

# Introduction to Field Work



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# Organising Field Work

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## Some Guidelines For Successful Fieldwork

by Dr Gee Chapman & others

### Reminders for teachers and leaders

It is essential that:

- There are clear objectives for the field study. Reconnaissance studies are vital.
- Students are prepared for the study with lead-up lessons, maps and questionnaires.
- The study provides maximum opportunity for student activities in the field (Are your students spending most of the day in the bus or in the field. Are there only guided observations, or are the students actively involved in field inquiries).
- There is follow-up to consolidate and evaluate the field study experiences.
- The trip is well organised in terms of timetables, transport, arrangements for studies in the field, parental approval, dress and gear needed for the study, expectations of student behaviour, duties of student groups, financial arrangements, insurance etc.

### Fieldwork ethics

You should be aware of your special responsibilities when you take students into the field. Teachers should follow these:

- Plan and lead excursions well.
- Take safety seriously.
- Choose and use your area carefully.
- Respect ownership.
- Think of other users of the area.
- Leave the area as you found it.
- Avoid disturbing plants and animals.
- Do not collect unnecessarily.
- Safeguard rare species.
- Give no-one cause to regret your field study.

There are outdoor study codes to acquaint you with common sense rules of behaviour necessary to protect the environment.

### Planning fieldwork

The sequence of activities in planning and implementing a full day study can be summarised as follows:

- Decide upon a field study problem or task and upon the area in which the study will be carried out in consultation with the subject coordinator or other teachers. (Refer to syllabus, and pattern of field studies in other years in the school).
- Carry out reconnaissance studies and plan a field study program. Think carefully about the abilities of the students, objectives, appropriate field experiences and the tempo of the study. Plan the ways in which the field study will be evaluated; for example, performance rating scales, objective test items, open book test (i.e. questions based on field notes) and written reports.
- Cost the field study, working on 80-90% student attendance, and plan to cover costs or make a small profit.

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- Consult with the principal, arguing the educational case for the field study, and set the date for the study.
- Confirm the bus order, ensuring that the bus will have a public address system in working order. Arrange transport departure times and place of embarkation.
- Advise the deputy-principal of teacher and classes involved in the study, the senior mistress if girls are involved, and the person in charge of the tuckshop of the number of students who will be away from school on the day of the field study.
- With the principal's approval, send home to parents a letter advising them of the purpose of the study, the date, cost, departure and return times, items necessary to take on the study, the teachers supervising the students and the date by which money for the study must be paid. The letter should include a tear-off consent form to be returned by a due date. A sample consent form is provided on the next page.
- Collect money at least one week prior to the study and check again with the bus company and with any key community persons who will be involved with the field study.
- Prepare the students for the field study (consider concepts, terms, skills, field groups, behaviour) and prepare questionnaires, maps and other materials that are needed. Leave a copy of printed materials with the principal.
- Armed with first-aid kit and portable public address system, if needed, supervise the boarding of the buses, and ensure that students are appropriately dressed and equipped for the trip.
- Ensure that the students are aware of the purpose of the study and of your expectations. Guide and encourage students as they carry out their field studies and supervise behaviour of students. Be clear and definite about arrangements for lunch breaks and other stops.
- At the conclusion of the trip, check that there is no lost property left on the coach, and that all equipment is returned to its assembly point, checked in and cleaned before being put away.

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## Permission Form

(Please detach and return by due date)

I give permission for my son/daughter .....  
(name) to attend the ..... (subject) field excursion on  
..... (day, date) to ..... (place).

I understand that the teaching staff will exercise all possible care  
but will not be liable for injury or illness or damage to property.

My son/daughter has had or suffers from:

Asthma:

Diabetes:

Epilepsy:

Rheumatic fever:

Other comments .....

In case of accident or illness, I wish my son/daughter to be  
treated

(Tick one):

By a private doctor:

At a public hospital:

Parent's signature .....

Address .....

Telephone number .....