

Patch Program

Leave Only Footprints

Leave No Trace means we care for nature while we explore it! Girl Scouts follow these smart outdoor rules to protect the planet and to show others how to be kind to the Earth. For this patch, we will become good environmental stewards while keeping the outdoors beautiful for everyone.

Grade level requirements:

- **Daisies (grades K-1).** Choose one activity from each category.
- **Brownies (grades 2-3).** Choose two activities from each category.
- **Juniors (grades 4-5).** Choose two activities from each category.
- **Cadettes (grades 6-8).** Choose three activities from each category.
- **Seniors (grades 9-10).** Choose three activities from each category.
- **Ambassadors (grades 11-12).** Choose three activities from each category.

When you're done, [submit photos and a story](#) to inspire other Girl Scouts to earn this patch too!

Discover

Welcome to the Great Outdoors! Whether you're hiking a trail, exploring a park, or just enjoying your backyard, you have the power to protect and preserve nature. Learning the Leave No Trace principles helps you become a champion for the environment.

- **Start with the basics!** Learn the [seven principles of Leave No Trace](#).
- **Wild critter care.** Respecting wildlife means learning how our actions affect animals, even when we don't see them! Whether you're grilling in your backyard or camping in

the backcountry, animals can sniff out food scraps -even in a trash can! Processed food isn't healthy for any animal species, and when animals find an easy food source, they'll visit again and again. Find out what wildlife lives in your area and make a plan to protect them by storing and disposing of food properly. Create a poster or skit to teach the sixth principle of Leave No Trace, "respect wildlife," to younger Girl Scouts or family members.

- **Pocket power.** Learning the Leave No Trace principles is important, but remembering all seven principles can be difficult! Make a pocket-sized book to take on the trail so you can remember the principles and teach others.
 - Start with eight notecards or cut paper to make eight identical pocket-sized pieces.
 - Design and color one notecard to create the cover of your book. Write "Leave No Trace" on it and decorate the card.
 - Write the following seven principles on the remaining cards – one principle per card.
 - Plan ahead and prepare.
 - Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
 - Dispose of waste properly.
 - Leave what you find.
 - Minimize campfire impacts.
 - Respect wildlife.
 - Be considerate of others.
 - What do the principles mean? On each card, draw something that will help you remember what the principles mean. For example, draw a map on the card with "plan ahead and prepare."
 - Punch a hole in the same place on the top of each card. Thread yarn or string through the hole to make them into a book. Tie the yarn with a little slack so that pages move freely. Then hit the trail!
- **Bead the way.** Learn the seven Leave No Trace principles by making a keychain or bracelet. See the "Resources" section below.
- **Ask a nature lover.** Ask five people – friends, teachers, troop members, adults – about how they think humans impact the outdoors. What do they do to protect nature? Have they seen people leave a trace in nature? What happened? Write down or draw what each person shares. Are people more aware of certain impacts (like littering or noise)?
- **Durable surface detective.** Create a "Durable vs. Delicate" game to help friends learn how to identify different types of surfaces using photos or real-life examples. Research non-durable surfaces—such as moss, wetlands, or soft forest soil—which are easily damaged by foot traffic, camping, or other outdoor activities. These areas don't recover

quickly and can suffer long-term environmental harm if stepped on. Durable surfaces, on the other hand, can withstand foot traffic without being damaged or eroded. Examples include rock, dry grass, or gravel. Use stickers or flags on your gameboard to mark safe paths and spark discussion about why surface choice matters.

- **Nature keepsake.** Preserve a memento of the nature around you! Make a leaf or bark rubbing or press the shape into a salt dough charm or ornament. Write down the memories you associate with that piece of nature – all while remembering to leave the item behind when you go. When we leave natural items in place, we protect habitats and allow others to enjoy the same discoveries. See the “Resources” section below.
- **Read and reflect.** Visit your local library to check out a book about Leave No Trace. Some examples are *Charlie Chipmunk Plays Outside: Leave No Trace Principles for Children* by Melanie Seiler and *We Leave No Trace!* By Terry Pierce. Draw a picture about your favorite LNT principle from the stories.

Connect

Connect with nature and the Earth by exploring how your everyday choices impact the outdoors – whether in your backyard, school yard, or across the globe.

- **Thumbs up, back it up!** Respecting wildlife means giving animals space to feel safe. The “thumb trick” helps us remember how far away we should be from wild animals. Play this game to learn how much distance animals need.
 - Set the scene by printing or drawing pictures of different wild animals (e.g., squirrels, deer, raccoons, bears) and place them around an outdoor area or room.
 - Stand at the starting line and give a thumbs up with your arm fully extended.
 - Close one eye and try to cover the animal picture with your thumb. If you can still see the animal around your thumb, you’re too close!
 - Back up and try it again until you can cover the entire animal picture with your thumb.
 - Then try it again out in nature! You can also act out being different animals with your Girl Scout troop and practice keeping distance from “humans” using the thumb trick.
- **Nature’s best friend.** Principle seven, “be considerate of others,” is just like one part of the Girl Scout Law – being considerate and caring! This principle helps everyone enjoy their outdoor experience. Loud music, barking dogs, and car engines

can take away from the peacefulness of nature. Find a quiet spot outdoors, sit down, and close your eyes for two minutes. What do you hear? Birds chirping? Passing cars? Leaves rustling? Now open your eyes and sketch what you heard. Share your drawing with an adult or friends and talk about how being quiet lets everyone – including animals – enjoy the outdoors more. Reflect on how you can be more considerate next time you’re outside.

