

Field Trip Safety

Teach students about field safety (including what to do if they get lost), dehydration, and hypothermia before going into the field. Consider inviting a resource person in to teach a class in survival skills. Resources to contact include the Red Cross, a community safety officer, and the Coast Guard. Students and their adult leaders should know and understand the following safety rules before going out in the field:

- Stay together.
- Have a buddy, and understand the responsibilities of having a buddy. Know where he or she is at all times, and report to the teacher immediately if something happens to your buddy.
- If you become lost, stay where you are and call out periodically.
- Dress warmly and keep dry. Encourage children to carry an extra pair of socks in their backpacks when visiting potentially wet areas.
- Know the dangers of, and treatment for, hypothermia. Take extra clothes, rubber boots and rain gear. (Plastic bags will do in a pinch.)
- Know the dangers of and prevention of dehydration, sun stroke, and sunburn. Make sure everyone is drinking plenty of water throughout the field trip
- Step carefully around the water in wetlands. Because the ground is so mushy, you can get stuck. Always wear properly fitting life jackets in boats. Make sure each jacket is properly fastened.
- Observe animals from a safe distance. Use binoculars, spotting scopes, and telephoto lenses to get a closer look. If an animal shows sign of being crowded or disturbed, sit quietly or move away slowly.
- Do not taste any wild plants. Some plants are poisonous and some people are allergic to plants that are normally harmless.
- Carry a first-aid kit and emergency medical information for each student. Be aware of allergies or medical problems of all children and of adult participants.
- Learn and review any special hazards in your area such as poisonous plants, venomous animals, or dangerous terrain.
- Always know which students you have in your group. Carry a list of students and take frequent head counts. To prevent stragglers and explorers from getting lost, assign a leader and follow-up (“caboose”) person when traveling from one point to another.

