

Litter Obliterators: Simple steps to a successful field trip

Pre-visit Preparation

Review this entire document and plan your cleanup. These steps are intended to highlight important talking points, but please add your own stories and anecdotes to personalize the experience for your group.

- Discuss** the following documents with chaperones and teens: *Be Safe Procedures; Bag it, Move it, Leave it.*
- Copy** and hand out *Be Prepared to Get Outside, Get Active, and Give Back* to participants before the trip.
- Locate** your site on a map and obtain directions to the site to share with the bus driver.
- Visit** the site before your trip if you have time. (For your safety, always use the buddy system when visiting the Preserves.)
- Check** your supply kit:
 - **Count** gloves and bags. You will need one pair of gloves per person and one garbage bag per six teens. Bring extra bags and gloves. If your group needs additional supplies, contact Cassie Hatzfeld (cassie.hatzfeld@cookcountyil.gov) at least two weeks before your cleanup.
 - **Review** your permit (check the location, date, time, emergency numbers, etc). Be sure to keep the permit with your supplies and bring everything to the cleanup.
 - **Make copies of the Preserve Scavenger Hunt.** Bring one copy per three students. (For future trips with returning students, try the *Bird Scavenger Hunt* or create your own.)
 - **Add pens or pencils** to your kit. One per three students will be needed for activities.

Activity Script

Introduction

1. **Locate** your starting point (typically a grove) at the site.
2. **Coordinate** with the bus driver on pick up time and exchange cell phone numbers.
3. **Know your location** in case of an emergency and communicate it to all chaperones. Cross-streets or an address will help authorities find your group quickly.
4. **Gather** participants at your meeting place in a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder. Ask for their **attention** and praise the listeners until you get everyone's attention. **Welcome** them to the site and remind them that they are there to complete a service activity, Litter Obliterators, and to get outside and enjoy nature. Set a few **rules** for having a safe and enjoyable day. (Ex. Stay with the group and listen when the leaders are giving instructions.)
5. **Getting Started** – Who in the group has visited the Preserves before? What did you do here? Besides recreation, like picnics, hiking, and biking, the Preserves are home to thousands of plants and animals. One of the goals of the Forest Preserve District is to maintain a healthy habitat for plants and animals. Who/what lives in the Preserves?

Preserve Scavenger Hunt – One way to find out what's in the Preserves is to get out there. We have a *Preserve Scavenger Hunt* to kick off the day.

1. **Establish boundaries and rules of the game.** Explore the Preserve and find items that fit the descriptions on the Scavenger Hunt. Write the items you find on the lines. Do not pick or take the items (leave no trace). If you do not know the items' names, just describe them. (Ex. medium-sized bird with dark back and red breast. White ring around eye. Or an American robin). Reminder – making things up is cheating! You must see, hear, or smell the things you write.
2. **Discuss animal encounters.** Don't approach any animals. Never touch or pick up an animal. Observe from a safe distance and enjoy!

3. **Discuss poison ivy.** Show the pictures from the *Poison Ivy ID sheet* and remind students to avoid any plants that have three leaves.
4. **Set a time limit and meeting spot.** Give students 15-20 minutes for the hunt.
5. **Organize** students in groups of three and pass out *Preserve Scavenger Hunt* and pens. Establish a group leader and timekeeper. Set them free!
6. **Gather the group** in a circle again. Discuss the results of the *Preserve Scavenger Hunt*. Each person should share something their group found. What was the coolest, weirdest, or most interesting thing you saw? Did your group find something that you did not expect to discover?

Litter Activity – You may have noticed on your Scavenger Hunt that, in addition to all of the plants and animals, you found things that do not belong in the Preserves – litter. One of the goals of the Forest Preserve District is to keep the land healthy for wildlife and people.

1. **Discuss what it means to be healthy** (5-10 minutes)
 - a. How would you define a healthy habitat (*definition of a habitat*: the natural environment of an organism) or natural area? An unhealthy habitat or natural area?
 - b. Why is it important to care for the land and clean up litter?
 - c. Why should we care?
 - d. The two main goals of Litter Obliterators are to make the habitat healthier for people and wildlife and to set a good example for other Preserve users.
 - e. How might our litter cleanup cause a behavior change in other Preserve users? If they see us cleaning up litter, they will realize that someone cares for this land. It might make them think twice about littering and also inspire them to volunteer.
2. **Review *Be Safe Procedures and Bag it, Move it, or Leave it*.** Remind participants that if they don't know what an item is, don't touch it and tell an adult. "Don't know, don't touch."
3. **Where will you find the most litter?** Instruct students to focus on areas around parking lots, pavilions or shelters, along the edges of groves and on paths. Groups should stay on paths when possible.
4. **Remind students to look for little things.** Ex. Cigarette butts, bottle caps, pieces of plastic can be very harmful to wildlife. Litter may be hard to find, but with some practice, you will start to see the little things.
5. **When a group has filled a bag,** tie it tightly and place it next to a metal FPDCC garbage can.
6. **Determine a meeting place** and time and boundaries. Plan 30 minutes to 1 hour for the cleanup.
7. **Split up group into teams of six** (combine two Scavenger Hunt groups). Hand out gloves and bags. Give one bag per group to start and tell them they can get extras at the meeting place.

Reflection – Discuss the results of your litter cleanup.

1. Was the litter cleanup what you expected? Was there anything you didn't expect?
2. What type of litter was most prevalent? Why?
3. How did your actions affect the community? Wildlife? Individual participants?
4. What is the importance of the resource being improved?
5. How can we take what we learned from the experience and continue to affect change?
6. If you had to describe your Forest Preserve experience in one word, what would it be?
7. What would you post on Facebook about your experience today?
8. If you were going to text your best friend about your experience today, what would you say?