



# THE YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

Welcome! Thank you for inquiring about the Appalachian Mountain Club's (AMC) Youth Opportunities Program (YOP). This packet provides specific information about YOP and our Outdoor Leadership Training (OLT). Please read this information carefully and give us a call with any questions; our contact information is listed at the end of this document.

## OVERVIEW

The **MISSION** of AMC's Youth Opportunities Program is to make the outdoors accessible and meaningful to youth living in urban and under-resourced communities. We do this through providing youth workers and teachers with the leadership training, resources, and services they need to lead youth on outings in a safe, fun, and relevant way.

YOP promotes youth leadership, confidence, and environmental awareness through participation in outdoor adventures such as backpacking, camping, hiking, and canoeing. Because participation in these types of outdoor activities has traditionally been limited to those with greater financial resources, YOP prioritizes agencies serving youth from urban and under-resourced communities. By providing scholarships, free equipment loans, and discounted lodging, YOP makes it possible for diverse groups of young people to get outdoors together. YOP is committed to providing the support that youth workers need to make outdoor trips a reality. Each year, through our work with more than 200 youth agencies and schools, our program serves over 37,000 youth – and we look forward to working with you.

## OUR HISTORY

The Youth Opportunities Program began in Boston in 1968 during the civil rights movement, when much of the country was in turmoil over racial conflict and social injustices. The Appalachian Mountain Club became increasingly concerned about how these tensions were affecting Boston's young people. The AMC approached urban organizations to offer resources and training to get youth outdoors, and YOP's "train-the-trainer" model was born. By providing youth workers with training, equipment loans, and other resources, the AMC supported backpacking, camping, and hiking trips for youth, offering a unique opportunity for them to develop leadership skills and a connection to the outdoors.

The first outing consisted of a small group of youth from Roxbury, Massachusetts, who ventured to the White Mountains during the summer of 1968 and returned home with exciting stories and talk of going back. Two more Roxbury groups took to the mountains that summer, soon to be followed in summers to come by teens from Dorchester, Mattapan, downtown Boston, and Cambridge

**"I was surprised at how extensive, well-organized, and well thought out every aspect of the training was and how incredibly generous YOP has been."**

- OLT participant

Since its grassroots beginning in 1968, YOP has grown and evolved in an ongoing effort to provide youth and youth workers from northeastern cities with a successful education, leadership, and adventure program. Today there are YOP members throughout New England, New York, and New Jersey. We now offer more than 10 outdoor leadership trainings throughout the spring, summer and fall, as well as dozens of workshops to support our members' leadership development, including training in backpacking, camping,

snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, trip planning, map and compass, wilderness first aid, Leave No Trace, canoeing, and more. Our program has successfully trained more than 5,000 youth workers and teachers – professionals who have in turn brought the outdoors to more than 250,000 urban youth. And the numbers continue to grow!

## MEMBER BENEFITS

Leaders who have successfully completed the OLT are eligible to receive many benefits from the Youth Opportunities Program. These resources make it possible for youth workers and teachers to lead their youth on outdoor adventures.

- **Equipment Loans:** YOP Members may borrow outdoor gear from YOP's nine equipment rooms located throughout the region. This includes tents, sleeping bags, stoves, fuel bottles, backpacks, daypacks, hiking boots, warm clothing, rain gear, and water bottles.
- **Additional Training and Workshops:** Leaders who have successfully completed the OLT are encouraged to continue their outdoor education with YOP by taking workshops in snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, Wilderness First Aid, team building, canoeing, trip planning, and advanced backpacking. Those who have completed these workshops in addition to the OLT may then borrow applicable equipment such as canoes, paddles, lifejackets, cross-country skis, ski poles, winter boots, winter sleeping bags, and snowshoes.
- **Trip Planning:** YOP helps youth workers and teachers find the information they need to plan their trips. YOP staff are available to answer questions, address risk management concerns, and make equipment and AMC lodging reservations.
- **Reduced Lodging Rates:** YOP Members are eligible for reduced rates at AMC huts, camps, and lodges making it affordable to bring youth to visit stunning locations across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey.
- **Youth Adventures:** Throughout the year YOP offers a variety of Youth Adventures which typically include additional assistance such as food, transportation, lodging, and staffing support.
- **Other Amazing Benefits Include:** Free AMC membership for a year, opportunities to network with other youth workers and online membership resources through our YOP Member Hub.

