



VOYAGEUR
OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

Independent Study Guide for Academic Credit

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Independent Study Overview

Many students, parents and teachers want to know how credit may be earned while attending an Outward Bound course. The answer lies in developing an Independent Study Project while on a course 7-days or longer. Since our founding in 1961 thousands of students have been awarded high school, undergraduate, graduate and teacher re-certification credit. This guide is a tool for you and your school to use as you design an Independent Study Project to complete as part of your Outward Bound course.

What is an independent study?

An independent study involves studying a topic before, during, and after your course. Projects have included natural science, leadership, physical education, the environment, geography, safety, nutrition, first aid, business administration, group dynamics, communications, and other topics. The choices are broad and are generally limited only by your imagination!

Who can do an independent study?

- Student's grades 8 through 12, undergraduate and graduate students, and teachers fulfilling recertification requirements may want to supplement their regular academic study with an Outward Bound course.
- Students who want to earn credit towards the completion of their formal education while simultaneously experiencing Outward Bound.
- Students looking to take a break from the classroom and ready to become thoroughly involved with "experiential" education.

IMPORTANT: Only those students who are willing to add to the already rigorous nature of an Outward Bound course should consider applying. Be assured, independent study requires additional study before, during, and after the course and only students willing to exhibit considerable commitment should consider undertaking a project.

How can I get credit at my school?

Prior to attending a course, make arrangements for fulfilling requirements and receiving credit with the school of your choice and the appropriate advisor or department head. They will require independent research demonstrating the application of your Outward Bound experience to an area of study in that department – astronomy, geography, English, physical education, etc. Important steps to the process are:

Confirm with a teacher, counselor, registrar, that credit is available through your own school or transferable from an outside institution.

Clearly establish exactly what type of credit(s) will be awarded/accepted and exactly what the credit will be used to fulfill.

Enroll on an Outward Bound course; insure that steps one and two (above) are complete before course start.

IMPORTANT: Please note that Outward Bound is not a credit awarding institution. It is *your* responsibility to arrange for credit either at your own school or with another institution able and willing to award credit. The cost of credit varies from institution to institution.

Arranging an Independent Study

What should I know about my OB course prior to arranging my independent study?

- Thoroughly read your Outward Bound course website sent by your course advisor in order to become versed in what activities you will be doing and in what geographic area your course will be run. This information will give you a solid foundation in the educational pedagogy of Outward Bound and its goals and objectives.
- Our courses rely on a flexible, responsive curriculum that meets the needs of each group and student. We cannot guarantee that we will present a particular topic (ie. geologic history or human history) on every course, but we often have resource materials like books on flora and fauna or history and weather.
- While on your course you will have some time to keep notes, make sketches, take pictures, read, but it will likely be limited. It is important to keep in mind that your course will demand your primary focus.
- The outcomes of Outward Bound are unpredictable and many students radically alter their interests and pursuits during their course. You may find that your interests change dramatically and therefore the focus of your project.

Where do I start?

- 1) **Solicit your school's support.** It is essential that you understand and follow your school's particular requirements for independent study and the awarding of credit. If you are not able to receive credit from the school you are attending, outside credit may be awarded from our partner university, Western State Colorado University. If you choose this route, you must make arrangements to ensure that your school is willing to transfer the credit to your transcript.
- 2) **Determine your sponsor.** You will need to make a decision about who your sponsor will be, i.e. who at your school will monitor the quality and completion of your project. Make sure that your sponsor is thoroughly familiar with the Outward Bound course, your reasons for undertaking an independent study, and how you plan to receive credit.
- 3) **Choose a subject that interests you and captures your imagination.** Discuss your project with your sponsor in order to determine the two of you are in agreement as to the value and realistic scope of your undertaking.
- 4) **Establish a contract with your school.** It is important to thoroughly establish this contract before attending your course. Your contract should contain clearly measurable milestones and allow both you and your sponsor to understand exactly what your project is and how you plan to achieve your goals. Questions to ask yourself during the process:

- What will I submit to my sponsor to demonstrate I have accomplished my project? Will it be a written report, a slide show, an oral report, a set of sketches, the completion of a set of readings, the demonstration of some newly-found skills?
- How does your project compliment a class you are taking or one you plan to take?
- What reading will you undertake to support your study?
- How will you engage your instructors and group-mates during your course?
- How is the success and completion of your project to be measured?
- What will you do during and after your course to complete your project?

