

Back Country and Wilderness Challenge Quiz

It is your responsibility to protect this wild place.



Please leave no trace!

In bygone days, travelers faced the challenge of survival in the back country and wilderness. Today the challenge of survival is whether our remaining natural areas can survive us. Test your knowledge and ability to use wild areas without using them up, by taking this backcountry and wilderness challenge test. Here's a hint: **think "Leave-No-Trace" to minimize your impact when you venture out to hike and camp in the backcountry. NOTE: More than one answer may apply.**

1. Leave No Trace

- a) Is a comprehensive attitude toward using the backcountry that shows our responsibility and respect for wildlife, other visitors, and everything beneath our feet.
- b) Applies to both camping AND traveling.
- c) Means thinking just as much about how your camp will look AFTER YOU LEAVE as how it looks while using it.
- d) Only applies to Wilderness Areas.

2. Which of the following transportation methods are allowed in the wilderness?

- a.) Jeep
- b.) Foot
- c.) Mountain Bike
- d.) Raft
- e.) Horseback
- f.) Snowmobiles

3. How long does a cigarette filter take to decompose?

- a.) 10-15 days
- b.) 2 years
- c.) 2 months
- d.) 5-25 years

4. What is the only good way to dispose of aluminum foil and cans?
- a.) Bury them 12-14 inches deep.
 - b.) Burn them in a hot fire.
 - c.) Hide them in a hollow log.
 - d.) Pack them out.
5. Which of the following may be left in the back country and wilderness?
- a.) Apple cores.
 - b.) Orange peels.
 - c.) Footprints.
 - d.) A cache of food or equipment - provided they are well hidden.
6. What is the best method for disposing of human waste?
- a.) Pick a place at least 200 feet from water sources and bury human waste - along with toilet paper - six to eight inches deep.
 - b.) Don't go! Force yourself to wait until your wilderness visit is over.
 - c.) Pick a place below the high water mark of a stream where flood waters will wash waste away.
 - d.) Be natural. Go when and where you've got to so, long as you are off the trail.
7. Which of the following would "woods-wise" campers do?
- a.) Dig a trench around their tent in case of rain.
 - b.) Cut boughs from a tree for a comfy bed.
 - c.) Chop down only dead trees for firewood.
 - d.) Never construct a rock fire ring.
8. What souvenirs can you take from the back country and wilderness?
- a.) Photographs.
 - b.) Arrowheads.
 - c.) Garbage left by slobs.
 - d.) A case of poison ivy.
9. Which of the following activities causes the most severe impact to backcountry naturalness?
- a) Fishing
 - b) Hiking off trails.
 - c) Littering.
 - d) Building a fire.
10. Brightly colored equipment, especially tents, packs and jackets are a good idea?

- a) True
- b) False

11. What is the best way to minimize the impacts of fire?

- a) Don't build a fire. Use a campstove instead.
- b) Clear away sod, needles and duff to mineral soil, then dig a hole and have a small pit fire that can be later buried.
- c) Collect and form rocks into a fire ring (making sure not to use river rocks) to keep fire from spreading.
- d) Break off only dead branches on trees for fuel.
- e) Use a fire pan, existing fire ring, or mound fire.

12. Armpits and dishes - how can you keep them clean?

- a.) Wash in lakes and streams using only biodegradable soap.
- b.) Wet, soap up and rinse well away from shore.
- c.) Stay dirty.
- d.) Cover body and dishes with bacon grease and let wildlife lick you clean.

13. Where to camp?

- a.) Choose flat ground away from the trail, but next to water.
- b.) Pick a site out of sight of the trail and at least 200 feet (about 70 steps) from water.
- c.) In well used, popular areas, camp where it is obvious people have camped before.
- d.) Camp close to other people for safety.

14. What happens to garbage left by IGNORAMUS DISGUSTUS (a lower life form that buries or leaves garbage instead of packing it out)?

