

Spring Semester for Outdoor Educators

Equipment List

Welcome to NOLS!

Learning to choose the right equipment for your adventure is an essential part of the NOLS curriculum. We know that walking into an outdoor store can be a daunting experience, but preparing for your course need not feel overwhelming. This list is designed to help you make smart, prudent choices about the gear you bring on your trip.

When you arrive, your instructors will first look through all the equipment you've brought and help you decide what to take into the field. You'll then go into our Outfitting Department to rent or purchase any remaining items. The list below is comprehensive; however, the actual equipment needed for your course will vary depending on location, season, and instructor judgment. For this reason, we do not recommend that you go out and purchase a lot of expensive, specialized gear for your course.

Here are some thoughts to guide you as you pack:

- **First, use gear you already own!** You'll be comfortable in tried-and-true clothing. Bring more layers than you think you'll need; your instructors will help you choose your best options. If an item is suitable for your particular course, you can take it into the field; if not, you can leave it in storage at NOLS Rocky Mountain. If in doubt, bring it to Lander!
- **Second, rent key items from NOLS.** When it comes to gear, everyone has their own preferences. In the field, you'll have the opportunity to hone your preferred system. We recommend that you rent, rather than purchase, several "big ticket" items, such as a sleeping bag and backpack. While you are not obligated to rent gear from us, there are several reasons why we suggest it. Our rental gear is high quality and chosen specifically for the heavy use it receives on courses. Rental prices are reasonable (based on wear/tear and duration of use), so you can try out gear and make informed decisions on future adventures.
- **Third, purchase specific items from our Outfitting Department.** To make shopping simple, we offer basic kitchen utensils (mug, bowl with lid, spoon, 32-ounce water bottle), personal care items (lip balm, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, bug spray, menstrual supplies, etc.), and other camping gear (headlamp, batteries, lighter). We also carry a selection of clothing, including wool socks, hats and gloves, rain jackets and pants, and base-layers. NOLS is a not-for-profit organization, and revenue from our Outfitting Department goes to serve the mission of the School.
- **Fourth, shop local.** Most gear shops, from REI to your local gear store, are familiar with NOLS and its courses. *We encourage you to keep the tags/receipts for all purchases, so that you may later return any items you don't use.*

Equipment Fees

In addition to your course tuition, you will pay an equipment deposit. This deposit will be applied directly to the charges you incur for gear rentals, purchases, or any loss or damage to our equipment. Total charges will vary depending on the amount of equipment you rent or purchase from us; the prices listed below will help you estimate your costs. At the end of your course, you will be billed for any amount that exceeds the equipment deposit, or refunded any balance.

Quality Over Quantity

At NOLS, we fundamentally believe that you don't need to own a lot of expensive gear to live and travel comfortably in the backcountry. By purchasing high-quality items and learning to care for them, you're making a lifetime investment. Spend money on the few items that really matter, but don't get lured into splurging on the trendiest fabrics or unnecessary gadgets.

Questions?

Contact your Admission Officer if you have any questions or would like further information about the equipment list.

How to Use This List

Items under the **Required** heading are items that you **must** either bring yourself or rent or purchase from NOLS as available. Items under the **Optional** heading are not required, and you may bring them from home, buy, or rent from NOLS as available. If you see an **X** in the price column, that means that an item is not available for rent or for purchase as indicated.

