

Trail Blazers Lesson Plan

This activity links with the Travel and Camp on Durable Ground principle of Leave No Trace

Activity: Investigate the impact trails can have in an area by creating a trail management plan

Learning Objectives: Gain an understanding of trails and recreation as a land use. Investigate the importance of soil and vegetation to biodiversity and understand how we impact upon it. Develop scientific investigative skills; predicting, observing, analysing and presenting results.

Links to Curriculum:

SESE Geography Strand: Natural Environments, Strand Unit: The Local Natural Environment

SESE Geography Strand: Natural Environments, Strand Unit: Rocks and Soils

SESE Science and Geography Strand: Environmental Awareness and Care, Strand Unit: Environmental Awareness

SESE Science Strand: Environmental Awareness and Care, Strand Unit: Science and the Environment

Time: Introduction 5 minutes, Activity 30 minutes and Wrap-up 10 minutes

Materials: Pens, paper and colouring pencils or markers

Method:

1. Discuss with the class what they know about tracks and trails:

- Where would you normally find trails?
- How are trails formed?
- What purpose do they serve?



2. Explain to the class that an important historical monument has just been discovered by archaeologists in a remote area of Ireland. Currently there is no access to the site. You have been given the job to develop a trail that will allow tourists and visitors to access the monument

3. Divide the class into four groups, each group will have to develop their trail in a different environment :

Coastal	Mountain
Grassland	Woodland

4. Each group must develop a trail plan for their type of environment. This plan should take into consideration:

Function	Access
Wildlife	Vegetation
Soil	Materials for construction
Safety	Visual Impact

5. Ask each group to present their plan to the class and discuss how the above issues affected their decisions

6. Discuss as a class why it is essential to consider the placement of trails and their importance in sensitive habitats



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Reflection:

Ask the class to imagine if no one followed paths and instead made their own way across green spaces:

- What impact would this have?
- Would these impacts differ on different surfaces?
- Would these impacts be more serious in particular areas? (E.g. sensitive habitats, SAC's, SPA's)

Further Investigation:

Complete the Trail Blazers Quiz to wrap-up the lesson.

Pupils can also carry out the Footsteps experiment from the 3rd and 4th class Leave No Trace Resources. This would provide firsthand experience of how trails are formed and the impact they can have on soil and vegetation.

Alternatively take the class out for a walk or hike on a popular local trail. The class can observe:

- Is the trail well located?
- What, if any, impacts does it have on surrounding vegetation and wildlife?
- Is there evidence that people are straying from the trail (e.g. is it wider in some parts?)

For more information on the Travel and Camp on Durable Ground principle and the other Leave No Trace principles visit:

www.leavenotraceireland.org

