



Institute for **Outdoor Learning**

Working in Outdoor Learning

Making a positive difference for others and our world

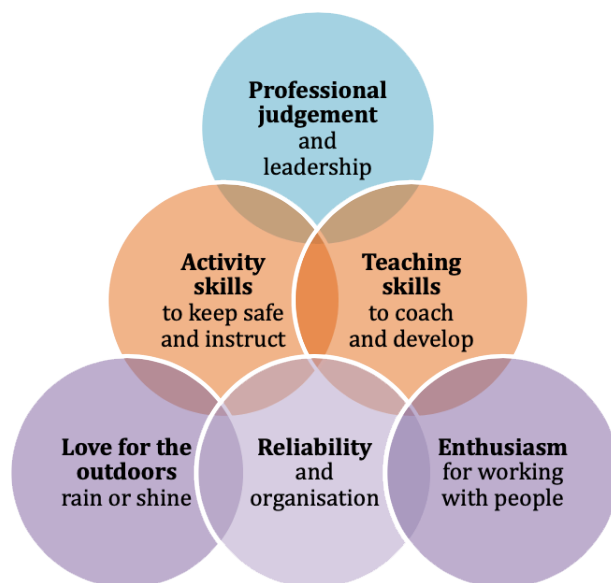
If you work in the outdoor sector you can expect to meet people with a passion for the outdoor environment, a desire to meet and get to know others, a love of developing knowledge, skills and experience, and a willingness to contribute to a strong team atmosphere.

There are full-time, part-time, voluntary and self-employment opportunities for people of all ages. You can work delivering, leading or managing outdoor learning as well as in operations, hospitality, logistics, accounts, maintenance and grounds.

What is working in outdoor learning like?

Developing skills and knowledge and provide exciting and often transformational experiences to children or adults can be rewarding and deeply fulfilling. You can turn a personal interest in an outdoor adventurous activity or appreciation of nature and the natural environment into something more than a hobby.

If engaging others in your passion, and helping them learn, develop and grow as individuals is what gets you out of bed in the morning come rain or shine, you can do it again and again in outdoor learning. It's a lifestyle thing.



What will you need to teach, instruct or lead outdoor learning?

Leading outdoor learning experiences is all about how you use an activity to help others gain skills and learn more about themselves, each other and connect to the environment.

It's more than just instructing or coaching others in an activity or sport. It is making a positive difference for others.

Warwick Mill Business Centre, Warwick Bridge, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA4 8RR

www.outdoor-learning.org institute@outdoor-learning.org

T 01228 564580 F 01228 564581

Registered charity number 1149420



To work in outdoor learning you will need to start with a love for the outdoors come rain or shine, reliability and organisation, and enthusiasm for working with people.

Employers often look for evidence of your interest in the outdoors through your sports, hobbies, clubs or societies or perhaps membership or voluntary work with scouts, guides, or other voluntary organisations.

You will need to gain activity skills to inspire and keep participants safe and teaching skills to coach and develop people through the activities you lead.

Some of these skills can be learnt during college or university courses, or on specific activity training courses from National Governing Bodies or Awarding Bodies. Many you will learn in the workplace and from personal experience.

Experience and further training and coaching will help you gain the judgement and leadership expected of an outdoor professional.

You will develop your decision making in changeable conditions, leadership styles and advanced facilitation and training skills with further training, coaching, and ongoing reflective practice.

Whatever your role, employers will need you to be trained and up-to-date with first aid, safeguarding and data protection and be deemed “competent” before you lead an activity or programme. Being able to drive a minibus may also be required.

What options do you have for working in outdoor learning?

Whether you have just completed school or university, are changing your career, want to give back to society, or looking to make the most of retiring early, there are many routes into in Outdoor Learning.

All ages are welcome, but you will usually need to be at least 18 to have instructional or leadership responsibility. There is no upper age limit.



You might be looking for a full-time role with an outdoor centre, national park, college, or adventure activity provider, or perhaps want to provide some outdoor learning as part of your job at a wildlife trust, expedition company, or school.