Upper Body Clothing			
<p>We layer our clothing, combining different garments to achieve optimum insulation and protection from wind, rain, and snow. For base layers, we recommend synthetic or natural fibers, both of which insulate when wet; merino wool products are popular. We avoid cotton, which offers no insulation when wet. Down jackets are popular, though it takes work and planning to keep them dry. It is common to need at least 3 insulating layers.</p>			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base layer (long underwear)	X	\$70	Mid-weight long underwear top, wool or synthetic (e.g. Patagonia Capilene series, Icebreaker Body Zone)
Middle layer (fleece jacket)	X	\$50-160	Fleece jacket (e.g. Patagonia Regulator and Mountain Hardwear Microchill) or a wool sweater
Insulating layers (2)	X	\$165-250	A warm “puffy” jacket that fits over your base/mid layers. In colder weather, we recommend 2 “puffy” layers, one lighter jacket and one heavier jacket that have synthetic or down fill. Lighter puffy jackets include Mountain Hardwear Compressor, Montbell Thermawrap, Patagonia Nano Puff. Heavier puffy jackets include North Face Morph, Patagonia Das Parka.
Wind shirt/anorak	\$40	\$70-110	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell.
Rain jacket	X	\$100-150	A sturdy waterproof jacket with a hood. Both coated nylon and breathable fabrics are acceptable (e.g. Gore-Tex, Marmot Precip, Mountain Hardwear Dry.Q, Patagonia H2No)
T-shirt	X	\$25-50	A lightweight synthetic or wool t-shirt
Sports Bra (2-3)	X	\$40	Lightweight bras that offer adequate support. Synthetic/natural materials that dry quickly are preferable.
Optional Items			
Sun Hoody	X	\$60-75	A lightweight synthetic, wool, or bamboo hoody that provides both sun protection. For some, this will be their primary layer.

Our advice? Bring the sweaters, fleece jackets, and synthetic/down layers you think might work. We'll advise you on the best combination for your trip, depending on the season and course area.

Lower Body Clothing

You will need 2 synthetic insulating layers (usually a base layer and a pair of fleece or puffy pants), along with your hiking pants. All must fit comfortably over each other so that they can be worn at the same time. If you tend to get cold easily, add a third layer of mid-weight bottoms to the base layer and fleece/puffy pants.

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Base layer (long underwear) (2)	X	\$70	Mid-weight synthetic or wool bottoms (e.g. Patagonia Capilene, Icebreaker Bodyfit Zone). Cotton and cotton blends are not acceptable.
Fleece or Puffy pants	\$40	\$60-150	Heavier-weight bottoms that fit comfortably over the base-layer bottoms. Puffy pants like the Mountain Hardwear Compressor Pant or the Montbell Thermawrap pants are popular. We have fleece pants available for all sections and rent insulated pants for the Winter section.
Wind pants/hiking pants	\$40	\$70	Durable, nylon shell pants. These should fit comfortably over all lower-body layers. Side-zippers allow the pants to be put on over boots. Soft-shell fabrics are acceptable, but lightweight "running pants" are not durable enough. Recommended for Canyon travel.
Underwear (3-6 pairs)	X	\$20-35	Clean underwear is essential for backcountry hygiene. Though you will have opportunities for laundry, having a supply of underwear for your semester is helpful. Synthetic or natural fibers (non-cotton) are great options.

Optional Items

Nylon shorts	X	X	Loose-fitting nylon athletic or river shorts. NOLS Rocky Mountain does not rent or sell this item.
Rain pants	X	\$90-110	Although not required, some people like to use rain pants in conjunction with a rain jacket.

Our advice? Bring the synthetic base layers, leggings, rain gear, and other layers you think might work. We'll advise you on the best combination for your trip, depending on the season and course area.

Head, Neck, and Hand Layers

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
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Required Items			
Baseball cap or wide-brim sun hat	X	\$16-30	Lightweight headwear to protect ears and face from the sun. We sell a variety of visors, trucker hats, and running hats.
Wool or fleece hat	X	\$16-35	Thick enough to keep your head and ears warm on colder days and nights.
Gloves or mittens	X	\$17-40	We recommend having a range (lightweight to heavyweight) of wool or fleece gloves to use throughout your course.

Optional Items			
Neck Gaiter	X	\$22	Neck gaiters are synthetic pieces of multi-functional headwear (hat, bandana, neck warmer, etc.) that many people use in the outdoors. Buff is a common brand.

Our advice? As long as they're not cotton, bring your gloves, mittens, and shells. We'll check them and see if they'll work. Depending on the weather, you may need one or two pairs. On the winter section, you might need every pair of gloves/mittens you have.

