcomes are not measured by the program.                                  | Leave No Trace education leads to less than half of learners demonstrating an increase in affinity for nature outcomes (e.g., Assessment through use of the American Camp Association’s Youth Outcomes Battery).   | Leave No Trace education leads to more than half of learners demonstrating an increase in affinity for nature outcomes (e.g., Assessment through use of the American Camp Association’s Youth Outcomes Battery).   |
| <b>Environmental Education K-12</b>             | Environmental education outcomes are not measured by the program.                      | Leave No Trace education leads to less than half of learners demonstrating performance and achievement in grade-level relevant environmental education outcomes (e.g., Assessment through use of the North American Alliance for Environmental Educations’ Guidelines for Learning K-12 Self-Assessment tool). | Leave No Trace education leads to more than half of learners demonstrating performance and achievement in grade-level relevant environmental education outcomes (e.g., Assessment through use of the North American Alliance for Environmental Educations’ Guidelines for Learning K-12 Self-Assessment tool). |
| <b>Other Relevant Outcomes Assessment</b>       | The program does not use any other assessment measures to understand learner outcomes. | Leave No Trace education leads to less than half of learners demonstrating an increase in development outcomes related to assessment measures not already listed.  | Leave No Trace education leads to more than half of learners demonstrating an increase in development outcomes related to assessment measures not already listed.  |