



STUDENT HANDBOOK

for NOLS Expeditions

THE LEADER IN WILDERNESS EDUCATION



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WELCOME

Welcome to NOLS and the experience of a lifetime. In this handbook, you'll find ways you can thrive with NOLS, information about our policies, and the ways we keep our students happy and healthy.

CONTACT US

Please contact the NOLS Admission Office with questions or concerns at **1-800-710-6657** or **admissions@nols.edu**.



THE NOLS CURRICULUM

Your course will immerse you in a stunning landscape and the fun and challenge of wilderness travel. Every NOLS expedition teaches the core curriculum, which is composed of leadership, wilderness skills, risk management, and environmental studies. In addition, some expeditions incorporate wilderness medicine skills into the course progression. You will apply these skills to challenges in a supportive learning culture with high expectations.

Ultimately, this is an opportunity to do more than enjoy the outdoors—it's your chance to have a transformative learning experience, one that fundamentally changes you and the way you view your role in the world.



ADMISSION POLICIES

Admission Process

Final acceptance to your course depends on the receipt, review, and approval of your enrollment materials by the NOLS Admission Office. These materials can be found online on your course Dashboard.

NOLS requires each student to be fully committed to and capable of working hard, taking personal responsibility, and working effectively in the group to achieve the goals of the course.

Health Review

Our student health review process helps us support students' health and well-being and provides information that is important for our instructors to know in the field. Please provide accurate and honest health information. Because our admissions staff may need to further discuss health issues with you, your parent or guardian, or your healthcare provider, it is important that we receive your health form in a timely manner. You are not accepted to NOLS until your health form has been reviewed and cleared.

NOLS reserves the right to deny admission to anyone that NOLS, in its sole discretion, believes is unable to meet the physical, psychological, cognitive, social, or safety demands of our courses (refer also to the Essential Eligibility Criteria at www.nols.edu/expedition-policies). If your health condition changes after you have been accepted, please notify the NOLS Admission Office with this information before the start of your course. If, during the course, we learn of pre-existing conditions that were not revealed on the health form, we reserve the right to expel you with no refund if, due to the health condition, it is not appropriate for you to be on the expedition or we determine you do not meet our essential eligibility criteria.

You can learn more about our admission criteria by contacting the Admission Office at admissions@nols.edu.



TUITION: DEPOSITS AND PAYMENTS

Your completed health form and non-refundable tuition deposit are due 21 days after we receive your application. The remaining tuition is due 75 days before your course begins. You can pay for your course with a credit card, check, or wire transfer.

You can find information about all required forms, due dates, and payment processes on the personalized checklist of your online Dashboard, which you can access at www.nols.edu/login.

Students who enroll within 75 days of the course start date will have different due dates, depending on the proximity to course start. Please contact the Admission Office for further information.

Equipment Deposit

An equipment deposit is required for every NOLS expedition. At the end of your course, you will be billed for any amount that exceeds your equipment deposit, or refunded any balance, from our world headquarters in Lander, Wyoming. Refunds or bills typically reach students around four to six weeks after the course ends.

Financial Aid

Financial aid opportunities at NOLS are broad; students have funded all or part of their courses with scholarships from NOLS, Veterans Benefits, AmeriCorps Education Awards, 529 College Savings Plans, and more. All financial aid options can be viewed at www.nols.edu/financialaid.

CANCELLATION POLICIES

For all semester and academic year courses in any location as well as all courses in India, if you cancel or leave for any reason, we will retain the non-refundable deposit or the following percentage of tuition, whichever is greater:

- Between 30 and 60 days prior to the course start date, NOLS will retain 25 percent of the course tuition.
- Between 15 and 29 days prior to the course start date, NOLS will retain 50 percent of the course tuition.
- Less than 15 days prior to the course start date or after the course has begun, there will be no refunds.

For all other courses, if you cancel or leave for any reason we will retain the non-refundable deposit or the following percentage of tuition, whichever is greater:

- Between 15 and 29 days prior to the course start date, NOLS will retain 25 percent of the course tuition.
- Between 8 and 14 days prior to the course start date, NOLS will retain 50 percent of the course tuition.
- Less than 8 days prior to the course start date or after the course has begun, there will be no refunds.

TRANSFER POLICIES

For all semester and academic year courses in any location as well as all courses in India, if you transfer from one course to another:

- More than 60 days prior to the course starting date, there will be a \$25 processing charge.
- 60 days or less prior to the course starting date, regular cancellation and refund charges will apply.