## YOP MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES

We have developed the following guidelines for participation in the OLT and YOP. Please review these carefully and call with any questions.

1. **YOP Membership:** Upon successful completion of the Outdoor Leadership Training, youth workers become YOP Members for a period of two years and receive membership benefits according to their YOP Member Profile. YOP Members renew their membership by participating in a qualifying "refresher workshop" within 2 years in order to continue receiving YOP benefits.
2. **YOP Member Profiles:** At the conclusion of the OLT, participants take part in an assessment process with their instructors to determine their YOP Member Profile. Possible Member Profiles depend on the type of OLT and the skills, experience, and comfort level of each participant; in turn, the Member Profile reflects the types of trips a member can lead with YOP's support. Participation in other YOP workshops and additional trip leading experience allow youth workers to grow and change their profile and lead more advanced trips. We encourage all YOP members to continue to build their skills by attending these ongoing trainings and leading trips with YOP's support. See pages 7 and 8 for a comparison of OLT types and possible Member Profiles.
3. **Age:** Youth workers must be 21 years or older in order to participate in the OLT.
4. **Two Trip Minimum:** OLT participants are expected to lead a minimum of two trips within a year of taking the training, though many will go on to lead more. This can include day hikes, backpacking, camping, and other outdoor activities. These trips will naturally be based on the skills, interests, and schedules of each individual YOP Member and the youth they serve.
5. **Trip Reports:** We ask that YOP Members report on the youth trips that they lead by completing a Trip Report through the online Member Hub. Trip reports help us ensure ongoing funding and support for YOP.
6. **Youth Agencies:** YOP is open to all youth-serving groups and schools; however we prioritize agencies and schools serving youth from urban and under-resourced communities.

7. **YOP's Role:** The OLT teaches a wide range of skills needed to lead youth on outdoor trips but is not a certification process. YOP provides support and resources needed to help make outdoor trips possible and can provide suggestions and ideas to members prior to any trip; however, YOP staff does not typically accompany members. Agencies assume full responsibility and ownership for all their trips.
8. **Lodging Discount:** AMC destinations across New England and the Mid-Atlantic region are available to YOP Members at reduced rates. Destinations are extremely popular and often fill quickly. YOP Members are encouraged to plan their calendars at least 6 months in advance in order to have the best chance at getting preferred reservation dates. First priority for these subsidized rates will be given to agencies and schools that serve youth from urban, under-resourced communities. Group size is limited to a total of 12 people per trained adult (including an adult co-leader).
9. **Equipment Loans:** The type of equipment that YOP members may borrow is based on their individual Member Profile determined by YOP at the conclusion of the OLT. See page 8.
10. **Trip Seasons:** Successful completion of the OLT qualifies youth workers to lead “three season” trips – outings that take place in the spring, summer, or fall. (This is typically mid-May to mid-October in New Hampshire and April to November in Massachusetts. Ask for details on specific locations dates; trip seasons will vary based on weather and geography.) YOP Members interested in leading winter trips must attend a winter workshop in order to borrow winter equipment or stay at an AMC destination during this season.
11. **Rates and Scholarships:** OLT and workshop fees are subsidized rates, for which most agencies and schools serving youth from urban and under-resourced communities will qualify. After reviewing your OLT application, YOP will contact you if the listed rate does not apply to your agency. We are pleased to provide financial assistance to those who require more financial support. Lack of funding should not prevent participation. Be sure to request a scholarship if needed.
12. **YOP Community:** All YOP Members are invited to participate in regular Community Gatherings and social events hosted by YOP. This is an excellent way for YOP staff, volunteers and Members to share new ideas, plan, and to keep YOP aware of community developments. YOP Members are also encouraged to participate in volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

# THE OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING

## OVERVIEW

Many YOP members have told us that the Outdoor Leadership Training (OLT) has had a significant impact on their lives. Whether you overcome a fear, gain a new perspective, or just meet some great new people, the OLT will be like nothing you've ever experienced before.

