



# Leadership At NOLS

LEADERSHIP IS SITUATIONALLY APPROPRIATE ACTION THAT DIRECTS OR GUIDES YOUR GROUP TO SET AND ACHIEVE GOALS.

NOLS uses a framework of 4 leadership roles, 7 leadership skills, and 1 signature style to teach leadership.

## 4 NOLS Leadership Roles

On every successful expedition, each member of the team fills a variety of leadership roles in order to achieve their ultimate goals. There are four types of leadership at NOLS, and all are equally important.

### DESIGNATED LEADERSHIP

The designated leader is the head architect and guardian of the group process. They can delegate tasks and decisions, but can't abdicate responsibility and accountability. Complex, potentially risky or tough activities and decisions are best handled with a designated leader guiding or monitoring the process. (Don't confuse a directive style with a designated leader; that's different.) Tasks include:

- Prepare and organize.
- Let your group know what you expect of them and what they can expect from you.
- Stay connected to your group and seek their input.
- Use your group's strengths and encourage responsibility.
- Take stands on issues clearly and directly.
- Work to stay calm and focused.
- Help others when they need it and ask for help when you need it.
- Do what you say and say what you are doing.
- Seek feedback and learn from experience.

### PEER LEADERSHIP

We practice peer leadership largely in our living arrangement on an expedition. In peer leadership, each person sees what needs to be done and takes the initiative to do it, without a hierarchy. All members assure quality completion of group tasks, functions, and goals. Peer leadership works better when members communicate general expectations: some prefer a division of labor and clarification about who is responsible for what, others don't. While traveling or engaging in higher risk activities, we do not rely on peer leadership alone. Tasks include:

- If something needs to be done, do it.
- Do more than your fairshare of chores.
- If others aren't pitching in, talk about it.

### ACTIVE FOLLOWERSHIP

Expedition members show good leadership by following the leadership of others. They should all participate in the group process, model good EB, and support the leader by seeking clarification, giving input, and respecting the group's plan. Active followers generally work for the betterment of the group and its goals. Tasks include:

- Take initiative to support the team's plan.
- Complement, rather than duplicate, the efforts of others.

### SELF-LEADERSHIP

A group member leads by virtue of who they are and how they influence others, not just by the position they hold. This is leadership through character and judgment, which has a huge influence on group dynamics. Tasks include:

- Take responsibility for yourself.
- Take responsibility for your own learning.
- Risk saying what you think.
- Own what you say.
- If it needs to be done, do it.
- If you don't understand, ask.
- Enjoy your surroundings.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Help others learn and succeed.
- Be kind.
- Push yourself.
- Admit your mistakes.
- If it is not safe for the group, don't do it.
- Participate and observe.
- Learn from your experiences.

## 7 NOLS Leadership Skills

The seven leadership skills are a holistic skill set that needs to be applied situationally and in combination with each other. Below are the attributes and responsibilities related to each skill. A NOLS graduate should be able to incorporate these skills into their everyday behavior in both the backcountry and at home.

### EXPEDITION BEHAVIOR

- Serve the mission and goals of the group.
- Be as concerned for others as you are for yourself.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Support leadership and growth in everyone.
- Respect the cultures you come into contact with.
- Be kind and openhearted.
- Do your share and stay organized.
- Help others, but don't routinely do their work.
- Model integrity by being honest and accountable.
- Say yes and deliver, or say no clearly if you cannot deliver.
- Resolve conflict in a productive manner.
- Help create a positive learning environment.

### COMPETENCE

- Display basic competence and actively improve your:
  - knowledge
  - organization and management skills
  - technical skills
  - physical abilities
- Set personal goals, make action plans, and follow through.
- Develop a group plan, communicate, coordinate, implement, and then evaluate.
- Take care of your personal maintenance needs in order to remain a highly functioning team member.
- Use specific techniques to reduce risk or avoid hazards.

### COMMUNICATION

- Speak up when appropriate; be silent when appropriate.
- Let your group know what you expect of them and what they can expect from you.
- Keep people informed as the situation changes.
- Listen actively: paraphrase and ask questions to clarify.
- Have the courage to state what you think, feel, and want.
- Differentiate between facts and opinions.
- Speak for yourself. Use "I language."
- Avoid use of language that offends others.
- Be empathetic during conflicts.