Packs and Bags

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Backpack	\$120	\$300	Our packs are large expedition models, with a volume of 80–110 liters, made by Deuter exclusively for NOLS. If you bring an internal frame pack, your instructors will examine it to determine its suitability for your course and route. It must have a volume of 80–110 liters.
Small stuff sack (2-3)	\$2	\$4	Small nylon sacks for organizing items in your pack

Our advice? An expedition backpack is a major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should rent ours, gain some experience, then make an informed decision after your course.

Sleeping Gear

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Sleeping bag	\$100	\$220-350	Synthetic-fill bags (e.g. Thermolite, Thermal.Q, APEX, etc.) perform well in the variety of conditions we encounter on courses. A bag rated to 0° or 15°F. Fall and spring semester students will also need a

			separate bag for the winter section (synthetic filled bag rated to at least -20°F).
Compression sack	\$12	\$40	Stuff sack with compression straps designed to compress your sleeping bag when not in use
Plastic trash bag (2-3)	X	\$1	2 heavy-duty lawn-and-garden/contractor bags (48 gallon/3 mil) to help waterproof your sleeping bag and backpack.
Foam or inflatable sleeping pad	\$15	\$35-110	Used for padding and insulation between sleeping bag and ground. Foam pads, which we rent, should be closed-cell and at least 3/8-inch thick and have at least an R-Value of 2.0. Inflatable pads, which we don't rent, work as well; Therm-a-Rest and REI are reliable brands.
Ground cloth	\$8	X	A waterproof nylon sheet to go between your sleeping pad and the ground

Our advice? A sleeping bag is another major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should rent ours, gain some experience, and then make an informed decision after your course.

Footwear

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Boots	X	\$170-250	Sturdy, expedition backpacking footwear with adequate support for extended wilderness courses. See information at the end of the equipment list for more ideas about boots.
Wool Socks (4-5 pairs)	X	\$13-30	Similar to gloves, a variety of light-heavyweight wool socks (eg. Smartwool, FITS, Darn Tough)
Camp Shoes	X	\$40-50	Lightweight, packable running/athletic shoes. Closed-toe required. Many students use Crocs, which we do not currently sell.
Optional Items			
Gaiters	X	\$45-55	Lightweight, ankle or shin-high gaiters to prevent debris from entering your boots while hiking.
Hiking shoe	X	\$160	Some students appreciate having a low-top hiker or approach shoe to wear during their Climb/Canyon section. (eg. La SportivaTX4, Salomon X Ultra, Scarpa Crux)

Our advice? Your boots will be a critical piece of gear. If they're not sturdy, don't provide enough support, or don't fit properly with wool socks, we won't let you use them. If you have any doubts about boots, feel free to give us a call.

Rock Climbing Section

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Rock climbing shoes	\$45	\$85-100	We rent Black Diamond, Scarpa, La Sportiva and Butora shoes. Available size range: 37-48 (Euro). If you bring your own, make sure they are comfortable enough to spend all day in.
Harness	No charge	X	We have harnesses to rent, free of charge, but if you own one, bring it along.
Helmet	No charge	X	We have helmets to rent, free of charge, but if you own one, bring it along.
Optional Items			
Crag Pack	\$40	\$50-100	A medium-sized daypack with 50-60L capacity. This can double as a ski pack on your Winter section.
Climbing pants/shorts	X	\$60-100	Comfortable pants to wear while climbing, either cotton or synthetic. Short shorts are not optimal for climbing with a harness.
T-shirts (1-2)	X	\$25	An extra t-shirt or two is always nice to have at climb camp. These can be cotton.
Chalk Bag	\$6	\$20	Some people like to rock climb with a chalk bag to keep their hands and fingers dry. It is not necessary.

Our advice? If you own a harness, helmet, chalk bag, or climbing shoes, bring them along. If your instructors approve, you can use them. We will use NOLS' protection, belay devices, slings, carabiners, and ropes.

