# adventure activity guidelines

# Camping

Schools must follow the Department’s Excursion Policy and Guidelines and the requirements outlined in this document when planning, conducting and approving adventure activities.

These guidelines are for developing risk management plans specific to the location, activity and group participating. They are not intended to be used as a training manual. Staff instructing the activity must have sufficient knowledge/expertise in the activity.

Camping refers to staying overnight in temporary or informal accommodation. Temporary accommodation includes bush huts, tents, tarpaulin shelters, bush shelters, snow structures and arrangements with no shelter. Informal accommodation includes halls, private property and other non-prescribed shelters.

If camping takes place in the snow, please see the guidelines for [Snow Activities.](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/excursions/Pages/outdoorskicountry.aspx) If camping takes place as part of a bushwalk, please see the guidelines for [Bushwalking](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/excursions/Pages/outdoorwalk.aspx). If the excursion also includes other adventure activities, organising staff must also refer to the guidelines for those activities.

Camping does not include accredited residential campsites, caravan parks, hotels/motels or ski lodges, Victorian Government residential schools. Schools using residential campsites for overnight camping must use accredited sites. Further advice on residential campsites and recognised accreditation providers may be found in Excursions Guidelines – Venue Selection.

## Staffing definitions

**Staff** – any adult approved by the principal who provides supervisory, instructional or educational elements of the activity or excursion. See Excursions Guidelines: Staffing for further details.

**Teacher** – a staff member registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching who provides a supervisory role on a program.

The following roles can be filled by school staff, a teacher or an external provider, or a volunteer (See [Volunteers in Schools](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/volunteers/policy) policy).

**Designated Instructor** – the appointed staff member on a program who provides the lead technical expertise and supervision for the activity.

**Instructor** – a staff member who provides professional, technical expertise and supervision for the activity.

**Assistant Instructor** – a staff member who provides assistance to the instructor(s) in the provision of technical expertise and supervision for the activity. An assistant instructor role may be filled by a volunteer (See: Volunteers in Schools Policy).

## Student preparAtion and skills

Planning for activities should begin with an assessment of students’ current knowledge, skills and experience in the environment and the activity.

The assessment of students’ current knowledge, skills and experience in the activity should be documented using [Documentation of Participant Preparation, Prerequisite Skills/Knowledge​ ​ (doc - 139kb)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/participrep.doc).

Core skills and knowledge for camping include:

* group hygiene – water collection, safe food preparation, dining and cleaning
* personal hygiene
* cooperation and teamwork during camp activities
* individual responsibility for personal and group safety
* technical camping skills, including cooking and safe shelter construction
* awareness of wildlife and potential for bites or stings
* the ability to react immediately and responsibly to emergencies.

Instructional staff must brief students on:

* equipment, clothing and footwear that is suitable for the activity and location
* safety measures appropriate to control risks associated with the activity and the environment
* minimal environmental impact techniques relevant to the activity and location
* historical and cultural considerations relevant to the activity and location
* activity scope and boundaries
* communication and communication signals
* relevant terminology.

## Equipment

All equipment used must be in sound condition, suitable for the activity and meet applicable industry safety standards.

##### Fuel stoves

Most camping stoves use fuels such as shellite, kerosene, methylated spirits or gas, all of which are highly flammable. They are potentially dangerous if not operated correctly. Stoves that use methylated spirits are the most suitable for use by students because methylated spirits has a low volatility.

The following safety measures must be followed when using fuel stoves:

* All fuel containers must be clearly labelled so as not to be confused with other liquids.
* The stove must not be fuelled or used anywhere near naked flames and other heat sources or when it is too hot to touch.
* Stoves must always be fuelled and/or primed outside tents or buildings.
* Fuel bottles must be securely sealed and kept well away from the lighted stove and other heat sources.
* Methylated spirits is a low volatility fuel and does not always light straight away, and burns with an invisible flame. As such care should be taken to determine if the stove is alight.
* Only refill the burner when it is completely out, and has cooled sufficiently to be picked up with bare hands.

