

Steering Committee

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FIRST-YEAR OUTDOOR PROGRAM

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Dear FOP Leader Applicant,

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 344 FOPpers participate in 39 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 18th through Monday, August 24th 2015, and your commitment as a leader would run from **August 13th through August 24th**.

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 99 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 responsibility for 8-12 first year students and requires 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 policy 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

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

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 (can be acquired through y) as well as additional training during the spring. Switch leaders ideally have previous boating experience.

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. 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 willingness to improve their outdoor skills.

Potential leaders should have prior experience in the outdoors and/or the desire to become comfortable 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 Weekend (BSW) 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 surely emerge with much-improved technical skillz!

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 26th through February 13th 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 18th. 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 2015. 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 Skills 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 25th, 7-9 pm:** Welcome Meeting
- (2) **Saturday, March 8th, 9 AM – 5 PM:** Skillz Day 1
- (3) **March 1st-5th, March 29th-April 2nd, April 5th-9th, April 12th–16th, 7 – 9 PM:** Workshop Weeks
A total of four weeknight workshops will be held throughout the spring of 2015. All trainees will be assigned, based on availability, to a weeknight (Sunday-Thursday) when they will meet from 7 pm to 9 pm. At these meetings, current leaders will teach technical skills such as maps and route planning or stoves.
- (4) **Spring 2014 semester:** Office Hours
Each trainee will be expected to contribute 6 volunteer hours to FOP.

- (5) **Monday, May 4th, 6 – 8 PM:** Training Trip Send-Off Meeting and Dinner
- (6) **May 16th-24th OR May 17th- 25th, depending on your exam schedule:** Training Trips
Our training trips are an evaluative process that occurs via a week-long 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.
- (7) **August 13th-17th:** Pre-FOP – You must be back at Harvard by 4 pm on August 13th.
- (8) **August 18th – 24th:** FOP trips
- (9) **Spring 2015 (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.
- (10) **Saturday, May 2nd, 9 AM – 2 PM (SWITCH ONLY):** Canoe Skills Day
All switch leaders are required to attend a canoe skills training day, to be held in the MAC.
- (11) **April 3rd-5th, April 10th-12th (OPTIONAL, BUT HIGHLY RECOMMENDED - CAN BE COMPLETED IN PLACE OF SPRING OFFICE HOURS):** Backcountry Skillz Weekend
As FOP trips take place in the remote backcountry of New England, FOP leaders must be comfortable with decision-making in an outdoor setting. For those hoping to improve upon their existing outdoor experience, FOP offers an additional two-night camping trip in April, the Backcountry Skillz Weekend. This non-evaluative trip, led by current FOP leaders, is designed to increase comfort in the woods and to provide an opportunity for extra practice of the technical skills required for leading a FOP trip. If you think that you would benefit from this additional experience, please check the designated box on the FOP leader application. Expressing your interest does not mean that you are required to go on this trip.

Anything else I should know?

- Students who will be on leave for either Spring semester 2015 or Fall semester of 2015 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 17th – 25th**. 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 2015

Contact at: 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 2014-15 Leader Application

FOP applications will be collected via an online 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 the form.

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 two paragraphs**. 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 (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(outdoor and leadership experience) of FOP

Question 1

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

Question 2

Part 1:

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! (two paragraph limit)

Part 2:

Please give us a sense of your comfort and skills in the outdoors by providing a chronological list of your previous outdoor experiences. An experience does not necessarily need to have taken place in a remote place but should in some way contribute to your comfort in the outdoors. Please include trip length, date, location, group size and relationship (i.e. family, friends, formal organization [Outward Bound, NOLS, etc.]), type of trip (the purpose of the trip and /or activities encompassed), and your role (the role you played within the context of the trip [i.e. did you aid in leading, planning, teaching or preparing for the trip?]).

Examples:

—Throughout school year. Cambridge, MA. Various friends. Walks along Charles River. Passionate participant.

—All summer, 2010. Phoenix, AZ. Parents. Weekly walks in the wilderness. Passionate participant.

—6 days, July, 2009. Narraganset Bay, RI. Group of 8 friends. Sea kayaking. I helped plan the route and purchase food for the trip.

Question 3

Please include any certifications and skills you have acquired and include their expiration dates. (Wilderness or Community First Aid, Wilderness First Responder, Wilderness EMT, Red Cross/ AHA/ NSC CPR, Life Guard, WSI, or any other skills/ certifications that you think might be pertinent.)

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 are about to eat lunch on the third day of your FOP trip with 8 FOPpers and 1 co-leader. So far, your trip has gone smoothly except for the first night: it was raining and you couldn't get one of your stoves to work, so you had a late dinner and a short night of sleep. Also, Dennis and Rafael's sleeping bags got damp, and they are still drying out. Lunch is later than usual today because the terrain in the morning was steep with a lot of elevation change. Neha, your most fit FOPper, thought the morning was really easy and was voicing her frustration that the group had been moving so slowly. Brynne hiked in the back the whole morning and could barely keep up. She told you that she was worried about holding up the group, but that this was the hardest thing she'd ever done before.

At lunchtime, the whole group sits down and you start to pull out the salami and cheese. One of your FOPpers, Jacob, is Jewish and does not eat salami, which you knew beforehand, so you pull out the peanut butter for him. Another one of your FOPpers, Greg, says he's never met a Jewish person before and asks Jacob why he's not eating salami. Neha turns to you and asks if she can have peanut butter instead because she's sick of salami. You know if you passed the peanut butter around today, there probably would not be enough peanut butter to last for the next two lunches. You are about to ask Neha to hold off when your co-leader, Ted, says "sure!" and passes it to her. You try to signal to him but he doesn't see you, and lunch goes on. You notice that Dennis is sitting separate from the group and not participating in the conversation.

Joanna, one of your most outgoing FOPpers who went to boarding school in Massachusetts, has been talking about her two older brothers who also went to Harvard. She announces to the group that she wants to go to medical school, and that she wants to write for the Crimson. One of your quieter FOPpers, Catherine, is from a rural town in Idaho and is the eldest of five siblings. She is listening intently to Joanna, and asks her what the Crimson is. Joanna explains to her that it is Harvard's daily newspaper, one of the top college papers in the country, and that it looks really good on a resume. Joanna goes on to tell Catherine how she and her mother have already planned out all of the courses that she will take over the next four years. Catherine looks worried and continues to ask Joanna about her college plans.

As you're eating lunch, Ted takes out the map and shows everyone the route for the afternoon. He says that we still have two miles over challenging terrain, and that we're going to have to pick up the pace if we want to get to camp before dark.

Dennis is still sitting away from the group, and you realize that he has been separate at meals for the past two lunches. You decide to go check in with him, and when you ask him how he's doing, he tells you that he's fine, just tired. You ask him if he wants to come over and join the group and he shrugs his shoulders and says maybe later.

As you pack up lunch 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. You wonder how best to prepare everyone for the rest of the day and the remainder of the trip.

Letter of Evaluation 1:

Name of Evaluation 1 writer:

In what capacity you know the writer:

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Applicant's name:

WAIVER: I do ___ // I do not ___ waive any rights of access I may have, as provided by law, to the letter of evaluation submitted by: _____ .

Date Applicant's Signature

Letter of Evaluation 2:

Name of Evaluation 2 writer:

In what capacity you know the writer:

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Applicant's name:

WAIVER: I do ___ // I do not ___ waive any rights of access I may have, as provided by law, to the letter of evaluation submitted by: _____ .

Date Applicant's Signature