The **purpose** of the OLT is to teach **basic outdoor and leadership skills**. These skills are all taught in the context of **taking youth outdoors**, a specialized type of trip leadership with unique challenges and rewards. The training is **experiential** which means that you will **learn by doing**; you will learn from your triumphs as well as from your challenges.

YOP offers a variety of Outdoor Leadership Trainings each year, ranging from three to five days and focused on camping, hiking, or backpacking skills. All trainings include a pre-trip meeting and several days of outdoor adventure in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, or New Jersey. Youth workers are encouraged to select the training that best meets their needs.

**“The OLT is one of the best and most helpful trainings I have ever been involved with.”**  
- OLT participant

Please note that in order to fully participate and engage in the experience, all participants are asked to leave their cellphone and other electronics behind during the training. We understand that this may be a challenge for some and we will provide a phone number in case of emergency.

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

The OLT covers four fundamental areas of outdoor leadership: technical skills, group dynamics, methods of leadership, and environmental awareness. Trip leaders with knowledge and skill in all four areas will be prepared to lead a variety of trips, from day hikes to camping to backpacking.

**1. Technical skills** training include lessons on navigation, equipment use, discussions about wilderness first aid, and risk management. These are the basic tools to lead an outdoor trip effectively and smoothly.

**2. Group dynamics** are explored through role-plays, games, and discussion. We teach strategies for creating a positive, inclusive group environment. Youth who are new to the outdoors will often behave differently in this new setting, so we try to prepare leaders for the likely tensions and interactions of their groups.

**3. Leadership:** Being a good leader means being an educator, an advisor, a motivator, a problem-solver and a decision-maker. We take an in-depth look at various methods and styles of leadership, and through role-playing and discussions, we help leaders balance these varying roles and find a style that works best for them.

**4. Environmental awareness** is emphasized in lessons on ecology and low-impact camping. We teach leaders to set a positive example for youth by being good stewards of the outdoors through practicing Leave-No-Trace principles.

## EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP MODEL

YOP uses a “Leader of the Day” model. During the trip, each participant will be the co-leader of their group for a time. Except for the basic itinerary and in emergency situations, decisions will be made by the Leaders of the Day and the group. Leaders of the Day will be responsible for reviewing the route with the rest of the group, checking to make sure all needed equipment is included, coordinating group members, and dealing with issues that arise.

Along the way, the instructors may set up role-plays to illustrate scenarios that can (and probably will) happen when you take a group of youth into the woods. Confronting the role-play situations as real and dealing with them accordingly can be a great learning opportunity - both for you and the rest of the group. It is a safe time to make mistakes and learn new ways to handle challenges. At the end of each day, the group will spend time processing the activities and accomplishments of that day and reflecting on the decisions, leadership styles, and effectiveness of the group and the Leaders of the Day.

## EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

At the end of the training you will be asked to evaluate yourself and the overall training experience through an individual assessment meeting with your Instructors. Together you will discuss the types of trips you feel comfortable leading and opportunities for further growth to determine your Member Profile. YOP uses these profiles to determine the types of trips that members can lead with YOP support and to offer support for future training and experience.

## OUR INSTRUCTORS

The instructors' role is to ensure the overall safety of the group, to facilitate the learning scenarios, to teach new skills, and to help process the day's activities. The training is experiential: the instructors are not there to provide all the answers or make decisions but to help you and the group find the answers and make the decisions.

YOP instructors have experience both in the outdoors and with youth development. They are a remarkable group of volunteers who are so committed to sharing the outdoors with youth that they volunteer their personal time each year to help instruct the OLT. They bring their experiences and their success working with youth in the outdoors to the OLT to help you learn.

## WHAT WE PROVIDE

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ground Pads       | <input type="checkbox"/> Compasses          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Backpacks         | <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kits     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tents                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Stoves            | <input type="checkbox"/> Maps and Guidebook |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping Bags         | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking Equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Instructors        |

Please see the enclosed equipment list for items you will need to bring and requirements for clothing and equipment. You should not need to purchase new clothing for the OLT – we have nearly everything you'll need in our equipment room. **PLEASE** email YOP at [amcyop@outdoors.org](mailto:amcyop@outdoors.org) with any questions or concerns.