**Student briefing prior to use**

Proper instruction in the use of fuel stoves must be given to students, and the following safety precautions should be given and strictly observed:

* a designated ‘cooking area’ should be established
* setup of the stove should be demonstrated to first time users
* the stove must only be used in a stable position where it will not tip-over or move around
* fuelling, lighting and extinguishing the burner should be demonstrated to first time users
* lighted stoves must never be left unattended
* students must not walk across the area where stoves are in operation
* students should avoid passing hot liquids and hot food over the stove and other people
* demonstrate the use of ‘billy grips’ for removing the lid and pots
* demonstrate the refuelling procedure
* demonstrate using the temperature controlling device (including how to put out the flame)
* staff must carefully supervise students while stoves are being used.

**Use in tents**

* Stoves should not be used in or close to tents. There are dangers in having a flame and fumes in such a confined space.
* If weather conditions are so poor that students must cook from their tent then the stove should be placed outside the tent, or in an annex or vestibule of the tent.
* Tent doors and vents should be open to ensure good ventilation.
* Movement in the tent should be kept to a minimum, with legs positioned away from the stove.
* Stoves must be positioned away from flammable objects-particularly plastic groundsheets, rucksacks, tent flaps and sleeping bags.
* Lit stoves must not be left unattended or allowed to overheat - for example by using over-large billies or pans.

## Clothing

Clothing must provide for sudden changes in weather and should include appropriate sun protection and personal safety items for the activities planned, for example, strong footwear, waterproof overpants, a woollen or sun hat.

When deciding clothing to be worn for the activity, staff and students must consider the:

* appropriateness of clothing materials
* principles of layering
* need for a wind and waterproof outer shell.

## Experience and qualifications

Staff instructing the activity should have sufficient knowledge and experience of the activity and the activity environment to operate in all reasonably foreseeable conditions.

There is no nationally recognised qualification for camping.

The designated instructor should have the following skills and experience in:

* managing students in a comparable camping environment
* planning camping that is appropriate for student groups
* the selection of campsites
* interpreting and responding to weather conditions.

Where a camping experience involves other adventure activities, staff must also refer to the relevant activity safety guideline(s).

At least one other accompanying staff member should have adequate camping experience. That person must:

* be able to assume a supervisory role during the activity
* be competent in emergency response procedures
* have conferred with the designated instructor to establish emergency response and supervision responsibilities.

 [Documentation of staff qualifications and experience (doc - 151kb)](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/staffqual.doc) must be used to document staff experience and training in lieu of qualifications.

Where an external contractor is chosen to run all or part of this activity, Excursions Guidelines – External Providers.

## Supervision

Supervision is a critical factor in managing risk in the outdoors.

A minimum of two staff members must be present for each activity. One staff member is to have responsibility for instruction in the activity and the other is to assist the instructor.

It may be necessary to increase the staff allocation based on ability to observe or monitor students on activity with consideration to:

* students (medical conditions, age, physical, mental and emotional maturity, ability and experience)
* group (dynamics and size)
* staff (medical conditions, age, ability and experience, qualifications and skills)
* location (remoteness, communications and environmental conditions).

Reasons for increasing staff allocations must be documented.

The following table shows the minimum staff-to-student allocation that must be used for camping.

|  |
| --- |
| Camping |
| Staff numbers | Student numbers |
| 2 | 1–20 |
| 3 | 21–30 |

Different ratios may be required if the excursion includes other outdoor adventure activities. Please refer to the relevant ratios for each activity published in Excursions Guidelines – Adventure Activities Guidelines. When camps are conducted in more remote areas or with groups with special needs, consideration must be given to more intensive staffing allocations.

The teacher in charge is responsible for the supervision strategy, which must be endorsed by the school principal as part of the excursion approval process. Staff members must supervise students according to that strategy, and in accordance with their duty of care. It is the role of the teacher in charge to clearly and adequately explain the supervision strategy to all participating staff members.

## Peak bodies and expert advice

Australian Camps Association <http://www.auscamps.asn.au/>

Country Fire Authority <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/>

Parks Victoria <http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/>

Scouts Victoria <http://www.vicscouts.asn.au/>

For further enquiries, please contact community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au

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