

ATES for Terrain ID

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Note: As of 2023, ATES has been updated to include five instead of three categories. If you'd like more info, see [ISSW Proceedings Paper](#). OnX Backcountry is releasing an ATES layer in early winter '24 that will include 1-4 categories.

Intro:

- Print ATES v.2 cards prior to field days
- Pass cards out and cue students to rate pieces of terrain as you travel
- Have students discuss routes that would limit exposure and routes that would expose riders to the most exposure
- Given our conditions for today, what terrain rating aligns with your risk tolerance?
 - If you had to move through X terrain how would you travel to limit exposure?
(This should cue students to discuss travel techniques)
- If conditions allow, pick a piece of terrain that is within the risk tolerance of the group and have students lead their group through the terrain.
- Debrief once through the terrain.
 - What went well or could be improved with how travel was executed?
 - Where were individuals or the group most exposed?
 - Was every group member clear about the plan?
 - Any comms concerns or considerations?

Table 1: ATES Communication model for backcountry travel.

Terrain rating	Class	Description for Backcountry Travel
Non-Avalanche	0	No known exposure to avalanches. Very low-angle or densely forested slopes located well away from avalanche paths, or designated trails/routes with no exposure to avalanches.
Simple	1	Exposure to low-angle or primarily forested terrain. Some forest openings may involve the runout zones of infrequent avalanches and terrain traps may exist. Many options to reduce or eliminate exposure.
Challenging	2	Exposure to well-defined avalanche paths, starting zones, terrain traps or overhead hazard. With careful route finding, some options will exist to reduce or eliminate exposure.
Complex	3	Exposure to multiple overlapping avalanche paths or large expanses of steep, open terrain. Frequent exposure to overhead hazard. Many avalanche starting zones and terrain traps with minimal options to reduce exposure.
Extreme	4	Exposure to very steep faces with cliffs, spines, couloirs, crevasses or sustained overhead hazard. No options to reduce exposure; even small avalanches can be fatal.