



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ #: \_\_\_\_\_

## Games, Nature, & Experiments

### What is Leave No Trace?

**Estimated Time:** 20 - 60 minutes (per principle)

**Age range:** All grades (with guidance)

**What you need:** paper, writing utensil, printer (optional), additional materials are specified for each principle

#### **Background Information:**

“The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace provide an easily understood framework of minimum impact practices for anyone visiting the outdoors. Although Leave No Trace has its roots in backcountry settings, the Principles have been adapted so that they can be applied anywhere – from remote wilderness areas, to local parks and even in your own backyard. They also apply to almost every recreational activity. Each Principle covers a specific topic and provides detailed information for minimizing impacts.

“The Seven Principles are well established and widely known, but they are not static. The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics continually examines, evaluates and reshapes the Principles. The Center’s Education Department conducts research – including publishing scholarly articles in independent journals – to ensure that the Principles are up to date with the latest insights from biologists, land managers and other leaders in outdoor education.”

**The 7 Principles - Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics**

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

#### **Instructions:**

Please see each of the seven Leave No Trace principles for ways to learn more about how to minimize your impact on the environment. The seven principles include:

- 1) Plan Ahead & Prepare: Know before you go
- 2) Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces: Choose the right path
- 3) Dispose of Waste Properly: Trash your trash
- 4) Leave What You Find: Take photos, leave footprints
- 5) Minimize Campfire Impacts: Be careful with fire
- 6) Respect Wildlife: Be kind to animals
- 7) Be Considerate to Others: You are not the only visitors

## Games, Nature, &amp; Experiments

## 4) Leave What You Find: Take Photos, Leave Footprints

**Estimated Time:** 20 minutes

**Age range:** All grades (with guidance)

**What you need:** coloring materials, paper

**Introduction:**

The Leave What You Find principle aims to protect both the ecosystems as well as each other's opportunity for outdoor discovery. This allows everyone to experience the same natural setting by leaving things the same (or better) as when we found them.

**Leave What You Find Guidelines:**

- Minimize **site alterations**.
- Avoid damaging trees and live plants.
- Leave natural objects and **artifacts** in the place(s) you found them.

As individuals, we may struggle with this principle because it is easy to get into the mindset of "just taking one thing" or "only breaking one branch for the optimal campsite." The Leave What You Find principle encourages us to think of our actions representing the actions of us all, as a whole. If every individual visiting a park thinks "I'll only pick one flower," soon there will be no flowers left. On the contrary, "I will take a picture of these beautiful flowers and leave them for others to admire" is a mindset that allows for minimal impact and maximum enjoyment for all. This applies not only to plants, but to all natural objects. Please leave them for others to enjoy!

**New Words**

**Site alterations** are changes made, in or around an area, that were originally not present.

**Artifacts** are man-made objects of historical value or importance.

An **environment** represents the natural world.

**Pathogens** are microorganisms (living things that are too small to be seen with the human eye) that can cause disease.

If something is **invasive**, it belongs to a species or type of organism (living thing) that takes over the environments it is found in. Invasive species often take resources that were previously used by other organisms.

**Ecosystems** are places where living and non-living things come together and interact.

**Observations** are things that you notice using one or more of your senses.



Besides leaving things *where* you found them, it is also important to leave things *how* you found them. Think critically about how you are interacting with natural objects. Will your actions permanently alter the **environment** in any way?

For example, many people may think “What’s the harm in carving my initials into a small part of this tree trunk? So many others have already done this.” In reality, carving trees can cause irreparable damage, because it leaves open wounds for **pathogens** to attack the tree. This can eventually lead to death of the tree. Even if you never see that tree again, years from now when it is no longer living, someone else will be deprived of the experience that you had.

Many people like to bring firewood with them to other areas when camping. However, **invasive** beetles and insects living within the wood are often carried along with it. This introduces non-native beetles into fragile **ecosystems** where they damage the surrounding forests for years to come. By leaving what we find, we can help protect and preserve natural ecosystems.



If you are able, take a camera with you when exploring the outdoors. You can document all of your findings with pictures, allowing others to have the same experience. If you don’t have a camera, a journal is also a good resource for capturing moments of wonder and awe in an outdoor setting. Please reference our *Sit Spot Journal* post for ideas on how to explore the outdoors around you and capture your thoughts and **observations** in writing. Try tracing a leaf in your journal or drawing a flower that you see. These are great ways to create lasting memories and to leave things as they are for the next wanderer to admire.

There are a couple exceptions outlined in this principle.



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Leave What You Find Exceptions:

- Campers can move natural objects like rocks and pine cones from where they want to set up their tent(s), but must attempt to put them back in their original locations before leaving the site.
- People may collect edible plants if they are confident in their identification, and do not deplete the resource.