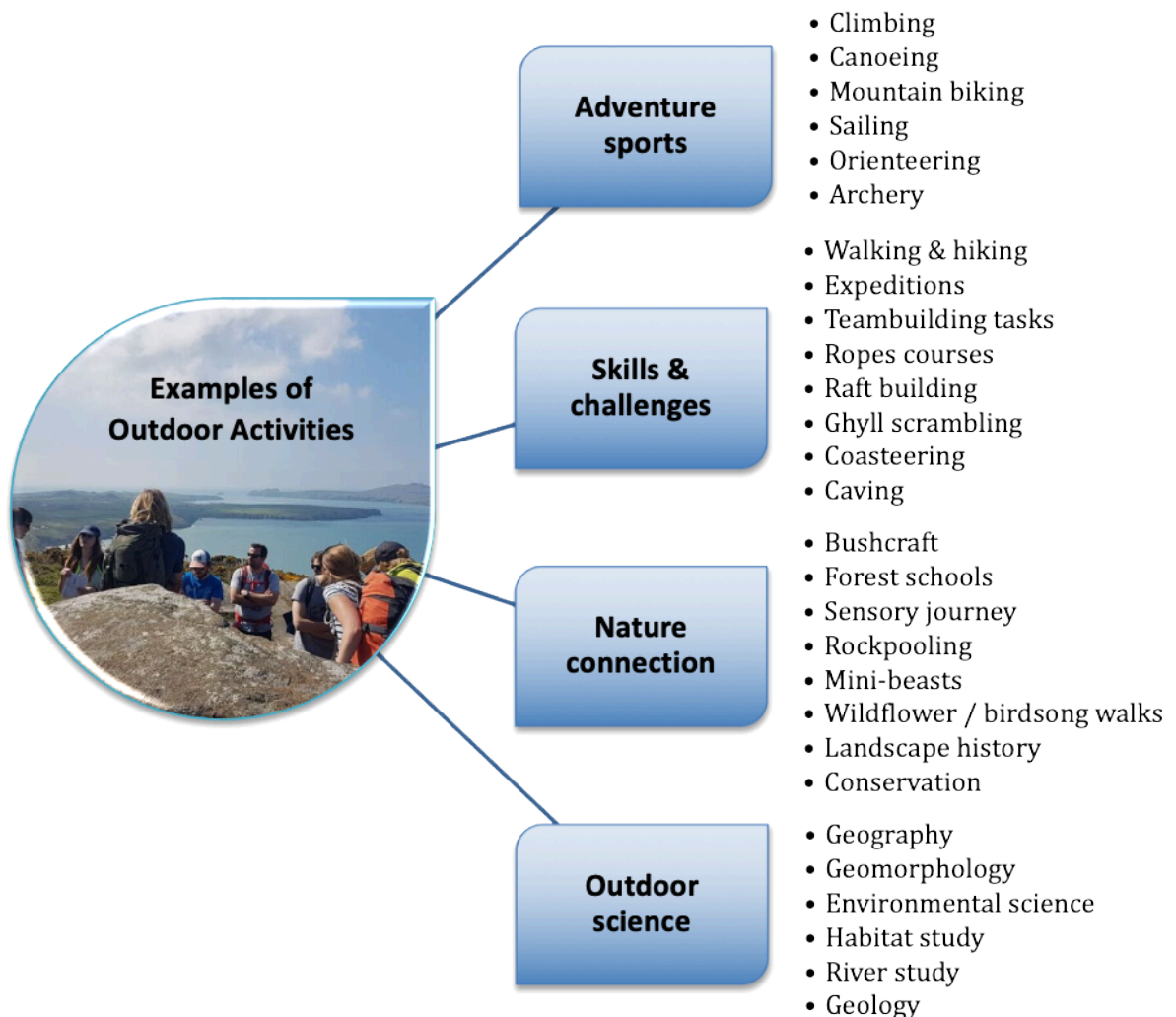
Volunteers have always been a core part of the outdoor sector. Giving your time to help others benefit from the magic of an outdoor learning experience is very rewarding.