- **Tiny trash, big impact.** Even the smallest bits of litter - like candy wrappers, twist ties, or bottle caps - can cause big problems for wildlife and ecosystems. These items can be mistaken for food, entangle animals, or take years to break down. Grab a magnifying glass and head outside to a park, trail, or even your schoolyard. Look closely at the ground, especially near benches, trailheads, or picnic areas. Collect micro-trash using gloves or tweezers and place it in a small bag. What types of trash were the most common? How could these items affect animals or plants if left behind? Research how long it takes for a gum wrapper or twist tie to decompose? Create a “tiny trash museum” by displaying clean micro-trash finds on a poster board with labels and facts.
- **BINGO!** Create bingo cards with items or behaviors related to Leave No Trace (e.g., “saw a trash can,” “heard a bird,” “picked up litter,” “stayed on the trail.”) Play during a hike or a park visit.
- **Story Circle.** Visit your local library to find and read a book about wild animals impacted by human behavior. Ask an adult to help find a book appropriate for your age. Some books to check out include: *The Wolves of Yellowstone* by Catherine Barr; *The Whale Who Ate Plastic* by Stephanie O'Connor; and *Tammy Turtle: A Tale of Saving Sea Turtles* by Suzanne Tate.
- **Iron Chef: Leave No Trace edition.** Plan a picnic using reusable containers, cloth napkins, and no single-use plastics. Practice packing out all trash and leftover food. Reflect on how this helps wildlife.
- **Ask a bear or a raccoon.** Pretend to be different wild animals with your friends. Interview each other and answer questions like, “What do you wish humans would stop doing?” “What makes your animal home special?” “What would you like humans to know about your home?” Discuss what you learned about how human behavior affects animals.

Take Action

With record numbers of people are getting outside, the need for minimizing our collective impact is more important than ever. As a Girl Scout, you can make the world a better place!

- **Make it official.** Get Leave No Trace certified! The [online course](#) is free and takes only 45 minutes.
- **Teach it forward.** Design your own poster with Leave No Trace messages to educate others. Where can you post it? Consider your school, a public library, your yard, a trailhead, or a window (with permission, of course).
- **Trash trackers.** Take the pledge to [clean up trash](#) on public lands. Girl Scouts has partnered with Pick Up America and Thor Industries to pick up 20 tons of trash. How much trash can you pick up to reach that goal?
- **Campfire soup.** After your campfire, end it by making campfire soup! First, let the fire burn completely to ash. Next, *slowly* sprinkle it with water while keeping your face back from the steam; you may need two or more gallons depending on the size of your campfire. Stir it up to make sure everything in the firepit is wet. Add more water if necessary until you don't hear hissing or see red embers. Work with an adult to check the heat by hovering your hands about four inches above the campfire soup. If you feel heat or can't get your hand that close, start over again with more water. If you feel heat, the fire is too hot to leave. Why is it important to stay until the fire is completely out? Teach three people this method.
- **Litter busters.** Create mini clean-up kits with gloves, trash bags, and hand sanitizer. Keep one in your backpack for a spontaneous litter clean up.
- **Photo challenge.** Take photos of beautiful natural objects—without touching or moving them. Share your photos in a troop gallery and talk about why it's important to leave nature undisturbed.

Resources

Leaf Rubbing and Salt Dough

Preserve a memento of the nature around you! Make a leaf or bark rubbing or press their shape into a salt dough charm or ornament. Write down the memories you associate with that piece of nature, all while remembering to leave no trace.

Leaf Rubbing

Make a leaf rubbing by placing paper over a leaf and rubbing it with a crayon or chalk. Try it with soft and hard leaves to see if there's a difference. Or make a bark cast from a tree. Press clay on a tree trunk and then remove it gently to make sure you can see the mark from the bark. Be careful not to hurt the bark or leave any clay on it. Do the same thing on several tree trunks to see the different designs in the markings.

Salt Dough

Using clay or salt dough, make an outdoor-themed impression. You might collect leaves or shells, or anything that's unique to the area where you live. Press your found objects into the clay or dough, then remove them and return them to the place where they were found. If you'd like to hang your impression when it's finished, make a hole at the top for string. (You may need to re-poke the hole a few times as your impression dries to keep it from closing up.) Your impression can be dried in the oven on low heat—ask an adult for help—or outside in the sun on a hot day.

