



Camping Leader

Candidate handbook





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Preface

This handbook has been designed to support candidates through Mountain Training's Camping Leader qualification. It contains useful information about the qualification as well as the syllabus and guidance notes.

Mountain Training recognises that walking, climbing, and mountaineering are activities that have associated risks. Mountain Training provides training and assessment courses and guidance to help leaders develop the skills to manage the risks associated with the environment in which they operate and to enable new participants to have positive experiences.

All leaders owe a heightened duty of care to the people they lead, their colleagues, and the wider public who may be impacted by the leader's actions.

Mountain Training qualified leaders will act in the best interests of their group, individual group members and others, and they will always act within their competence to prevent harm to them.

Acknowledgements

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Thanks also to the following whose photographs bring the handbook to life: Doug Cooper, Frit Tam, Guy Jarvis, Mark Walker, Paul Smith and St David's College.



Hill Walking

Throughout this handbook there are references to Hill Walking by Steve Long which we publish to support all walkers and campers. It is packed with essential information and techniques and we have listed the relevant chapter(s) for each syllabus area.



1. Qualification pathway

1.1 Introduction

The Camping Leader qualification enables campers to support and develop the camping proficiency of others.

1.2 Scope of the qualification

A qualified Camping Leader can:

- Supervise a camping group
- Teach campcraft activities

1.2.1 Terrain

A qualified Camping Leader can operate in:

- A variety of campsites, all with vehicular access, such as land with no facilities or commercial campsites offering a range of facilities.

A qualified Camping Leader holding a Mountain Training walking leadership qualification can also operate camps in terrain within the scope of that qualification.

1.2.2 Exclusions

The qualification does not cover:

- The supervision of groups away from the campsite.

1.3 Stages in the qualification

1.3.1 Registration prerequisites

- You must be at least 17 years old.
- You must have some personal or supervisory experience of overnight camping.
- You must have a genuine interest in the supervision of groups.



Record your experience

Once you have registered for the qualification you will be given access to DLOG, Mountain Training's digital logbook which has been developed to help you keep track of your camping trips and other experience. The Camping Leader qualification relies on experience and it is crucial that you record it so that it can be reviewed.

1.3.2 Online training

- Complete the optional online training, accessed through the E-learning sub-tab on the Awards & Training tab in your account.

1.3.3 Consolidation period

There is no consolidation period, though candidates are advised to have completed the online training course or have had equivalent training prior to undertaking the Camping Leader assessment.

Some candidates may benefit from undertaking further personal camping trips or supervising camping groups in a variety of settings.

There is currently no time limit on the validity of a training course and some candidates may take several years to complete the qualification.

Familiarise yourself with the syllabus and revisit the online training if necessary.



Our association can help you as you work towards one of our qualifications. We are building a community of confident and expert leaders, instructors and coaches, that we hope you will join.

1.3.4 Assessment prerequisites

- You must have personally undertaken and logged an absolute minimum of five overnight camps, ideally in a variety of contexts.
- You must have assisted with or overseen at least two group camps. If personal camping has only been undertaken when also supervising a group, then these two group camps can be part of the total submitted for personal camping i.e. some candidates may need to log only five overnight camps in total. Reflective comments must accompany the group supervision evidence.
- You must be familiar with the syllabus.



- You must be an experienced self-sufficient camper.
- You must have experience of the supervision of camping groups.
- You must be at least 18 years old.
- You must have a current first aid certificate, gained by completing an in-person (not online) course which involved at least one full day or eight hours of instruction and included an element of assessment.

2. Course structure

2.1 Online training

An online training course covers all elements of the syllabus using a variety of formats such as presentations, videos and quizzes to aid learning. You may use the online training course as often as you wish in advance of your assessment course.

The online training also provides you with an outline of how your assessment course will be delivered and ideas for how you might consolidate your learning.

2.2 Assessment

Assessment will involve a minimum of eight hours contact time.

Results: Pass, Defer, Fail, Not yet completed, Withdrew, Did not show.

There is no exemption from any element of the assessment.

Practical reassessments cannot take place within three months of the initial assessment to allow sufficient time for practice and preparation. All deferral reassessments must be completed within five years of the original assessment. Candidates may undertake two short reassessments after a defer result. Subsequently a full assessment must be undertaken.

3. Course delivery

Course directors must hold Mountain Leader or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

Additional staff must be Hill and Moorland Leader plus Exped Skills Module/Camping Leader plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

Min. course size: 2, Max. course size; 12, Max. ratio: 1:6.