## SAFETY

As participant safety is a high priority for all AMC trainings, procedures and policies have been developed to manage and limit participant risk. Participants are expected to work with staff to reduce risks and make the experience successful for all involved. In case an emergency does occur, AMC instructors are trained in Wilderness First Aid, carry backcountry first aid kits, and follow a comprehensive Emergency Action Plan developed for each individual training group. Instructors carry cell phones and/or radios, although these are not reliable in all locations and conditions. Despite such steps, participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to, cooking and camp chores, adverse weather and environmental conditions, transportation in vehicles and on foot, and the remote locations of our trips. Please carefully read and sign the Participant Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and the Release and Indemnity Agreement, and call if you have any questions. Your understanding of these risks and adherence to our policies and procedures contributes to making this experience successful.

## TICK MANAGEMENT AND LYME DISEASE PREVENTION

The Black Legged Tick (commonly called the deer tick) in the east may transmit Lyme disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Northern New Jersey, Long Island, NYC area, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts have the highest risk for Lyme disease along the East Coast. Ticks need to be engorged in your skin for 36 hours before they transmit Lyme disease.

In our efforts to prevent any transmissions from occurring, all participants & staff are required to:

- Conduct a tick check every 12 hours for the duration of the program/ trip.
- Examine gear in an effort to find and remove ticks. Ticks can ride home on clothing, and attach to a person later. Examine jackets and backpacks.

Participants and staff are recommended to:

- Wear long pants, long shirts, and boots – not sandals – when traveling through tall grasses or tight forest.
- Tuck in your shirts and pull socks over pant legs to minimize the chances of ticks finding skin.
- Avoid wearing bright colors and opt for light colors like khaki, beige, and olive to better see ticks on your clothing.

## AMC ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (EEC)

In addition to the program-specific information provided in these materials, please note that the AMC has Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) ([www.outdoors.org/pdf/upload/AMC\\_EEC.pdf](http://www.outdoors.org/pdf/upload/AMC_EEC.pdf)) that apply to all participants in AMC-sponsored activities. These criteria were created to help potential participants identify and understand the fundamental cognitive and physical requirements of participating in AMC activities. The EEC are a resource for anyone considering participating in an AMC-sponsored activity. If you have questions or requests regarding the EEC, please contact us and we will be happy to speak with you.

**“It's tough. It's frustrating. It's the best thing I ever did.”**  
- OLT participant

## CHOOSING THE TRAINING THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Backpacking, Hiking, or Camping – which training should you take? Since 1968, YOP has been offering a **Backpacking Outdoor Leadership Training (OLT)**. This classic wilderness training, which many participants have called life-changing, is appropriate for all youth workers who want to take their youth on outdoor adventures, regardless of experience level. If you are open to learning and new experiences, in relatively good shape, and enjoy challenging yourself, this is your training! Participants in the backpacking OLT often have a wide variety of backgrounds; many have no previous outdoor background while some bring several years of experience. The diversity of skills and experiences adds to the learning environment and prepares youth workers to more effectively lead their own trips. The Backpacking OLT offers participants an extended wilderness experience packed with new leadership and outdoor skills, making these participants eligible to lead the most varied types of trips with their youth.

YOP also offers a **Camping and Day Hiking Outdoor Leadership Training (OLT)**. While no experience is necessary for any of our trainings, we recognize that four days spent backpacking may feel overwhelming as a first-time experience. In contrast to the Backpacking OLT in which participants carry all of their equipment and spend each night at a different site along their hiking route, the Camping OLT uses a “base-camp” model, focusing on the skills necessary for leading day hikes and camping trips. The group will spend each night at the same campsite and lead hikes and activities from that base. Participants will spend three or four nights camping in tents. No experience is required – just a willingness to learn and contribute.

