

# Be a responsible camper

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Tips for minimizing your impact on the environment.

When you camp out, take steps to reduce your impact on the environment, experts advise.

The nonprofit group Tread Lightly recommends using existing campsites whenever possible and camping on durable surfaces.

Other ways to minimize your "footprint" include placing tents on non-vegetated areas, not digging trenches around tents, and camping at least 200 feet from water, trails and other campsites.

Pack out what you pack in, the organization advises in a news release. It's also a good idea to carry a trash bag and pick up litter left by less considerate people.

Other tips from the organization:

- Before setting out, repackage your food and snacks in resealable food bags. This will reduce the weight and trash you have to carry out.
- For cooking, use a camp stove instead of a campfire to reduce your impact on the land. If you must build a fire, use existing fire rings, build a mound fire, or use a fire pan. Clear a 10-foot diameter area around the campfire site by removing all grass, leaves and extra firewood. Make sure there are no tree limbs or other flammable objects above the campfire. Use only fallen timber for campfires; do not cut live trees.
- If possible, let the wood in the campfire burn down to fine ash. Pour water on it and drown all embers until the hissing stops. Stir the ashes and embers until everything is wet and cold to the touch. If water is not available, use dirt.
- Wash and brush your teeth at least 200 feet away from lakes and streams. Detergents, toothpaste and soap are a threat to fish and other aquatic life. Scatter your gray water so it filters through the soil.
- If there are no toilets, use a portable latrine if possible and pack out your waste. If you don't use a portable latrine, bury your waste in a hole 6 to 8 inches deep that is at least 200 feet from lakes and streams, campsites or trails. Cover and disguise the hole with natural materials. Pack out your toilet paper.

**More information:** The American Camp Association has more about [minimum-impact camping](#).

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