

# NOLS ALUMNI WIND RIVER HIKING AND WILDERNESS MEDICINE FIRST AID

## *Equipment Guidelines*

### **Welcome to NOLS!**

Learning to choose the right equipment for your adventure is an essential part of the NOLS curriculum. We know that walking into an outdoor store can be a daunting experience, but preparing for your course need not feel overwhelming. This list is designed to help you make smart, prudent choices about the gear you bring on your trip.

When you arrive, your instructors will first look through all the equipment you've brought and help you decide what to take into the field. You'll then go into our Outfitting Department to rent or purchase any remaining items. The list below is comprehensive; however, the actual equipment needed for your course will vary depending on location, season, and instructor judgment. **For this reason, we do not recommend that you go out and purchase a lot of expensive, specialized gear for your course. PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT NOLS ALUMNI AT (800) 332-4280, [alumni@nols.edu](mailto:alumni@nols.edu), with any equipment questions.**

Instead, here are some thoughts to guide you as you pack:

**First, use gear you already own!** You'll be comfortable in tried-and-true clothing. Bring more layers than you think you'll need; your instructors will help you choose your best options. If an item is deemed suitable for your particular course, you can take it into the field; if not, you can leave it in storage at the branch. If in doubt, bring it!

**Second, rent key items from NOLS.** When it comes to gear, every adventurer has his or her own needs, styles, and preferences. With guidance from your instructors during your course, you'll have the opportunity to hone your "perfect" system, and your notions about the smartest layers or ideal backpack may change in the field. Unless you're already a veteran backcountry traveler, we recommend that you rent several "big ticket" items: sleeping bag and foam pad, backpack, wind pants, wind shirt, and puffy jacket. While you are not obligated to rent gear from us, there are several reasons why we suggest it. Our rental gear is high quality, chosen and maintained specifically for the use it receives on courses. Rental prices are reasonable, and renting lets you try gear, so you can make informed decisions on future adventures. (After your course, you may purchase any of the items you rented, with the rental fee deducted from the price; this is a great way to begin building your personal gear closet.) Finally, even if your equipment is appropriate, it will receive a lot of hard use; students are often surprised at the amount of wear they put on their personal gear during a course.

**Third, purchase specific items from our Outfitting Department.** To make shopping simple, we offer basic kitchen utensils (mug, bowl with lid, spoon, 32-ounce water bottle), personal care items (lip balm, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, bug spray), and camping sundries (headlamp, batteries, lighter). We also carry a selection of clothing, including wool socks, ball caps, hats and gloves, rain jackets and pants, and base-layers. NOLS is a not-for-profit organization, and revenue from our Outfitting Department goes to serve the mission of the School.

**Fourth, visit your local outdoor store.** Most gear shops, from REI to mom-and-pop outfits, are familiar with NOLS and its courses. They can advise you on purchases—but be wary of being "upsold" items you don't really need! We encourage you to keep the tags on all equipment and clothing (and the receipt) so that you may return any unneeded items.

### **-Equipment fees**

You should be prepared to pay for your equipment rental or purchases after your course by cash, check or credit card. Additional charges will be incurred for any equipment that is lost or damaged. Please note that prices listed in the below equipment list may change slightly.

### **-How to use this list**

Non-rental items on the list below are designated in one of two ways:

**-Purchase only** | Indicates that an item is available at NOLS Rocky Mountain for purchase only.

**-Not available** | Indicates that an item is not available at NOLS Rocky Mountain, either for rent or for purchase.

**Quality over quantity**

At NOLS, we fundamentally believe that you don't need to own a lot of expensive gear to live and travel comfortably in the backcountry. By purchasing high-quality items and learning to care for them, you're making a lifetime investment. Spend money on the few items that really matter, but don't get lured into splurging on the trendiest fabrics or unnecessary gadgets.

**Questions?**

If you have any questions or would like more information regarding the items on this list, please contact the NOLS Rocky Mountain Outfitting Department at (307) 332-1422.

### Upper Body Layers

We layer our clothing, combining different garments to achieve optimum insulation and protection from wind, rain, and snow. We use either synthetic or wool fibers, which insulate when wet; merino wool products, such as those offered by Icebreaker, SmartWool, and Ibex, are increasingly popular. We avoid cotton, which is poor insulation when wet. It is common to need three insulating layers.

Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Base layer (mid-weight synthetic)	Purchase only	\$50–75	1	Mid-weight long underwear top, wool or synthetic (e.g. polyester, Capilene 1 or 2)	
Middle layer (fleece pullover)	Purchase only	\$50–75	1	Fleece pullover or expedition-weight top (e.g. Polartec 100 or 200, Capilene 3 or 4), or a wool sweater	
Top layer (synthetic jacket)	\$12.50	\$175–250	1	A warm, synthetic-fill “puffy” jacket that fits over your base layers (e.g. Mountain Hardwear Compressor, Patagonia Nano). We sell and rent the Montbell Thermawrap Pro.	
Wind shirt/anorak	\$6.25	\$55	1	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell, in either pullover or parka style	
Rain jacket	Purchase only	\$120–150	1	A sturdy waterproof jacket with a hood. Both coated nylon and breathable fabrics are acceptable (e.g. Gore-Tex, Patagonia H2No, Marmot Precip, Mountain Hardwear Dry.Q)	
T-shirt	Purchase only	\$35–50	1	A lightweight synthetic or wool t-shirt	

Our advice? Bring the sweaters, fleece jackets, and synthetic layers you think might work. We’ll advise you on the best combination for your trip, depending on the season and course area.

### Lower Body Layers

You will need 1–2 synthetic insulating layers (usually a base layer and, in early summer, a pair of fleece pants). All must fit comfortably over each other so that they can be worn at the same time. If you tend to get cold easily, add a middle layer of mid-weight bottoms to the base layer and fleece pants.

Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Base layer (mid-weight synthetic)	Purchase only	\$45–60	1 pair	Mid-weight synthetic or wool bottoms. Cotton and cotton blends are not acceptable.	
Middle layer (expedition-weight synthetic)	Purchase only	\$50–75	1 pair	Expedition-weight bottoms that fit comfortably over the base-layer bottoms	

Wind pants	\$6.25	\$60	1 pair	Nylon shell pants. These should fit comfortably over all lower-body layers. Side-zippers allow the pants to be put on over boots. Breathable fabrics such as Gore-Tex are acceptable, but lightweight “running pants” are <u>not</u> durable enough. We recommend renting NOLS wind pants. They are the most popular piece of equipment we’ve ever designed! Many students purchase their wind pants at the end of their course.
Rain pants	Purchase only	\$90–110	1 pair	Optional. Although not required, some people like to use rain pants in conjunction with a rain jacket.
Nylon shorts	Purchase only	\$40–60	1 pair	Loose-fitting nylon athletic or river shorts
Underwear and sports bra	Purchase only	\$18–32	2–3 pairs	Briefs or boxers must be synthetic; some men prefer to go without underwear and use nylon shorts with liners. Women can wear what’s comfortable: cotton, silk, or synthetics are fine. Bras must be silk or synthetic.

Our advice? Bring the synthetic base layers, rain gear, and exercise clothing you think might work. We’ll advise you on the best combination for your trip, depending on the season and course area.

<b>Head, Neck, and Hand Layers</b>					
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Rental price</b>	<b>Purchase price</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Checklist</b>
Baseball cap or wide-brim sun hat	Purchase only	\$19	1	To protect ears and face from the sun; available with NOLS logo	
Balaclava	\$1	\$17	1	Optional. Balaclavas are full head-and-neck coverings that have an opening for the face.	
Wool or fleece hat	\$1	\$15–20	1	A warm hat made of wool or fleece	
Mosquito head net	Purchase only	\$6	1	A light nylon head net	
Gloves	Purchase only	\$17–55	1 pair	Ragg wool or synthetic (e.g. fleece)	
Mittens	Purchase only	\$12–17	1 pair	Optional for late-summer courses. Ragg wool or synthetic	
Mitten shells	Purchase only	\$50–65	1 pair	Optional, but recommended for courses beginning before mid-June. Water-repellent nylon shells that fit over your mittens or gloves	

Our advice? As long as they’re not cotton, bring your gloves, mittens, and shells. We’ll check them and see if they’ll work. Depending on the weather, you may need one or two pairs.

### Packs and Bags

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Rental price</b>	<b>Purchase price</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Checklist</b>
Backpack	\$25	\$250	1	Our packs are large expedition models, with a volume of 5500 to 6100 cubic inches, made by Deuter exclusively for NOLS. <u>If you bring an internal frame pack, it will be examined by your instructors to determine its suitability for your course and route. It must have a volume of 5500 to 6100 cubic inches.</u>	
Small stuff sack	\$1	\$4	2-3	Small nylon or mesh sacks for organizing items in your pack	
Food zip bag	Purchase only	\$15	1	We carry the Outdoor Product deluxe duffle and Bridger Outdoor duffle. Water-resistant nylon, 2700 cubic inches, with a top zip	

*Our advice? An expedition backpack is a major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should rent ours, gain some experience, then make an informed decision after your course.*

