

Outdoor Education (Winter Camping)

SECONDARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- Local - Multi-day winter camping trips that travel within 2 hours from the arrival of emergency medical assistance or which are within easy reach of help (heated buildings are accessible).
- Backcountry - Multi-day winter camping trips that travel more than 2 hours from the arrival of emergency medical assistance and/or where motorized vehicle assistance is not accessible.
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).
- Also consult [Outdoor Education \(General Procedures\)](#).

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (e.g. a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.
- When using equipment that is not described on the activity page, care must be taken to determine that it is safe for use.
- When using electric tent heaters they must be CSA approved.

- Each excursion must be equipped with:
 - A complete set of maps for the route, with emergency access points designated.
 - Means of treating drinking water.
 - Means of shelters (for example, quinzee and wall tents).
 - All wall tents must have 2 doors or the sides of tents must not be buried.
 - When using a wall tent, the appropriate accessories must be used (for example, pickets, king poles, internal frames).
 - One tarp per 4 students
 - One ground sheet per tent/quinzee
 - Ropes
 - One camp stove for cooking per 8 participants (for example, propane, liquid gas, wood burning).
 - When using a wood stove for heat in a wall tent, the wood stove must be appropriate to the size and design of the tent.
 - When using a wood stove, the appropriate accessories must be used (for example, stove pipe, extra elbows, fireproof gasket).
 - Repair kits for frequently used equipment (for example, tents and camp stoves).
 - Splitting axe(s) and/or saw(s) and/or camp knife/knives
 - Shovel(s)

- Each participant must be equipped with:
 - Water bottle
 - Whistle, or signaling device
 - Flashlight or headlamp
 - Sleeping bag rated for the temperatures predicted during the time of the excursion, or combined with a sleeping bag liner for added warmth
 - Foam or inflatable sleeping mat
 - Water proofing bag(s) to keep clothing and sleeping bag dry
- If leaving the base camp, each participant must also be equipped with:
 - A copy of the map of the route with emergency access points highlighted
 - Compass
 - Fire lighting device(s) in waterproof container (for example, waterproof matches, lighter, ferro rod).

Refer to the [***First Aid***](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Determine that all necessary clothing and footwear are included prior to departing on the excursion.
- Clothing (in layers suitable for the season) and footwear appropriate to the activity, location and environmental conditions must be worn.

- A dry change of clothing kept in a watertight bag/container must be accessible.
- The importance of layering clothing must be taught, including appropriate clothing and fabrics to wear for warmth, moisture wicking and quick drying.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Facilities/site must be consistent with age and experience of campers.
- Check with local authorities for current information regarding area safety.
- Appropriate environmental and sanitary practices (for example, washroom routines) must be taught.
- Shelters should be appropriate for conditions and adequately constructed.
- When setting up a wall tent, take into consideration the wind direction to determine the direction of tent and stovepipe placement.
- A physical barrier must be present to separate the sleeping area from the wood stove or heater when sleeping overnight in a heated wall tent, (for example, wooden fence or picket fence).
- Standards for Sleeping in a Quinzee
 - The outside ambient temperature must be no warmer than -4 degrees Celcius.

- Snow that is piled for the quinzee is to be taken from various layers of the snow pack and left to sinter for a minimum of two hours prior to digging out the quinzee.
- Sticks to a depth of a minimum of 6" must be placed around the top of the quinzee snow pile to guide the depth of digging out the quinzee.
- When digging out the quinzee, a minimum of one student must be watching the student who is digging out at all times.
- Once dug out, light a candle in each quinzee for a minimum of 30 minutes to allow an ice glaze to form inside the quinzee.
- Ensure that if the door is to be covered over, that it is blocked by something easy to remove in an emergency (for example, light weight sled, foam sleeping mat, backpack).
- The Teacher/Monitor is responsible for checking in with students prior to going to bed, and first thing in the morning upon waking.
- At least two shovels must be left outside of each quinzee during the night in case of collapse.
- Establish a system to signal to Teachers/Monitors checking on the quinzees that the quinzee has been abandoned during the night (for example, flag, shovel over the door).
- A final inspection of each quinzee is to be conducted by the site supervisor, prior to students sleeping in the quinzee.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), Teachers must take into consideration their school board/school's protocols and procedures related to:

- environmental conditions (consult [Weather](#)); and
 - snow conditions (for example, snow/ice storms) and visibility.
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, frostbite, hypothermia).
 - The school board's weather procedures are the minimum standards at all times. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult [Medical Conditions](#).
- Students must not participate in the activity until they receive information on concussion prevention specific to the activity, inherent risks of the activity (for example, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks), and procedures and rules for safe play. Students must receive instruction on the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Refer to school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and parent/guardian permission.
- Activities must be modified according to the age, ability level, language, and experience of students, number of participants, and the facility available.
- Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
- Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.

- Students must be made aware of expectations as they relate to emergency procedures and signal to assemble.
- A systematic pattern for group travel and communication must be established.
- Do not travel in darkness unless in an emergency situation.
- A process for keeping track of students must be in place (for example, buddy system).
- A Principal/Designate in the school, and each Teacher (and Trip Guide [where appropriate]) on the excursion must have: a map of route and an excursion itinerary including an emergency action plan (for example, supervisory chain of command, emergency evacuation plan, emergency access points, local emergency contact phone numbers)
- Ensure an adequate supply of nutritious food preserved and packed to suitable weight for carrying.
- Ensure an adequate supply of safe water (the group must have a water purification method and must be made aware of water sources prior to embarking on trip).
- Students must receive instruction and demonstrate proficiency on safely using splitting axes, camp knives, and saws prior to embarking on the trip.
- Establish a procedure for vacating the quinzee/wall tent (for example, a buddy system for leaving the shelter at night). Students must be instructed in the procedure of the evacuation of the shelter in case of emergency (for example in case of a fire or a quinzee/tent collapse).
- A student must not be left alone in a quinzee/wall tent at night. There must be a minimum of 2 students and a maximum of 4 students sleeping in each quinzee.
- A final inspection of each quinzee/wall tent must be conducted by the Trip Guide, prior to students sleeping in them.

- Trip Guides must check each tent's scissor poles or internal frame for stability and strength prior to each night.
- No open flame, of any sort, in or near shelters.
- When a wood stove is used to heat a wall tent, the stove must be designed for the size and construction of the tent and follow the manufacturer's installation and use instructions.
- Trip Guides must be responsible for the proper tent set up and stove set up.
- Any adult acting in a supervisory capacity who has been trained and directed by the Trip Guide is allowed to manage the woodstove.
- Only after they have received proper instruction, and have demonstrated proficiency, students may load a wood stove while being monitored by a Monitor.
- A shovel and container of snow/sand/dirt or a fire blanket must be kept in close proximity to the stove all wood stoves in operation in case of fire.
- The Trip Guide, Teacher, or Monitor Instructor with knowledge, skills, and experience, approved by the Trip Guide and the school/school board, must check heat sources and monitor their use daily.
- Safety procedures for cooking over a campfire, woodstove (wall tent camping), or campstove must be established.
- Students must receive instruction and demonstrate proficiency on safely using the cooking device(s) prior to use.
- A wood stove used for heating may be used to cook, provided pots and pans are used. Food must not be cooked directly on the wood stove top.

- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The type of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.
- On-Site Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- For filling and lighting of stoves, lighting campfires, cooking meals on camp stoves/open fires, and use of saws, axes, and camp knives:
 - On-Site Supervision is required by the Teacher when a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring.
- Direct Supervision is required when students are:
 - filling and lighting of stoves;
 - lighting campfires;
 - cooking meals on camp stoves/open fires; and
 - use of saws, axes, and camp knives.
- On-Site Supervision is required after students' demonstration of proficiency of:
 - cooking of meals on camp stoves or open campfires; and

- use of axes and camping knives.
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity (e.g., rest or snack breaks).
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Teacher, can monitor students during physical education activities. Refer to your school board's policy on Volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used and the Teacher is not directly with the Qualified Instructor, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.

