



# Backpacker ABCs

## Teaching Guide

*Adventure awaits! We've laid out our gear!  
We've planned out our route, and the trail is all clear!*

Teach children what to expect on a wilderness backpacking trip through this adorably illustrated ABCs book. Along the way, they'll learn about knots, tents, switchbacks, storms, first aid, "leave no trace," and "hike your own hike." They'll also experience wilderness wonderland and nature's vistas. Will they make it to camp?

### Concepts

**Planning a Trip (A):** Collect a pile of items, including things that would be taken on a backpacking trip and things that would not. Have the children choose the items they think they should take and explain why they would take them.

**Packing a Backpack (B):** Bring a backpack packed for a trip. Remove the gear from the pack. Have the children repack the gear into the pack. Have them explain why they would pack certain items in certain places. For example: heavy, dense items should be close to the hiker's back; frequently-accessed items should be on the outside of the pack.

**Weather (B, G, P, Q, R):** Have the children check the weather forecast for tomorrow. Ask them how it would affect their trip and how they could plan for the weather. Have the children add and remove extra layers of clothing, such as jackets, hats, gloves, and scarves. Ask them how the layers make them feel. Have the children put on and take off rain gear.

**Maps (C, X):** Have the children study a map of a wilderness area and identify the various symbols and other features and what they mean. Have the children identify a location for a campsite and then trace the route they would hike to get to it. Have them estimate the distance.

**First Aid (F):** Have the children practice cleaning a spot on their skin with a disinfectant wipe and then applying an adhesive bandage.

**Food (J):** Bring several foods, including foods that would be taken on a backpacking trip and foods that would not. Have the children select the foods they would take on a backpacking trip and explain why they would take them. Reasons may include: non-perishable, durable (not easily smashed or broken), nutritious, and a high number of calories for the weight.

**Hike Your Own Hike (H):** This phrase started on the Appalachian Trail. Ask the children to brainstorm interesting things they might do on a backpacking trip that nobody else might be doing. Ask them to think about where "hike your own hike" ends: when your hike infringes on nature or other people, you are making *others* hike *your* hike.

**Knots (K):** Have the children practice the square knot, bowline, and double half hitch.

**Leave No Trace (L):** Learn the seven principles of "Leave No Trace" at [Int.org](http://Int.org). Take the children outside and have them find "traces" left by other people. If they find trash, help them collect it and take it to a trash receptacle.

**John Muir (M):** Read a selection from *My First Summer in the Sierra*, by John Muir.

**Sketching (O):** Take the children outside with a sketchbook (or piece of paper) and a pencil. Have them find a feature to sketch (it could be a rock, a flower, a tree, or a distant mountain). After they have sketched, discuss the details they captured. Also ask them how they felt while they were sketching.

Grade Level  
Pre-K to 2

Age Level  
3 to 7

### Vocabulary

Brambles (E)

Hitch (K)

Grandeur (M)

Vista (N)

Squall (R)

Switchback (S)

Ukulele (U)

Wonderland (W)

Compass (X)

Sleeping bag (Z)

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