YOP's three-day **Camping Outdoor Leadership Training (OLT)** focuses on the basics of camping with youth. This is an excellent introduction for those brand new to outdoor adventure and interested in learning camping skills. Participants will spend two nights base camping, learning engaging outdoor activities and building skills in risk management, sensory awareness activities, games, campfire activities, Leave No Trace Principles and more. No experience is necessary.

## OLT COMPARISON

	<b>BACKPACKING</b>	<b>CAMPING &amp; DAY HIKING</b>	<b>CAMPING</b>
<b>WHO SHOULD ATTEND</b>	Youth workers and teachers who enjoy a challenge, are in good physical condition, and are interested in leading a variety of outdoor trips.	Recommended for youth workers who plan to lead day trips, day hikes, or camping overnights. Suggested for those who may not want to backpack for 4 or 5 days.	An excellent introduction for those brand new to outdoor adventure. Suggested for those who are interested in more “close to home” camping opportunities.
<b>SUMMARY</b>	Each night is spent at a different site along the hiking route. All gear for the duration of the trip is carried on each participant’s back. Get ready for a challenging experience full of fun, learning, and adventure!	Focus is on day hiking and “base-camping” skill development. Each night is spent at the same location. Day hikes range from 3 miles to 6 miles each day.	Focus is solely on “base camping” skill development. Each night is spent at the same location. Activities will focus on camping with youth exploring new surroundings. Hiking will not be a part of this training.
<b>LOCATIONS</b>	White Mountains, NH; Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, NJ	Cardigan Mountain, NH; White Mountains, NH; Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, NJ; Harriman State Park, NY	Blue Hills, MA; Harriman State Park, NY
<b>DAYS OUTDOORS</b>	4 or 5	4 or 5	3
<b>PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE</b>	No experience required; Recommended for participants that are in good physical condition and enjoy challenging themselves	No experience required	No experience required
<b>ACCOMODATIONS</b>	Tents shared with 1-3 people Composting toilets or backcountry bathrooms.	Tents shared with 1-3 people. Composting and/or portable bathroom facilities.	Tents shared with 1-3 people Composting and/or portable bathroom facilities.
<b>PHYSICAL EXPECTATION</b>	Able to carry up to 40 lbs. for up to 7 miles for more than 8 hours per day.	Able to carry up to 15 lbs. for up to 6 miles for more than 8 hours per day	Able to carry up to 10 lbs. for up to 1 mile.
<b>TRIP TYPES, LODGING AND EQUIPMENT BENEFITS</b>	Based on YOP Member Profile. Possible Member Profiles include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backpacker</li> <li>• Hiker and Camper</li> <li>• Hiker</li> <li>• Camper</li> </ul>	Based on YOP Member Profile. Possible Member Profiles include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiker and Camper</li> <li>• Hiker</li> <li>• Camper</li> </ul>	Based on YOP Member Profile. Possible Member Profiles include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camper</li> </ul>
<b>COST</b> (scholarships available)	\$160-195	\$160-\$195	\$110

## YOP MEMBER PROFILES

OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING TYPE	Backpacking			
	Camping and Hiking			Backpacker
	Camping	Hiker	Camper + Hiker	
Possible YOP Member Profile Types	Camper	Hiker	Camper + Hiker	Backpacker
<b>Equipment Privileges</b>				
Hiking equipment		•	•	•
Camping equipment	•		•	•
Backpacking equipment				•
<b>Trip Types and Season</b>				
Day hikes with indoor overnight(s) or no overnight		•	•	•
Camping (up to 3 nights)	•		•	•
Spring, summer, fall	•	•	•	•
Multi-day backpacking				•
AMC Destinations (see below)	AMC campsites	AMC Lodges & Cabins	AMC Campsites, AMC Lodges & Cabins; some AMC Huts and Cardigan High Cabin with White Mountains Camping/Hiking (OLT)	AMC Campsites, AMC Lodges & Cabins, AMC Huts, AMC Backcountry Campsites

**AMC Campsites:** Ponkapoag Camp, Harold Parker State Forest, Noble View Outdoor Center, Mohican Outdoor Center, Harriman Outdoor Center

**AMC Lodges & Cabins:** Joe Dodge Lodge, Highland Center, Cardigan Lodge, Mohican Outdoor Center, Harriman Outdoor Center

**AMC Huts and Cardigan High Cabin:** “Low Huts” (below treeline) include Lonesome Lake Hut, Zealand Falls Hut, Carter Notch Hut, and Mizpah Spring Hut. “High Huts” (above/near treeline) include Lakes of the Clouds Hut, Madison Spring Hut, Greenleaf Hut, and Galehead Hut. Cardigan High Cabin is located on the side of Mt. Cardigan.

