



The Woods Project Welcome Packet 2025-2026

Dear Parents and Students,

Thank you for your interest in participating with The Woods Project! Through year-round programming, The Woods Project creates wilderness experiences that promote academic success, college and career readiness, and lifelong thriving for Houston high school students who wouldn't otherwise have access to these opportunities. Our organization's programming is designed to engage students across multiple years and is offered mainly through:

- **Fall and Spring Weekend Camping Trips and Workshops**
- **Two-Week Summer Backpacking Trips in Washington, California and Colorado**

Through participating in our Weekend Experiences, we hope that students gain interest in joining us for the 'capstone' of our organization, which is the Summer Trip. Both parents and students must read through this packet carefully so that you are as prepared as possible before participating in any Programming with The Woods Project. **This Welcome Packet focuses on our Fall/Spring Weekend Trips and Workshops, and includes the following:**

- Weekend Trips and Workshops Overview
- Student Rights and Responsibilities (No Phones, No Bullying, Etc).
- How to Sign Up
- Weekend Packing List (What to Bring)
- Frequently Asked Questions

We hope that, through our overnight trips and workshops, students not only have fun and gain interest in the outdoors, but that they discover a new passion, make new friends, and hopefully take skills they've learned onto a two-week Summer Trip. If you have any questions regarding our Weekend Programming, Summer Trips, or The Woods Project, please feel free to contact us by emailing marcus@thewoodsproject.org or by calling 281-371-6696 Ext. 6.

Thank you and we hope to see you outside soon!

Marcus Tierrablanca
Program Manager



Weekend Trips (Sat - Sun Overnight)

Locations: State Parks and natural wilderness areas include Brazos Bend State Park, Huntsville State Park, Big Thicket National Preserve, Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary, Galveston Island State Park, and Sam Houston National Forest

Activities:

- Backpacking, Hiking, Camp Games
- Kayaking, Mountain Biking, Fishing (in partnership with Texas Outdoor Family)
- Service Project or Educational Workshop

Food & Gear: Provided by The Woods Project. We accommodate most allergies and dietary restrictions. Students should only bring what is on the Packing List (attached).

Transportation: Provided by The Woods Project. Round-trip bus from TWP Office.

- We are located at 2700 Southwest Freeway, Houston, TX 77098 at the American Red Cross Building.
- Saturday Morning Departure
 - Students must arrive and check in no later than 8:00AM.
- Sunday Afternoon Return
 - Students return by 2:00-2:30PM for pickup.

Weekend Workshops (Saturday only)

Locations: Local destinations such as Memorial Park, The Menil, Buffalo Bayou, Armand Bayou Nature Center.

What Activities:

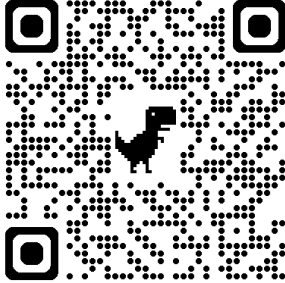
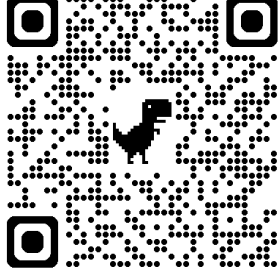
- Backpacking, Hiking, Biking or Art in the Park
- Service Project or Educational Workshop

Food & Gear: Provided by The Woods Project. We accommodate most allergies and dietary restrictions. Students should only bring a water bottle, comfortable and appropriate clothing for the workshop.

Schedule: No transportation is provided. Students are responsible for arriving at the location for check-in on Saturday by no later than 8:30AM. Students must be picked up by no later than 1:30PM after activities and lunch have concluded.



How to Sign Up for Weekend Programming

	
<p style="text-align: center;">Student Application</p> <p>Link: https://www.tfaforms.com/299335</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Portal Login</p> <p>Link: https://www.tfaforms.com/5008823</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the Student Application. 2. Login to the Portal and select 'Sign Up for Weekend Experiences'. 3. After clicking 'Submit', select your trip/s and complete the registration process. 4. The Woods Project will follow up with confirmation and any updates. 	

- Students must complete a Student Application prior to registering for a Weekend Experience.
- Registration for Weekend Experiences closes **two weeks** before the start of the trip.
- **Fees/Cost:** The cost for an Overnight Trip is \$15, and Workshops are \$5. Payment is collected upon registration. This fee covers all food, transportation (when provided), campsite/venue reservations, and all necessary camping gear or supplies. Registration is tax-exempt, and processing fees are included. If you have any concerns about your ability to participate because of these fees, you will be able to request scholarship by emailing the Program Director, Jess Merino at jmerino@thewoodsproject.org.
- **Cancellation and Late Registration Policy:** For cancellations, rescheduling, or late registration, contact Marcus Tierrablanca at marcus@thewoodsproject.org. Please let us know as soon as possible if you will no longer be able to attend a trip, so that we can adjust our logistics and plan accordingly.
 - Requests to register for a trip after it has closed *cannot be guaranteed*, and depends on availability and how close the request is to the trip start date.
 - Students who do not notify The Woods Project about a cancellation or do not show up for a trip they are registered for will be marked as a 'No-Show'. After three No-Shows, a student will be ineligible to participate in future Weekend and Summer Programming.



