



Audubon Outdoor Academy Parent Handbook

Mission

Audubon Outdoor Academy (AOA) is committed to inspiring curiosity, responsibility, and compassion in youth as guardians of environmental, cultural, and historical resources.

Vision

We envision a community of nature-focused youth inspiring sustainable outdoor practices and growing into their full potential as members of the natural world.

Objectives

- Identify plant and animal species
- Develop and implement outdoor survival skills
- Develop problem solving, leadership, and teamwork skills
- Understand and explain ecological principles
- Apply principles and strategies of environmental ethics and environmental science
- Demonstrate personal responsibility for the protection and conservation of the natural environment
- Engage in citizen science
- Utilize sustainable practices in all aspects of daily life
- Build personal connections to historical and cultural elements of the world
- Embrace diversity as a common denominator among all peoples

Staff Information and Curriculum Overview Teacher Qualifications All teachers have current First Aid and CPR certification. All teachers and substitutes have completed an interview process, background check and come with strong references from their previous employers.

Curriculum overview

Hiking

Outdoor safety

Collaborative projects

Survival skills

Observations

Nature Journaling

General Information

Audubon Outdoor Academy Contact Information

School Office-Audubon Acres 900 N SanctuaryRD Chattanooga, TN 37421

jwhitehorn@chattaudubon.org

423-892-1499



Communication

Parents can communicate with teachers and admin using the Remind app. Instructions to download app will be provided prior to the school year.

All other Communications will be via Email and Phone calls

Enrollment forms, with \$150 deposit, should be completed as soon as possible and emailed or mailed to Audubon Outdoor Academy. Once this is completed your child's space in the class will be reserved. • The deposit can be applied to tuition according to the payment plan chosen, or it can be used for the re-enrollment deposit for the following year. • If your child has not received immunizations you must submit an exemption form.

Withdrawal Parents who wish to withdraw their child from Audubon Outdoor Academy, at any time during the school year, must communicate their plan with the Director (email, phone or in person). The \$150 enrollment deposit is nonrefundable

Tuition Payment

Audubon Outdoor Academy has two Payment plans Bi-annual/Semester or Monthly. If you would like to pay bi-annually, please let Jessica know via email at jwhitehorn@chattaudubon.org.

Parents/guardians will be emailed an electronic invoice by the 25th of the prior month for the following month. Payments should be received before or on the 1st of each month for that month.

Severe Weather Closings

In the event of inclement weather, Audubon Outdoor Academy will make every effort to open as usual. This means that we will **NOT** follow Hamilton County weather delays and closings. We strive for the children to experience all types of weather in order to embrace the values of a forest school. However, to preserve the safety of our children and staff, we will carefully assess the weather forecasts and current conditions, and close if conditions warrant such actions. If warnings are issued during school hours, or heavy downpours and 5 lightning occur, all children will be moved indoors until the threat is over.

It is at the discretion of the Audubon Outdoor Academy Director to make the decision to dismiss early, open late, or close. In the event of delays or cancellations, a decision will be made by 11 a.m. and broadcast via the following outlets:

- Remind App
- If the director decides to dismiss early, families will be notified by Remind app.



Food at School

AOA strives to incorporate sustainable practices in all we do and encourage our parents to support those efforts. Please send foods in reusable containers or minimally and/or compostable packaging.

Illness: To control the spread of illness, children with vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, and/or fever should not be sent to Audubon Outdoor Academy until the child has been symptom free, without medication, for 24 hours. Should a child become ill while at school, parents will be contacted to pick up the sick child promptly. If a parent cannot be reached immediately teaching staff will call the next emergency contact to arrange pick-up.

Dispensing medication: You will need to provide a signed authorization that allows teachers to administer medication, even non-prescription. Specific instructions regarding dosage, frequency, and symptoms of the condition for which the medication is administered should be listed on the authorization form signed by a parent. The medication should be labeled with the child's name. The Audubon Outdoor Academy staff member who administers the medication will document the time, the dosage, and any noticeable side effects.

Absences: If a child will be absent due to illness or if it is a planned absence, the parent must communicate with their child's teacher in person or via Remind as soon as possible.

Punctuality: Because our classes are outdoor and hiking to our sites each day is a part of the daily activities, it is important that children arrive on time. If arrival time will be delayed, parents must communicate via Remind with the teachers as soon as possible so alternate arrangements for meeting the group may be planned. Teachers should check the Remind app occasionally during the day for parent messages regarding their child.

After School Pick-up Policy and Procedures: No child is ever released to an adult who is not listed on the emergency form. If the adult is not listed on the authorized pickup list, the parent needs to inform the office ahead of time to add that person to the pickup list. Parents or authorized adult must sign out upon departure. Parent or other authorized adult will accompany each child on their walk to their car after school. Parents who do not pick up their children within 10 minutes of dismissal will need to complete a late pickup form. In the case of recurring late pick-ups, teachers should notify the director who will take further actions to address the issue.

