



EXPLORATIONS ACADEMY

FRONT COUNTRY ("CAR CAMPING") EQUIPMENT LIST

This is merely an example of a packing system. If you have your own system with fewer items that has proven to work in the past then feel free to bring that. Label all personal gear with your child's initials or full name. Please contact your student's advisor with any questions about gear.

STUDENTS WILL BRING:

General Supplies

- ☐ Daypack (to fit notebook, water bottle, layers, etc)
- ☐ Lunch for Day 1
- ☐ 1 liter (or larger) water bottle
- ☐ Notebook/ field journal and pen

Clothing: NO COTTON!

- ☐ 2 pairs of wool socks
- ☐ Change of underwear
- ☐ Raincoat & rain-pants (breathable, not plastic, no ponchos)
- ☐ Non-cotton pants and shirts
- ☐ Non-cotton jacket/ puffy
- ☐ Trail runners or hiking boots

Personal Items: Travel-sized preferred

- ☐ Toothbrush and toothpaste, floss
- ☐ Comb/hairbrush
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Glasses/contact lenses/saline solution, Tampons/pads (as needed)

Camping Gear

- ☐ Duffle bag or backpack & liner
- ☐ Sleeping bag (not cotton) temperature rated for the season
- ☐ Sleeping pad (closed cell or inflatable)
- ☐ Tent (if you do not have one, or access to one, school can provide you with a tarp)
- ☐ Headlamp or flashlight (with new and extra batteries)
- ☐ Cup, bowl, & spoon
- ☐ Basic wristwatch or sundial

Weather- Dependent Gear Items

- ☐ Wool, silk, or synthetic long underwear (top and bottom)
- ☐ Hat & gloves
- ☐ Sunhat/ sunglasses

Optional Gear Items

- ☐ Art Supplies
- ☐ Playing cards/games
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Binoculars (compact & lightweight)
- ☐ Insect repellent/hand sanitizer
- ☐ Sleeping bag liner for warmth
- ☐ Personal medication & 1st aid

WE WILL PROVIDE:

- All meals (except lunch for Day 1)
- Stoves/fuel
- Maps & compasses
- Pots, pans, and all cooking utensils
- First aid kits

DO NOT BRING:

- Tobacco, alcohol, or non-prescription drugs
- Phones, music players, electronic games, etc
- Expensive or fragile equipment
- Junk food (candy, gum, soft drinks, etc.)
- Makeup, scented deodorant, perfume, or jewelry
- Weapons

Explorations Academy Backpacking FAQ

♦ Gear-Related Questions

1. **Why is cotton not allowed?**
 - Cotton retains moisture, and waterlogged items lose their ability to insulate, become very heavy, and are slow to dry, which can lead to hypothermia or discomfort. Wool and synthetics dry faster and stay warm when wet.
 2. **Do students need to buy all this gear? Can anything be borrowed from the school?**
 - The school has loaner gear that students can check out. Contact your child's advisor to communicate what is needed and find a time to look through the gear room.
 3. **How big should their backpack be? Is 60L too big for a smaller student?**
 - 40–60L is standard, but fit is more important than size. Packs should be properly adjusted to the student's torso and hip measurements. You can go to REI and get appropriately sized. Broadly speaking, 40L is sufficient for all EA trips *if* the overall gear system is dialed in and minimalist.
 4. **What's the difference between hiking boots and trail runners? Which should we choose?**
 - Trail runners are lighter and more flexible, which saves energy while moving and reduces blisters. Conventional hiking boots do not provide any meaningful level of ankle support and are generally not recommended.
 5. **Why are phones and electronics not allowed? Can they bring a phone for photos/emergencies?**
 - This is a chance to unplug and build community. Leaders carry communication devices for emergencies. Most backpacking locations don't have cell service anyway.
 6. **What kind of sleeping bag should we get if we don't have one?**
 - A down or synthetic sleeping bag rated to 30°F or lower is required. Down is lighter and more compressible, but synthetic performs better if wet. Listed temperatures are rated for survival, not comfort - you should generally get a bag rated for a lower temp than expected conditions. Rated temperatures also assume the use of a sleeping pad and warm clothes.
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♦ Health & Safety Questions