### Sleeping Bags and Pads

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Rental price</b>	<b>Purchase price</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Checklist</b>
Sleeping bag	\$15	\$220	1	Synthetic-fill bags (e.g. Quallofil, Hollofil, Polarguard, etc.) perform well in the variety of conditions we encounter on courses. A bag with approximately 3 pounds of fill, rated to 5° or 10°F	
Summit pack/ compression sack	\$4	\$50	1	We use the Lowe Attack Summit, which doubles as a compression stuff sack for your sleeping bag and a summit pack for day hikes	
Plastic trash bag	Purchase only	\$0.50	2-3	2-3 heavy-duty lawn-and-garden bags (33 gallon) to help waterproof your sleeping bag and backpack	
Sleeping pad	\$1.50	\$15-75	1	Should be closed-cell foam and at least 3/8-inch thick. Used for padding and insulation between sleeping bag and ground. We highly recommend (and sell, but don't rent) a self-inflating sleeping mat. Therm-a-Rest and REI are reliable brands.	

*Our advice? A sleeping bag is another major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should rent ours, gain some experience, and then make an informed decision after your course.*

<b>Miscellaneous Items</b>					
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Rental price</b>	<b>Purchase price</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Checklist</b>
<b>Eating utensils</b>					
<i>Insulated mug</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>12- to 20-oz. insulated mug with a lid. Available with NOLS logo</i>	
<i>Bowl</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$7</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>A bowl with a snap-on lid is handy.</i>	
<i>Spoon</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Lexan spoons are light, durable, and popular.</i>	
<i>Water bottle</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$13–30</i>	<i>1–2</i>	<i>1–2 wide-mouth quart- or liter-size plastic bottles, like Nalgene® bottles</i>	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>					
<i>Lip balm</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Stick, cream, or tube-type moisturizing balm, SPF 15 or greater</i>	
<i>Sunscreen</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$10–20</i>	<i>1–2</i>	<i>A 3- to 6-oz. tube, SPF 30 or greater</i>	
<i>Bandana</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$2</i>	<i>2–3</i>	<i>A few of these are always handy.</i>	
<i>Headlamp/flashlight</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$29–40</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Durable and lightweight. Headlamps are popular. Bring spare batteries.</i>	
<i>Disposable lighter</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$1.50</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>For lighting your camp stove</i>	
<i>Insect repellent</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$5</i>	<i>1–2</i>	<i>Small bottles; no aerosol spray cans. Ben's is a popular brand.</i>	
<i>Toiletries and towel</i>	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Must bring. Towel for showering after your course. Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, skin lotion, and tampons. Travel or trial sizes are enough.</i>	
<i>Watch</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$20–65</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>A watch with an alarm is a nice feature.</i>	
<i>Notepad and pencil</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$10</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>A small, lightweight pad is fine.</i>	
<i>Sunglasses</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$50–160</i>	<i>1 pair</i>	<i>Good-quality sunglasses with 100 percent UV protection; lenses should be dark. If you wear prescription lenses and have limited vision without them, bring your own prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on polarized shades at an outdoor store. Glass lenses will scratch less easily than plastic. We sell Suncloud and Optic Nerve. Julbo, Smith, Native Eyewear, Oakley, and Bausch &amp; Lomb are good brands.</i>	
<i>Instant hand sanitizer</i>	<i>Purchase only</i>	<i>\$2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Must have two 2-oz. bottles for keeping hands clean</i>	
<i>Our advice? Keep the toiletries, pocketknife and other gear to small sizes. We work to keep our pack weight as low as possible. Saving every ounce is essential!</i>					

<b>Footwear</b>					
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Rental price</b>	<b>Purchase price</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Check List</b>
Boots	Purchase only	\$175–250	1 pair	Sturdy leather heavy backpacking or light mountaineering boots with good ankle support for wilderness courses. Our boot stretching process helps expedite the break-in period of new boots.	
Wool socks	Purchase only	\$13–19	4–5 pairs	Heavy ragg wool or heavy wool/synthetic blend	
Liner socks	Purchase only	\$6-8	2–3 pairs	Optional. Lightweight wool, synthetic or Capilene® “wicking” socks. You will need at least two pairs if you are using a liner sock/wool sock combination in your hiking boots.	
Gaiters	Purchase only	\$50	1 pair	Shin- or knee-high, durable. Lightweight “running gaiters” are not recommended.	
Camp shoes	Not available	Not available	1 pair	Must bring. Running, tennis, or cross-training athletic shoes, closed toe required	
<p><i>Our advice? Your boots will be a critical piece of gear. If they’re not sturdy, don’t provide enough support, or don’t fit properly with wool socks, we won’t let you use them. If you have any doubts about boots, feel free to give us a call.</i></p>					

### **Boot recommendations**

NOLS has been outfitting students with boots for many years and our priorities have remained the same: we want you to have boots that provide adequate protection for your feet, are durable enough to withstand extended rugged wear, and provide reasonable comfort. Many boots available on the market do not meet these criteria, and a boot that is good for weekend day-hiking use may not be a good boot for your NOLS course.

