

Steering Committee

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FIRST-YEAR OUTDOOR PROGRAM

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Dear FOP Leader Applicant,

<http://www.harvardfop.com>

Thank you for your interest in FOP! Since its inception in 1979, we have worked hard to provide safe, inspiring, and fun orientation trips for incoming Harvard students. We owe much of our success to our wonderful leader community, and we hope that this letter will answer some of your questions about FOP and becoming a leader.

What is FOP? FOP (First-Year Outdoor Program) is an introduction to Harvard that takes place across the mountains and lakes of northern New England. This year we had 393 FOPpers participate in 43 trips all over New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont. While on campus, the FOPper and Leader communities continue to learn from and support one another, creating spaces for reflection and growth throughout the year. This year's FOP trips will run from Tuesday, August 16th through Monday, August 22, 2015, and your commitment as a leader would run from **August 11th through August 22nd**.

Who are FOP leaders? **FOP Leaders need not have gone on FOP themselves as freshman!** Because we lead trips for over one-fifth of the freshman class, it is important that our leader pool represent the vibrancy and diversity of Harvard. Currently, our 100 leaders span a variety of ages, interests, levels of outdoor experience, talents, and backgrounds. FOP leaders should be ready to make fearless leaps into the unknown and untouched, supporting themselves and those around them as they learn, grow, and reflect.

What do FOP leaders do? Leading FOP is a serious responsibility that requires leaders to take charge of 8-12 first year students and have the capacity to learn both technical and interpersonal skills. Leaders must be able to:

- Communicate and work effectively with a co-leader(s)
- Learn and become comfortable with technical skills necessary for backcountry travel
- Safely lead incoming first-years according to FOP policies and procedures in a wilderness environment
- Effectively deal with unexpected and emergency situations
- Recognize and balance both individual and group needs
- Help ease the transition to Harvard and open-mindedly discuss views on the Harvard experience with first-years, continuing to serve as a resource once back on campus through active engagement with their FOPpers

What kinds of trips are there? FOP offers many different types of trips for incoming first-years. Trips vary in distance, elevation, and difficulty.

Backpacking Trips: Backpacking trips are six-day treks through the mountains of northern New England.

Switch Trips: Switch trips include canoeing and backpacking. NOTE: Leading a switch trip requires lifeguard certification (switch trainees have the opportunity to certify) as well as additional training during the spring.

Service Trips: Service trips give back to the wilderness community on which FOP depends. Trips range from onsite construction and trail work to combination hiking and service in the backcountry.

What makes a good leader? FOP leaders promote the development of social support and self-awareness for first-years. We are looking for applicants who convey interpersonal skills and who are able to foster a positive environment for group bonding and self-exploration, drawing on their own experiences as well as those of other leaders in the community. FOP leaders are dedicated to acting as a resource for students who will be experiencing a wide range of emotions as they enter an entirely new community.

Since FOP is conducted in a remote backcountry setting, leaders are faced with particular challenges regarding the safety and comfort level of participants on their trips. With this in mind, we look for applicants with sound decision-making abilities and a readiness to improve their outdoor skills.

Potential leaders should have the desire to become comfortable in the outdoors and/or prior experience in the outdoors. Past experience can come in a variety of forms, including organized trips with outdoor programs, adventures with friends and/or family, and participation in outdoor sports. These and other outdoor activities can all contribute to one's outdoor knowledge and capabilities.

For all trainees, with or without past outdoor experience, we offer the Backcountry Skillz Day (BSD) as part of our training program (see below). We **strongly encourage all trainees to participate**, regardless of their wilderness abilities prior to the weekend – all who go will emerge with much-improved technical skillz, and will be better prepared for training trips!