IMPORTANT: Keep in mind that an Outward Bound day is typically full from beginning to end. We do not provide significant free time for academic study or writing. Most students find a journal, sketch pad, or camera to be an essential element of their project. Laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other similar electronic devices are not permitted on course.

5) **Send a copy of your independent study and contract to your Outward Bound course advisor.** Your course advisor will notify your instructors of your project. If time does not permit communication before your course, make sure you bring a copy of your contract to the course start to discuss your project with your instructors.

How will outcomes be measured?

This is something that you will need to determine with your sponsor.

- How is the success and completion of your project to be measured?
- How is its quality to be evaluated?

Cooperatively evaluate what the best format will be for a final project. This could be a paper, a presentation, a photo exhibit, or any other media or combination of medias that you both come to agreement on.

IMPORTANT: Outward Bound will provide you with a graduation certificate at the end of your course. Should your school require further documentation of your experience on course, your instructors can provide you with a brief written evaluation of your participation on course. Please let your course advisor know immediately if this will be a requirement, so they can inform your instructors prior to course start.

What do I need a sponsor for?

Your sponsor will play an important role in the success of your project. It is the responsibility of the sponsor, in cooperation with you, to ensure that whatever credit awarding institution you choose is in fact willing to award credit when specific criteria are met.

The sponsor also plays an important role in helping to frame both the expectations of the institution and the outcomes of the project. The sponsor is expected to act as an objective liaison between the institution and you to ensure objectivity and quality. Only sponsors willing to work closely with both you and the school(s) involved should be considered for this important responsibility.

Rationale for Academic Credit

Who is Voyageur Outward Bound School?

At Voyageur Outward Bound School we believe in the potential of every individual and that there is more in us than we know. We believe when people discover strength of character and an aptitude for leadership and a desire to serve, it has a positive impact on their lives and the lives of those around them. Through challenge and discovery, we change lives. We offer life-changing expeditions for everyone, regardless of social or economic status, race or gender, from struggling teens, to first generation urban youth, adults in transition or veterans integrating back into life outside of active duty.

For over 50 years, we have been changing lives by using the wilderness as a classroom to provide unparalleled opportunities for personal growth, self-reliance, confidence, teamwork and compassion. Our full portfolio of programs ranges from part-day programming to wilderness programs lasting a full semester. Canoeing, camping, rock climbing, backpacking, skiing, snowshoeing, dog-sledding and urban adventure programs serve as the educational vehicle for social and emotional learning and character development. In all of our programs, tight-knit groups are led through sequenced challenges designed to discover and improve skills such as emotion management, teamwork, initiative, problem solving, responsibility and empathy. This learning occurs for both the individual and the group. Voyageur Outward Bound School students experience the benefit of personal challenge and the positive effects of nature as they build critical life skills.

What are the objectives and outcomes of an Outward Bound course?

An Outward Bound expedition, laced with the invaluable wisdoms of life experience, take you deep into remote and beautiful wilderness areas and deep into the core elements of life. All Outward Bound courses and programs are based on four core values: Compassion, Integrity, Excellence, and Inclusion and Diversity. Our courses demonstrate these values by concentrating on the following learning objectives:

- Cognitive Development – intellect, mental strength and the ability to organize; knowledge involves logic, problem-solving, memorization and decision making.
- Psychomotor Development – aside from the issues of good health and wellbeing, development of the physical self impacts mental and spiritual well-being.
- Affective Development – congruent feelings, values and attitudes are fundamental components of the well-rounded individual truly augmenting personal growth.

The differences between traditional education and Outward Bound's "experiential" model lie largely in two areas: the setting (traditional classroom vs. the wilderness classroom) and the proportionate emphasis placed on the three objectives listed above. An Outward Bound course, regardless of duration, emphasizes equal cognitive, psychomotor and affective development. Since traditional education focuses most heavily on cognitive learning, the balance of an Outward Bound course positively affects most students by improving confidence, motivation, commitment, trust, communication, honesty. For many, a course provides a high-impact and long-lasting milestone.