4. Awarding organisations

Mountain Training Board Ireland

Mountain Training Cymru

Mountain Training England

Mountain Training Scotland





Syllabus and guidance notes

The Camping Leader will be able to supervise a camping group and teach campcraft activities. They will be personally competent in a range of campcraft techniques and be able to provide clear demonstration and effective tuition in these to novice campers. They will be able to:



1. Leadership and group management

1.1 Demonstrate adaptable leadership behaviours and decision-making.

- 1.1.1 Monitor the group, environmental conditions and activity, and can adapt their behaviours and decisions to meet ongoing safety, group and task requirements.
- 1.1.2 Be consistent and confident in their decision making to achieve positive outcomes and communicate these clearly to the group.

Guidance

The Camping Leader needs to be able to demonstrate the basic skills and decision making of adaptive leadership. They should have a well-researched plan for their group's



camping experience which incorporates factors such as the groups' abilities and needs, the weather and ground conditions as well as the location and intended activities (such as cooking). Most important of all is to match their choices with the desired outcomes for the group.

However, despite the best laid plans things can and do change – be it the weather, the group, the equipment or whatever. A good leader will notice, and look out for, these changes before a problem arises and adapt their approach accordingly. For example; more rain than forecast and tents may need moving to higher ground; a boisterous group may need managing in a more directive way than planned; a participant's allergy may require a modification of the food menu.

Leaders need to cultivate trust amongst their group. This is a skilful task that requires an appropriate balance of consultation and instruction with the group. Effective leaders will, for example, adapt the way they communicate and give responsibility to excitable novice groups compared to more experienced campers. They should use all the communication techniques available to them to give a clear, consistent and congruent message – using appropriate language, tone and volume of voice, body language and eye contact.

Key practice points

- Lead by example. What you do is as important as what you say. If you ask people to clean up the campsite, get involved yourself. Model desirable behaviour.
- Make sure your group is ready to receive instruction when you need to give it – gather them up and make sure they are all looking at you before you speak.
- Praise in public, give constructive criticism in private. Call people aside if you need to challenge their behaviour, unless it was directed at someone else.
- Explain your thinking. Followers have a right to know why you are telling them to do something; but retain your authority.



Chapter 10 Planning to look after people

Chapter 11 Hazards and risk management



2. Planning and supervision

Plan appropriate overnight camps to:

- 2.1.1 meet group aims.
 - 2.1.2 be appropriate for the forecast weather conditions.
 - 2.1.3 comply with access legislation and local access agreements.
 - 2.1.4 comply with employer/organisation and legal requirements such as safeguarding.
- 2.1 Select and organise a camp area and individual tents within it.
 - 2.2 Identify and manage any camp area hazards.
 - 2.3 Manage camp hygiene.
 - 2.4 Manage a group when using different forms of accommodation – bunkhouses, bothies, public and wild campsites.
 - 2.5 Incorporate a minimum impact approach to camping.



Guidance

Perhaps the most important thing for a Camping Leader to consider is ‘why?’ The aims and abilities of the group should be the main consideration when planning any venture.

When planning a camp for or with a group, there are some basic considerations to be thought through such as the distance from help, the site hazards and terrain, what the weather and ground conditions will be like and the resources needed (equipment, food etc.). Additionally, the expected wind direction and speed is a major consideration, as is the amount of rainfall predicted. With careful planning it may be possible to find shelter from the worst of the weather.

As with many aspects of outdoor activities any organisation employing/deploying the leader may have specific requirements in terms of reporting and recording the planned venture as well as a standard procedure for dealing with some of the issues around camp management; Camping Leaders should make sure that they are aware of, and comply with, these procedures.

If camping on organised sites or with the explicit permission of the landowner, there will be few access issues for a camping group to consider other than making sure that their impact on the site is minimised. Whilst on a managed campsite it can be useful to discuss the status of ‘wild camping’ with your groups, as this varies between England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland and is a popular activity with the potential for negative environmental impact on the sites used.

Sanitation and good hygiene is part of a Camping Leader’s responsibilities and if there are no managed facilities, you should organise the group so that there is no possible contamination of water above the collection point. Toilet areas should be designated as appropriate (again ensuring no direct contamination of flowing water) and a policy on burying or packing out waste is well communicated.

