

ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) created an Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) to help participants understand the fundamental requirements for joining an ADK trip.

The criteria cover what anyone who participates with ADK programs must be able to do in order to participate.

The EEC identify the basic requirements of participation focused on risk management, aligned with our mission.

The below criteria are intended to be informative and helpful for all participants considering attending ADK trips.

While they provide a general overview of what's required for ADK trips, they do not capture every specific criterion or task that may arise during a particular activity.

General Criteria

Participants must be able to:

- Travel and navigate through changing conditions including weather, temperature, terrain, wind, rain, heat, or cold.
- Depart and arrive according to schedule, maintain a comfortable and consistent pace, take regular breaks, and participate in group logistics.
- Take care of yourself by eating and hydrating appropriately, dress appropriately for the elements, maintain personal hygiene and necessary self-care, and keep known medical conditions under control.
- Communicate effectively with trip leaders or group members if you experience personal distress, injury, illness, or require assistance during the activity.
- Maintain alertness and focus for multiple hours while travelling through wilderness or remote terrain.
- Pay attention to directions, understand and follow instructions whether travelling independently or with the group, and stay with the group when required.
- Respect and adhere to rules the trip leaders establish to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.
- Act in accordance with Leave No Trace ethics and follow minimum-impact guidelines as directed by the leaders.

- Cooperate as a member of a group, support a team-oriented approach even under difficult circumstances. Treat other participants with courtesy and respect and demonstrate flexibility and willingness to compromise when needed.
- Recognize that problem-solving approaches may vary among group members. Leaders make final decisions, but your input is valued. Tolerance, flexibility, and a cooperative spirit are essential.
- Be able to recover from a fall, either independently or with companion assistance when applicable.
- Endure exposure to changing and potentially extreme weather including sustained sub-freezing temperatures (below 32 °F/0 °C), very dry or humid conditions, extreme heat temperatures, strong sun exposure, and rapidly changing weather such as icy, wet, wind, blizzard conditions, and thunderstorms.

Day Hikes Criteria

- Travel over backcountry terrain that may be narrow, uneven, rough, rocky, muddy, icy or snow-covered, with loose soil or vegetation and possibly exposed ledges or cliffs.
- Hike the mileage, elevation gain, and loss specified in the trip itinerary, on the terrain described above, carrying your personal gear and equipment as outlined in the trip description.
- Carry your day hike equipment and supplies. For example, your daypack should include at least two liters of water, extra clothing layers, rain outerwear, sun protection, food, and other essential supplies.
- Be prepared to travel continuously for up to one hour between planned rest breaks (or longer as conditions dictate) while maintaining safe pace and alertness.
- Endure exposure to a wide range of weather and environmental conditions: temperatures that may dip below freezing (32 °F / 0 °C) or rise above 85 °F / 29 °C, very dry or very humid air, summit exposure, and rapid changes from dry or hot to intense rain, wind, lightning, thunderstorms, or flash floods.
- Manage comfort in backcountry conditions including presence of biting insects, sun exposure, rapidly changing weather, and group dynamics.

Snow-based Outings Criteria

- Properly put on and take off all required winter equipment and clothing such as snowshoes, ski boots, skis, and gloves, either independently or with limited assistance from a companion, following reasonable instruction. Beginners will receive basic instruction at the start of the trip.
- Travel independently across varied snow conditions, including differing depths and densities, while maintaining stability and awareness of surroundings
- Move safely on skis or snowshoes over terrain appropriate to the trip's level (flat, uphill, and downhill) without creating risk to personal safety or impacting the experience of other participants.
- Recover safely from a fall, either independently or with assistance from a companion.
- Withstand extended exposure to diverse and rapidly changing winter conditions, including sustained sub-freezing temperatures (below 32 °F / 0 °C), summit exposure, strong sun and brightness, and potential shifts from cold, icy, or wet weather to heavy snow, wind, blizzards or white-out conditions.
- Be prepared to travel in remote winter settings that may be eight or more hours from medical facilities, where communication, transportation, or evacuation could be delayed.
- Manage comfort in backcountry conditions including presence of biting insects, sun exposure, rapidly changing weather, and group dynamics.

Paddling Criteria

- Enter and exit a canoe in a variety of natural conditions including rocky, wet, sandy, or slick surfaces and in both shallow and deeper water.
- Remain seated and balanced in the canoe for extended periods, maintaining stability while paddling for several hours at a time.
- Effectively control a paddle to steer, maneuver, and propel the canoe forward potentially for multiple hours a day including in challenging conditions such as headwinds or light currents.
- Carry personal gear to and from the canoe and campsite and independently set up and take down personal camping equipment such as a tent, sleeping pad, and sleeping bag.
- Safely navigate between canoe and campsite or restroom areas through shallow water or across terrain that may be sandy, rocky, muddy, slippery, or uneven.

