



## Outdoor Leadership Training

### Appalachian Mountain Club

The mission of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) is to foster the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the outdoors. We envision a world where being outdoors is an integral part of people's lives; where our natural resources are healthy, loved, and protected.

### Youth Opportunities Program

The Youth Opportunities Program (YOP) is an outdoor education, professional development, and social justice program of the Appalachian Mountain Club. Through Outdoor Leadership Training, trip planning support, and access to gear lending libraries, we collaborate with educators and youth development professionals so they may foster impactful and relevant outdoor experiences for their youth.

YOP partners with organizations and schools that serve youth from under-resourced communities and communities of color that have historically faced barriers to outdoor recreation. We envision a future where more youth enjoy the outdoors, and where outdoor participation reflects the diversity of every community, with equitable access for all.

### Our History

The Youth Opportunities Program began in Boston in 1968 during the civil rights movement, when much of the country was in turmoil over racial conflict and social injustices. The Appalachian Mountain Club became increasingly concerned about how these tensions were affecting Boston's young people. The AMC approached organizations in Roxbury to offer resources and training to get youth outdoors, and YOP's "train-the-trainer" model was born. By providing youth workers with training, gear loans, and other resources, the AMC supported backpacking, camping, and hiking trips for youth, offering a unique opportunity for them to develop leadership skills and a connection to the outdoors.

### Everyone Belongs Outdoors

As your partner in conservation, education, and recreation the Appalachian Mountain Club is inspired by the untold diversity of our members and friends. We aim to be an inclusive, equitable, and kind community. At AMC we are united in our adventures by mutual trust, collective safety, respect for the natural world, and appreciation for our time together outdoors. We pledge that AMC will always provide a welcoming and respectful environment. If you see or experience something different, please let us know.

[codeofconduct@outdoors.org](mailto:codeofconduct@outdoors.org) | <https://www.outdoors.org/code-of-conduct>

*AMC's full Code of Conduct is available online.*

### YOP Member Benefits

Leaders who successfully complete an Outdoor Leadership Training (OLT) are eligible to receive many benefits from the Youth Opportunities Program. These resources make it possible for youth workers and teachers to lead their youth on outdoor adventures.

- **Gear Loans:** YOP Members may borrow outdoor gear from YOP’s eleven equipment rooms located throughout the region. This includes tents, sleeping bags, stoves, backpacks, daypacks, hiking boots, warm clothing, rain gear, and water bottles. The type of gear that YOP members may borrow is based on their individual Member Profile determined by YOP at the conclusion of the OLT.
- **Additional Training and Workshops:** Leaders who have successfully completed the OLT are encouraged to continue their outdoor education with YOP by taking workshops in snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, Wilderness First Aid, canoeing, trip planning, and backpacking. Those who have completed these workshops in addition to the OLT may then borrow applicable equipment such as canoes, lifejackets, cross-country skis, winter boots, winter sleeping bags, and snowshoes.
- **Outdoor Experience Planning:** YOP helps members find the information they need to plan their outings. YOP staff are available to answer questions, address risk management concerns, and review curriculum, gear and AMC lodging reservations.
- **Reduced Lodging Rates:** Based on need, member organizations are eligible for reduced rates at AMC huts, camps, and lodges, making it affordable to bring youth to visit stunning locations across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and New Jersey. Priority for these subsidized rates is given to agencies and schools that serve youth from under-resourced communities and communities of color.
- **Youth Adventures:** Throughout the year YOP offers a variety of Youth Adventures which typically include additional support such as food, transportation, lodging, and staffing support.
- **Other Amazing Benefits Include:** Free personal AMC membership for a year, opportunities to network with other educators, and online membership resources through our YOP Member Hub.

## YOP Membership Guidelines

We have developed the following guidelines for participation in the OLT and YOP.

- **YOP Membership:** Upon successful completion of the Outdoor Leadership Training, youth workers become YOP Members for a period of two years and receive membership benefits according to their YOP Member Profile. YOP Members renew their membership by participating in a qualifying “refresher workshop” within 2 years in order to continue receiving YOP benefits.
- **YOP Member Profiles:** At the conclusion of the OLT, participants take part in an assessment meeting with their instructors to determine their YOP Member Profile. The Member Profile reflects the types of trips a member can lead with YOP’s support, and can change through participation in additional workshops. See pages 7 – 9 for a comparison of OLT types and possible Member Profiles.
- **YOP Member Ratio of benefits:** In order to practice leave No Trace ethics, to think about best risk management practice and to equitably share the YOP resources, YOP members receive lodging benefits and free gear loan benefits for themselves, another adult and 10 youth per trip. If your trip includes more than 10 youth, we recommend that you find a colleague or friend to take the YOP Outdoor Leadership Training, and this will allow for benefits to apply to the larger group.
- **Age:** Youth workers must be 21 years or older in order to participate in the OLT and become a YOP member.
- **Two Trip Minimum:** OLT participants are expected to lead a minimum of two “trips” per year through their organization, though many will go on to lead more. Trips can be any type of outdoor experience with young people. Members are expected to report on their trips through the online Member Hub. Trip reports help us ensure ongoing funding and support for YOP.