For all other courses, if you transfer from one course to another:

- 30 or more days prior to the course starting date, there will be a \$25 processing charge.
- 29 days or less prior to the course starting date, regular cancellation and refund charges apply.



COURSE INFORMATION

Nutrition

Being physically active in the outdoors requires sufficient amounts of nutritious food. The NOLS expedition diet is high in calories and consists of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, which may include foods like: pasta, rice and other grains, beans, flour, cereal, nuts, cheese and dairy, soups, and dried fruits and vegetables. Your instructors will teach you how to cook these ingredients on a camp stove, and you will learn how to prepare satisfying, nutritious meals on your course, even if you're a first-time cook. Expedition food at each location will be based on availability and often includes a variety of local foods—we hope you arrive with curiosity and a willingness to learn how to cook!

Special Dietary Needs

NOLS will make a reasonable effort to accommodate medical dietary needs, such as food allergies and intolerances, or religious laws or practices. We also may be able to support personal dietary preferences.

If you have any special dietary needs, it is important for you or your doctor to indicate them on your health form and to inform your admission officer well in advance of your course. That way, NOLS can make arrangements and alterations to the course rations before you arrive. It is unlikely that we can accommodate changes unless informed at least two weeks prior to the start of the course.

Some NOLS locations are able to accommodate special dietary needs more easily than others, but may not be able to support all dietary preferences. Contact the Admission Office to determine if or how we can meet your needs.

Physical Fitness

NOLS courses are, in general, rigorous physical experiences. We encourage you to consider your physical condition now and develop a well-rounded routine that emphasizes stamina, flexibility, balance, and strength. You should focus on being able to sustain a moderate level of exertion for hours on end.

For more specific guidelines on developing a physical fitness routine, refer to the “How to Prepare for Your Course” information online on your course Dashboard.

Expedition Living

Being a member of an expedition means that you and your group will work together as a team, sometimes in stressful and difficult conditions. “Expedition living” means living in close quarters with limited personal time and routines that may change day to day. It also requires problem solving on an interpersonal or group level, contributing to a safe learning environment, and being willing to accept others’ differences.

Expedition members share the responsibility of cooking their own meals, cleaning and other camp tasks, setting up and taking down shelters, participating in navigation, and being engaged when moving from camp to camp. Students transport their own gear, sleep outdoors, possibly in mixed gender tent groups, and are expected to care for themselves in weather conditions that can be extreme. These and other tasks are part of the learning and contribute to the overall success of the expedition.

Evaluations

The evaluation process is an integral part of every NOLS course. You will receive oral feedback in a timely fashion throughout the expedition. In turn, you will be asked to provide feedback to your peers, your instructors, and the overall program during and after your course.

At the end of your course, and after each section on semester courses, you will receive a written and graded evaluation from your instructors. Courses shorter than a semester that have multiple sections may conduct an evaluation at the end of each section, or conduct a single evaluation at the conclusion of the course.

Evaluations will consist of grades and accompanying narratives describing student achievements and areas for growth observed during the course. The written evaluation and grade become a record of your performance on the course, serving you in your continued growth and NOLS if you apply for another course or ask us to be a reference. These evaluations and grades are also a part of the college credit you can earn on a NOLS course. If you disagree with the grade you received and choose to formally appeal that grade, you must do so within a month of the end of the course by contacting the NOLS Registrar at registrar@nols.edu or **1-800-710-6657**.

To request a copy of your evaluation after your course, please email the Admission Office at admissions@nols.edu.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

NOLS is committed to building a diverse community that is inclusive of people from all backgrounds. NOLS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, genetics information, disability unrelated to admission requirements, or veteran status.

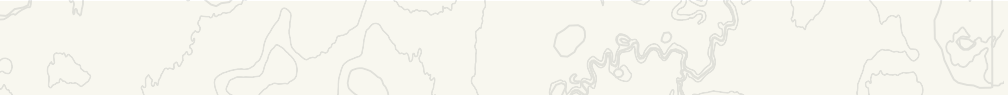
POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

At NOLS, “inclusion” means we work to maintain course environments that support individuals being their authentic selves and engage differences to build productive, agile teams. A positive learning environment supports our commitment to equal opportunity for all students.