Now that you've learned how to Leave What You Find, preserving our wilderness areas for generations to come, it's time to do a fun activity to reinforce what you've learned! For this activity, we'll be looking at the impact of humans from a tree's perspective.

## 'If I Were a Tree' Activity

### Instructions:

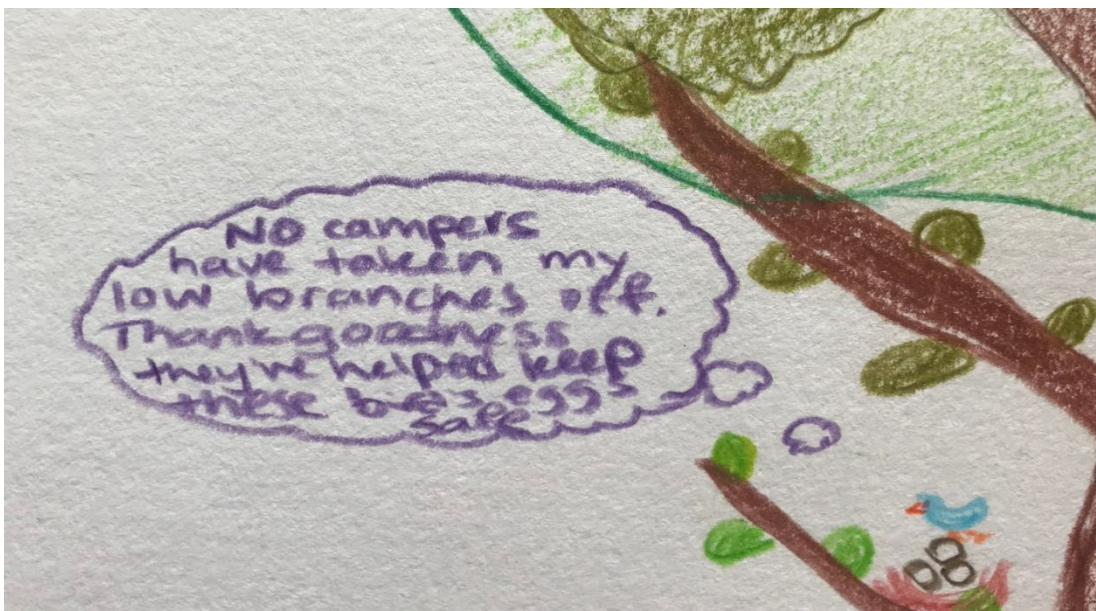
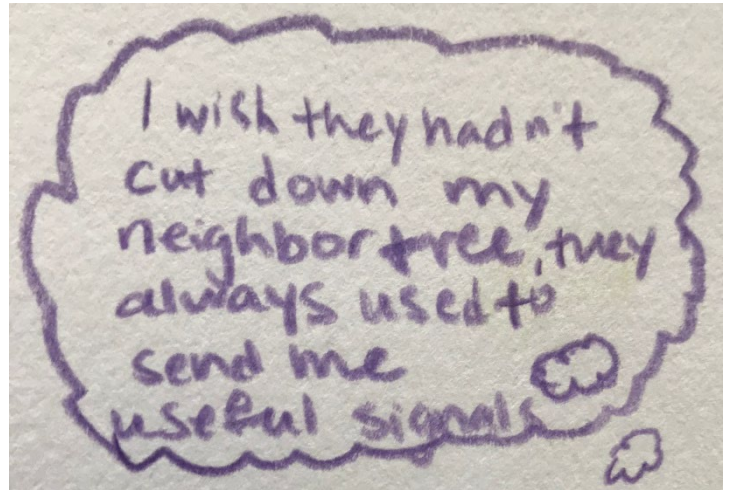
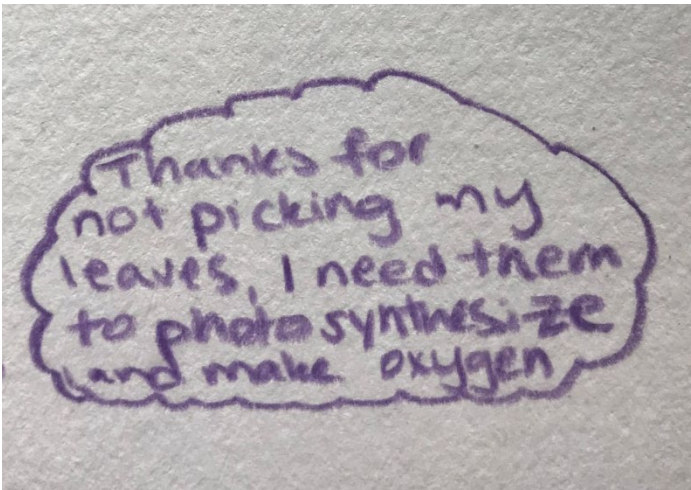
1. Start by drawing a tree for the base of your picture. Ponder what might be going through the tree's mind. What would a tree think about?
2. Include parts of the tree that may or may not be affected by humans. For example, are there low hanging branches—or have those been removed?
3. Now map out the ecosystem surrounding the tree. Map out any thoughts the tree might have using thought bubbles!