**AMC Backcountry Campsites:** located throughout the White Mountains and include backcountry lean-to shelters and tent platforms.

## HOW TO APPLY

The OLT application is available online at <http://amc.adcieo.com/outreach/step1.aspx> . We recommend that you review the application before completing it online and consider downloading a copy for reference. You will likely need some information from your supervisor/agency director to complete the application.

**Please note that OLTs fill very quickly and we recommend applying as soon as possible.** Our application reviewers expect that all submitted applications are complete and closely reflect your work with youth and your readiness for the training. Once we have reviewed your application we will contact you to confirm your registration or to ask further questions before accepting your application. Shortly before the start of the training we will be in touch with a final information packet as well as directions and a few reminders.

**Please submit your application and payment as soon as possible** if you intend to participate in the training. Please contact us with any questions you might have: We hope you'll join us!

YOP New England (Massachusetts and New Hampshire OLTs)  
Lindsay Watkins, New England Manager of Training and Support  
617-391-6637, [lwatkins@outdoors.org](mailto:lwatkins@outdoors.org)

YOP New York/New Jersey (New York and New Jersey OLTs)  
Mashawn Butler, NY/NJ Leadership Training Coordinator  
646-292-5254, [mbutler@outdoors.org](mailto:mbutler@outdoors.org)

General information: [amcyop@outdoors.org](mailto:amcyop@outdoors.org)  
[www.outdoors.org/yop](http://www.outdoors.org/yop)

**“The opportunity to meet so many other youth workers and observe their styles and methods is something I don’t think I could have experienced any other place.”**

- OLT participant

# CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

## PERSONAL CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

It is imperative to understand the importance of having the proper clothing and equipment when leading outdoor trips. YOP will provide all equipment for the group (tents, stoves, cookware, etc.) and any outdoor gear that you need (backpack, sleeping bag and pad, etc.). You will be responsible for some of your clothing as well as a few other items. We cannot take participants into the woods with improper, insufficient or unsafe gear. Your personal gear will be checked by our Instructors at the beginning of the training. We will send you an equipment list specific to your training. **Please check with us if you don't have a clothing item on the list. You can borrow nearly every item on the equipment list from us, including fleece, rain gear, long underwear, boots, and socks.**

## FEET

Keeping your feet comfortable and well protected will be important on this training and on any hike. Always wear sturdy hiking boots. Mountain terrain can be difficult to traverse and boots with good ankle support can prevent a sprained ankle. Walking with the additional weight of a backpack also requires good support. *Never wear new boots on a long trip.* Break them in gradually by walking around in them for short periods of time. Then try them out on a day hike. YOP has excellent boots that you can borrow.

Cotton socks can cause blisters and allow your feet to get cold if they are damp. We recommend wool or synthetic (or a blend of the two) socks for hiking. Hiking-specific socks such as Smartwool, Darn Tough, Wigwam, and many others can be found at outdoor stores such as REI, as well as in most sporting goods and department stores. We also have them available to borrow from our gear room.

It can also be helpful to wear two pairs of socks when hiking. The sliding action between the two layers helps to prevent blisters. The first layer can be a thin sock, made out of a synthetic fiber such as polypropylene. These are frequently called "liner socks". The second sock should be a heavier wool sock.

## LAYERING

When preparing for a hike, layering allows us to control body temperature. For example, take off a sweater when too warm or put on a rain jacket if it gets too windy.

Listed below is what a good layering system looks like. It should be possible to comfortably wear all layers at the same time though you will usually mix and match depending on the conditions.