On your course, you can expect:

- A supportive learning environment with high expectations. Each person’s values, beliefs, and actions affect the entire group, and we will strive to create an environment where everyone is treated with respect.
- Real challenges and meaningful experiences. We will try to inform you of anticipated curriculum and risks. At the same time, it must be understood that unanticipated situations may dictate that more attention is given to some elements of the course and others might receive minimal or no attention.
- Thoughtful, honest, and timely comments concerning your performance.
- Well-trained and qualified instructors.





NOLS expects the following of you:

- To follow the field practices and policies described in pre-course information, course orientation, and as taught by instructors throughout the course, and to be responsible for your own well-being and for contributing to the well-being of the group.
- To participate fully in the expedition—take part in classes, camp chores, activities, discussions, leadership, conflict resolution, and the building of an inclusive course culture.
- Be inclusive by being warm and curious, and demonstrating respect for those aspects of a person’s identity as outlined in our equal opportunity statement.
- To be courteous to local residents and merchants, and take time to learn about and respect local customs and culture.

These expectations are reiterated at the start of your course and revisited throughout.

In addition, especially early in your course, instructors spend time with you and your classmates in order to understand and help shape the expedition’s culture. They will talk with you individually about your well-being and your perspective on the group culture throughout the course. Conflicts with other students and instructors are a natural part of group dynamics, yet can impact the positive learning environment. Your instructors will help your group understand and manage conflict in a productive and respectful way.

If you have additional concerns about group culture or have conflict with an instructor, you should address the issue with another instructor or with the person conducting your course debrief when you return to the NOLS campus. Everyone shares responsibility for upholding the positive learning environment.





RISK MANAGEMENT

At NOLS, we embrace the physical and emotional challenge of the natural environment to attain our learning objectives. NOLS courses are not easy and involve the pursuit of adventurous activities in rugged terrain in which there are real dangers. Risk, both physical and emotional, is an important element of a NOLS education. The uncertainty posed by nature combined with the judgments and abilities of students and staff lead to risk. Risk management, in this context, is the ability to make a decision when the outcome is uncertain and relies on our ability to perceive and quantify the risks we face. Risk management is taught and practiced on every course. NOLS is committed to promoting the physical and emotional well-being of all students and we are proud of our excellent record managing the risks of wilderness travel.

Wilderness adventure involves hazards such as rock fall, quickly-flowing rivers, and steep terrain that can pose a risk to even the most experienced outdoor leader. Activities ranging from simple day hikes to climbing glaciers can, because of the unpredictable forces of nature or an error in judgment, become dangerous and potentially life-threatening.

Each student plays an important role in managing risk and the success of their NOLS course. Good physical conditioning and a positive mental attitude are essential. Should unforeseen circumstances arise, such as weather, permit restrictions, unusual situations, risk management concerns, or if NOLS deems it necessary, NOLS reserves the right to make changes to course activities, curriculum, and area locations.

Our courses are expeditions that travel through remote areas, which can create complex situations should an emergency arise. It is not uncommon to be days from medical help. NOLS instructors are trained in wilderness medicine and backed by comprehensive wilderness emergency response and evacuation systems. Instructors carry first aid kits that include some specific medications for treating sick or injured students in remote locations. Many of the medical incidents that might occur are simple and often treated in the field. For more serious incidents or when a student is evacuated for a medical reason, they will be taken to a medical facility for evaluation or treatment.

We provide satellite telephones, personal locator beacons, radios, or other electronic communication devices on each course to use in the event of life-threatening emergencies, but this does not guarantee communication from the field to our support bases. Portable telephone, satellite and radio signals may be subject to interference caused by terrain, atmospheric conditions, equipment limitations, and other variables, and may not always work.

It is important you understand that there are risks. Some adventure programs say that they can guarantee your safety. NOLS does not. The risk of injury, even serious injury or death, is always present in the outdoor environment. Indeed, much of the value of a NOLS course lies in learning how to identify hazards and adapt behavior to strive to avoid injury or illness. We feel that the risks are manageable and that no organization is better equipped to manage them than NOLS.





SCHOOL POLICIES

NOLS' mission is to be the leading source and teacher of wilderness skills and leadership that serve people and the environment. Our community—staff, students, trustees, and alumni—shares a commitment to wilderness, education, leadership, safety, community, and excellence. With that in mind, we have instituted these policies for the health and well-being of our students and staff. What follows is a summary of school policies, and more detailed information can be made available upon request.

