

Safety First!

Before Your Trip

1. Always visit the site at least a week beforehand to survey the area: assess the terrain, any challenges, presence of poison ivy and the time walking from one site to another, and locations of restrooms.
Become familiar with the trails you might be using. Note any clues at the site that you might help in your field experience—level of water, flora and fauna that you would like to point out, other points of interest such as presence of beavers, puddling or erosion occurring, invasive species, etc. And any potential dangers, such as ticks, snakes, chiggers. Also ask Ranger about this. Visit our [Wildlife and Heritage](#) page to identify invasive or exotic species.
2. Talk to students about your findings and alert them to safety precautions, rules for trips outside the school; common sense rules such as not running ahead of the group, having a buddy, and not leaving the trail; recognizing and avoiding poisonous plants and animals; what to do and not to do around bodies of water; the proper use of equipment. Explain all this to parents who will accompany the class as well.
3. Assess class for allergies or disabilities. Prepare a first aid kit for the outdoors. Include in your parent permission form the types of clothing to be worn and safety precautions to be taken.
4. Ask if Ranger will be able to greet the buses and introduce the students and chaperones to the park and to talk about any of their own safety and park rules—e.g., *leave only footprints; take away only memories*. They may also want to alert you to other groups that will be sharing the park with you that day.
5. Identify procedures for immediate, on-site treatment for insect or animal bites, accidental ingestion of unknown plant matter, or other medical emergencies until professional medical treatment is obtained.
6. Obtain cell phone numbers of all parent chaperones and accompanying teachers.
7. Bring a bag or container in which to put trash.
8. Last but not least, prepare students for the lessons they will be doing and incorporate classroom instruction on the subject matter, any background information, how the study will add to your MWEE, e.g., and vocabulary to be learned.

At the Site

1. Meet with the Ranger if prearranged. Listen to any specific instructions for the day and make sure parents understand their responsibilities. Point out restroom locations to the students and parents.
2. Proceed to your site(s) and if you are using a pavilion (also prearranged) set up your equipment or materials for your activities.
3. Make sure that each student has a buddy.
4. Field study should not include the collection of organisms or plants unless a valid educational purpose is served by the collection and adequate research has been done to ensure both the safety and legality of the collection.
5. Avoid glass containers or jars whenever possible.

6. If using a lake, pond, stream, or marsh as a study site, ensure that students know the protocol for behavior and procedures by or in the water and monitor carefully—e.g., seining, wetland soil study, macro collection. All macroinvertebrates collected should be put back where they were found. Avoid throwing rocks into water, skipping rocks, etc.
7. When you are done, Collect and carry out all trash, study containers, and other items you brought in.
8. Have fun. Take away only memories and lots of energy and nature knowledge!