

Field Course Information

Precourse Reading

Read over the topic handouts for your course on our [Course Resources](#) page. They follow the outline of topics we will cover, while the Tremper text is a supplement that offers additional perspectives.

We provide a copy of Bruce Tremper's *Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain* at the course, our *Alaska Avalanche Fieldbook* as a course workbook, and a crystal and clinometer card. Level 2 students also get a copy of *Snow, Weather, and Avalanches: Observational Guidelines for Avalanche Programs in the United States*.

Travel Procedures

The risk management for our group is a primary concern, so we must strictly observe the following rules for our field trips:

- * We go out as a group and we return as a group - no exceptions. If you arrive late, after we have left the trailhead, you will not be allowed to join the group. No early departures are allowed. If anyone has trouble in the field, we must all be prepared to stick together and stay to help for as long as it takes. Arrange your schedule now so you have the evenings after field days open.
- * We function as a group in the field. No one goes ahead of the instructor without specific permission, and we must stay within easy communication distance of each other. This rule does not change when we heading in at the end of the day. Anyone who disregards instructions for safety and conduct of the class, or engages in activity that puts any or all of us at risk will not be allowed on further field trips.
- * The field trips require a high level of physical fitness to reach suitable areas. We will not be camping, but we must climb anywhere from 280-710m (900-2,300 feet) and travel 2- 5km (1-3 miles) through trail-less country each field day. Conditions may include mud, swamp, and bushwhacking as well as snow, which may be deep or wet.
- * You must be comfortable with whatever you will have on your feet on 20-25 degree slopes (like Hooter lift at [Eaglecrest](#)) in good snow; and be able to travel effectively when the snow is bad or the slope is 35-45+ degrees (like the advanced runs at Eaglecrest). On Level 2 courses, we generally have one group that moves faster and travels more in steeper terrain.
- * You need not be an expert skier, boarder, or winter mountaineer by any means, but you must have the physical conditioning and winter travel skills necessary for safety in our field conditions and for keeping to our schedule. This course is not

for outdoor novices. If you do not have the necessary basic fitness and winter travel ability, we cannot allow you to participate in the field trips.

* The course also requires the gear and skills to stay comfortable and warm outdoors for long periods in sometimes-terrible weather. If you show up without the required equipment, food, fluids, and clothing, you put all of us at risk and we cannot allow you to go with us into the field. Review the equipment list and be sure you bring everything on it.

* Sorry, we love dogs, but we can't have them on our field trips.

* No earbuds during field sessions! This includes our time climbing the uptrack, where we will be pausing periodically to discuss observations. The course will require your undivided attention.

* Any injuries on field trips must be reported promptly to the instructor.

* No one leaves the parking lot at the end of the day without checking with the instructors. We must confirm that everyone is back safely.

* If we are out several days in a row, you may keep gear that has been checked out to you until the end of that session but must turn it in before you leave on the final day. We must confirm that your gear is checked in before you leave the parking lot.

Personal Field Gear

Clothing

You must have enough clothing to be out in the field all day, regardless of the weather. Our studies require us to stand around and be in contact with the snow far more than you do on a typical recreational day. Bring at least two layers more than you usually wear. Bring chemical heat packs if you have chronically frosty fingers or toes or if it is a cold day. If you are snowshoeing and tend toward cold toes, hiking boots are not warm enough for cold days. Wear insulated boots like Sorels or a warm pair of snowboard boots, big enough for two pairs of socks without being too tight, and keep the laces loose. Wear extra-warm layers on your legs and torso, too.

Do not rely on movement for warmth. We must be able to stop for variable and often long periods in order to teach the course. We cannot move just because you are cold. Your warmth is your responsibility.

Similarly, we cannot move because you are impatient. We must pace ourselves to slower group members and will spend far more time talking, observing, and practicing skills than you do on a recreational day. This is a course, we are here to learn. You can travel fast and ride hard on other days.

Required Clothing

- long underwear - synthetic, silk, or wool; NOT cotton!
- shirt or turtleneck - synthetic, silk, or wool; or heavy long underwear
- at least three warm insulating layers, such as: fleece vest, fleece jacket, wool sweater, fiberfill coat or vest, or pile coat or vest
- shell parka - waterproof breathable preferred; NOT cotton!
- pants - shell and insulation, such as: wool pants, warmup bibs, or fleece pants plus waterproof breathable bibs; NOT cotton; no jeans or Carhartts!
- gaiters - if they are not built into your pants
- warm boots and socks
- warm hat - like a stocking cap or beanie
- mitts or gloves

Recommended Clothing

- neck gaiter or scarf
- baseball hat for warm, sunny days
- extra set of mitts or gloves

Field Gear

Required Field Gear

- + beacon
- + probe
- shovel - a sturdy, lightweight avalanche shovel - NOT a discount store shovel!
- day pack - a good big day rucksack with straps and pockets for all your gear, including shovel and boards
- A way to get around efficiently in the snow - no postholing in the course!
 - 1.) Mountain skis, telemark or alpine touring, with skins and poles.
 - 2.) OR snowboard with good mountain snowshoes or approach skis and poles for uphill travel.
 - 3.) OR splitboard with skins and collapsible poles.
 - 4.) OR good mountain snowshoes. (Will be fine for both uphill and downhill; ski poles strongly recommended.)
- head lamp, likely to be used in the course so be sure to bring it!
- pocket knife
- lunch
- insulated water bottle or thermos - at least one liter of fluids
- sun glasses - required after mid-February in AK; optional early season

- sun screen and lip protection - required after mid-February in AK; optional early season
- toilet paper and lighter
- blister kit and band aids
- fieldbook and pencil
- clinometer - we have combination clinometer/crystal cards
- hand lens - 10x best, for snow study

Recommended Field Gear

- map and compass
- emergency medical kit - strongly recommended
- camera with memory cards and spare batteries
- spare headlamp and beacon batteries
- ski poles - essential for ski travel; strongly recommended for snowshoers
- goggles - strongly recommended for skiers and snowboarders
- helmet - strongly recommended for skiers and snowboarders
- snow saw
- Celsius dial stem thermometer. The best online source is Life Link, <http://www.garmontusa.com/l/snowstudy.html>
- binoculars
- cell phone (emergencies-only, otherwise keep it off)

+ Items we have available for checkout. Be sure to let us know if you will need these so we have enough on hand.

TEST NEW OR BORROWED GEAR BEFORE THE COURSE!