Late Pick up Fee: Children in our programs must be picked up by 4:15 p.m. If a parent is late, they will be asked to sign a form indicating the time of pickup. Parents will receive two Grace late pickups. After that, Late pickup fees are \$1 per Min, If you are more than 30 minutes late a flat fee of \$45. Late fee payment is due within 30 days.



Clothing and Gear List

Because Audubon Outdoor Academy embraces all seasons and aims to remain outside during many types of weather, it is **CRITICAL** that your child has clothes and gear that allows him or her to play comfortably. We adhere to the motto: There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing choices.

Below you will find a list of items as well as helpful tips and suggestions regarding clothing and gear. We have provided a checklist of required items. As the school year progresses and children's engagement with natural elements are monitored, teachers may add or change items and gear that are optimal for children's activities.

Everyday Basic Gear

- Water bottle (filled.) Children must be able to independently operate water bottle.
- Child-size backpack that is big enough to hold extra layers of clothing.
- Waterproof, not water resistant, rain pants
- Waterproof, not water resistant, rain jacket. (It is best to go with a non-insulated rain jacket.)
- Rain boots
- Hiking boots, sneakers (**NO CROCS, FLIP FLOPS**). Chacos and Water Shoes are permitted only at times of water activities.
- Snacks (Preferably in reusable containers or minimal waste/compostable packaging)
- Insect repellent (Applied before arrival)
- Sun screen(Applied before arrival)
- Writing Utensils
- Journal/Notebook
- PFD - Water Activities at a later date

Warm months: any kind of rubber rain boot

Cold months: insulated rain boots -

Change of Clothing-Labeled extra change of clothing in zip lock bag that includes:

Warm months: short sleeve, quick dry shirt; quick dry shorts; socks; underwear

Cold months: base layer long sleeve shirt and pants, additional thick sweater or fleece jacket and fleece pants, wool socks, waterproof mittens, hat, underwear

Helpful Hints

• **Layering:** Layering is key! Some days are 1-layer clothing days, some 2-layer days, some 3-layers. It is much easier to take layers off as needed than to warm a child that has already gotten chilled.

The children's needs throughout the day are often unpredictable and will depend not only on the weather conditions but also the child's body temperature and activity level. We layer to adjust to the variety of conditions we encounter!



In the winter: Wearing 2 layers of wool long underwear underneath a thick wool sweater and fleece pants is the most effective way to layer children under their rain gear in order to keep them warm without feeling too bulky.

- **We're going to get dirty!** Please make sure you dress your children in clothes that can get messy.
- **Comfortability:** All clothing and footwear should be loose fitting and roomy to allow the body's own insulating layer to surround the skin. This is more comfortable and keeps the children warmer! Pants are more comfortable for children when they have elastic waists instead of buttons or snaps.

- **VERY IMPORTANT:** Please label everything with your child's name.

Maintaining your gear: Once it is really wet and muddy, rain gear can go in the wash by itself when you get home on the rinse cycle (without soap - to preserve the waterproofing a little longer), and then either drip dry or put it in a low-heat dryer cycle.

- Jackets may be slightly less muddy than pants, so you may get a few days of wear out of them before needing to rinse them.
- 'Tear Aid' is a product that Puddle gear recommends for maintaining rain gear. This product is much more effective than duct tape in the long run (duct tape gets gummy), but for a short-term fix, duct tape works in a pinch.
- Kookaburra or Eucalan wool wash products protect the lanolin in the wool that maintains the warm when-wet properties. When aired out at night, wool does not hold odors and when worn under other layers, only needs to be washed every few weeks.
- If you purchase your pair of Bogs boots from REI, they will take them back if damaged and give you a new pair.

Child Safety Guidelines

General Forest Rules

- **No Toys:** Nature provides all the materials necessary for playing outdoors, so toys from home are not necessary.
- **Boundaries:** Children are expected to stay within the boundaries that have been established by teachers.
- **Climbing trees:** Children may climb trees at school while under adult supervision. They may not climb higher than twice their height and only after they have demonstrated competence.
- **Sticks:** The children may not play with sticks that are longer than their arm, unless it is clearly and responsibly being used as a walking stick, or a tool (digging, for example), or for building, under the supervision of the teachers. Running is not permitted while holding a stick.
- **Ingestion:** Children will not eat or drink any substance found in nature without teacher permission.