Tobacco and Nicotine

NOLS is an advocate of healthy lifestyles and is a tobacco, nicotine, and smoke-free environment. There is no tobacco or nicotine use allowed on any of our courses or in our buildings and vehicles. Possession or use of tobacco, smoking of any substance, or use of e-cigarettes or vaping devices may lead to expulsion. In addition, the use of nicotine replacements (i.e., nicotine patches) is not allowed except by prescription.

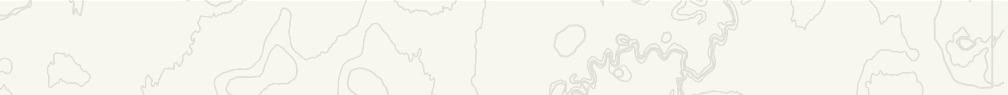
Alcohol and Other Substances

The illegitimate use or abuse of physically or cognitively altering substances is not allowed on courses or on NOLS property and will result in expulsion. This includes alcohol, marijuana, marijuana derivatives including CBD or THC products (regardless of local laws), and the sharing or abuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs, or other substances. Products that contain hemp-derived CBD oil or are FDA approved are allowed except if prohibited under state or international laws.

NOLS has a zero-tolerance policy on the use of alcohol and banned drugs/substances in the field. An exception may be made for students of legal age (in the country where the course occurs) to be allowed moderate use of alcohol while in town before or after field sections. However, inappropriate use of alcohol in town may result in expulsion.

Free Time

You will have some free time before and after the field portion of your course. In addition, students on courses with multiple sections will



have free time in town as they transition between sections. NOLS is not responsible for students during free time; however, any inappropriate acts or activity that occur during free time are subject to the NOLS expulsion policies in this document.

NOLS Promotion

Occasionally, NOLS uses students' names, photos, and other images in promotional material, videos, and press releases. We are using more photos in more places now than we ever have, and we'd love to include your photos. After your course, you can easily submit photos to us at www.nols.edu/photos.

Firearms

You may not bring firearms or other weapons on a NOLS course. The use, discharge, and possession of personal firearms are not permitted on NOLS property. However, firearms may be stored in locked personal vehicles parked on NOLS property. We will not store firearms with a student's luggage while they are in the field. The student is responsible for finding off-site storage. Violation of our firearms policy could result in expulsion.


Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

Harassment or sexual misconduct are not tolerated and may lead to expulsion. Examples may include sexual, racial, homophobic, or other offensive jokes; stereotypes based on race, religion, or national origin; nonconsensual touch; unwelcome sexual advances, attention, or conversation; and exposing others to sexual activity without consent. If you think you are seeing harassment or misconduct toward yourself or another person, please discuss it with your instructors or a program administrator.

Prescription Drugs and Your Health

Please keep NOLS informed of any changes to your health at any time before your course begins. We must be aware of any prescription drugs you are taking and you must be able to reliably take the medications as prescribed. You should only bring prescription drugs that are specific to your needs. Please list all medications on your health form.

If you are given new prescriptions after you've submitted your health form but before your course starts, you must inform the



Admission Office before your course and your instructors on the first day of your course. We may need to conduct another health review to ascertain your continued eligibility for the course. We reserve the right to deny admissions at this time and retain all tuition. Failure to take your prescription drugs as prescribed, misuse of these drugs, or failing to update us with changes to your prescriptions or medical history could result in expulsion.

Cell Phones and Other Technology

A NOLS course is a unique opportunity to leave behind the constant connectivity and access to technology of daily life. Because we are providing an opportunity to experience nature and wilderness, students are not permitted to take personal cell phones (including smartphones) or tablets (i.e., iPads) into the backcountry, even to use as cameras.

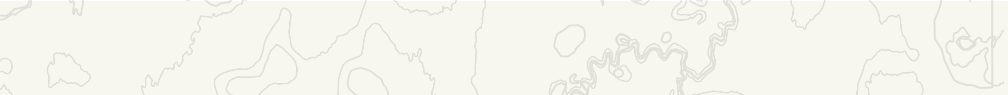
Satellite phones, satellite tracking or communication devices, two-way radios, and smartwatches connected to a mobile network are also not permitted on NOLS courses. You should be aware that going without personal technology and constant connection can create stress, and we work to support students experiencing stress as we're able.

Drones are not allowed. There may be regulations limiting or prohibiting their use (they are not permitted in U.S. national parks, for example), and their use is not in keeping with the wilderness experience we are seeking.

