

Oregon Trail Guide Assignment



Background:

For this assignment, students will **write a travel guide** to help colonizers moving to the West along the Oregon Trail. Imagine you are from the city and in need of help moving through the forest and mountains to your new home. You'd probably need information like:

- How many and what kind of supplies to bring
- When to leave
- What direction or path to take
- What to do in emergencies
- Who to trust along the way

This is the kind of information you'll be providing for other travelers in your travel guide.

Instructions:

- Play [the game Oregon Trail](#). It might be wise to play several times in order to get a feel for the variety of experiences one might face along the trail.
- Using your knowledge of the Oregon Trail from the game, class lectures, the textbook, and the supplementary materials below, write a guide for other travelers
- In your travel guide, keep in mind:
 - the criteria listed above under "background"
 - who your audience is - you're *selling* a guide to them
 - Assume they are intelligent (don't write in some kind of weird voice)
 - You'll need to be a voice of authority - make sure you give details and back up your ideas (cite where needed)
- On the top of your assignment, **include BOTH your Name AND CWID** (we do not normally do this, I know)

Supplementary Materials:

- [Traveling on the Overland Trails, 1843-1860 - Library of Congress \(includes primary sources\)](#)
- [Ask a Mortician \(YouTube\) - The Donner Party: What REALLY Happened?](#)
- [Oregon Encyclopedia - the Oregon Trail](#)

Oregon Trail Guide Rubric

	Doesn't Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Development	Assignment does not attempt to construct a historically accurate representation of a guide that might be used for travel. Assignment may be a generic description of the Oregon Trail or a summary of supplementary materials, but is not reflective of the assessment's central idea.	Assignment presents a travel guide that answers the basics of the questions posed by the background information. Guide may provide sound reasoning and/or evidence for suggestions, but does not necessarily reflect the needs or perspectives of all travelers.	Assignment shows in-depth understanding of the complexity involved in Oregon Trail travel; Supporting ideas and evidence are clearly presented and result in a cohesive product that reflects an understanding of the travel experience from multiple perspectives.
Audience	Uses language and/or delivery that is partially understandable due to errors in mechanics and organization; shows an unclear grasp of the targeted, intended audience	Fully uses language and/or delivery that is clear, straightforward, expresses meaning with few significant errors, and considers a majority of the targeted, intended audience	Shows in-depth use of language and/or delivery through proficient, expressive, clear, and appropriate messaging to a targeted, intended audience
Content	Content and/or historical evidence is partially relevant and shows little understanding of the subject	Fully uses relevant content and/or historical evidence and demonstrates general understanding of the subject	Shows in-depth understanding and uses relevant, quality content and/or historical evidence to support suggestions

Hiking the Appalachian Trail

Introduction

Hello adventure-seekers! In this guide to hiking the 2,190+ miles of the Appalachian Trail, you'll find essential information for safety, supplies, emergencies, and more. Be sure to make yourself a comprehensive list before embarking so that you're prepared for the journey ahead. Good luck!

Where do I start?

The best place to start on your journey is to decide how much of the Appalachian Trail you want to take on. Most hikers find that a journey of the entire trail takes somewhere between 5 to 7 months. If you don't have that kind of time, you may want to opt for one of the shorter sections – that's perfectly fine! Some sections of the trail are also cooler in temperature than others. This will dictate parts of your journey, like when you leave or where you start your journey. Here are some examples:

Springer Mountain, Georgia (75 miles): This roughly eight-day hike is perfect for the Spring. The longer journey also helps hikers get acclimated to longer treks, for those who want to take on the entire trail at a later date.

Shenandoah National Park, Virginia (100 miles): While this is one of the longer trails by length, it's considered one of the best hikes for beginners. The 10-day journey has some of the least-steep areas and has places to stop for both shopping and enjoying beautiful wildlife.

Blue Mountains, Pennsylvania (40 miles one way): This beautiful hike at the heart of Hawk Mountain takes 4-days on average. While it's not as long as others on the list, hikers should be aware of the chillier weather prone to Pennsylvania in the Fall and Winter months. Shelters and campsites dot the path, so hikers who wish to take in the hike (regardless of weather) can do so with the confidence of a place to stay at night.

Essential Safety Tips

While each hiker's journey is different, there are some items that all travelers should carry for basic safety. In order to stay safe *and* to help carry the load, it's recommended to travel in groups. This is also beneficial for medical emergencies and instances where hikers may need to help one another over tough surfaces.

Here is a list of items that all hikers or groups should be prepared to pack:

- **Clothing Layers:** Daytime and nighttime temperatures can vary drastically depending on season, altitude, and weather conditions. Hikers should be prepared to pack a variety of layers that include weather-proof tops and bottoms. This doesn't mean that hikers must pack *a lot* of clothes, but simply that hikers should be conscious of how smart they are packing. Being smart about packing a few layers that can be dried quickly will allow hikers to stay warm and cool along the trail.
- **Water Purifiers:** Water from streams is often naturally purified if it is from a running water source. As water runs over rocks and through sand and sediment, it's filtered by nature. However, if you're in an area with mostly standing water, you'll want a way to purify water. This can be done by boiling, or with a variety of purifying "straws" available at hiking stores. This will prevent illness on the trail.
- **First Aid:** Hikers should be prepared for emergencies like sprained ankles and various cuts. Be sure to have a way to clean and wrap wounds.

- **Bear Spray:** The last thing anyone wants is to come face-to-face with a bear and have no way out. It's always encouraged to learn less aggressive tactics to steer a bear away. But in the end, one should *always* take care of the safety of themselves and their group. Bear spray should be aimed squarely in the bear's face (think the nose – it's not pepper spray and not a human). While it will hurt the bear and hopefully cause them enough alarm to run away, it's not considered lethal. Both you and the bear can continue on your own paths.
- **A map:** Do not rely only on GPS or technology on the trail. Be sure to have a physical map with any key points laid out, such as shelters or trail communities.

This certainly isn't an exhaustive list. Consider discussing your journey with someone at an outdoor shop to see what type of light weight first-aid and/or emergency supplies they suggest. You can also reach out to the National Park Service for suggestions!

To ensure your own safety and the safety of others on the trail, be sure to register your hike with Park Rangers before leaving. Also be sure to let a few family members know when you are leaving, when you plan to return, and leave a copy of a map with your general hike plans. If something goes wrong, this will help them to assist local law enforcement in finding you and getting help.

General Tips for the Trip

Someone new to hiking 2,000+ miles might wonder exactly how we adventure-seekers make it in the wilderness for over half a year. That's a great question! Much of the success comes from weeks of preparation before leaving. Hikers expecting to make the whole journey should plan to need new clothes, shoes, and food along the way. They will need to anticipate those needs and ship new materials to spots along the route accordingly. Here are some suggestions:

Don't Reinvent the Wheel: Hikers have been taking this trail for decades. There are numerous blogs, websites, and now TikToks for exactly this topic. Do some research to see what will work best for you based on your group size, individual needs, and journey length.

Be Realistic: You will want to over-anticipate rather than under-anticipate (at least for your first journey) what your needs are. Make sure to budget for shipping costs accordingly.

Don't Create Danger: If you get to a spot on the trail where you are running out of supplies and you will not make it – STOP. TURN BACK. Do not purposefully create a dangerous situation for yourself or others. There will always be more opportunities, but not if you don't think smart.