River Section

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
River shoes	X	X	A simple solid sneaker or river shoe with full foot coverage and sturdy soles. (Keens or other semi-coverage shoes are not appropriate for the conditions). Consider shoes big enough to fit multiple pairs of socks in cold weather (up to 1.5 sizes bigger than normal).
Long-sleeved UV-protective shirt	X	\$40-50	Light-colored long-sleeved nylon shirt for sun protection. Hoods encouraged. A sun hoody is a suitable and popular option.
Lightweight cotton pants and shirt	X	X	Convenient sun protection around camp

Base Layer (long underwear) (2)	X	\$15-50	On the river, it's essential to designate long underwear sets as "wet" on the river (worn under the drysuit, often with fleece or wool midlayers) and "dry" in camp. Plan to bring 2 full sets to the river section (can be the same from other sections—no cotton or cotton blends).
Swimsuit	X	X	Most students prefer wearing nylon shorts. A sports bra-type top with nylon shorts can work as well. Lycra swimsuits are also an option.
Large dry bag	\$27	\$90-125	3-cubic-foot dry bag made of heavy-duty waterproof material. Used to carry all personal clothing
Small dry bag	\$7	\$35	600-cubic-inch dry bag made of heavy-duty waterproof material. Used to carry all personal items needed during the day
Water-insulating, breathable, long-sleeve top	\$17	\$60-85	A top mid-layer; water-insulating, breathable fabric (e.g. Neoprene or Hydroskin). Used in place of a 3mm wetsuit
Water-insulating, breathable bottom	\$17	\$60-85	A bottom mid-layer; water-insulating, breathable fabric (e.g. Neoprene or NRS Hydroskin) used in place of a 3mm wetsuit
Paddle jacket	\$15	\$50-85	A top outer layer, long-sleeved, water resistant jacket with closures at the bottom, wrist, and neck. To be worn over other layers when kayaking or rafting (separate from a rain coat for camp).
Optional Items			
Wetsuit	\$25	X	This is an expensive item; please do not go out and purchase it if you do not already have one. We suggest a full-body wetsuit of 3mm thickness. Alternatively, pants and a long-sleeve top made of 3mm neoprene are acceptable.
Neoprene booties	\$10	\$20-40	River or diving booties that stay on the foot securely while swimming. Must have a hard sole capable of walking on rocks. Used primarily for cold weather and in kayaks.
Neoprene Socks	\$6	\$20 - \$30	Neoprene or hydroskin socks meant to be worn inside river shoes to help insulate feet (2mm). Essential for spring courses (March-May) and late fall courses (October-November). Can be paired with wool socks for comfort.
Our advice? Rental of whitewater-specific gear (PFD, helmet, etc.) is included in your tuition. Feel free to bring any personal whitewater gear you already have (e.g. paddling jacket, dry top,			

river booties, helmet, etc.) and your instructors will check it to make sure it is appropriate for your trip.

Winter Section

For semesters with winter sections only. Winter sections will require additional insulating layers, and skiing and winter camping gear.

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Winter Sleeping Bag	\$50	\$220-350	Students will need a separate bag for winter conditions (synthetic filled bag rated to at least -20°F).
Insulated parka	\$40	\$350	A synthetic-fill winter parka with a hood. Must fit comfortably over all your upper body layers. We have specially-made, heavy-duty parkas that we rent. (ex. Patagonia Das Parka, Black Diamond Stance Belay Parka)
Insulated pants	\$30	\$150	Synthetic-fill pants. Must fit comfortably over all your lower body layers. NOLS has specially-made, heavy-duty pants that we rent to students.
Insulated Bootie System	\$30	NA	Three-part custom winter insulated bootie system containing an inner, outer, and over bootie to wear in camp and while sleeping.
Insulated mittens	\$12	\$80	Synthetic-fill mittens that fit over your other mittens and gloves
Mitten shells	\$12	\$38-45	Water-repellent nylon shells that fit over your mittens or gloves
Extra mittens/gloves	X	\$12-60	You should bring any liner, wool, fleece, heavy gloves or mittens that you have. Students often take as many as 6 pairs of gloves/mittens into the winter section.
Thermos	X	\$30	We recommend having .5-1.2L capacity. Some people even bring more than one thermos.
Ski Socks	X	\$35	If you have ski socks, bring them! Most students bring at least 5-7 pairs of socks on their Winter section.
Ski boots	\$85	\$400-600	We rent Black Diamond/Scarpa alpine touring (AT) ski boots and typically size our boots at least a half size larger than in a resort setting. Our boots range from 23.5/36.5 to 33.0/49 (Mondo/Euro sizing); if you are outside the size range or typically purchase WIDE shoes, please contact us before your course begins.
Skis, poles, and skins	\$100	\$400	We use backcountry Black Diamond/G3/ Blizzard alpine-touring skis and Dynafit bindings.