If you wish to take photos or videos on your course—and we hope you will!—please bring a 35mm or dedicated digital camera. Avoid elaborate, heavy setups. Additionally, eReaders, such as Kindles, without cellular connectivity are allowed.

Evacuation, Voluntary Withdrawal, and Expulsion

Students who are injured or become ill may be evacuated if they can no longer participate on the course. Evacuation decisions are made by course instructors with support from program administrators. The method of evacuation will be determined solely by NOLS based on the severity of the student's condition, operational logistics, and available resources. Evacuation methods can range from hiking or paddling to a road and being picked up by NOLS personnel to a



helicopter evacuation for a serious condition. Evacuation costs are the responsibility of the student. We suggest that you purchase the Tuition Protection Plan to safeguard your investment. If you have an existing travel insurance policy, you are responsible for knowing if you are covered. NOLS will not seek pre-authorization from private insurers when making evacuation decisions.

Students who voluntarily withdraw from a course, are evacuated, or leave the course for any reason will be charged for the associated costs of removing them from the field. NOLS reserves the right to notify the student's emergency contact to inform them of the reason for withdrawal.

Violation of any NOLS policies may result in expulsion. Situations that may result in expulsion include, but are not limited to, behavior that is unsafe, disrupts or distracts from the educational mission of the course, or reflects adversely on NOLS; possession or use of illicit drugs, alcohol, or other substances; abusive or inappropriate behavior; theft or misuse of property; and disregarding instructions. NOLS reserves the right to search students' property if we have reason to believe that illegal or unsafe activity has occurred or might occur. Sexual or exclusive relationships that are detrimental to expedition dynamics and sexual relationships involving a minor will likely result in expulsion. In addition, failure to inform NOLS regarding changes to your medical condition or if you have a health condition that is beyond our instructors' training and ability to support could result in expulsion, as such information could be crucial in an emergency situation.

Students who are expelled are responsible for associated costs, will receive a failing grade for their course, and will not receive a refund.



ACADEMIC CREDIT

Students over the age of 16 have the option to earn college credit through the University of Utah on any course that is 10 days or longer. High school graduates, or equivalent, may register for this credit. Current high school students must have completed their junior year with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 or higher and must submit an official transcript with their registration form to verify their status. Before your course, be sure to verify with your counselor or advisor that your school accepts these credits.

Students interested in taking their NOLS course for this optional University of Utah credit must pay the university credit fees, in addition to the course tuition, before the course begins. Registration forms and payment submitted after a course begins will not be accepted.

We partner with Western Colorado University to offer college credit and enable you to use your Segal AmeriCorps Education Award or 529 College Savings Plan to pay for your NOLS experience.

Some colleges offer their own credit and process financial aid for a NOLS education. Contact your advisor to determine the necessary steps to receive credit for your NOLS course

You can learn more about any of these options for earning credit at www.nols.edu/credit.

Request Your University of Utah Transcript

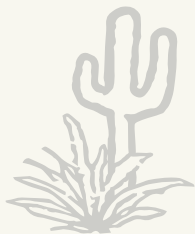
To receive an official transcript, or have one sent to your school, you must make a request directly to the University of Utah. Transcripts are not available until after the close of the term in which your course occurs. Requests for early report of grades will only be accommodated if they are made in advance of your course start date. Please contact the NOLS Registrar at registrar@nols.edu with any requests or questions.

ONE FINAL NOTE

Your course is intended to be a transformative experience. It will challenge you, delight you, and push you to seek out powerful and exciting experiences for the rest of your life. We hope that the guidelines in this handbook will prepare you to have the best course possible.

PRE-COURSE CHECKLIST

- Familiarize yourself with this handbook.**
- 21 days after enrolling:** Pay your tuition deposit and submit your completed health form on your online Dashboard at www.nols.edu/login.
- 75 days before your course begins:** Pay your full tuition and complete all of your forms on your online Dashboard.
- Make your travel plans only after your health form has been cleared by NOLS.** See your Travel and Logistics document for more information.
- Get your gear together.** Read through your course's equipment list carefully to see what you can rent and buy from NOLS, and what you need to bring yourself. Questions? Please contact us!
- Get excited!** You're about to start an amazing experience, and we can't wait to meet you.





WORLD HEADQUARTERS

Lander, Wyoming

POPULATION 7,732 | ELEVATION 5,358'

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LANDER, WY 82520-2848
NOLS.EDU | 1.800.710.6657**

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