

# *Tips from the Old Scout*

## **Tip # 8: Leave No Trace Principles**

*Tips from the Old Scout* is a series of informational articles that will appear on the Troop 201 website each month. They are intended to be an information source for both parents and scouts on a variety of important topics relating to camping, backpacking and hiking.

The subject is “Leave No Trace”. These principles have been adopted by all camping and hiking organizations as a way to preserve the beauty of our wilderness areas. Scouts are taught these principles and are expected to follow them on all hiking and camping outings. At a minimum, this means to carry out whatever they carry in – to leave no candy wrappers, apple cores, etc. in the woods. All scouts are instructed to bring a gallon-sized Ziploc bag with them on outings, and use this to carry out all garbage. There are often receptacles for garbage in parking areas: otherwise scouts need to bring all garbage home to dispose of properly.

The Scouting movement has always embraced Leave No Trace principles – the first edition of the Boy Scout handbook in 1910 included a Conservation merit badge. In 1948, Scouting published an 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 and be conservation minded.”*

Today, an entire chapter (chapter 7) of the Handbook is devoted to Leave No Trace principles. Here are the seven principles summarized:

1. Plan ahead and prepare. Have a specific route and a detailed map of the area you plan to hike or camp in.
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces. When hiking, stay on the trail and walk in single file to avoid widening the trail. In camp, pitch your tent in an open area and do not cut branches, etc. When leaving your campsite, it should look like no one was there.
3. Dispose of waste properly. This includes carrying out all garbage, and observing the recommended distances from the trail and water sources (200 feet) for “depositing” human waste. Scouts are taught the proper way to dig and use a “cat-hole latrine”.
4. Leave what you find. Do not disturb or remove plants, flowers or animals.
5. Minimize campfire impacts. Use established fire pits or fire rings. Make sure fires and coals are dead out before leaving the campsite.
6. Respect wildlife. This includes the practices of hanging bear bags, using a pack tent, and keeping all food and “smellables” out of tents.
7. Be considerate of other visitors. Stay away from other’s tent and camp areas, and establish an early “quiet time” at night to allow other campers and hikers to rest.

**Remember:**

- Pack out all garbage when camping and hiking – leave nothing behind. Bring a Ziploc bag to collect all wrappers and food remains. Leave the campsite and trail cleaner than when you arrived.