Learning Objectives Defined

COGNITIVE

(35%) Map and compass work, expedition, goal setting and planning, problem solving and decision making, first aid and emergency, preparedness, geology, natural history, ecology, field sanitation, etc.

PSYCHOMOTOR

(35%) Skill development in activity: backpacking, mountaineering, climbing, rappelling, whitewater rafting, sailing, canoeing, camping/camp craft, etc.

AFFECTIVE

(30%) Group process, curiosity, self-discovery, structured and unstructured self and group reliance, development of spirit, tenacity, socialization with others, compassion

Examples Independent Study Topics

The following topics are only examples. Submit any ideas for consideration—be creative!

Art. While on your course create a notebook of sketches, watercolors, poems, reflections, aphorisms, photographs and sounds that develop a personal theme.

Astronomy. Outward Bound courses are typically great opportunities for studying the stars.

- Assume you can only travel by night using the stars as your guide—describe step-by-step directions for retracing your route. This will include a map of the sky with star key.
- Identify constellations. Describe how other cultures have identified the same stars and constellations and the mythologies behind them.

English. Read the journals of those who traveled the routes before you (John Wesley Powell's *The Exploration of the Colorado River*; Harvey and Cohn Fletcher in the Grand Canyon; Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* in the canyon lands.) Keep a detailed journal of your course including art and poetry and publish sections in a local or school newspaper.

Environmental Studies.

- Observe, record and document natural versus human impact on your course area. What are the signs of flooding, erosion, deforestation, overuse. Managing public campsites and wilderness access are areas of great environmental concern. Write a paper describing the future of your course area as you see it, including observations of both good and bad management.
- There are numerous state and federal agencies charged with a wide variety of environmental goals and objectives. Which agencies manage your course area? Describe their mission. How is it being realized? Describe the future of land management in America. What are the primary issues? Who are the big stake holders? How should the complexity of the environmental discussion be successfully resolved? Who wins? Who loses?

First Aid/Safety/Sanitation.

- During your course strict safety policies must be followed. Identify and review these policies. Choose a policy used in rock climbing, first aid or sanitation and describe the

origin of the policy, its application, its effect, its outcomes. Were the policies well thought out? Are they open to inspection or written in stone? How do the safety policies used on course apply to the management and welfare of all people?

- Obtain American Red Cross First Aid Certification before your course, read three books on wilderness medicine and first aid. What first aid skills and equipment are critical for safe expeditions into the backcountry? Read *Accidents in North American Mountaineering* and debrief one or two accidents in light of your personal philosophy, background, and experience. Discuss the single biggest cause of injury in the backcountry.

Geography/Geology. Map your course with four different types of map: latitude and longitude; topographic; land form; ecosystem; demographic... Create your own map, including a detailed scale and key. Compare and contrast the information each map provides. Make a geography notebook composed of photographs and drawings. Compare the geography to the geology and how the two impact one another. Identify key geologic events that have shaped the geography of your course area.

History.

- Your course area is rich in human history from the remains of ancient civilizations to modern cowboys and mining camps. One of the many periods steeped in lore in the Boundary Waters is the time of the voyageurs—here are the tales of natives, early settlers, trappers, and explorers. Gaining an understanding of the history of your course area will significantly add to your enjoyment.
- The history of the Environmental Movement in America is rich lore and controversy, intrigue, political corruption, heroism, failure and magnificent success. How has this movement impacted your course area? What are the major environmental concerns influencing your course area today? Who are the agencies responsible for land use in your course area? Who are the major environmental players impacting your area?

Natural History. Study animal tracking before course start. Identify possible animals in the environment in which your course will be held. Document what you see and learn about animal habitat, eating patterns, life cycles, characteristics and behavior.

Nutrition. Make a list of all food available during your course. What is the nutritional composition of the food: percentage of friendly and unfriendly fat, carbohydrate, protein, vitamins, minerals, water? How many calories do you estimate you burn while at rest, for each mile covered on foot, on each day of your course? What is the source of these calories? How does nutrition contribute to optimal performance? Design a totally alternative menu.