The management of groups is very dependent upon the nature of the group and the degree of supervision selected. Considerations such as the age, the level of experience, the gender mix and observations about the level of harmony or discord amongst the group will all influence the level of supervision required. It is also important to minimise any potential disruption for other users of commercial or public campsites and other forms of accommodation. Bothies can be sensitive as there is a general presumption against use by large groups – it is worth looking at the Bothy Code issued by the Mountain Bothies Association and not only adhering to it but also explaining it to novices.



Chapter 10 Planning to look after people

Chapter 11 Hazards and risk management



Key practice points

- Familiarise yourself with the Countryside Codes (England, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own), Scottish Outdoor Access Code, Comhairle na Tuaithe (Ireland), Bothy Code and Leave No Trace principles.
- Consider how you would organise a group of tents for a range of groups including primary-age children, sixth form students and adults. How and why might they differ?
- Make a list of possible campsite hazards, relevant to the site itself, and how you would manage these with a group.
- Experiment with pitching a tent in windy conditions and consider how that affects the task as well as the ideal orientation of the tent.



3. Teaching and learning skills

- 3.1 Create and maintain a positive learning environment for all participants.
- 3.2 Communicate effectively and appropriately with a group and individuals, checking for understanding.
- 3.3 Demonstrate an ability to adapt the teaching style to meet group needs.



- 3.4 Identify and use appropriate tasks to ensure safe group activity.
- 3.5 Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for evaluating a session and success of the outcome.
- 3.6 Present competent demonstrations of the techniques within the syllabus and scope.
- 3.7 Help participants develop a positive attitude towards camping and introduce the idea of lifelong participation.

Guidance

Camping Leaders need to quickly create an environment of trust and confidence within their group so that participants feel relaxed and comfortable to tackle new and challenging activities. Camping can feel like a very alien activity for many and some may not be familiar with preparing and cooking their own food. Age, ability, individual requirements, confidence and energy levels amongst the group will require different approaches to achieve success. Good communication skills are key. The ability to create rapport, communicate at an appropriate level, use positive language, provide a variety of demonstration techniques, check for understanding through skilled questioning and give useful feedback and encouragement to individuals are the foundations of effective teaching.

In addition to these communication skills, effective teaching requires Camping Leaders to be able to observe and assess participants' abilities, confidence levels and group dynamics, adapting their approach accordingly. Be aware of how individuals and the whole group are progressing with tasks such as pitching tents and cooking meals so that you can provide further teaching or adjust the task to better suit their needs.

Remember that assistants, such as older students, parents or teachers, can offer a valuable resource to support you with your teaching. These people are often connected with the group and will know much about their individual needs and potentially how best to deliver information to them. However, judgement about what activities are to be undertaken, and how they are to be managed, remains with the leader. All teaching sessions are different due to the nature of the group and the conditions of the day.



See all Learning to Lead boxes



Key practice points

- Develop a set of 'lesson plans' for teaching common group tasks such as how to light a stove or pitch a tent.
- Consider how you might teach a particular camping skill in a very direct, instructional style and how you would teach the same skill in a student-centred way. What might be the pros and cons of each?
- Based on your previous camping experience and knowledge of working with groups, think about potential teaching challenges and how you might change your style or the task to improve the outcome. This will form the basis of reflective practice after each camp.



4. Camping equipment

- 4.1 Select and appropriately use a variety of tents, sleeping bags, sleeping mats and other camping equipment.
- 4.2 Select, pack and carry other personal and group equipment for an overnight camp.



Guidance

A sound knowledge of equipment is important for a Camping Leader because appropriate equipment, used correctly, is integral to a successful camping experience. As a leader you may also offer advice to novices on choice and suitability of equipment which cannot be done well if you do not have appropriate knowledge and understanding. Your knowledge will enable you to recommend appropriate equipment for groups in your care, bearing in mind the expected conditions and available budget.

An essential area to have a depth of knowledge in is the design, construction and features of a range of tents. It is important to be able to match appropriate tents to context as well as to be able to demonstrate efficient and stable pitching of a variety of types. Different designs and styles of tent all have their pros and cons and you should be able to recognise them. Packing and care of tents, including temporary repairs, is almost as important as being able to pitch them properly. Maintenance and selection of appropriate accessories such as guy lines and pegs should also be considered.

After obtaining the shelter afforded by the tent, the next consideration is a warm and comfortable nights' sleep. Matching mats and sleeping bags to the anticipated conditions can prevent carrying too much weight in summer or spending a night shivering in winter.

