

Leave No Trace for COPE & Climbing

The COPE or Climbing site is an outdoor resource which can aid in the overall development of character in young people. Safety and well-being of participants and staff are of paramount importance, closely followed by preservation of the beautiful natural setting. By using Leave No Trace outdoor ethics to govern the stewardship of this resource, it will be preserved for future generations to use.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

Proper event planning and preparation helps COPE or Climbing participants achieve their goals safely and enjoyably while minimizing damage to natural resources. Poorly prepared participants, confronted with unexpected situations, often resort to high-impact solutions that degrade the outdoors or put themselves at risk.

Poor planning often results in:

- High-risk travel or emergency evacuations because participants were not prepared for remote location, or to protect themselves from insect pests, poisonous plants and bad weather.
- Improperly located sites that do not have proper screening between events, leading to unintended interaction between groups on the course.
- Excessive trash or personal items left behind because of failure to plan properly for the events of the day.

2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Damage to land occurs when surface vegetation or communities of organisms are trampled beyond recovery. The resulting barren area leads to the development of undesirable trails, campsites and soil erosion.

Some guidelines for travel on the COPE or Climbing site are...

- In event areas, participants should concentrate activity. Use the connecting trails to prevent damage to natural areas and screening vegetation.
- When traveling off of connecting trails for events such as trust walks or accessing new climbing sites, try to follow existing game trails and avoid sensitive plant communities or un-traveled natural areas.
- When camping, place tents and cooking activities in designated areas which have been developed for these uses.
- Only emergency and service vehicles are allowed beyond the warning signs of the COPE or Climbing site.

3. Properly dispose of waste

COPE or Climbing groups need to take their trash out with them. There is no reason why people cannot carry out the extra materials which they carried in with them in the first place. Though most trash and litter 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 visitors. Trash and litter detract from an area's naturalness.

Waste water & trash

Prevent contamination of natural water sources; dispose of waste water only in designated areas. Minimize the need to pack out food scraps by carefully planning meals. Place all trash in garbage bags and take them to designated areas when the program is completed.

Human waste

Proper human waste disposal prevents spread of disease and exposure to others. Use restroom facilities when provided. In remote locations, practice human waste disposal techniques that have been recommended by your group leader (e.g. cat-holes)

4. Leave What You Find

Allow others a sense of discovery; leave rocks, plants, archaeological artifacts and other objects as found. The COPE or Climbing site may be home to rare and delicate plant species or historical artifacts.

Minimize Site Alterations

Do not dig tent trenches or build lean-tos, tables or chairs. Avoid hammering nails into trees, hacking at them with hatchets or saws, or damaging bark and roots of trees. Avoid trampling vegetation in areas adjacent to program sites – stay within designated areas. If you clear an undeveloped area of rocks or twigs, replace these items before leaving. On high-impact sites, it is appropriate to clean the site of any debris when you leave, and smooth over holes in activity areas covered by wood chips or gravel.

5. Minimize the Use of Campfires

The only appropriate place to build a fire is within existing fire rings. Many program areas are heavily wooded and fire danger can become extreme in late summer. True *Leave No Trace* fires are built only as large as needed. Cooking fires and fires built for evening sessions should be modest in size. Large fires may send up sparks into the air, and damage overhanging tree branches. Frequent feeding of small fires also creates activity for evening sessions. At times, use of open fires is prohibited. Check for any fire bans before building a fire.

6. Respect Wildlife

Quick movements and loud noises are stressful to animals. Considerate people practice these safety methods:

- Observe wildlife from afar to avoid disturbing them
- Give animals a wide berth, especially during breeding, nesting and birthing seasons.
- Store food securely and keep garbage and food scraps away from animals so they will not acquire bad habits. Help keep wildlife wild. You are too close to wildlife if an animal alters its normal activities.

7. Respect Other Visitors

Thoughtful participants:

- Travel quietly between activity areas so that they do not disturb other groups using the program.
- Leave radios, tape players, and pets at home to keep the noise down.
- Select designated campsites well away from other groups to help preserve privacy and solitude.
- Make sure the colors of their clothing and gear blend with the environment.

Enjoy enthusiastic participation and celebration with their COPE or Climbing group without raucous or boisterous behavior.

Additional Ways to Minimize Climbing Impacts

- Though it may seem there is plenty of room for new routes, the rock resources is limited
- Chipping and drilling destroys the rock, use removable protection and natural anchors—No pitons
- Bolts should only be used when no other protections is available
- Adjust loose rocks to make stable instead of tossing them over the edge
- When considering establishing new routes, weigh whether the local ecology can withstand the increased traffic (new trails, etc). Does it really add new diversity to the other climbs in the area?
- Use earth tone slings
- Bolts should match the rock or be painted to camouflage (now required in Europe)
- Use discrete anchors at the tops of climbs, avoid chain which blows and makes noise
- Use chalk sparingly, particularly out west
- Vertical Rocks represent unique biological communities, choose sites free of fragile plants such as lichens
- Remove equipment at the end of each day
- Don't hog all the climbs
- Fires and pits at the base of most crags is unacceptable