

The Outdoor Code

Every Scout who is spending time outdoors should be familiar with the Outdoor Code. It is especially important for Webelos, Scouts BSA, and Venturers who are out camping regularly.



The Outdoor Code:

As an American, I will do my best to

Be clean in my outdoor manners

Be careful with fire

Be considerate in the outdoors

Be conservation-minded

The Scouts will read the Outdoor Code and probably understand most of it. But adding in some discussion points will help reinforce it. So below (and in the printable copy) I have not put some discussion points after the code itself. Use these as a starting point for having a conversation about what we can really do to minimize our impact when camping.

The Outdoor Code

As an American I will do my best to

Be clean in my outdoor manners

- I will treat the outdoors as a heritage.
- I will take care of it for myself and others.
- I will keep my trash and garbage out of lakes, streams, fields, woods, and roadways.

Be careful with fire

- I will prevent wildfire.
- I will build my fires only where they are appropriate.
- When I have finished using a fire, I will make sure it is cold out.
- I will leave a clean fire ring or remove all evidence of my fire.

Be considerate in the outdoors

- I will treat public and private property with respect.
- I will use low-impact methods of hiking and camping.

Be conservation minded

- I will learn how to practice good conservation of soil, waters, forests, minerals, grasslands, wildlife, and energy.
- I will urge others to do the same.

Discussion Points

These are some discussion points I like to use. Add your own.

- What does treating the outdoors as a heritage mean?
- What are some things I can do to take care of the outdoors next time I go camping?
- What should I do with my trash when there is nowhere to dispose of it nearby?
- What are the differences between a cooking fire, a campfire, and a bonfire?
- How can I decide if an area is appropriate for a fire?
- When putting out a fire, how can I tell if it is cold out?
- What does a clean fire ring mean?
- What are some things I can do to reduce the impact of hiking and camping on the outdoors?
- What are some things I can do to be conservation minded in the next week?
- Is it ever difficult to remind my friends to be conservation minded?
- Run through all four words: clean, careful, considerate, conservation-minded. Say them as a group several times, without prompting. No, together, everyone saying it at the same time. Then take away any cheat sheets and say them as a group again a few more times.

Teaching The Code

- Point out that C-point of the Scout Law is Courteous, but that the C-word in the Outdoor Code and the seven principles of Leave No Trace is Considerate.
- Run through all four C-words again, and point out how the first and third just tack on "in my outdoor manners" and "in the outdoors" onto the end, which is easy to remember because what are we memorizing? The Outdoor Code.
- Ask each boy to say the four C-words individually. If they can't do it correctly, say that they'll have another chance in a minute, move on to the next boy. As they listen to more youth say it correctly, their memory will be reinforced.
- The first part of the Outdoor Code is easy, it's almost the same as the Scout Oath. This time, though, you're not staking an oath on your personal honor, you're stating that you will do these things as a representative of America. "As an American, I will do my best to..."
- What were those four C-words again? Say them all as a group, together, quickly.
- What are you careful with? Fire. And the final point is easy, you've already memorized it.
- Now who wants to say the Outdoor Code? Have each boy say it in turn.
- Afterwards, it may be pointed out that it's only in their short-term memory. This is why it (along with the Scout Oath/Law, etc.) is said at the beginning of every meeting.