

Educational Trip Leader (ETL) Permit and Process

Frequently Asked Questions



Why was the Educational Trip Leader Permit established?

Each year, thousands of students take safely to the woods and waters of Maine on educational trips organized and led by their schools, colleges or universities. While some of these trips are led by Registered Maine Guides, who are either regular employees of these educational institutions or hired specifically for the excursion, many of these trips at colleges and universities are led by fellow students who have undergone extensive training including wilderness safety. In other instances, educators or staff members with experience and training are leading the outings.

There had been a long-held assumption by many educational institutions that student participants were typically not paying directly for excursions nor was their trip leader being directly compensated, so they were not required by State law to hire a Registered Maine Guide for any paddling or overnight primitive camping. So, to provide clarity to this decade's old uncertainty and to provide a path for educators and educational institutions to be in compliance with statute, the Educational Trip Leader Permit was established through the 129th Legislature.

When is an Educational Trip Leader Permit required?

An educational institution conducting an outdoor educational trip that would normally require a Registered Maine Guide (trips overnight away from potable water and/or trips that occur on Maine's waterways) shall provide for every 12 trip participants at least one educational trip leader who holds a valid educational trip leader permit and who is associated with the educational institution. If the person who is conducting the trip holds a valid Maine Guide's license, then the educational trip leader permit is not required.

What is an Outdoor Educational Trip?

"Outdoor educational trip" means an educational or recreational outdoor trip conducted by an educational institution that includes non-motorized boating and/or camping at a primitive camping area but does not include fishing, hunting, trapping or the use of snowmobiles, motorboats or all-terrain vehicles.

What is a "primitive camping area"?

According to Maine statute, a "primitive camping area" means a camping location that does not have access to a water supply that is approved by the Department of Health and Human Services.

As an example, all campsites in Baxter State Park would be considered primitive under this definition. However, campsites at any of Acadia National Park's campgrounds would *not* be considered primitive.

What is an Educational Institution?

“Educational institution” means a public school or private school as defined in Title 20-A, section 1, a postsecondary education institution or any other education institution defined by the commissioner by rule.

What is the status of the ETL permit process?

The Educational Trip Leader Oversight Committee has created a process for the training and testing of Educational Trip Leaders, as well as the application process for folks who wish to become ETL Instructors and/or ETL Administrators. DIFW is accepting and processing ETL permits, and the application can be found on the DIFW website, [here](#). We now have multiple ETL Instructors around the state who can train and test ETL permit applicants, and sign their permit applications. More information on the ETL Instructor and Administrator roles can be found at the bottom of this document.

Who can hold an ETL permit?

A person can apply for an ETL permit if they meet the following criteria:

- are at least 18 years old
- have successfully completed the ETL training and testing
- hold a valid and updated Wilderness First Aid (or greater) and CPR certification

Note: Someone working under an ETL permit must be “an employee or student sponsored and certified by the educational institution in which they are enrolled, employed by or affiliated with, to lead outdoor recreational trips.” Affiliated in this rule means they have been approved by the school/district to be an official volunteer.

I work for a town Recreation Department. Can I lead trips under an ETL permit?

No. Municipal recreation departments are not educational institutions. Some recreation departments choose to run outdoor trips under the Camp Trip Leader program, if their programming is licensed as a camp under the Department of Health and Human Resources.

Our school (public high school) offers multiple trips on one day. Does each group need to be led by an ETL?

It depends on what the trips are. If the trips would normally require an RMG or ETL (as explained above) then, yes, each group would need an ETL that is abiding by the 12:1 ratio. However, if some trips don't require an RMG/ETL (for example, a day hike or mountain bike outing), then those trips would not require ETLs.

What is the cost for a school district to have an educator attain an ETLP?

The cost of training will depend on where you decide to take the training. If your educational institution has an approved ETL Instructor “in house” your training may even be free.

An ETL permit application is \$25, and the permit lasts 5 years.

The cost of a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) course depends on where you take the course, but an average cost is ~\$250.

I work for a non-profit organization that runs outdoor trips. Can I lead trips under an ETL permit?

No. According to statute and rule, ETL permit holders must be employees of the educational institution for whom they are leading outdoor recreational trips. Some non-profit organizations opt to work under the Camp Trip Leader program if they run camps, others use Registered Maine Guides for the trips that need them.

I just take students cross-country skiing on the trails near our school. Do I need this permit?

No. Leading day trips that are not on water would not require a Maine Guide, and so they would also not require an ETL.

I'm only bringing students canoeing on the pond near our school. Do I need this permit?

Yes. If you are leading trips on water as part of your job, including day trips, a Maine Guide's license is required. Therefore, you can make use of the ETL program if your situation meets the criteria outlined above.

I'm interested in becoming an ETL Instructor, where can I find more information?

Please see these links for more information:

[ETL Instructor information session video](#)

[ETL Instructor application form](#)

I'm interested in becoming an ETL Administrator, where can I find more information?

Please see these links for more information:

[ETL Administrator information session video](#)

[ETL Administrator application form](#)