Avalanche transceivers	No charge	X	NOLS provides avalanche transceivers for all students to use, free of charge.
Helmet	No charge	X	A helmet is not required. You can bring your own or borrow one from NOLS for free.
Optional Items			
Ski Pant Shells	X	X	If you have ski pants with built in gaiters at the bottom of the legs, bring them. You might want to use them on your winter section.
Our advice? Our winter gear is specialized for our expeditions. If you own a pair of ski bibs or pants, or a thick winter parka, bring it along and we'll check it. If you already own alpine touring (AT) or telemark skis you'd like to use, please give us a call before your course begins; we'll make sure they're appropriate for winter backcountry travel.			
Miscellaneous Items			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Required Items			
Bowl	X	\$7	A plastic bowl with a screw- or snap-on lid is handy.
Spoon	X	\$1-10	Lexan spoons are light and durable. We also sell plastic and titanium sporks
Water bottle (1-2)	X	\$11-13	1-2 wide-mouth quart- or liter-size plastic bottles
Lip balm	X	\$3-5	Stick, cream, or tube-type moisturizing balm, SPF 15 or greater. Products with zinc provide superior protection.
Sunscreen (1-2)	X	\$5-10	A 3- to 6-oz. tube, SPF 30 or greater. Products with zinc provide superior protection.
Bandana (1-2)	X	\$2	A few of these are always handy.
Headlamp	X	\$30	Durable and lightweight. Bring spare batteries.
Disposable lighter (2)	X	\$1.50	For lighting your camp stove
Insect repellent (1-2)	X	\$5-8	Small bottles; no aerosol spray cans. Bugs are generally not a major concern in the spring.
Toiletries and towel	X	X	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, skin lotion, and menstrual supplies. Travel or trial sizes are enough. NOLS provides towels throughout your semester.
Watch	X	\$25	A watch with an alarm is a nice feature.
Pen/pencil	X	X	For journaling and taking notes during classes
Notepad	X	\$10	A small, lightweight pad is fine.

Sunglasses	X	\$30-80	Good-quality sunglasses with 100-percent UV protection; lenses should be dark. If you wear prescription lenses and have limited vision without them, bring your own prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on polarized shades at an outdoor store. We sell Suncloud and Optic Nerve.
Instant hand sanitizer (2)	X	\$2	This is used for travel to and from your NOLS course. NOLS will supply hand sanitizer for you to use on course as necessary.

Optional Items

Prescription glasses and contact lenses (2-3 pairs)	X	X	If you wear them, bring a spare pair of glasses or lenses. Contact-lens wearers should also bring a pair of glasses as backup. Prescription sunglasses are also nice to have in reserve.
Book or e-reader	X	X	A small paperback reading book or lightweight e-reader, such as a Kindle; bring a protective case. Tablet-style e-readers (e.g. Kindle Fire) are not acceptable.
Trekking poles	\$12	\$60	A sturdy telescoping pole for easy packing. We rent trekking poles for the hiking sections only.
Camera	X	X	GoPros and lightweight digital or 35mm cameras are acceptable; bring a protective case. Avoid elaborate lenses and heavy SLRs. (Please note: you may not bring your smartphone or tablet into the field to use as a digital camera.)
Camp chair	X	\$35	Crazy Creek–style, or a sleeping-pad adapter.
Hydration system	X	X	An alternative hydration system, whether a Camelbak, Platypus, etc.
Sunglasses retainer	X	\$8	Chums or Croakies for keeping track of your glasses or sunglasses.
Pocket knife	X	\$25-35	One small knife is sufficient; simple folding knives are popular.