Again, **you do NOT need to have gone on FOP to be a leader!**

How do I become a leader? Applicants must complete two stages prior to their confirmation as leaders. The first, Trainee Selection, constitutes the application and interview process, and leads to the selection of leader-trainees. Those leader-trainees must then engage in a comprehensive training process throughout the spring. Upon successful completion *and evaluation*, trainees are asked to become leaders. Sometimes, leaders whose skills need significant improvement in certain areas may be required to complete additional training after leading in the fall. Additionally, a trainee may be asked not to participate in FOP if his/her skills are significantly lacking. With that said, *once trainees have been selected we are committed to doing everything we can to help trainees successfully complete training – in exchange for those trainees' commitment of the time and effort that it will take.*



Trainee Selection:

The first step of the process is to submit a complete application. If appropriate, we will then contact you for an interview. Interviews will take place from January 25th through February 12th and are intended to give Steering Committee members a better understanding of the applicant's leadership capabilities and decision-making abilities. The number of interviews we will conduct depends on the size of the applicant pool.

If past years are any indication, trainee selection will be a highly competitive process. In a typical year, we receive between 130-160 applications and end up accepting about 45 applicants. We will notify you of our final decisions **by email** on or before February 17th. If you are selected, you will become a FOP leader-trainee and will begin training.

Training: The following are the training requirements for the spring of 2016. Final selection as a leader is dependent on completion of these requirements. Under EXTREME circumstances, we may be able to make an accommodation for missing one of the Skillz Days, but you **MUST** notify us immediately if you think this might apply to you. Before you apply, **please be sure you can commit to these dates.**

If you foresee a **significant and unavoidable conflict** with the listed **Training Trip dates**, please notify us in the designated section of the application, explaining the exact nature and timing of the conflict. We encourage applicants to carefully consider their responses, as they will have bearing on their application.

IMPORTANT DATES

- (1) **Wednesday, February 24, 7 – 9 PM:** Welcome Meeting
- (2) **Saturday, March 5, AND Sunday, April 17, 9 AM – 5 PM :** Skillz Days
- (3) **April 2 - 3, OR April 9 – 10, 9 AM – 5 PM:** Wilderness First Aid and CPR Certification

All trainees need to sign up for one of two weekends to train and receive WFA and CPR certifications. These are two-day courses, and if you cannot make either of these weekends, you will have to arrange your own WFA and CPR certification before Training Trips begin, and FOP will reimburse you for its cost.

- (4) **Two Monday, Wednesday, or Friday nights, 5 – 7 PM in Spring:** "Pod" Dinners

Two Pod dinners will be held throughout the spring of 2015. All trainees will be assigned, based on availability, to a weeknight (Monday-Wednesday) when they will meet from 5 pm to 7 pm. At these meetings, current leaders will help cook FOP-style dinners as well as teach

technical skills such as maps and route planning, stoves, or tarp setup. Trainees will also be expected to meet once with their Pod leaders outside of the group.

(5) **Spring 2016 semester:** Office Hours

Each trainee will be expected to contribute 5 volunteer hours to FOP.

(6) **Monday, May 2, 6 – 8 PM:** Training Trip Send-Off Meeting and Dinner

(7) **May 15 - 23:** Training Trips

Our training trips are an evaluative process designed to allow leaders to develop their outdoors and leadership skills. They take the form of a weeklong wilderness trip in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Training trips are a wonderful opportunity to learn, teach, and become familiar with all the responsibilities of leading a FOP trip.

(8) **August 11 – 15:** Pre-FOP – You must be back at Harvard by 4 pm on August 11th.

(9) **August 16 – 22:** FOP trips

(10) **Spring 2016 (SWITCH ONLY):** Lifeguard Certification Classes

All switch leaders need to be Lifeguard certified. For those not currently certified, FOP will be offering an evening course at the MAC this spring. We will notify you as soon as we confirm the dates.

(11) **Saturday, April 30, 9 AM – 2 PM (SWITCH ONLY):** Canoe Skillz Day

All switch leaders are required to attend a canoe skills training day, to be held in the MAC or on the Charles River.

(12) **One day between spring break and training trips / March 12 – 20 (OPTIONAL, BUT HIGHLY RECOMMENDED - CAN BE COMPLETED IN PLACE OF SPRING OFFICE HOURS):** Backcountry Skillz Day / Spring Break Backcountry Skillz Week

As FOP trips take place in the remote backcountry of New England, FOP leaders must be comfortable making decisions in an outdoor setting. For those hoping to improve upon their existing outdoor experience, FOP offers additional day trips between spring break and training trips, the Backcountry Skillz Days. There is also the possibility that FOP will provide an opportunity for a Backcountry Skillz week trip over spring break. If you think that you would benefit from this additional experience (and we think that everyone would regardless of prior experience!), please check the designated box on the FOP leader application. Expressing your interest does not mean that you are required to go on these trips.