- **Youth Organizations:** YOP is open to **all youth-serving groups and schools**; however we prioritize agencies and schools serving youth from under-resourced communities and communities of color.
- **YOP's Role:** The OLT teaches a wide range of skills needed to lead youth outdoors but is not a certification process. YOP staff supports - but does not typically accompany - members on trips. Agencies assume full responsibility and ownership for all their trips.
- **Trip Seasons:** Successful completion of the OLT qualifies educators and youth development professionals to lead outings that take place in the spring, summer, or fall. Trip seasons will vary based on weather and geography. YOP Members interested in leading winter outings must attend a winter skills workshop.
- **Rates and Scholarships:** OLT and workshop fees are already subsidized rates, although you may request additional scholarship funds when completing the OLT application.
- **YOP Community:** YOP's greatest asset is our community of YOP Members and volunteers. All YOP Members are encouraged to participate in volunteer opportunities, community gatherings, committee meetings, and social events.

## The Outdoor Leadership Training

### Overview

The **purpose** of the Outdoor Leadership Training (OLT) is to teach **basic outdoor and leadership skills**. These skills are all taught in the context of **taking youth outdoors**, a specialized type of trip leadership with its own challenges and rewards. The training is **experiential**, which means that you will **learn by doing**; you will learn from your triumphs as well as from your challenges.

YOP offers a variety of Outdoor Leadership Trainings each year, ranging from three to five days and focused on camping, hiking, or backpacking skills. All trainings include a pre-trip meeting and several days of outdoor adventure.

### What You Will Learn

The OLT focused on two fundamental areas of outdoor leadership: technical skills and leadership. Trip leaders with knowledge and skill in both areas will be prepared to lead a variety of trips, from day hikes to camping to backpacking.

1. **Technical skills** training include lessons on navigation, gear, discussions about wilderness first aid, low-impact practices, and risk management. These are the basic tools to lead an outdoor trip effectively and smoothly.
2. **Leadership** is explored through an in-depth look at various methods and styles of leadership. Through role-playing, discussions, and the use of a Leader of the Day model, we help educators determine when to use different leadership styles depending on the context. We discuss strategies for creating a positive, inclusive group environment.

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*The OLT is one of the best and most helpful trainings I have ever been involved with.*  
 – OLT Participant

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## Experiential Training and Leadership Model

YOP uses a Leader of the Day model. During the trip, each participant will be the co-leader of their group for a time. Leaders of the Day will be responsible for reviewing the route with the rest of the group, checking to make sure all needed equipment is included, coordinating group members, and dealing with issues that arise. It is a safe time to make mistakes and learn new ways to handle challenges.

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*I was surprised at how extensive, well-organized, and well thought out every aspect of the training was and how incredibly generous YOP has been. – OLT Participant*

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## Evaluation & feedback

At the end of the training, you will be asked to evaluate yourself during an assessment meeting with your instructors. Together you will discuss the types of trips you feel comfortable leading in order to determine your Member Profile. This corresponds to the types of trips that members can lead with YOP support.

## Our Instructors

Each OLT is co-led by two to three YOP instructors who have experience in outdoor leadership, wilderness first aid, and youth development. Sometimes instructors are YOP staff, but often they are YOP volunteers who are committed to sharing the outdoors with youth. The instructors' role is to ensure the overall safety of the group, to facilitate the learning scenarios, to teach new skills, and to help process the day's activities.

## Gear and Clothing

We will send you a gear list for your specific Outdoor Leadership Training when we confirm your registration. You should not need to purchase any clothing or outdoor gear for the OLT – you can borrow nearly everything you'll need from our gear room. For each training, YOP provides: food, education materials, tents, sleeping bags, ground pads, backpacks, stoves, cooking equipment, compasses, first aid kits, maps and guidebooks, and more.

## Safety

As participant safety is a high priority for all AMC trainings, procedures and policies have been developed to manage and limit participant risk. Participants are expected to work with staff to reduce risks and make the experience successful for all involved. In case an emergency does occur, AMC instructors are trained in Wilderness First Aid, carry backcountry first aid kits, and follow a comprehensive Emergency Action Plan developed for each individual training group. Instructors carry cell phones and/or radios, although these are not reliable in all locations and conditions. Despite such steps, participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to, cooking and camp chores, adverse weather and environmental conditions, transportation in vehicles and on foot, and the remote locations of our trips.

## AMC Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC)

In addition to the program-specific information provided in these materials, please note that the [AMC has Essential Eligibility Criteria \(EEC\)](#) that apply to all participants in AMC-sponsored activities. These criteria were created to help potential participants identify and understand the fundamental cognitive and physical requirements of participating in AMC activities. The EEC are a resource for anyone considering participating in an AMC-sponsored activity.

## Choosing the Training That's Right for You

Backpacking, Hiking, Camping – which training should you take?