You could work with children, young people, young adults, families, adults across all ethnic groups and communities. Some people choose to work with disadvantaged, less able or more vulnerable people. Others work with elite performers or high-flyers.

Which activities or subject areas interest you?

Outdoor learning includes a wide range of activities and subjects such as adventure sports, outdoor skills & challenges, field studies or environmental connection. You'll find some examples below.

Do you wish to specialise in just one or two activities or subjects, or are you looking to be a multi-activity specialist?



Whatever the activity you are leading, the outdoor learning community expects its colleagues to actively promote inclusion, equality and participation by all; to overtly respect the environment and encourage behaviours in others that preserves it; to encourage all participants regardless of aptitude to achieve to their limits; and to promote on-going use of the outdoors and onward progression.

What does an Outdoor Learning Job Involve?

You are likely to be involved in setting up and running events for school children, young people, families or adults over a few hours, a full day or longer. Some aspects of this may happen indoors too – such as planning and reviewing experiences with groups.

Making a real difference

Outdoor learning makes a real difference for others and you will be helping others create positive memories and achieve lasting benefits.

Outdoor learning inspired me...

“To find out about the world around me through experience, with grubby knees and hangnails, with bruises, blisters, and the great joy that can only be engendered by nature. I have the great honour to do lots of work with young people, nothing compares to the fire in the eyes of someone who has just ridden a horse down a deserted beach, road their first wave, heard their first nightingale, fallen out of their first tree or witnessed their first sparrowhawk hunt!”

Steve Backshall

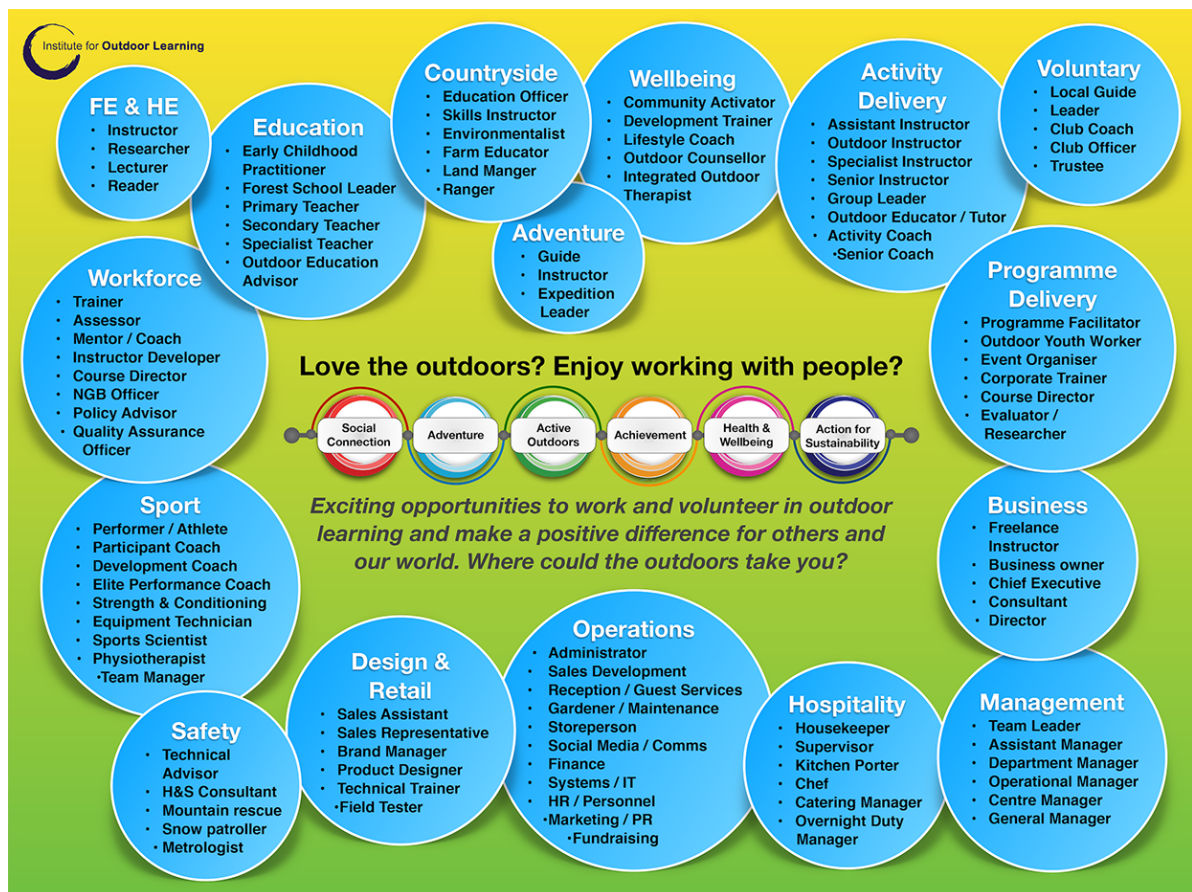
What will you gain?