- a.) Buried garbage is like a boomerang, it almost always gets back to the surface.
- b.) Animals may learn to associate humans with handouts.
- c.) Fishing line, plastic six-pack rings, cigarette butts, etc. can seriously injure or kill small animals and birds.
- d.) Biodegradable garbage will quickly rot and disappear.

15. How should horses be kept overnight in the wild country to best minimize their impact?

- a.) Tied to a tree.
- b.) Leg picketed in a dry meadow.
- c.) Kept in an electric corral.
- d.) Tied to a highline - a line stretched tightly between two trees at least 20 feet apart and high enough for a horse to pass under.

e.) Tied on hitchracks or constructed corrals that can be left for the next group to use.

16. So you love to fish. What do you do with the guts?

- a) Throw them in the lake after puncturing the air bladder.
- b) Throw them in the bushes.
- c) Bury them.
- d) Burn them in a hot fire.
- e) Pack them out.

17. What should backpackers do when encountering horses or a pack string on a trail?

- a.) Hurry past the string as quickly as possible.
- b.) Stroke the lead animal on the nose to assure him you are friendly.
- c.) Get to the downhill side of the trail and stand still.
- d.) Get to the uphill side of the trail and make cooing sounds.

18. What will "shortcutting" switchbacks on trails accomplish?

- a.) Save effort or substantial time for hikers and riders.
- b.) Cause visual eyesores from gullying and devegetation.
- c.) Cost the Forest Service extra tax dollars to correct.

19. When traveling through the backcountry you should?

- a) Stay on trails as much as possible.
- b) Walk single file on trails, but spread out when hiking cross-country.
- c) Take rest breaks next to the trail to minimize disturbance away from the trail.
- d) Avoid wet areas on the trail to keep your boots dry.

20. Which of the following items are important Leave No Trace tools?

- a) Axe
- b) Tennis shoes
- c) Small trowel
- d) collapsible bucket
- e) cell phone
- f) gators (leggings)

End of test

You have now completed your wilderness awareness quiz!

Check your answers to find out how you rate as a back country and wilderness visitor.

BACK COUNTRY and WILDERNESS CHALLENGE ANSWERS Score one point for each correct answer.

1. Leave No Trace. Answers a, b, c and d are correct. Leave No Trace is not just for wilderness areas, but for all natural areas from your backyard to the back country. **Total possible points = 4**

2. Answers b, d, and e are correct. The Wilderness Act of 1964 was established "In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States...". Transportation is by primitive, non-motorized and non-mechanized means only. Even bicycles and hang gliders, because they detract from a sense of wilderness, are prohibited from designated wilderness. **3 points**

3. Answer d is correct. The granulated charcoal and fiber glass filters found on cigarettes take about 5-25 years to decompose. So please remember to pack your butts out of the wilderness. **1 point**

4. Answer d is correct. Pack out all foil. Don't burn it. Foil is one of the major litter problems in the back country and wilderness because it does not burn. Instead it accumulates in fire pits and breaks up to glitter and litters the wild country. **1 point**

5. Answer c is correct. Leave only footprints. Sure - apple cores disappear in a few days, but until they do other people may not enjoy seeing them. Orange peels, like hunter orange, are easy to spot and are very resistant to decomposition (4-24 months!). Caches of gear or equipment are prohibited in the wilderness. Food caches may attract bears or other animals and teach them bad habits. Please remember "Pack it in - Pack it out." **1 point**

6. Answer a is correct. The cat method of burying human waste six to eight inches deep and well away from water is the way to do your duty. Microorganisms in this top soil layer quickly break down waste. Visitors should carry a small trowel for digging. **1 point**

7. Answer d is correct. Woods-wise campers know that fire rings of blackened rocks have become a major visual impact. They use either a stove, existing fire ring, or make a fire using a fire pan or fire blanket. For firewood, use only dead and down fuels no bigger than your wrist. Standing trees, dead or alive, should not be cut. Trenching around tents leaves unsightly scars and is unnecessary with proper site selection. Bough beds are not only destructive, but not very comfortable. **1 point**