Selecting, packing and carrying other equipment needs careful consideration mindful of the group and location of the campsite. You should be able to give a good example and clear demonstration to your group here to avoid equipment damage or loss. Particular items maybe unfamiliar to the group and challenging to pack, for example synthetic sleeping bags and tents, therefore clear guidance will be required. Certain items maybe be shared between the whole group e.g. toiletries and washing equipment. Being able to foster a team orientated approach here is important.



Chapter 5 Living in the mountains

Key practice points

- Practise erecting a range of different tents. Research why there may be differences in the overall design or features.
- Seek out guidance on the packing and long-term storage of tents, sleeping bags, mats and other equipment.
- Consider how shared equipment can be divided between a group and what factors will influence who carries what.



5. Camping food and cooking

- 5.1 Select food and drink and plan menus with consideration to nutritional values.
- 5.2 Understand food hygiene considerations for food storage, preparation and cooking.
- 5.3 Select and safely use stoves and fuel.
- 5.4 Manage fire risk when cooking with a group.

Guidance

Cooking and eating while camping provide valuable social and teambuilding opportunities for groups and their leaders. It is also a time full of challenges which a Camping Leader needs to manage. Time spent with your group in advance, planning what food they're going to cook, using which stoves and fuel, is well worth it.

Food suitable for camping comes in many shapes and forms, ranging from lightweight dehydrated foods requiring only hot water, through to fresh ingredients which require safe transport, preparation and cooking. Your awareness of how to plan a simple, balanced menu, taking into account the nutritional value of different food groups, the equipment available, ease of cooking and the activities being undertaken by the group, will support their decisions about what to eat and drink. Care should be taken to accommodate the



dietary, cultural and religious requirements of all group members to ensure everyone is well-fuelled.

Fuel efficiency and cost are other factors worth considering; as an example, couscous simply needs a pan of boiling water, rice may need simmering for up to twenty minutes; the saving in fuel to be bought and carried can be considerable. A subsidiary consideration is the amount and type of packaging. It is good practice to leave at home any packaging that is not needed (boxes, wrappers etc.) to minimise the amount of packaging that is carried. Canned food scores low on these criteria for a multi-day expedition but may be entirely appropriate if the group is arriving by vehicle.

A similar range of options exist with regards to suitable stoves and fuel, which range from small lightweight offerings used on a multi-day trip to bulky options best suited to campsites with vehicle access. All of them have their strengths and weaknesses and how appropriate they are for novice use, bearing in mind such things as stability, fuel security, ease of refuelling and cost.

For the most common stove types, you should have a clear idea of how to teach good practice use to novice campers, bearing in mind their experience and responsibility. It is also important to put in place a procedure for minimising the risks caused by refuelling stoves as there have been numerous incidents caused by accidental spillage or leaking.

The health and safety of the people in your group is part of your responsibilities as a Camping Leader. Good food hygiene and fire safety processes around lighting and using stoves are essential and should be well understood by all group members.



Chapter 5 Living in the mountains

Chapter 14 Dealing with injuries

Key practice points

- Consider the refuelling methods of various stoves and how you would manage these with different groups. When and with who might you implement a blanket policy around not cooking in or near tents?
- Research environmentally sensitive methods of leaving no trace with regards to cleaning items used for cooking. What systems could be used for packing out any food waste?
- Discuss camping food and cooking with other leaders – what stoves, fuel and food do they choose to eat and why?
- Draft a list of 'Health and Safety Essentials' for a managed campsite which can be adapted depending on the group and site.



Mountain Training

Association

Our association is a membership organisation that can help you as you work towards one of our qualifications.

As a membership association we are building a community of confident and expert leaders, instructors and coaches, that we hope you will join.

We can help you with:

- Big savings on clothing and equipment
- A wide range of accredited development workshops, events and opportunities for continuing personal/professional development
- Specialist mentoring for your qualification
- Regional networks and opportunities to build connections with others in the sector
- The Professional Mountaineer magazine offering advice, tips and guidance from experts and peers within the profession
- Specially negotiated rates for liability insurance for qualified members

Anyone can join from the moment they register for a Mountain Training qualification, and can join anytime when working towards a qualification or when qualified.

Join via your account on the Mountain Training Candidate Management System (Tahdah – CMS).

“The workshops I’ve done have been brilliant and have definitely made me a better leader” Alex, Association member.

“The Association offers an excellent range of CPD, which has given me a broader understanding of the role, skills and expertise required to be a great leader. Definitely recommend.” Charlie, Association member.