Anything else I should know?

- Students who will be on leave for either Spring semester 2016 or Fall semester 2016 are not eligible to apply.
- The cost of **leader training is paid for by FOP**, and while most leaders will provide their own clothing, backpack and sleeping bag, arrangements can always be made to borrow FOP equipment.

Some great (optional) training opportunities: For anyone who enjoys spending time in the outdoors or wants to learn more about the outdoors, there are some fun upcoming opportunities that may be of interest. Please note that selection as a FOP leader-trainee is not determined by whether you attend. We do, however, believe that training is an important aspect of developing leadership skills and encourage anyone that is interested to take advantage of these opportunities.

Advanced Skills Workshops: Throughout the semester, FOP will hold some fun, informal gatherings covering more advanced topics in outdoor and leadership skills.

WFR: There will be a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) course offered during Wintersession, **January 16th – 24th**. This course provides an opportunity for leaders and other Harvard undergraduates to get more advanced emergency wilderness medical training. That said, all trainees go through a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) course as part of their training, and WFR is not required. It can, however, significantly enhance one's comfort and ability in dealing with an outdoor emergency. All Harvard undergrads can take the course at a reduced rate.

Sincerely,
The FOP Steering Committee 2016
Contact: harvardfop@gmail.com or 617-495-7935
Office location: Matthews Basement

NOTE: PLEASE KEEP THIS LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS AS A REFERENCE FOR FUTURE DATES

FOP 2015-16 Leader Application

FOP applications will be collected via a Qualtrics form. Please use the following document to think about your response before opening the online form. Once you have composed your answers, you should copy and paste them into a template available for download on the form and our website.

Section F(ree response) of FOP

Please answer the following questions. Due to the large volume of applications we receive, we kindly ask you to limit each response to **no more than 150 words**. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be **specific** in your answers and **illustrate using examples**.

Question 1

Tell us something about you that you think we should know. Several optional prompts are below. We emphasize that you are not restricted to these.

- Describe an experience of personal growth. What challenged you to grow, and how did you respond?
- If you had to pick one person in the world to describe you, who would it be, and why?
- Tell us about an aspect of your life that you consider a fundamental part of your identity.

Question 2

What do you think your strengths would be in leading a group of first-year students? What would be your greatest challenges?

Question 3

Describe a situation in which you made a difficult decision. What factors did you consider? Are there other factors you wish you had considered? Take us through your thought process. The decision does not have to have been a monumental one. We recommend that you not describe your decision about whether to come to Harvard (we get a lot of these).

Question 4

In FOP we are actively and constantly working toward making our trips and community as inclusive as possible, though we recognize that we still have significant room for growth and programmatic development. What does the idea of inclusion mean to you in the context of helping FOPpers, about to embark on their first year of school, make the transition to college life? What steps would you take to create an inclusive space on your trip?

Question 5 (for re-applicants only)

What have you done in the past year that might enhance your ability to lead a FOP trip (esp. additional teaching, outdoor experience, etc.)?

Section O(utdoor and leadership experience) of FOP

Question 1

Please list chronologically your teaching experiences (outdoor or otherwise, volunteer or paid), any group leadership experience, and any positions of responsibility you've held that have been valuable to your development.