Here are some things to consider before getting started:

*What other organisms (living things) are around?*

*Has this ecosystem been affected by humans in any way? Positively or negatively? Both?*

*Is the tree sad about any of the impacts on or around it? Is it grateful for anything?*

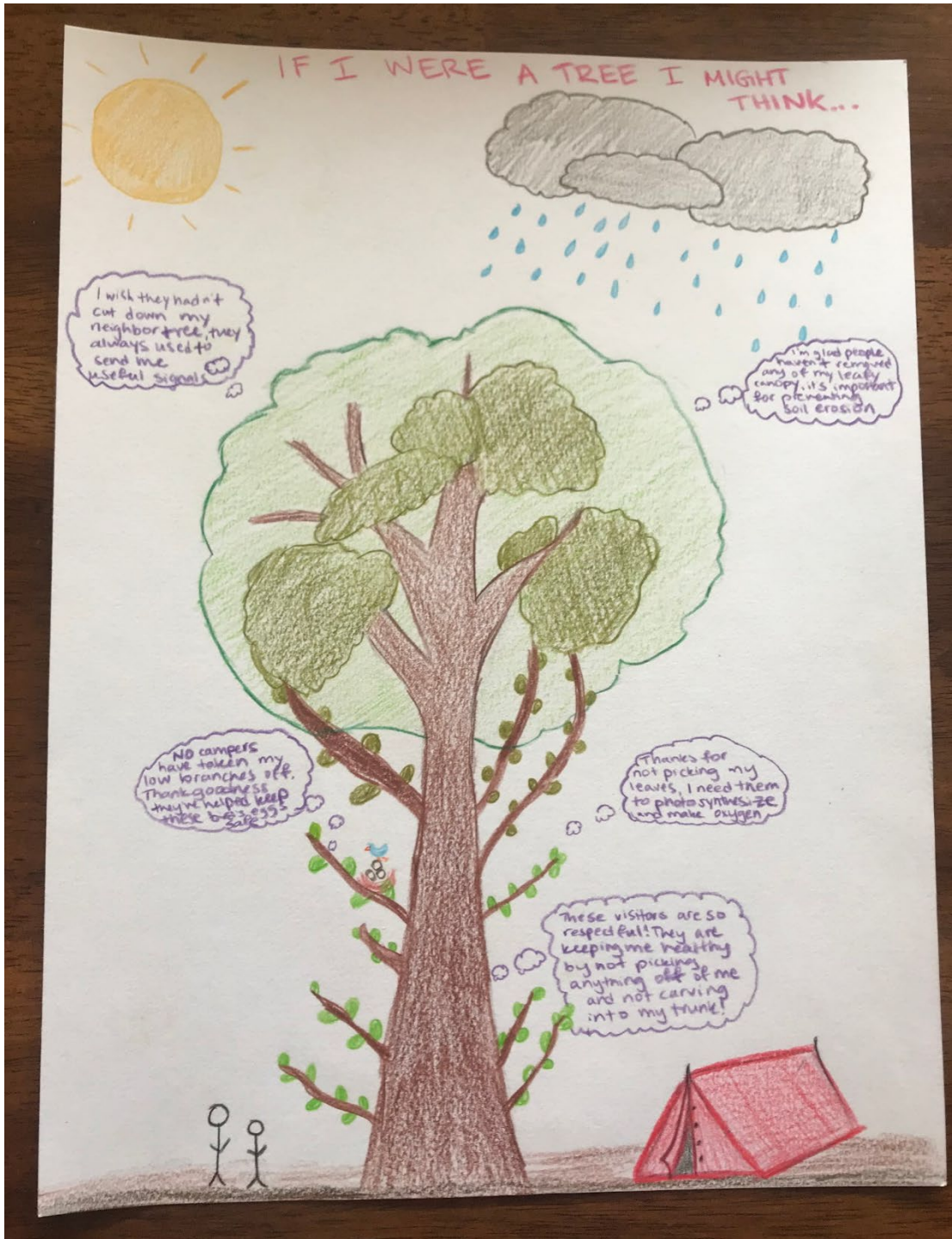




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Use the space below (or blank paper) to draw your tree within its ecosystem.

A large, empty rounded rectangular frame with a thin black border, occupying the majority of the page. It is intended for a student to draw a tree and its ecosystem within this space.



## Sources:

<https://Int.org/why/7-principles/>

<https://www.reliabletreecare.com/arborists-warn-against-tree-carving/>

<https://www.nwf.org/Trees-for-Wildlife/About/Trees-Make-a-Difference>

<https://Int.org/why/7-principles/leave-what-you-find/>