- In giving feedback:
  - Be timely.
  - Be growth-oriented.
  - Be specific about your observations.
  - Acknowledge your share of any problem.
  - Be clear about what you will do next.
  - Be as open to receiving feedback as to giving it.

### JUDGMENT & DECISION-MAKING

- Work to develop good judgment. Consider all available experiences, resources, and information to achieve positive results.
- Use situationally appropriate decision-making styles. Develop a range of styles.
- As a leader, choose a decision-making style and then tell the group what it is.
- Be clear about limits and boundaries when letting people make choices.
- Use the strengths and knowledge of other group members to solve problems.
- Help others see how choices fit into the big picture and the long view.
- Apply human factors to the management of risks.
- Question norms and challenge assumptions underlying decisions.

### TOLERANCE FOR ADVERSITY AND UNCERTAINTY

- Turn challenging situations into opportunities.
- See choices as many workable options and combinations, not either/or.
- Learn to endure, even enjoy, hard work and challenge.
- Live in rhythm with what you cannot control. Control what you can.
- Use humor. Keep things in perspective. Maintain a positive mental attitude.
- Function effectively under difficult circumstances. Make focused decisions and stay connected with others.
- Work successfully with different types of people.
- Be patient with less competent colleagues.

## 1 Signature Style

The one signature style is the leadership style that works best for each individual. This style is based on tapping into the leader's multiple intelligences, learning preferences, social intelligence, conflict management styles, and other personal strengths and preferences.

### SELF-AWARENESS

- Understand your abilities, limitations, and learning needs.
- Learn from experience, then take steps to improve.
- Admit and correct your mistakes.
- Be proud of your successes and build on them.
- Work at just being yourself as a leader.
- Be clear about your own values and goals.
- Find a healthy balance that works for you: work hard, play, reflect, and rest.
- Seek feedback from others.

### VISION & ACTION

- Great leaders create an environment that inspires individuals and groups to achieve their full potential.
- Initiate: assess what needs to be done and do it.
- Motivate: add your energy and can-do attitude to projects in order to help motivate others.
- Inspire: create an environment that inspires individuals and groups to achieve their highest potential.
- Use teamwork strategies: don't duplicate others' efforts; complement them.
- Help create what you want to see.
- Clarify group goals and values, then use these to guide your actions.
- Take risks at an appropriate level for yourself and your group.
- Seek creative ways to move the group forward.
- Stay open and flexible to change.
- Model the way (lead by example).
- Take responsibility for your own education by setting leadership development goals and attaining them.

### COMPETENCY WITH STYLES

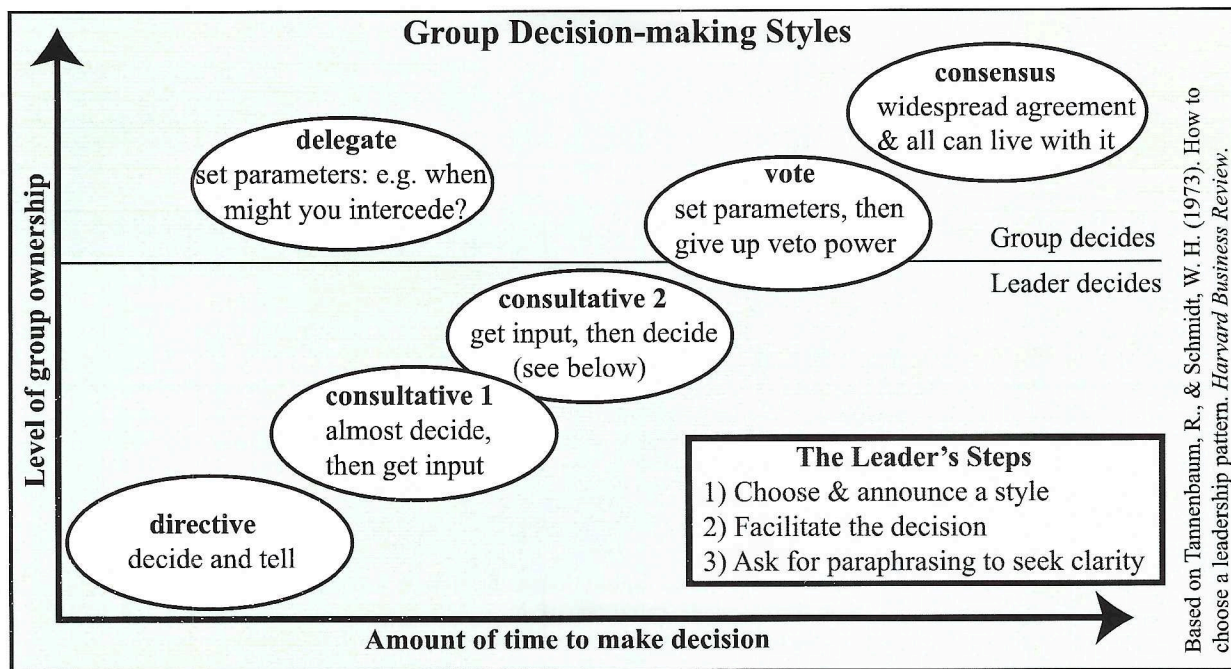
Cultural competency is about using your strengths effectively with people who are different from you in any way. These levels of cultural competency help describe your ability to use your signature style effectively with others.

