

American Outdoor Schools



Dear Counselors:

In preparation for our week together we have compiled a list of specific areas that we feel need to be clearly understood before arriving at camp.

The three main purposes of the *American Outdoor Schools* are:

1. To guide students into a new and/or deeper understanding of the natural world.
2. To provide a high quality educational experience that will supplement the classroom experience.
3. To facilitate the growth of deeper relationships between students and their teachers. It is our job to take care of the details so that you can spend the week with your students, and we do place high priority on good counseling. To successfully achieve all of the goals mentioned we need your help. The following is a breakdown of the typical outdoor school day, including our expectations of you:
 - **Flag Raising:** (optional) A different cabin group will be designated to raise the flag each day. The counselor's role is to make sure that all students arrive on time and demonstrate respect for their peers and the ceremony.
 - **Meal Times:** Meal times are good opportunities for interaction with your students. We ask that there be a counselor at each table so that, 1) volume control can be localized, 2) students will have an adult example to follow, and 3) they can begin to relate to you on a personal basis. Announcements are usually made during meals, and it is very important for the counselors to be aware of them.
 - **Teacher/Counselor Meeting and Cabin Clean-Up:** Students are given the responsibility to take care of their cabin. Counselors are to clean only their own area and to serve as encouragers to students. While students are cleaning, teachers and counselors meet with the In-Camp Supervisor for sharing suggestions and concerns, reviewing the schedule, etc.
 - **Class:** During class times we expect counselors to be role players who will be able to come alongside students and participate with them, while helping to maintain control. Your attitude is a key here: your interest will affect the interest of the student.
 - **Electives:** Counselors as well as *American Outdoor Schools* staff will lead elective activities each day. This will allow for smaller student groups and greater individual attention. Typical electives include hikes, natural art, etc.... You are welcome to bring special crafts or hobbies to share with the students.

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- Rest time: This time right after lunch is set aside for quiet in-cabin activities. The counselor needs to be present and in control at this time. This is an excellent opportunity for talking about group living.
- Recreation Time: The *American Outdoor Schools* staff relies on counselors to be in charge at this time and to be involved with student's in-group games, hiking talking, or whatever recreational opportunities are available. This non-structured time is best for simply developing friendship with students. It is a chance to have fun with them. We encourage cabin groups to spend at least a portion of this time together in an activity.
- Journal Time: Immediately after evening meals the classroom teacher leads the students in a time of written reflection on the day's activities. Journal questions are provided in his packet so that they may be copied for student use, however teachers may develop their own written activity to be used during this time.
- Evening Activities: This is another situation where the counselor's attitude and behavior is a crucial factor in the success of the activity. Please don't sit in the back and watch. We need you to sit with the students to participate and help with instruction and discipline.
- Lights Out: One of the most challenging times of the day. Even a respected teacher/counselor will have his/her authority tested to the limit the first night. It is important for the students to get plenty of rest to keep up with the rigorous camp schedule. It is your job to discourage nocturnal activities in your cabin. We request that you discourage ghost stories as they unsettle students rather than settle them down.

Counselor Responsibilities

Your role in the cabin will have a great impact on the depth of your relationships during the day. It is important to gain control without losing respect. There is a difference between being a "nice guy" and being a friend. But please remember that threats of discipline must be carried out if made. Much of the impact of the program will be determined by you, the counselor.

- It is your responsibility to know the camp guidelines so that you will know what we expect of the students.
- Your position in our organization is of great importance. The students will watch and learn from everything you do - good or bad. Please be "on your guard" and cooperate with all camp policies.
- You will be expected to be on time and participating in all camp activities unless

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previous arrangements have been made. This includes sitting with your students at meals and meetings.

- You are responsible for the supervision and leadership of the afternoon recreation time.
- You are responsible for supervising your cabin group when they have duties such as KP or flag.
- You are responsible for the control and supervision of your students between the end of each night's activities and breakfast the next morning.
- You are responsible for checking to see that your students' cabin is properly cleaned before leaving outdoor school.