8. Score yourself three points if you chose a, c, and d. Cultural resources such as arrowheads are a thrill to find, but a crime to take. Treat the back country like a museum, not a gift store. Leave what you find! **3 points**

9. Answer d is correct. Fire building is the biggest impact, especially if not done with care. Blackened roots, charred wood, limbs broken from trees, and garbage left in fire pits are impacts all too commonly found. **1 point**

10. False. Bright colors tend to shrink the back country because they are highly visible. Select earth tones, greens, browns, and blues when purchasing equipment for wild and natural areas. **1 point**

11. Answer a is the best, but count e as acceptable. A camp stove is the best Leave No Trace tool since fire becomes unnecessary. If you must build a fire, use an existing fire ring, fire pan or fire blanket. **1 point**

12. Answers are b and c. Wilderness hygiene, how to keep the back country and wilderness clean, requires that no foreign substances such as left over food or soaps (even biodegradable types) find their way to water. Either stay dirty or wash by first getting wet and soaping and rinsing well away from the water. Answer d) would probably work, but we shouldn't be feeding the wildlife. **2 points**

13. Answer b and c are correct. Good campsites are generally away from fragile shorelines and wet areas. Because most campsite impacts occur with low to moderate use, impacts can often be avoided by camping in well established sites where impacts have already occurred. **2 points**

14. Answers a, b, and c are correct. Remember that buried garbage is like a boomerang. It will get to the surface either from animals digging it up or from frost heaving. So-called biodegradable waste, including left over food, is garbage that needs to be packed out. **3 points**

15. Answers c, and d are correct. Tying stock to trees for a short time (less than a half hour) is generally acceptable, but for extended periods this practice causes tree damage as animals paw at roots, compact soil, and chew bark. A tree that has struggled for survival and growth for hundreds of years, can be quickly destroyed by one thoughtless act. Picketing in a dry meadow is good, for short periods of time, but not overnight. An electric corral that can be moved when needed, or highlines, are practical methods that work. **2 points**

16. The correct answer depends on the situation. Throwing fish viscera in lakes is not the best idea, since cold water retards decomposition. In grizzly country the best idea might be to not fish at all, but if you must, guts can be buried six to eight inches deep, well away from camps and trails (about 1.2 mile away). If not in bear country, viscera can be scattered on the ground away from camp. Answer e, pack them out, is a safe bet for **1 point**.

17. Score **1 point** if you picked c. Horses and mules can be easily frightened by backpackers, so move as far as possible to the downhill side of the trail, stand still, and restrain dogs, and speak gently to the horse (or rider).

18. Answers b and c are true. Switchbacks, where a trail zig-zags up or down slope are engineered to protect trails from erosion while providing a gentler grade for hikers and horses. Cutting switchback causes long lasting scars and saves no time. **2 points**

19. If you picked a and b, score two. Trails are built to handle use impacts. Walking and riding single file prevents trail widening and braiding. Conversely, spread use when traveling off trail. Take breaks out of sight of trails to improve the chance of solitude for others, and when encountering wet areas on trails, it is best to march right through. **2 points**

20. Take a point for b, c, d and f. Hiking boots, while appropriate for the trail, should come off in camp as tennis shoes are much lighter on the land. A trowel to dig catholes is essential. A collapsible bucket means fewer trips and fewer tracks to the waterhole and gators keep you on the trail. **4 points**

SCORING - Total points possible = 37

30+ Top hand. Take a bow and welcome to the wilderness.

24-29 Mountaineer. A pal of the wilds.

17-23 Dude. Tread carefully, thoughtfully and lightly.

16 or less BIG FOOT!! Your tracks are too big and noticeable. Learn to Leave No Trace before you trash a special place.