- **Communication:** After registering for a Weekend Experience, The Woods Project will communicate with parents and students via email and text on a regular basis prior to the event date to relay any important changes, missing paperwork, or questions that TWP may have regarding a student.

Student Rights and Responsibilities Agreement

As a participant in **The Woods Project Weekend Experience**, I understand that I am a member of a community where mutual respect, personal responsibility, and safety are vital. By signing below, I acknowledge my **rights** as well as my **responsibilities** and agree to follow the expectations laid out for me. If I have any concerns or need clarification, I will speak with a TWP trip leader or staff member.

Your Rights:

1. **Right to Safety:** I have the right to feel safe throughout the program, both physically and emotionally. TWP leaders will never be alone with a student.
2. **Right to Learn and Grow:** I have the right to take part in all activities designed to help me learn and develop new skills in a supportive environment.
3. **Right to Be Heard and Supported:** I have the right to voice my concerns, ask questions, and share my thoughts respectfully. I have the right to seek assistance from an adult if I need help or if something is bothering me.
4. **Right to Be Treated with Respect:** I have the right to be treated with kindness and respect by others and to have my personal space, belongings, and identity respected.

Your Responsibilities:

1. **Respect for Myself, Others, and Nature:**
I will treat myself, others, and the environment with care and respect. I will not engage in bullying, harassment, or harmful behavior. I will follow all park rules and Leave No Trace principles.
2. **Responsibility to Follow Program Rules:**
I understand and will adhere to rules designed to ensure the safety and enjoyment of everyone, including:
 - Students will participate with a buddy/group for activities.
 - All phones/electronics must be turned in for the duration of the trip.
 - No drugs, alcohol, or weapons can be brought or used on a trip. This includes vaping and THC products.
3. **Respect for Others Space:**
I will respect tent assignments made by staff. For privacy and safety reasons:
 - Participants are only allowed in the tent assigned to them.



- No public displays of affection.
4. **Respect Boundaries and Safety Instructions:**
I will follow all campsite boundaries and safety instructions. I will inform an adult before leaving the group or going anywhere outside designated areas.

Consequences of Not Meeting Responsibilities:

I understand that if I fail to meet the responsibilities outlined above, The Woods Project staff may take the following actions:

- Contacting my family and/or school.
- Expelling me from the program at my family's expense.
- Limiting or removing my participation in future programming.

Additional expectations may be communicated onsite, and I agree to follow those as well. By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand my **rights** and **responsibilities** during The Woods Project Program and that I will strive to uphold them.



What to Bring - Student Weekend Packing List

(In addition to what is worn on the bus):

- One or Two Sets of Underwear
- One Pair of Long Synthetic Pants
- One Pair of Synthetic Shorts
- 1 Beanie/Warm Hat
- 1 Baseball Cap/Sun Hat
- Sunscreen (we will have some, but if you have a preferred brand)
- 1 Warm Fleece or Sweater (NOT Sweatshirt/Hoodie)
- 2 Short-Sleeve T-Shirts (Synthetic Preferred)
- 1 Long-Sleeve Shirt (Flannel for Cold, Synthetic for Sun)
- 1 Set of WARM Sleeping Clothes
- 1 Pair of Sneakers or Hiking Boots (No Hunting/Work Boots, a GOOD Pair that Will Not Break During a Hike) - *Size up hiking boots! Bring a .5 or 1 size larger pair than what you normally wear.*
- 1 Pair of Camp Shoes (Crocs/Texas with Ankle Strap, Flip Flops are OK, but not recommended)
- 2 Pairs of Wool/Athletic Socks (Ankle Cut or Higher)
- Toiletries - toothbrush/toothpaste
- Feminine Hygiene Products if Needed
- Medicine if Needed (Inhaler, Epi-pen, Prescription Pills, Vitamins/Supplements, Anything You Take on a Regular Basis)
- Day Pack for Day Hiking - School Backpack is Great.
- Light 1-liter or 2-liter Water Bottle That Can Withstand Day Hikes (Nalgene, Hydroflask, etc.)
- Flashlight (optional)
- 1 Pair of Sunglasses (optional)
- Digital/Instant Camera for Photos (optional)

(Kayaking/canoeing trips only, please also bring)

- Bathing Suit
- Water shoes (no flip flops - close toed with strap highly recommended)

Why do the materials matter?