Materials

- 3 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup water (plus up to 1/2 cup extra water, if needed)
- Food coloring (optional)
- Electric mixer
- Drinking straws (optional)
- Parchment paper or aluminum foil

Instructions

1. Mix the flour and salt together in a bowl.

2. Add 1 cup of water to the flour mix. To make colored dough, add 15 drops of food coloring to the water before mixing it into the dough.
3. Use the electric mixer to mix the dough on medium speed until a ball forms. If the dough is dry, slowly add water (1 tablespoon at a time) until the dough comes together.
4. Remove the dough; knead it until smooth.
5. Form the dough into disks and make your impressions. If you want to hang your finished project, use a straw to poke a hole at the top.
6. With adult help, preheat the oven to 275 degrees.
7. Bake dough pieces on a foil- or parchment paper-lined cookie sheet for 2 hours. Cool completely before handling.

More Resources

- Leave No Trace: [lnt.org](https://www.lnt.org)
- Pick Up America & GSUSA: <https://www.pickupamerica.com/girlscouts>
- Keep Nature Wild Impact Form: <https://keepnaturewild.com/pages/wild-earth-day-50-impact-form>

Girl Scouts Leave No Trace



Learn and be prepared to use the Leave No Trace Seven Principles to help protect the environment on your trip.



Plan ahead and prepare so you leave nothing behind. Get to know the area you'll visit. Repackage and store food in reusable containers.



Travel and camp on durable surfaces. Walk only on existing trails and camp on surfaces that are already impacted or are durable enough to withstand repeated trampling.



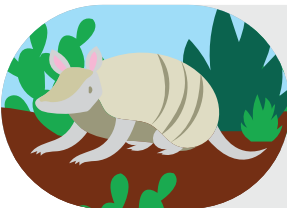
Dispose of waste properly. Carry out what you carry in—never dump anything on a campsite or into a water source.



Leave nature as you find it. Don't collect or take anything from the outdoors.



Minimize campfire impacts. Instead of using firewood and building campfires, pack a lightweight cooking stove and lantern.



Respect wildlife by checking them out at a distance. Never approach, feed, or follow them.



Be considerate of other visitors. Remember you're not alone in the wilderness. Keep your voices down and let nature be the loudest sounds you hear.

Leave No Trace Craft



Leave No Trace (LNT) is the gold standard in outdoor ethics guidelines. It has seven simple principles which provide an outline for minimum impact when outdoors. This craft is designed to teach Girl Scouts of any age the importance of responsible outdoor exploration.

Memorization and color association is a great way to help Girl Scouts recall the seven principles. For this activity, Girl Scouts will make a keychain using color beads to connect the seven principles:

Learn the
7 Principles
at [LNT.ORG](https://lnt.org)

Purple: Plan Ahead & Prepare

Black: Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces

Yellow: Dispose of Waste Properly

Green: Leave What You Find

Red: Minimize Campfire Impacts

Blue: Respect Wildlife

Pink: Be Considerate of Others

This craft is instructed as a keychain but could also be designed as a pin for backpacks, bracelet*, or necklace.

Supplies:

- Key rings for keychains, safety pins for swaps
- Cord/string, preferably 2mm - 2.6mm thick
- LNT Principles laminated card (included in kit)
- 6mm square letter beads: L, N, and T
- Heart shaped pony beads
- Pony beads in purple, black, yellow, green, red, blue, and pink
- Optional: Beads or different colored string for embellishment



Steps:

1. Cut a piece of cord 10-12 inches long.
2. Fold the cord in half to find the center of the cord.
3. Slide the key ring and LNT Principles laminated card onto one end of the cord and pull to the fold in the middle.
4. Slide a heart bead or embellishment bead onto both ends of the cord.
5. Follow that bead with the “L”, “N”, and “T” beads. This acronym is how many people in the outdoors refer to Leave No Trace and the seven principles.

6. Follow the letter beads with another heart bead or embellishment bead.
7. Then place the purple bead, which represents the first principle: Plan Ahead & Prepare. As you add each colored bead to your creation, discuss why each of these Leave No Trace principles is so important for Girl Scouts committed to leaving a place better than they found it.
8. Next comes the black bead, which represents the second principle: Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces.
9. Then add the yellow bead, for Dispose of Waste Properly.
10. Next, add the green bead for the fourth principle: Leave What You Find.
11. The fifth bead and principle, Minimize Campfire Impacts, is represented with a red bead.
12. After that comes the blue bead for the sixth principle: Respect Wildlife.
13. Finally, finish off with the pink bead for the seventh principle: Be Considerate of Others.
14. Repeat as many times as needed for your design, or until the concept of Leave No Trace has been grasped.
15. Tie off the end with an overhand knot just under the last bead.

*For the bracelet variation, use elastic string. Instead of folding in half, string all the beads in the same order onto the elastic and then tie around your wrist using a square knot.

Share your designs!

Tag Girl Scouts of Central Texas on social media.

 @gsctx |  @gsctx