Medium-weight, off-trail backpacking or light mountaineering boots work best. They provide good support for off-trail hiking with heavy packs, and usually require less break-in time than heavyweight mountaineering boots. Here are some features to look for:

- Constructed from full-grain, one-piece leather upper or a combination of nylon, Gore-Tex, and leather
- A sole that provides good traction, like Vibram® or other lugged sole
- 1/2- to 3/4-length shank or full poly mid-sole stiffener within the sole to provide foot support and protection
- Ankle support! Trail running shoes and below-the-ankle hiking boots are not acceptable.
- Comfortable fit with your preferred hiking socks. Boots that are too small commonly cause blisters.

The following list of acceptable boots is not exhaustive and is to be used for suggestions only. It is fine to substitute a similar boot for one of those listed here.

**Asolo:** Power Matic series; TPS series; Power Light series; Matrix series; Energy series

**Garmont:** Dakota; Synchro Plus; Cypress, FC Eco 4.0

**La Sportiva:** Thunder II; Cascade

**Lowa:** Tahoe; Tibet; Banff; Pingora

**Montrail:** Feather Peak

**Oboz:** Wind River

**Scarpa:** Mustang; Barun; Nepal Pro; SL M3; Escape

**Vasque:** St Elias; Wasatch; Bitterroot; Summit; Sundowner; Clarion; Breeze; Taku

*Note that boot manufacturers often rename product lines. Visit the manufacturer’s website or contact us if you have questions.*

### Optional Items

Equipment	Rental price	Purchase price	Quantity	Comments	Checklist
Binoculars	Not available	Not available	1	Small travel binoculars work well.	
Prescription glasses and contact lenses	Not available	Not available	2–3 pairs	If you wear them, bring a spare pair of glasses or lenses. Contact-lens wearers should also bring a pair of glasses as backup. Prescription sunglasses are also nice to have in reserve.	
Water treatment	Not available	Not available	1	NOLS supplies Aquamira (chlorine dioxide) or Potable Aqua tablets (hydroperiodide) or for backcountry water purification. However, if you are sensitive to iodine or chlorine, you may need to bring a water filter.	
Vitamins	Not available	Not available	1	Not necessary, but a small quantity of multi-vitamins is popular among staff and students for this length of course.	
Book or e-reader	Not available	Not available	1	A small paperback reading book or lightweight e-reader, such as a Kindle; bring a protective case. Tablet-style e-readers (e.g. Kindle Fire) are not acceptable.	
Trekking poles	Purchase only	\$80	1	A sturdy telescoping pole for easy packing. We sell the Leki Eagle.	
Camera	Not available	Not available	1	GoPros and lightweight digital or 35mm cameras are acceptable; bring a protective case. Avoid elaborate lenses and heavy SLRs. Please note that you may not bring your smartphone or tablet into the field to use as a digital camera.	
Camp chair	Purchase only	\$30–50	1	Crazy Creek–style, or a Therm-A-Rest adapter. Available with NOLS logo	
Hydration system	Purchase only	\$30–50	1	Very handy and popular. We carry CamelBak® bladders.	
Sunglasses retainer	Purchase only	\$5	1	Chums or Croakies for keeping track of your glasses or sunglasses. Available with NOLS logo	
Pocketknife	Purchase only	\$20–45	1	One small knife is sufficient; simple folding knives are popular.	

*Our advice? Keep the camera and other optional gear to small sizes. We work to keep our pack weight as low as possible, but our packs are heavy. Saving every ounce is essential!*

#### Group equipment

The items listed below are provided by NOLS and shared among all expedition members. Group equipment is included as part of the course tuition; students may be charged for any lost or damaged group equipment.

Tents and shelters  
Camp stoves  
Fuel and fuel bottles  
Pots and pans  
Bear-resistant food containers  
Trowels or shovels

Maps and compasses  
Reference books  
Binoculars  
First-aid kits  
Equipment repair kits  
Fishing equipment

Climbing protection\*  
Climbing ropes\*  
Helmets and harnesses\*  
Ice axes\*  
Snowshoes\*  
*\*if applicable to course type*



