

Outdoor Education (Camping - Backcountry)

An Extended Overnight Camping Experience In An Outdoor Environment Where Students Use Tents And Prepare Their Own Food, More Than 2 Hours From The Arrival Of Emergency Medical Assistance.

SECONDARY - CURRICULAR 2025

- Consult [Disability-Centred Safety](#) if your groups of students include students with disabilities.
- 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](#).
- Consult [Outdoor Education \(Swimming - on Watercraft and Land-based Trips\)](#) if swimming is to take place in a non-designated swim area while tripping.
- 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.

- A complete set of maps of the location and emergency access points. A copy of the map (photocopies are acceptable) and one compass per participant, if appropriate. A GPS to be used as a back-up only.
- One whistle per participant.
- Water purification system(s) (for example, water filter(s), iodine tablets), in quantity sufficient to hydrate students for the duration of the trip, plus one extra in case of malfunction.
- Where appropriate, propane or white gas campstove(s), or wood box(es) in quantity sufficient to cook enough food to feed all students in a timely manner, plus one extra in case of malfunction.
- Weather (for example, sun, cold, precipitation) and insect protection.
- Where appropriate, animal repellent (for example, bear spray, bear bangers, whistles).
- Shovel/trowel.
- One flashlight or headlamp per participant.
- Waterproof matches and/or matches in a waterproof container.
- Tarp(s) for shelter and ropes to secure.
- Saws and camp knives (if deemed appropriate by teacher).
- When using equipment that is not described on the activity page, care must be taken to determine that it is safe for use (for example, no sharp edges, sharp corners, cracks, or splinters).

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 where appropriate) and footwear (for example, closed-toed shoes that provide traction) appropriate to the activity, location and environmental conditions must be worn. No bare feet outside of tents.
- Rain gear and/or a dry change of clothing kept in a watertight bag/container must be accessible.
- 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

- Trip Guide must check with local authorities to determine the level of potential hazards (for example, bears, forest fires).
- Routes into and out of the wilderness campsite must be commensurate with the age and abilities of group. Consult [Outdoor Education \(Backpacking/Hiking - Backcountry\)](#).
- Appropriate environmental and sanitary practices (for example, washroom routines, disposal of dishwater and excess food) must be taught.
- No open flame, of any sort, in or near tents.
- Situate tents after considering the presence of any hazards (for example, away from dead or dying trees).
- A designated cooking area must be established away from tents, and whenever possible away from the path between tents.

- An emergency escape route including safety procedures and/or a designated safe location, in case of bears or other hazards, must be established.

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
 - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board's protocols and/or regional Public Health Department's website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke, poisonous plants).
- At all times the school board's weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. 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 signal to assemble, a system for keeping track of students (for example, buddy system), and boundaries for activities.
- A trip plan must be developed and communicated to all involved with the excursion. A Principal/Designate in the school, each Teacher (and Trip Guide [where appropriate]) on the excursion, and a local emergency contact (for example, park official, area police station) must have a copy of the trip plan (for example, a map of the route and/or campsite and an excursion itinerary, supervisory chain of command, emergency evacuation plan, emergency access points, provisions for inclement weather, local emergency contact phone numbers, health information for students, colours of canoes and tents, campsites).
- No open flame, of any sort, in or near shelters.
- Ensure an adequate supply of nutritious food appropriately for carrying to and from, and storing in the camp setting.
- Food must be hung, stored in bear-proof containers, or kept as far away from camp as possible.
- Camp stoves must be available, accessible, and appropriate for the activity, location, and duration of the excursion. Students must receive instruction on using the stove(s) prior to embarking on trip.
- Safety procedures for camp/cooking fires must be established (for example, water bucket in close proximity, safe movement when near fire, review of "stop, drop and roll").

- Ensure an adequate supply of safe water. Students must receive instruction on using the water purification system, and must be made aware of water sources prior to embarking on trip.
- Prior to using knives, saws or axes, students must receive instruction on their proper and safe use.
- All cutting and chopping tools must be sharpened and in good condition.
- 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, and use of saws:
 - 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; and
 - use of saws.

- On-Site Supervision is required during all other components of the activity (e.g., tent setup, collection of firewood, rest or snack breaks).
- At least one Trip Guide must have wilderness camping experience, and be familiar with the route to the site, and the campsite(s). If using tents, at least one of the Trip Guides must have tent-camping experience.
- 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.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Teachers and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.
- 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 Ratio

- 1 Teacher/Monitor per 8 students.
- For all overnight excursions, two Teacher(s)/Monitor(s) are required as a basic minimum, one of whom must be a Teacher.
- Where males and females participate on an excursion, both male and female Teachers/Monitors are required.

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 one of the following current advanced wilderness first aid certifications:
 - 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
- **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.

- **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.

- **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).

- **Supervisor:**

- A supervisor is a teacher, parent/guardian/volunteer, or trip guide. This term is used only in relation to supervision ratios.

- **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

Tue, 11/11/25 09:10 am