Physical Education. Keep a record of the physical conditioning you did to get ready for your course. Describe your program and an ideal program. Document during your course a record of your physical activity. Record the number of miles traveled per day and the number of calories burned. Note body changes. Document which muscles are used and how. Note any changes caused by altitude. Describe what activity you will need to do to maintain fitness after the course. Define fitness and health. Discuss: motivation, fat, muscle, health, adaptation, exercise, specificity, training, rest, nutrition... Read Cooper, Sheehan, Anderson, Wilder, Ulyot.

Political Science. With few exceptions, our courses are conducted within designated Wilderness Areas. The landmark Wilderness Act of 1964 was a piece of legislation significantly impacting the future of American wilderness. Trace the political development of this Act. What are its future political ramifications? What are the political interests competing for commerce, preservation and recreation in these wilderness areas? Which is more important, a person a job or the environment? How are these two conflicting interests balanced and managed?

Psychology/Sociology.

- The first American Expedition to Mount Everest involved a study of human behavior under stress. An Outward Bound course involves similar dynamics. Read Hans Selye's *The Stress of Life*. Define friendly and unfriendly stress. Keep a record of the stresses and adjustments you experience on your course. Identify and describe responses to stress.
- Identify Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as one perspective on group dynamics and development. Consider how decisions are made in light of these needs. Discuss your instructors' roll on the course as the course progresses.
- What is the Outward Bound Process. Define it. How is this process applicable on both micro and macro levels? How does process relate to personality?

Religion. Many students find God alive and well in the wilderness. He/She or It has played a significant roll in nurturing and transforming the spirit from the time of the aesthetic desert hermits to the walkabouts of native cultures to the early morning musings of Thomas Merton, Annie Dillard. Describe your personal relation with God and how the wilderness reflects this vision.

Service. Service is a fundamental element of every Outward Bound course. Define the word service and provide examples. Describe examples of service on your course. Reflect upon the school's motto: To Serve, To Strive, and Not To Yield. What place does service play in your life? Read Hesse, *The Journey to the East*; Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*; and/or Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*.

Example Strategy for Developing a Project

Projects have been developed around a wide variety of disciplines: Geography, History, Political Science, Physical Education, Psychology, Sociology, English, Safety, Environment, Nutrition, First Aid, and others.

The following example is a successful model used by many students.

1) **Establish a goal.**

Example: I will develop an independent study on the subject of teamwork and leadership.

2) **Define specific learning activities and outcomes.**

Example:
Before the course:

- a. Read *The Secrets of Dynamic Communication, Leaders, the four keys of effective Leadership, and Leadership is an Art.*
- b. Define qualities common to a successful team.
- c. Define qualities of a leader.

During the course:

- a. Document specific examples of teamwork and leadership.
 - What are the visible clues?
 - Who are the leaders? When do they lead/follow?
- b. Document how teamwork and styles of leadership change.
 - a. Is the same person always in charge? Who is in charge when it gets tough?
 - b. What leadership styles are present? How do they work in the group?
 - c. How does communication and teamwork change throughout the day?
- c. Document examples of the group working as a team and failing to work as a team.
- d. What is the role of the instructors?
- e. Discuss what aspects of leadership and teamwork you would like to take away from your course.
- f. Interview an Outward Bound staff member and discuss my observations.

After the course:

- a. Interview a local community leader and discuss my observations and how they relate back to the community.

Example Independent Study Contract

Student Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

School Attending: _____

Name of school awarding credit: _____ Grade: _____

Number and type of credits to be earned: _____

Sponsor: _____ Phone: _____

Title of Independent Study: _____

Outward Bound Course Number: _____ Start: _____ End: _____

Attach the following:

- 1) Statement of purpose for independent study
- 2) Description of plan for independent study (developed between student and sponsor):
 - Goal
 - Specific learning activities and outcomes (Before, during, and after course)
 - Measurable outcomes

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature (For students under 18)

Date

Sponsor(s) Signature

Date

Registrar Signature

Date