Our advice? Keep the toiletries, pocket knife, camera, optional items and other gear to small sizes. We work to keep our pack weight as low as possible.

Wilderness First Responder (WFR) Section

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
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Required Items

Clothing and shoes for indoor and	X	X	You will need clothing appropriate to an indoor and outdoor class environment. Many of your layers for your field sections will be relevant during the WFR,
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outdoor class environments			but it is nice to have more in-town options available. We suggest a comfortable pair of indoor shoes or slippers. Spring temperatures will range from -20° to 60°F, with multiple feet of snow. 3-5 days of clothing.
Winter boots	X	X	You may be outside on a simulated rescue for multiple hours. Please bring a winter boot that will keep your feet warm.

Shared Group Equipment—NOLS will supply

Expedition members share both the use of and the responsibility for the group gear that NOLS issues. NOLS charges only for group equipment lost or damaged. Keep in mind that NOLS evaluates gear from a number of perspectives beyond those that an individual user might consider. Performance, durability and simplicity are all contributing factors towards our gear selection.

- Tents and shelters
 - Trowel or shovel
 - Stoves, fuel bottles and fuel
 - Pots and pans
 - Maps and compasses
 - Bear-resistant food containers
 - Fishing gear
 - Equipment repair kits
 - Reference books
 - Binoculars
 - First aid kits
 - Climbing protection*
 - Climbing ropes*
 - Helmets and harnesses*
 - Ice axes*
 - Snowshoes*
- *if applicable to course type*

Boot Recommendations

NOLS has been outfitting students with boots for many years and our priorities have remained the same: we want you to have boots that provide adequate protection for your feet, are durable enough to withstand extended rugged wear, and are comfortable. Many boots available on the market do not meet these criteria, and a boot that is good for weekend day-hiking use may not be a good boot for your course.

Medium-weight, off-trail backpacking or light mountaineering boots work best. They provide good support for off-trail hiking with heavy packs, and usually require less break-in time than heavyweight mountaineering boots. Here are some features to look for:

- Durable outer material, such as leather or thick nylon, that will withstand hiking among sharp boulders and dense vegetation. Full mesh is not appropriate.
- A waterproof Gore-Tex liner can be beneficial, but is not required. Your feet will get wet if water comes in over the top of your boot. A Gore-Tex liner can also slow drying time once the boot is wet.
- A sole that provides good traction, like Vibram® or other lugged sole
- 1/2- to 3/4-length shank or full poly mid-sole stiffener within the sole to provide foot support and protection.
- Mid-top or high-top ankle coverage. Trail running shoes and below-the-ankle hiking boots are not encouraged.
- Comfortable fit with your preferred hiking socks. Boots that are too small commonly cause blisters.

The following list of acceptable boots is not exhaustive and is to be used for suggestions only. It is fine to substitute a similar boot for one of those listed here.

- Altra: Lone Peak Hiker
- Asolo: TPS series, Equalon, Altai, Finder, Fugitive,
- Keen: Targhee II/III Mid
- HOKA ONE: Anacapa Mid, Kaha
- La Sportiva: TX4, TXS GTX
- Lowa: Camino, Ranger, Trekker, Mauria, Explorer, Lady Light
- Oboz: Sawtooth
- Salomon: X Ultra 3 Mid, X Ultra 4 Mid, Quest 4D GTX
- Scarpa: Kailash, Mescalito
- Vasque: Talus

Note that boot manufacturers often rename their product lines. Visit the manufacturer's website or contact us if you have questions.