- **Under Layer:** long underwear, top and bottom, of wool or polypropylene. Lycra running pants are acceptable. This is the layer next to your skin.
- **Middle Insulation Layer:** on top: two layers of wool, polyester or fleece. On bottom: wool or fleece pants. This layer also includes wool or fleece hat and mittens.
- **Waterproof Layer:** waterproof jacket and pants (rain gear). Note that it must be water**proof** not water *resistant*.

**"I was surprised at how quickly the weather changes in the mountains... how much I could learn in a short period of time."**  
- OLT participant

## WHY NOT COTTON?

Cotton absorbs moisture easily which increases heat loss. Even when dry, cotton is a poor insulator. When it is wet, either from sweat or the outside environment, it loses its insulating value quickly. It is slow to dry and heavy when wet. This is why we ask participants to leave behind jeans and sweatshirts – you'll just end up with heavy, wet clothing that won't keep you warm.

Although it's acceptable to hike in a cotton T-shirt, at the end of the day or when the weather changes, you'll want to start layering and insulating with **non-absorbent materials**. Wool, polypropylene and fleece are recommended fabrics when recreating outdoors. They work to keep moisture away from your skin so that you don't get cold.

**We will send an equipment list list specific to your training with your confirmation materials.**

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **1. I've never been hiking, camping, or backpacking before. Is previous experience required?**

No previous outdoor experience is necessary. If you are an active person and have the desire and enthusiasm to learn, any of our trainings will be a good fit for you. A large percentage of the people who complete the OLT *don't* have any previous experience. In fact, most people with outdoor experience find the OLT more challenging and more rewarding than they anticipated!

## **2. What will the food be like?**

YOP provides all food from dinner on the first night through lunch on the last day. Meals are hearty, delicious and plentiful. We bring tasty food and encourage youth workers to do the same on their trips because youth love food too! It is something familiar that provides comfort in the unfamiliar surroundings of the woods. **Please be sure to note any special dietary restrictions or special considerations on your medical form. We can accommodate most needs.**

## **3. I understand that no cotton is allowed, but is cotton underwear okay?**

Yes, cotton underwear is acceptable because of the minimal body space it covers and because it's likely that you'll have a dry pair in your pack. If you have underwear made out of a synthetic material or technical wool, bring that instead - it's just easier.

## **4. Can I use my own backpack, sleeping pad, or sleeping bag?**

Yes, provided it meets the criteria specified on the packing list.

## **5. I can't make the pre-trip meeting but can attend the training. Can I still go?**

There is a substantial amount of information that will be covered at the pre-trip meeting. The pre-trip meeting is mandatory for all wishing to take part in the Outdoor Leadership Training, though it may be possible to attend a pre-trip meeting for an earlier OLT if you know well ahead of time that you will not be able to make it.

## **6. How many staff can attend from my agency?**

A maximum of four staff per agency can attend each OLT to allow us to separate people who know each other; e find that participants learn and challenge themselves more this way. This also ensures that YOP can serve as many youth agencies as possible.

## **7. I'm afraid it's too late to register and all the spots may be filled. What can I do?**

YOP maintains a waiting list for all OLTs. The pre-trip meeting is required for those on the waiting list so that in the event someone can't attend the training, you will be ready to go! And don't despair – we always take several people off of the waiting list each year.

## **8. Is smoking allowed on the trip?**

Responsible smoking is allowed, but not in buildings, shelters, vans, or tents. Expect to discuss safety concerns and other issues with your group. The OLT is not the time to try something new such as quitting smoking or a new diet.

## **9. I live close to where we will be training. Do I have to meet you at AMC Boston headquarters on the first day?**

Only for Boston participants: The Outdoor Leadership Training starts and ends at AMC. *Everyone* must meet at AMC's Boston office to help load up and everyone must come back to Boston to help clean up. While we understand that it may be inconvenient, we are proponents of continuity and fairness! Everyone will be tired, everyone has a long trip in (even city-dwellers often have hour-long commutes) and, logistically, additional vehicles will be problematic. If you'd like to spend the night before or after your OLT close to Boston, we can try to help you arrange accommodations. .

***Please contact us if you have other questions or concerns! We hope to see you on the OLT.***