Physical Safety: The children are always within eyesight and earshot of an approved adult and maintains appropriate teacher to child ratio. The only people that interact with the school children during the day are preapproved by the faculty and are never alone with the children. Teachers carry emergency forms and an official first aid kit at all times. There are always two or more adults onsite at all times.

- **Site Assessment:** The sites and structures are checked for safety each morning before the children arrive at school.
- **Fire Safety:** Children are only in the presence of fire while under supervision of their teacher(s). Although a child may be invited by a teacher to help tend a fire, they are given very specific instructions based on their age and ability to discern a safe distance. They will help to collect and haul firewood, but the teachers are always in charge of adding fuel to the fire. There is always direct adult supervision when children are in the vicinity of fire or hot coals.

Bathroom Safety: The bathroom area consists of both a designated outdoor space (chosen to allow for privacy but located within earshot of a teacher) as well as an indoor toilet facility. The teachers are located so that they can hear the children and are available to help when needed. If a child needs assistance using the bathroom, the teacher that helps is close enough to the other children and teachers that they are not “alone” with the child since they are in proximity to and within earshot of others. The bathroom door is not closed while a teacher is physically assisting a child in that space, but may be closed for privacy when the child is in there alone while the teacher waits outside the door.

First Aid at School: In the case of a minor injury, the teachers may administer basic first aid—wash the injury with soap and water and cover with band-aids—as they see fit. The parents will be notified of any significant injuries at pickup (or after school via phone call if the child is picked up by another adult). In the case of a major injury, the teachers will call 911 and the parents/emergency contact and apply basic first aid until medical help arrives. All teachers have easy access to First Aid kits at all times. Children will always be sent to the nearest hospital if such extreme measures are needed.

Emergency Evacuation: In the unlikely case that we would need to evacuate the property all parents would be notified via phone call of the destination.

Social & Emotional Safety

AOA is committed to inspiring and teaching respect for the earth and all its creatures and this includes modeling and fostering respect for self and for others at all times. Outdoor learning provides many opportunities for cooperative play and teachers are there to guide children into co-creative adventures.

There is a zero tolerance policy for hitting, grabbing, pushing, name-calling, aggressiveness or any other demeaning behavior.



If these behaviors occur, the teacher will separate the instigating child from the group to a calm place for a one-on-one discussion. An incident report will be written and given to parents and the director. Should the behavior in question not shift in a timely manner, the child will be removed from the group and be taken into the school office until the child is ready to return to his class. Recurring instances of disruptive behavior will result in a parent-teacher conference to implement a behavior plan. We will work as a team to support each child to ensure a successful experience at Audubon Outdoor Academy. Although we wish to be able to serve all children that come to our school, we will not allow the health and safety of the class to be compromised. We do take any intimidating behavior seriously and recognize that it makes a deep impact upon others. Our teaching philosophy holds the dignity of each child at its very core. Our curriculum inherently supports empowerment, teaches judgment, honors boundaries, values intuition, increases awareness, models clear communication and encourages healthy expression of all feelings. Thank you for contributing to the safety of our children and our community by modeling the types of behavior that we want to encourage in the children.

Disruptive Behaviors

The following behaviors distract from the full benefit of the program and will result in consequences.

- Requires constant attention from the staff
- Inflicts physical or emotional harm on other children, adults, or self
- Disrespects people and materials provided in the program
- Consistently disobeys the rules of the classroom
- Verbally threatens other students and/or staff
- Uses inappropriate or offensive words repeatedly

Plan for Disruptive Behavior

Step One: Disruptive behaviors will be addressed in an incident report. This will be completed by a teacher to document inappropriate behaviors that directly impact other children, staff members, or the group as a whole. This report will be shared with the parent and will explain the behavior and how the behavior has affected others. It will also explain how the situation was resolved. The incident report will be given to the parent at the end of the day to be signed and returned the next day to the teacher.

Step Two: Parent/Teacher/Director Meeting If two incident reports are written during one week, documenting that the child has difficulty managing his/her behavior on a recurring basis, parents will be asked to meet with the child's teacher and School Director to develop a behavior plan.

Step Three: Child may be sent home or be removed from the program. If, after Steps One and Two, the child's behavior continues to be inappropriate, consistently disruptive, and/or dangerous, it may be necessary for the child to be sent home for a time to be determined, or removed from the program altogether.



Parent Handbook Agreement Form The Audubon Outdoor Academy Parent Handbook lists the values, policies, rules, and regulations of Audubon Outdoor Academy . Its purpose is to assure the smooth operation of our program. Reading and understanding this handbook is imperative to the operations of Audubon Outdoor Academy . By signing this form, you are agreeing to abide by these written provisions of Audubon Outdoor Academy . I understand that my signature on this form binds me to observe the policies, rules, and regulations as set forth by Audubon Outdoor Academy.

_____Signature _____ Date