Working in Outdoor Learning is a foundation for your personal, social and professional life. Many employers value the transferable skills (like planning, motivating others, communicating, taking responsibility, can-do attitude, etc.) that people who work in outdoor learning can bring to their future jobs.



Where to start

The [IOL Workforce Map](#) will give you an idea of the different job roles in the sector, and what is required in each of them. Every employer or organisation will have their own structure and titles for their staff and preferred route into employment.



The main options:

Outdoor apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a great way to earn while you learn. The NEW Outdoor Activity Instructor Apprenticeship (England) is designed specifically for working in outdoor learning. Other schemes are available in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Bespoke training or development schemes

A number of employers and training organisations offer seasonal, fast track, trainee, or volunteer schemes for aspiring outdoor professionals. They vary in scope and depth - look at the IOL jobs page to see current opportunities.

College and higher education courses

Have a look at IOL Approved HE Courses - they have all demonstrated the course is relevant for working in outdoor learning, the teaching staff are skilled,

knowledgeable and experienced, and the institution shows active support for IOL and the sector.

Activity instructor courses and NGB awards

A great starting point if you looking to work in a voluntary capacity or want to be ready to move in to a part-time or full-time outdoor learning role. Look for a training course from a National Governing Body in the sport or activity you are interested in. As you complete each award you will probably be able to find freelance work coaching or instructing others.

The [IOL Training / Education Guide](#) gives examples of what is required for a range of job roles and links to all the key organisations that manage recognised and widely accepted training courses and awards relevant to working in outdoor learning.

Specialist Outdoor Sport or Activity Instructor	+	Outdoor or Adventure Therapist	+
Multi Activity Instructor at an Outdoor Centre	+	Overseas Expedition Leader for Schools	+
Environmental Educator or Field Studies Tutor	+	Freelance Outdoor Activity Instructor	+
Woodland or Forest School Leader	+	Outdoor Centre Manager	+

Can I work for myself?

Absolutely. Many people work freelance and some run their own business providing outdoor learning experiences direct to clients on a part-time or full-time basis.

The [IOL Guide to Working Freelance in Outdoor Learning](#) is a useful starting point.

Developing your career

The Institute for Outdoor Learning is here to support you throughout your career.

- Have a look at the [IOL Jobs Directory](#) to find your first (or next) job
- When you are ready for the next step, look at [The Outdoor Professional](#) guide
- Working through the [IOL 7 Steps to CPD](#) with an [APIOL](#) or [LPIOL](#) Coach can help you to work out where you are now, where you want to go next, and how you can get there.



Where can I get my questions answered?

The [IOL Home Nation and Regions](#) are your first port of call. They hold meetings, workshops and conferences where you can get to know your local outdoor learning community and find out about opportunities in your area.