- 1) Know your own style strengths and preferences.
- 2) Be transparent with your styles so others know what to expect from you (e.g., explain the specific decision-making process you will use, before you use it).
- 3) Keep expanding your ability to work with people who use other styles, *without negative judgment*.
- 4) Be flexible and adapt to using each of the styles when they would be most effective for you to use them.

### Excellent Leaders:

- Help a group set and achieve technical goals.
- Help a group set and achieve risk management goals.
- Support and help create strong leaders in a group.
- Empower each member with appropriate responsibility.
- Use individual and collective strengths.
- Improve the quality of interaction among group members.
- Create a safe and effective environment for learning.
- Help people ignite their aspirations and dreams.
- Engender trust by role modeling good character.
- Act as a mentor and coach to others.
- Foster effective communication skills in the group.
- Develop good group decision-making and judgment in team members.
- Are accountable.





## Consultative Decision-Making

*This is commonly used by NOLS student leaders. Your goals are to use the collective wisdom of the group to make a higher quality decision than you could make alone, and to get "buy-in" so folks understand and are motivated to follow the plan. If you establish clear guidelines and help everyone stick to them, you can proceed more quickly and easily. If you are on the move, find a safe location to stop and make a decision. Tell folks that you need input from them before you decide what to do next. Be clear so it doesn't just sound like a vote will be taken. Here's the consultative process:*

**1. ACCUMULATE INFORMATION** | The leader facilitates the group and gathers facts. Use a simple model like weather, terrain, and human factors so that you can develop an easy pattern. Weather includes current and developing conditions. Terrain includes objective hazards, distance, and certainty of location. Human factors include ability, tiredness, and motivation. Be sure that everyone hears all of the pertinent facts.

**2. INQUIRE OF YOUR GROUP** | What do they think about the situation? What level of risk are you all facing? Are there any red (stop!), yellow (stop and think?) or green (go!) lights? What are their feelings? What do they want to do? Is there anyone who absolutely needs a certain decision for health or safety reasons? Have enough options been explored?

**3. MAKE A DECISION** | Using facts, feelings, risk ratings, and group desires, the leader makes a choice in a timely manner that meets group goals and fits safety parameters.

**4. TELL THE GROUP THE DECISION AND DO A FINAL CHECK** | If there isn't support, ask "Is there any new information? Does anyone think it is not safe enough? Is some factor changing quickly?" Either explain why you want to stick to the plan, or go back to steps #1 and #2 and come up with a decision that everyone can support.

**5. IMPLEMENT THE DECISION, BUT STAY OPEN AND FLEXIBLE TO CHANGES** | Leaders can often use a more directive style to orchestrate the decision once the group has had enough input in the process. At all times, any group member can stop implementation and ask for changes for safety reasons, or ask for a review of the decision because new information has come to light.



Please send us feedback:  
NOLS Curriculum, 284 Lincoln Street, Lander, WY 82520  
www.nols.edu • curriculum@nols.edu • (307) 335-2264

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