- Wear all required safety equipment, including a properly fitted and approved personal flotation device (PFD) and closed toe shoes, always while on the water or handling boats.
- Demonstrate a safe swimming position, being able to turn independently from face-down to face-up, keeping the head above water and feet near the surface.
- In the event of a capsize, be able to exit the canoe independently and, with guidance and assistance from instructors, a partner, and one additional canoe, re-enter the boat safely while following directions.
- Be able to self-rescue or actively participate in a rescue—swimming or floating to safety, grasping a rescue rope, and cooperating with an assisted recovery.
- Navigate and move safely within a camp area, which may include uneven terrain, rocks, roots, tent lines, and other hazards, including during low light or nighttime conditions using a headlamp or flashlight.
- Maintain personal hydration and nutrition, including the ability to treat and consume water from natural backcountry sources.
- Manage comfort in backcountry conditions including presence of biting insects, sun exposure, rapidly changing weather, and group dynamics.

Backpacking Criteria

- Carry a backpack weighing 25–50+ pounds, or approximately 1/3 of your body weight.
- Travel across varied backcountry terrain including wet, dry, rocky, sandy, uneven, or unstable ground over the daily mileage and elevation changes listed in your trip itinerary, for up to 10 or more hours per day while carrying a full pack.
- Navigate and move safely within a camp area, which may include uneven terrain, rocks, roots, tent lines, and other hazards, including during low light or nighttime conditions using a headlamp or flashlight.
- Enter and exit tents pitched on the ground, including in darkness or limited light.
- Sleep on the ground using a sleeping pad designed for backcountry use and move comfortably from standing to sitting or lying positions and back.
- Maintain personal hydration and nutrition, including the ability to treat and consume water from natural backcountry sources.
- Maintain personal hygiene and self-care in a setting without running water or flush toilets, using privies, cat holes, or wag bags as appropriate.

- Continue traveling safely over varied terrain during adverse weather conditions such as heat, wind, rain, or cold, and be prepared to hike for up to one hour without a rest break if needed for safety or logistical reasons.
- Have relevant backpacking experience appropriate to the trip's level of difficulty.
- Carry personal gear (pack, tent, sleeping bag, clothing, etc.) plus a share of group gear (e.g., stoves, fuel, cookware) over the planned distance and terrain, with the capacity to assist or carry additional items if another participant is injured.
- Be comfortable setting up and breaking down camp in a variety of weather conditions. All personal gear should be tested and familiar before the trip.
- Willingly participate in group camp chores, including water collection, cooking, meal cleanup, and campsite organization.
- Be able to travel on or off trail, possibly fording streams or traversing rough, variable terrain, as required by the itinerary.
- Have sufficient endurance and resilience to travel farther, faster, or longer than planned if unexpected circumstances such as storms, fire, or flooding require it.
- Wear all required safety gear, including comfortable, broken-in footwear suitable for backcountry conditions.
- Stay alert and communicate effectively to warn others of hazards, such as falling rocks, unstable footing, slides, aggressive wildlife, fast moving water, or other environmental risks.
- Manage any known medical conditions in a remote environment for up to twice the length of the scheduled trip, where medical care, evacuation, or communication may be delayed.
- Manage comfort in backcountry conditions including presence of biting insects, sun exposure, rapidly changing weather, and group dynamics.
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Yurt Programming and Lodging Criteria

- Be comfortable staying in rustic lodges with primitive facilities, bunk beds, and shared rooms and bathrooms.
- Travel on uneven terrain to the bathroom and around property in challenging conditions such as snow, ice, mud, and low light.
- Take care of yourself including dressing with appropriate clothing and footwear dependent on the conditions, eating and hydrating appropriately.

- Be able to carry equipment to various locations on property dependent on class needs.
- Travel up and down small staircases in challenging conditions including snow, ice, and low light.
- Remain in one location for extended periods, including in varying conditions such as cold temperatures, high heat and humidity, or the presence of biting insects.

Trail Work Criteria

- Participate in manual labor tasks as outlined in project descriptions, such as digging, lifting, construction, and site clean-up, for up to eight hours each day, depending on the program.
- Wear all recommended or required protective gear, including but not limited to: protective eyewear, face mask or shield, gloves, hard hat, and appropriate footwear, at all times during the activity.
- Follow directions from project leaders to ensure safety, efficiency, and minimal impact on the environment.
- Maintain awareness of your physical limits, taking breaks as needed, staying hydrated, and practicing proper lifting or movement techniques to prevent injury.
- Stay alert and communicate effectively to warn others of hazards, such as falling rocks or branches, unstable footing, tool hazards, and other environmental or occupational risks.
- For multi-day programs, participants must additionally satisfy all Backpacking Essential Eligibility Criteria.