



Field Trip Chaperone Guide

Who is the Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS)?

PVAS offers a wide variety of educational programs for children, adults, and families. Our goal is to get people of all ages outside to explore and learn about the natural world! We manage four **nature preserves** in the Eastern Panhandle featuring a variety of habitats to hike and explore. Thank you for volunteering your time to help the children at your school experience nature firsthand.

Your Role as a Chaperone

Prior to this field trip, the students participated in an in-school nature themed lesson taught by a PVAS environmental educator. This field trip is designed to expand upon the information the students learned in class, and provide hands-on, experiential learning in the outdoors. For some of the children, this might be the first time they have ever gone on a hike in the woods, or held a bug that they found under a log. As adults, we have a unique responsibility to nurture and cultivate the natural sense of wonder and love for nature in the children we engage with. We are so grateful that you will be a part of this experience. You may even find yourself connecting with nature in new and exciting ways too!

Children model adult behavior, so the way you engage in the field trip activities impacts the student experience. Here are some tips on how to model engagement:

- If your group is not focused on the activities, help them refocus their attention by redirecting their attention to the instructor or making sure the students are on task with the activity. You can participate in activities as well to help students stay engaged!
- Be excited to be there! Saying things like “Wow! Look at this bug!” helps engage the students and get them excited too.
- It’s okay if you don’t know how to identify things in nature. Try prompting the students with questions to get them to think like scientists. Example: “ I wonder who made these footprints. Which direction do you think the animal was going?”
- Act as if you like everything (even if you don’t) If you are tired of hiking or think a bug is gross (which is totally okay), keep this to yourself to avoid influencing students’ feelings/perceptions.
- Keep your phone in your pocket (unless you are taking photos).
- Save socialization with other parents until lunch time. Parents who are chatting in the background are very distracting to the instructor and students alike.
- Help teach the students “Leave No Trace Principles” by packing out your trash, and leaving what you find.

Field Trip Structure

- A PVAS staff member will email the field trip schedule to the contact teacher at least one week in advance.
- Classes will rotate between 3-4 stations, between 20 -40 minutes in length, led by PVAS educators/and or volunteer educators.
- Lunch will be 30 minutes in length

What students and chaperones should wear:

- Closed-toed shoes comfortable for walking (i.e. tennis shoes)
- Old clothes that can get muddy
- Coat, jacket or rain gear as appropriate. Dress warm and in layers!

What students and chaperones should bring:

- If it has been rainy in the last 48 hours or will be raining on the day of the field trip, we recommend that students bring an extra pair of shoes for the bus. A plastic grocery bag will help keep muddy shoes from getting the bus too dirty.
- Lunch- Some schools arrange for “pack outs” from the school cafeteria or students can bring their own.
- Filled water bottles. We will provide a water cooler for refills.

What teachers and chaperones should bring:

- Lunch
- Filled water bottle
- Cameras (optional)
- Antibacterial hand wipes or hand sanitizer
- First-Aid Kits (our staff is CPR & First Aid certified and we will have supplies too)
- Trash bags to pack out trash from lunch

Questions

Contact Amy Thomas, Lead teacher and Naturalist
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