Supervision/Monitoring Ratios

- 1 Teacher/Monitor per 8 students for distant, overnight camping
- 1 Teacher/Monitor per 12 students for local, overnight camping

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Outdoor Education Sample Kit Contents](#))
- A working communication device (for example, satellite or cell phone, or satellite GPS messenger) suitable for the activities/locations must be available. This device must be maintained, waterproofed, protected and dedicated for emergency communications only. The phone number for the device, and phone numbers for emergency services and school contact people (for example, the principal) must be included with the phone.
- At least one Teacher, Trip Guide, or Monitor must have a minimum of a standard first aid course from a reputable provider (for example, St. John Ambulance, Canadian Red Cross, Lifesaving Society) for *local*

trips.

- At least one Teacher, Trip Guide, or Monitor must hold one of the following current first aid certifications for *backcountry trips*:
 - WMA Wilderness Advanced First Aid
 - St. John Ambulance Wilderness First Aid Level 3
 - Canadian Red Cross Advanced Wilderness and Remote First Aid
 - Equivalent to any of the above.
- Follow the school's first aid emergency response ((consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#)) and the school board's concussion protocol (consult [Concussions](#))).
- An emergency action plan and response to deal with evacuations and lockdowns, including specific direction for participants with accessibility needs, must be followed and communicated to all students.☒

Definitions

- **In-charge Person:**
 - Some activities refer to an "In-Charge" person. While the teacher is in-charge and responsible for the overall safety and well-being of students under their care, sometimes there are other personnel who must be identified as "In-Charge" related to specific situations (for example, a pool lifeguard). In activities where an "In-Charge" person is designated, that person, in consultation with the teacher, must make final decisions regarding safety of the students
- **Qualified Instructor:**
 - An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled

by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Monitor:**

- An individual who assists the Teacher with a group of students, (e.g., Volunteer, Qualified Instructor) and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:
 - **Observe:** Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
 - **Identify:** Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
 - **Act:** Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
 - **Report:** Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the teacher for management and direction.

- **Outside Activity Provider:**

- A commercial company, volunteer organization, or individual, not associated with the school board, who possess the required qualifications to provide safety and initial skill instruction, and monitoring for the duration of an activity.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.

- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher:**

- A person with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board (i.e., teacher, vice-principal, principal). This person is legally responsible for the students and has the authority and responsibility to supervise.

- **Trip Guide:**

- An individual who has the required certifications and/or knowledge/skills of the route and activity. This role could be fulfilled by a Teacher, a Volunteer, or an employee of an Outside Activity Provider and must be approved by the school/school board. Trip Guides have been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Teacher is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both, the activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:
 - No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Teacher supervising.
 - The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.

- Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for one activity and requires the Teacher to be present at that activity for management and direction.
 - An activity may be under Direct Supervision:
 - During the entire duration of the activity;
 - During the set up and take down of equipment; .
 - During the safety and initial skill instruction;
 - During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
 - When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.
- **In-the-Area Supervision:**
 - The Teacher is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:
 - The Teacher is circulating between the activities occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the Teacher is communicated to the student.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and skill and instruction and is monitoring at a combination of locations, the Teacher is located in proximity to where the student activities take place, is circulating between the activity locations, and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Students may be out of sight for periods of time.
 - An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:

- Where the same activity is located in separate locations (e.g., Fitness activities);
 - Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
 - Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a separate location from the teacher (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling, hiking on trails);
 - When the activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
 - Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.
- **On-Site Supervision:**
 - The Teacher is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, climbing wall at an Outside Activity Provider’s facility, campsite) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:
 - Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Teacher is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
 - Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outdoor storage shed, boathouse, staff tent) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
 - Where a Qualified Instructor(s) is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for an activity or a combination of activities at one location and the Teacher is present and is circulating and accessible for management and direction.
 - An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:

- During the entire duration of the activity;
- During the safety and initial skill instruction;
- With activities using multiple stations while the Teacher is circulating;
- When combining two or more activities at one location while the Teacher is circulating; and
- When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Teacher and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with student's physical activities.

Last Published

Fri, 03/27/26 11:37 am