**The Backpacking Outdoor Leadership Training** offers participants an extended wilderness experience. If you are open to learning and new experiences, exercise regularly, and enjoy challenging yourself, this is your training! Participants in the backpacking OLT often have a wide variety of backgrounds; many have no previous outdoor background while some bring several years of experience. This training can be physically and emotionally challenging, so a healthy sense of adventure and tolerance for challenge and adversity is helpful.

YOP also offers a **Camping and Hiking Outdoor Leadership Training**.

In contrast to the Backpacking OLT in which participants carry all of their equipment and spend each night at a different site along their hiking route, the Camping and Hiking OLT uses a “base-camp” model, focusing on the skills necessary for leading day hikes and camping trips. The group will spend each night at the same campsite and go on hikes from that base. Participants will spend three or four nights camping in tents. No experience is necessary.

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*It's tough. It's frustrating. It's the best thing I ever did.*

*– OLT Participant*

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YOP's three-day **Camping Outdoor Leadership Training** focuses on the basics of camping with youth. This is an excellent introduction for those new to outdoor adventure and interested in learning camping skills. Participants will spend two nights base camping, learning engaging outdoor activities and building skills in risk management, sensory awareness activities, games, campfire activities, low-impact practices, and more. No experience is necessary.

## OLT Comparison

	BACKPACKING	CAMPING & DAY HIKING	CAMPING
<b>WHO SHOULD ATTEND</b>	For those who enjoy a challenge, exercise regularly, and are interested in leading a variety of outdoor trips.	For those who plan to lead day trips, day hikes, or camping overnights.	For those who are interested in more “close to home” camping opportunities.
<b>SUMMARY</b>	Each night is spent at a different campsite along the hiking route. All gear for the duration of the trip is carried on each participant’s back. Backpacking is a challenging experience full of fun, learning, and adventure.	Focus is on day hiking and “base-camping” skill development. Each night is spent at the same location and day hikes cover some challenging terrain.	Focus is on “base camping” skill development. Each night is spent at the same location. Activities will focus on camping with youth exploring new surroundings. Hiking will not be a part of this training.
<b>LOCATIONS</b>	Cardigan Mountain, NH; White Mountains, NH; Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, NJ	Cardigan Mountain, NH; White Mountains, NH; Harriman State Park, NY	Blue Hills, MA; Ecology Village, NY
<b>DURATION</b>	4 or 5 days	4 or 5 days	3 days
<b>PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE</b>	No experience required, but participants should be exercising regularly and enjoy a physical and mental challenge.	No experience required.	No experience required.
<b>ACCOMMODATIONS</b>	Tents shared with 1-3 people. Outhouses and/or backcountry methods. Meals cooked by the group on backpacking stoves.	Tents shared with 1-3 people. Outhouses and/or port-a-potties. Meals cooked by the group on camping stoves.	Tents shared with 1-3 people. Outhouses and/or port-a-potties. Meals cooked by the group on camping stoves.
<b>PHYSICAL EXPECTATION</b>	Able to carry up to 50 lbs. for up to 6 miles over challenging terrain for more than 8 hours per day.	Able to carry up to 15 lbs. for up to 6 miles for more than 8 hours per day	Able to carry up to 10 lbs. for up to 1 mile.
<b>TRIP TYPES, LODGING AND EQUIPMENT BENEFITS</b>	Based on YOP Member Profile. Possible Member Profiles include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backpacker</li> <li>• Hiker</li> <li>• Camper</li> </ul>	Based on YOP Member Profile. Possible Member Profiles include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiker</li> <li>• Camper</li> </ul>	Based on YOP Member Profile. Possible Member Profiles include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camper</li> </ul>

## YOP Member Profiles

OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING TYPE	Backpacking			
	Camping and Hiking			
	Camping	Hiking		
Possible YOP Member Profile Types	Camper	Hiker	Camper + Hiker	Backpacker
<b>Equipment Privileges</b>				
Hiking equipment		•	•	•
Camping equipment	•		•	•
Backpacking equipment				•
<b>Trip Types and Season</b>				
Day hikes with indoor overnight(s)		•	•	•
Day hike, no overnight		•	•	•
Camping up to 3 nights	•		•	•
Spring, summer, fall	•	•	•	•
Multi-day backpacking				•
AMC destinations	AMC Campsites	AMC Lodges and Cabins	AMC Campsites, Lodges & Cabins; some AMC huts and Cardigan High Cabin*	AMC Campsites, Lodges, and Cabins, AMC Huts, AMC Backcountry Campsites

### How to apply

The OLT application is available online at [yop.outdoors.org/outreach/](http://yop.outdoors.org/outreach/). We recommend that you review the application before completing it online and consider downloading a copy for reference. You will likely need some information from your supervisor/agency director to complete the application.

**Please note that OLTs fill very quickly and we recommend applying as soon as possible.** Once we have reviewed your application, we will contact you to discuss your application and confirm your registration.

Please contact us with any questions you might have: We hope you'll join us!

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