9. **What if my child has a medical condition or takes medication daily?**
 - In accordance with the law, Explorations Academy does not administer, remind or ask students to take medication. Instructors can hold medication for students and provide that medication to the student upon request. All medications must be disclosed in medical forms and pre-arranged with admin.
10. **How do students handle toileting in the backcountry?**
 - We teach Leave No Trace principles. The school provides toilet kits and instructions, which vary depending on the trail. Some of the more popular trails and wilderness campsites in our area provide a basic pit toilet.
11. **What if my child gets their period while on the trip?**
 - Staff are prepared to support students, and we encourage students to bring supplies even if they don't expect their period. Staff meets with students and train them how to successfully backpack while on their period.
12. **How much water do they need to carry? Will there be places to refill?**
 - Students carry two 1-liter bottles. Leaders provide water treatment and plan for refill points. Students may bring their own water filters if they'd like.
13. **What about bears or other wildlife?**
 - We follow best practices for food storage and camping in wildlife areas. Leaders carry bear spray where required. Dangerous animal encounters are extremely rare in Washington.
14. **Do you always come back from trips on time?**
 - You'll receive a trip logistics email at least a week before departure with context and details about departure and return times. These times are our best estimates—on multi-day trips it's common to be a little ahead or behind schedule due to weather, trail conditions, or group pace. Parents will be notified by email or text of ETA times the day of return if the return time is later than expected. When students return, they'll need to complete a trip clean-up before leaving. Please check with a staff member before heading out, even if the group is behind schedule.

15. **What happens if my child gets injured on the trip?**
- Staff is trained and certified as either Wilderness First Responder or Wilderness First Aid. As a staff we have emergency practices and protocols that we review prior to trips. The Head of School will contact parents with details at the first possible moment to coordinate reunification.
16. **What if the weather turns bad?**
- We monitor weather patterns using trusted sources like Windy in the days and weeks before a trip. We have established go/ no- go scenarios and will cancel or reschedule a trip in favor of exercising caution. If weather unexpectedly changes during the trip, the trip leaders will initiate an early departure and notify the Head of School. The Head of School will call and text all parents with early arrival time. We require parents to be reachable or provide an alternate contact during trips. Please coordinate alternate contact with the main office. Parents/ Guardians, please leave your phones on at night.
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◆ Preparation & Experience Questions

14. **My child has never done anything like this—how can they prepare?**
- Practice hikes with their packed bag, and sleeping outside if possible are great ways to prepare. We will train students in essential skills, the trip itinerary, and safety practices prior to leaving and while on the trail.
15. **How will the gear check work? Can we get help before the trip?**
- Students must complete a pre-check at home, and trip leaders will do a second check. Advisors can provide personalized advice in advance. We ask that parents allow students to pack their bags and check off the items alongside them. Younger students or students new to backpacking need more guidance from parents, while older students or seasoned backpackers need less support. Parents engaged in the packing process helps set students up for a successful trip.
16. **Will my child be warm enough?**
- If they follow the gear list and learn layering strategies, yes. Warmth is a priority in gear checks.
17. **What if something breaks or my child forgets something?**
- Leaders carry group repair kits and backups for essential gear. We check bags for essential items prior to departure.
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◆ Emotional & Social Questions

18. **Will my child be okay being away from home and without their phone?**
- It's natural to feel nervous. Our staff is trained to support students emotionally, and trips are designed to develop independence and connection.
19. **What if my child feels overwhelmed or wants to come home early?**
- Staff are trained to handle challenges in the field. Evacuation is rare and only done for safety reasons. Mental health can be a safety reason and staff will support students for early departure in coordination with the Head of School. The Head of School will notify parents and coordinate early reunification. .
20. **How do you handle group dynamics and conflicts?**
- Leaders facilitate respectful group culture and use restorative practices to address conflicts. We encourage parents to talk with the child after the trip and listen to how they are thinking and feeling about past conflicts. If there are unresolved or continuing issues please contact your child's advisor or the Head of School.
21. **Can my child bring extra items for comfort, like a stuffed animal or favorite hoodie?**
- It depends on how full/heavy the bag is before adding comfort items, but generally not if it's cotton or bulky.
22. **Why can't my child have their phone on the trip?**
- We ask students to leave phones at home or stored in the office so they can fully engage with nature, their peers, and the experience without distractions. Being unplugged helps build confidence, presence, and real connection. Phones often don't work in the backcountry anyway, and staff carry emergency communication devices. For most students, this becomes one of the most refreshing parts of the trip, even after initial resistance.