

Safety First

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Explore. Discover. Learn!

It is important to remember safety comes first, especially around large water bodies and while in the outdoors!

- Have students use the buddy system. Tell students to always travel in groups of two or more and to stay with their group when outdoors.
- Never drink the water from a stream, lake, river, or other water body you are investigating. Even if it looks clean it might not be healthy to drink.
- Stay on the bank of rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes. Make sure the bank is sturdy and won't give way. Look for signs of erosion that might indicate loose ground.
- If conditions permit, wading can add to the adventure! Before you go into the water make sure the water is safe for entry. Know the area before taking youth there. When you arrive, look to see if there are potential hazards. Is the bank rocky? Is there potential for rocks to be underwater where they can be a potential hazard? Does the current look weak or strong? Is the water level low or high? Are there known deep drop offs close to the area where you are? Also pay attention to the weather. Strong rains can alter the current and water levels. Also, make sure storms are not in the forecast for the time you are to be out in the water. If a storm comes in, exit the water and head for shelter.
- If wading is allowed, make sure all students stay within a certain distance and do not go in too deep. A generally safe depth is knee deep in the water.
- Know how to identify poisonous plants such as poison ivy and poison oak. Make sure to keep youth away from these plants. The general rule is "leaves of three, let it be." Poison sumac is not as common but can also be a threat. Poison sumac grows in wetlands and can look like a small tree with seven to nine leaves per branch.
- Certain insects, such as ticks, mosquitoes, flies, bees, and hornets, can also pose a threat to your experience outdoors. Dress accordingly and use repellants when necessary.
- Make sure proper attire is worn. Socks, long sleeves, and pants are ideal for hiking in thick vegetation and forested areas. Hats are useful for sun protection and from ticks. Shoes should always be worn! Flip flops are never ideal for outdoor adventures.
- Respect the environment. Remember you are a guest. Do not disturb the natural habitat. Do not take anything you find with you and do not leave anything you brought behind.



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