

M325.02

List the competencies of an outdoor leader (OL)

No review

Objective

By the end of this lesson the cadet shall be expected to define the term OL and list the competencies of an OL.

Teaching Point 1

Define an OL

Leadership

The term leadership can be interpreted in many different ways. It is defined to meet the needs of goals of the organization, however, all meanings have a common basis or foundation. In most cases, the definition is tailored to fit the activity or organization under which it has been developed.

The Canadian Forces (CF) defines leadership as “directly or indirectly influencing others, by means of formal authority or personal attributes, to act in accordance with one’s intent to a shared purpose”. The CF definition is generic, value-neutral and broadly inclusive of all forms of leadership across a wide range of settings and times.

(A particular breed of cadets defines leadership as “the art of influencing human behaviour to accomplish a mission or task in the manner so desired by the leader”)

Distinction between leadership and Leaders

It is important to note that there should be a distinction between the concept of leadership and the ways in which an individual becomes a leader.

Leadership

Leadership is a process of influence. In most informal group settings, people who become group leaders influence other group members to create, identify, work toward, achieve, and share mutually acceptable goals. In these types of situations, more than one group member often emerges to fulfill different leadership responsibilities. Competent leadership requires formal training, especially in outdoor situations where bad leadership can have disastrous consequences.

Leader

A leader is a person with certain qualities or traits exercising a definite and particular role in relation to others. The role they exercise is a set of expected behaviours associated with a person’s position in a group.

Expectations of a Leader

Any person who has been a member of a team, participating in an activity, whether indoors or outdoors, has developed a list of expectations they believe the leader of their group should possess. As an individual participating in an activity, people expect leaders to:

- be good at planning and organizing;
- be confident;
- be technically competent, which for OLs includes competency in basic skills such as first aid, route finding and predicting the weather;
- care for other people;
- make good decisions;
- be trustworthy;
- communicate well;
- inspire others to be their best;
- build and maintain morale;
- be good teachers and coaches;
- be able to deal with difficult people and handle conflicts;
- be able to build and guide teams; and
- anticipate problems and deal with them proactively.

Qualities of an OL

The responsibilities associated with being an OL can, at times, seem overwhelming. It is not just about possessing leadership skills. To be an effective OL, the leader should possess the following qualities:

- courage,
- tenacity,
- humility,
- warmth,
- enthusiasm,
- integrity,
- patience,
- competency,
- strength of character,
- desire to be a leader,
- humour, and
- organizational skills.

THE UNIQUE SKILL OF BEING AN OL

Being an OL requires a different set of skills, qualifications, competencies and qualities than that of a leader in other settings. Incorporating these skills, qualifications and competencies into daily routine while participating in an outdoor adventure activity (OAA) is what makes an individual an OL. OLs:

- are unique as they are usually appointed into the position they hold in the group;
- are motivated and enjoy being outside and instilling this enjoyment in the individuals they lead;

- have previous outdoor experiences that provide them with a strong basis from which to lead;
- are required to use the process of group interaction and cooperation as a basis for the facilitation of personal and social growth of the members in their group;
- are responsible to ensure the safety of the individuals engaging in OAA under their leadership;
- aim to ensure the protection and preservation of the natural environments into which people venture for OAA; and
- aim to enhance the quality of OAA for individuals they are leading.

Who will Lead the Group?

A leader is either appointed or emerges from the membership to lead. Groups may naturally be drawn to the individual who exhibits the best leadership qualities. Some groups may naturally defer to the individual with the most experience while other groups may feel that no one person needs to be designated as the leader and leadership should be shared among the members of the group.

Designated Leader

When a person is appointed as the leader of a group, they become the designated leader. OLs will usually find themselves in this role. They are appointed due to their knowledge and experience in the activities being completed.

Hard and Soft Skill Competency

Being a leader in the outdoors requires a different set of hard and soft skills than that of a leader in other settings. OLs must be able to incorporate both types of these skills into their daily routine while participating in OAA.

Hard Skills

Hard skills are the technical, safety and environmental skills associated with being an OL. There is no requirement for individuals to master every skill; however, competency with a wide variety of skills is encouraged. As well, it is important for OLs to know their limitations. The safety of the individuals in the group relies on the ability of the OL to carry out the specific activity.

Examples of hard skills include:

- canoeing,
- mountain biking,
- hiking,
- mountaineering,
- kayaking,
- rock climbing,
- ice climbing,
- navigating,
- camping, and

- winter hiking.

Soft Skills

Soft skills complement hard skills. Being an excellent kayaker does not mean that an individual will be an effective OL. There has to be a balance between hard and soft skills. Soft skills are divided into the categories of instruction, organization and facilitation. Unfortunately, soft skill development is sometimes neglected.

Definition of an OL

An OL is an individual who leads groups and individuals into natural settings using a variety of modes of transportation such as hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, mountaineering, etc. An OL must combine their hard skill competencies with soft skills in order to provide groups and individuals with a positive, safe and challenging outdoor experience. It is the responsibility of an OL to ensure the protection and preservation of the natural environments into which they bring people for an OAA.

Confirmation of TP

Q1. What qualities should an OL possess in order to be effective?

Answer:

Q2. What type of leader is an OL?

Answer:

Q3. What are some examples of hard skills?

Answer:

Conclusion

OLs are a critical aspect of the army cadet adventure training program. The presence of knowledgeable, conscientious OLs during cadet activities will influence the safety and success of the activity. The competencies of an OL are the skills and ideals which can be learned but must be practiced in order to master.