Wool: Wool wicks moisture away from your skin, dries quickly, odor resistant, and preserves body temperature (hot or cold).

Nylon/Synthetic/Polypropylene/Quick-Dry: Synthetic wicks moisture away from your skin, dries quickly, and preserves body temperature!

Cotton: We try not to bring cotton on trail or on trips because it takes a long time to dry, and doesn't preserve body temperature! The one exception is underwear.

Do NOT Bring: Flip flops, jeans, hair dryers, curling/flat irons (other electric appliances). **Cell phones and cameras are okay to bring. However, CELL PHONES WILL BE COLLECTED when we reach camp. Do not count on using your cell phone as a camera. This will not be allowed.**



Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if I'm no longer able to attend a trip that I registered for?

Contact The Woods Project (marcus@thewoodsproject.org) to let us know that you will no longer be attending a trip you've registered for. Let us know as soon as possible, preferably at least a week in advance from the start of the trip.

Are students able to go on a trip with a friend/friends?

Yes! Students are welcome to sign up together for the same trip/workshop (as long as Applications are complete and there is availability). **However, this is NOT a guarantee that friends will be put together in the same tenting assignment or group during the trip.** The Woods Project encourages students to go outside of their comfort zones on these Weekend Experiences and meet other students from other high schools.

Can students bring a camera that is not a cell phone to weekend programming?

Students are allowed to bring a camera for photos (disposable,digital,polaroid) on Weekend Programming, however, we discourage any camera that is able to connect to the internet.

What happens if there's bad weather?

The Woods Project continuously checks weather conditions at any locations we are planning to go to in advance. We do not cancel trips if there is a chance of some rain, as we have gear and procedures to handle wet conditions. However, if there is a high chance of severe weather/lightning, we would let anyone registered for the trip know of any changes/cancellations the Friday before the start of a trip.

What happens in case of an emergency?

For every location that we go to, The Woods Project has an Emergency Action Plan that lists out important local numbers and the nearest hospital/ER room in the area. In the event that there is an emergency that rapidly develops (i.e. lightning storm), students will follow all instructions provided by the TWP Staff on site to ensure safety. If there is a student-specific emergency, TWP Staff will also contact listed emergency contacts.

Is there scholarship available for Weekend Experiences if I am not able to pay?

If the cost of a Weekend Trip or Workshop is a concern, please contact our Program Director, Jess Merino (jmerino@thewoodsproject.org) and we can discuss scholarship options.

Who are the adults that will be chaperoning on the trips?

All TWP trips have a student to chaperone ratio of 1:7. Chaperones can be teachers from partnering schools, or volunteers from the general public that have heard about the organization. All chaperones are required to attend a Weekend Trip Orientation that goes over all TWP policies and procedures, and all chaperones are background checked before getting approved to go on a trip.

How many students are usually on a trip?

Our overnight trips can range from 35-50 students that come from various different schools across Houston. Our workshops range from 20-30 students.

Are showers available on Overnight trips?

Although some of the parks we go to have facilities for showering nearby, The Woods Project does not allow showering on overnight trips for students and chaperones.

Does my student need to bring any camping equipment?

The Woods Project provides all camping equipment for students, and they only need to bring the items listed on the Packing List. If your student has any gear that they would like to bring, like



hiking boots, they are welcome to bring it. If there are any gear-specific questions you can email marcus@thewoodsproject.org.

Should I send food along with my child?

The Woods Project provides all of the food for Overnight trips and Workshops so we ask that you do not send any extra food or snacks. If your child has specific food restrictions or allergies, please make sure that was indicated on the medical portion of the Student Application so we can plan accordingly.

What if my child has to take certain medications or has allergies?

Please ensure that your child brings any necessary medications with them on the trip and that they are aware of their allergies. Your child should also understand how to take the medication, as they will ultimately be responsible for taking it correctly. All medications and allergies must be reported on the Student Application so TWP Staff and chaperones can be aware and plan accordingly.

Will I be able to contact my child while they're on a trip?

Our goals at The Woods Project are for your child to enjoy the outdoors, meet new people and develop stronger confidence and leadership skills. We find that these outcomes are best achieved unplugged and away from cell phones. TWP will collect cell phones and any other electronic devices from students upon arrival to an Overnight location, and return them once they depart on Sunday. Our leaders always carry phones in case of an emergency, and all parents are given an emergency line to call in case they need to get in touch with their child.

How do I help my child prepare for a trip?

Please make sure that your student follows the appropriate Packing List and that both you and your student read any information that is sent from The Woods Project or your student's school/organization.

Who can I contact if I have more questions?

You can use our [Contact Us](#) form if you would like to submit any general questions, or you can contact our Program Director, Jess Merino, at jmerino@thewoodsproject.org for any questions relating to Weekend and Summer Trips.