Question 2

What does the "outdoor" in "First-Year Outdoor Program" mean to you? What do you think the outdoors would mean for you in a FOP context? Why do you think we do FOP outdoors and how does that make our program unique? Applicants with no outdoor experience often bring new perspectives to these questions and should not worry about having a "correct" response—just because someone has a lot of outdoor experience does not mean they would make a good FOP leader! (150 word limit)

Section P(ut your feet in their boots) of FOP

Imagine that the following scenario describes a day on a FOP trip you are leading. After reading it, please list three of your concerns, elaborating about why they are concerns for you, and how you would react to them. There are no right or wrong answers, but you should try to pick the three concerns that you feel are the most pressing. Please note that, while leading FOP can be a demanding experience, the situation described below is not typical and has not happened on an actual FOP trip. Any resemblance to friends is purely coincidental. (500 word limit)

You have just finished your third day of hiking with your group of 9 FOPpers. Although you have arrived in camp at a reasonable hour, the day was longer than you expected. The length of the day was due in part to Peter, your co-leader, taking the group down the wrong trail for half a mile and the thunderstorm that passed through around 1 PM. Still, almost all of your FOPpers tell you what an incredibly positive time they are having.

Two of your female FOPpers, Lizzie and Matilda, have been getting along very well all week and have talked about everything from their favorite TV shows to their liberal political views. Recently, they both have been talking about the many vacations they took throughout their childhoods, such as Lizzie's family trip touring all of Luxembourg and Matilda's hikes throughout New Zealand. Renee, a FOPper from a small town in Missouri, used to chat with Lizzie and Matilda while hiking, but ever since they've started talking about their upbringings, she's been hiking directly behind you. She's also started to talk less and less, usually responding to direct questions with one to two word answers.

Meanwhile, Mark, a FOPper from northern New England, is helping Peter cook. He is by far the most helpful FOPper, and is always the first one to volunteer when you arrive at camp. In fact, when you were moving things around to set up the tarp earlier, you noticed that Mark was carrying a huge amount of weight - he had taken most of the group gear and even some personal gear of other FOPpers. Everyone seems to have taken a liking to Mark, especially a FOPper named Suzy. Suzy always hikes close to Mark and volunteers for all the same tasks as he does. She takes pride in asking him to help her, and Mark certainly doesn't seem to mind the attention.

Phillip is a very athletic FOPper from New York City. He deferred a year before starting college and enjoys telling you about what he did in his year off, such as surfing in Australia and backpacking through Greece. Daniel, another FOPper, always listens attentively to Phillip's stories. He seems very impressed by Phillip, and tries to interest Phillip in his own stories, in addition to asking him if he wants to "get trashed" together when they get back on campus. Phillip is quite unresponsive to Daniel, and instead spends a lot of time talking to Peter, more than to the other FOPpers. He sometimes slips in comments about how much he matured over his year off and how he identifies more with your more mature point of view. Peter listens to all of his stories and occasionally asks questions, but once while Phillip was recounting a trek through the Alps you think you may have caught an eye roll coming from Peter.

The other FOPpers, Kelly and Jack, are fairly quiet. They smile and respond positively when approached but do not talk too much with each other or the rest of the group. You often see Kelly shivering during breaks, but when you ask her about it she says she's fine and just needs to keep hiking. She enjoys doing nice things for others, such as giving away her cookies and dessert treats because she gets full quickly.

In the valley you're in, the sun sets quickly. Before you got into camp, Peter announced that each leader would take a group of FOPpers and there would be a competition to put up the tarps the fastest. He also warns the FOPpers to stay away from the dangerous Gage Caves, a quarter-mile to the northeast of camp. As dinner cooks, you wonder what to do next. As a leader of the group you want to make sure everyone gets the most out of this FOP trip. Tomorrow the group has five miles of hiking over fairly challenging terrain. You wonder how best to prepare everyone for tomorrow and the remainder of the trip.

Letters of Evaluation

Please make sure that your evaluations are completed by people who have observed you in a position of leadership or responsibility such as a high school teacher, extracurricular instructor, employer or, if you went on FOP, one of your FOP Leaders. It is generally not constructive to submit an evaluation from a roommate or close friend. Likewise, it is often helpful to submit evaluations from individuals with diverse perspectives on you (i.e., submitting evaluations from both of your FOP Leaders would not be recommended).

Make sure to give the following information to those whom you are asking to write evaluations for you:

1. Your full name (the same one that you will enter in this form)
2. Your Harvard email address (the same one that you will enter in this form; it should contain "@college")
3. Whether or not you have waived your right of access to the evaluation