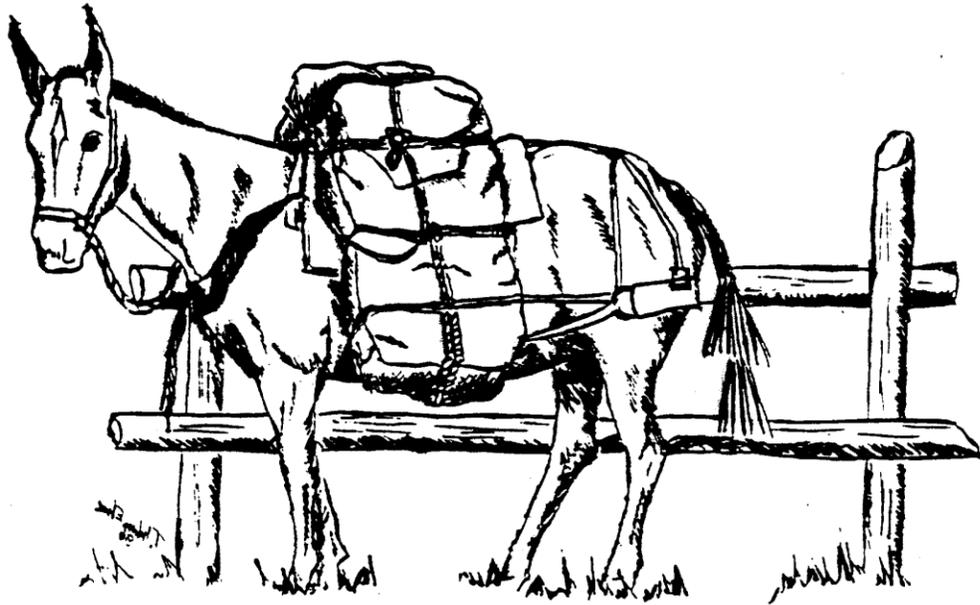


# OUTFITTING & PACKING COURSE

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Thirty hour course with the six-ten hours of independent study

Developed by Arnold D. "Smoke" Elser  
Wilderness Outfitters  
now known as  
Wilderness Outfitters Consulting Group, LLC



**Wilderness Education Specialists**

A lesson plan developed for  
Wilderness Outfitters Consulting Group, LLC  
Wilderness Education Specialists  
Outfitting and Packing Course

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# OUTFITTING AND PACKING COURSE

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

In 1964 Congress passed the Wilderness Act which established a designated wilderness system in the United States, involving public lands. This act set aside vast areas to be held in perpetuity in as natural and untrammled, by man, condition as possible. The act set aside these lands in their most primitive conditions, with specific exceptions for public recreation, and as a resource benchmark for future generations.

Americans are using our wilderness and roadless areas more and more each year as major recreational areas. Our government agencies are making better and more sensitive management decisions requiring more access and presence in these areas. This requires the use of pack animals and the ability to pack into these areas for agency personnel, as well as public recreational users.

## ***RATIONALE***

The Wilderness Act of 1964 congressionally protected many wilderness and roadless lands. Some of the specific exceptions to the Wilderness Act allowed for scientific exploration, resource education and recreational use of these lands so that future generations may develop an understanding of how our pioneer forefathers endured the many hardships of exploring this land. These people developed many unique skills needed to travel and survive in these undeveloped lands. These skills are becoming a lost art and yet we need to maintain these skills and improve on them in order to protect these resources and allow recreational use. The Outfitting & Packing Course is designed to revive and improve these skills, to instruct back country users in how to “safely” handle horses and mules in the back country, leaving as little evidence of their passing as possible. These skills include maximizing the use of stock and each piece of equipment that is used.

## ***GOALS***

The goals of this course are to develop a sensitivity to the historical significance of livestock packing developed by our pioneer forefathers and to develop skills that will protect these areas and allow the continued public recreational use by livestock.

Each student will become proficient in the use of the Decker and sawbuck pack saddles, and become familiar with the Diamond Hitch, Box Hitch, Basket Hitch, Barrel Hitch, and other outfitting and horse packing equipment and techniques.

## ***CLASS SESSION***

The Outfitting and Packing Course requires a minimum of twenty-four hours of lectures, individual participation, demonstration and hands on activities working with horses and mules and all the

equipment involved. An additional six hours of independent study or practicum can be arranged allowing for advanced development of skills. The ideal facilities include a classroom, and indoor and/or outdoor arena large enough to handle eight-ten head of stock and accommodate twelve-fourteen students at one time. The facility should have electricity, bathroom facilities and seating for twelve to fourteen students, as well as an area for demonstration.

## **LESSON ONE**

3 hours – An introduction to all the equipment used in packing and outfitting with livestock in our roadless lands. This will include many different types of specialized equipment, as well as historically significant equipment. This session is a “snapshot” of the entire course and develops an interest in the overall subject. This session also includes a physical description and lab practical on the anatomy, as well as introducing the student to a horse or mule. It includes a demonstration on a good veterinary kit to be carried by all packers, pointing out injury points on the equine and safety in handling and being in the presence of horses and mules.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- I. Participants will develop a clear understanding of the vast amount of equine packing equipment available, and a full understanding of their good and bad points (safety for the equine and the user).
- II. The students will develop a knowledge of the physical anatomy of equine and how they may be injured.
- III. The students will learn how to safely be around and handle equine.
- IV. The participant will learn how to identify minor and major horse injuries and how to care for them with an emergency first aid vet kit.

### **MATERIALS:**

- Each participant will need a notebook and pencil
- Each student will receive a handout on the anatomy of a horse
- Demonstration materials will include many different pack saddles, riding saddles, specialized packing equipment (picketing, hobbling, lash ropes, manties and ropes, camp equipment, shoeing equipment, leather working tools, etc.)
- Gentle, well trained horse and mule
- A complete field first aid veterinary kit

### **PROCEDURE:**

- I. A historical overview of why we pack livestock in the back country.
- II. A detailed lecture and description of all equipment demonstrated, how it works, its availability and its safety characteristics.
- III. A hands on approach to the anatomy of equine and what you look for in a good mountain horse. This procedure may include physically touching stifle joints, examining feet, listening to the stomach and observing the teeth.

IV. Questions, answers and group discussion.

## **LESSON TWO**

3 hours – This is a lecture on the many different styles of riding saddles, their parts and how they fit, and main accessories that are used on the saddle in traveling in the back country. This session will also include a lecture on controlling devices (bridles, bits, reins).

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- I. Participants will learn the many styles of riding saddles and how they fit the horse. They will also become familiar with the specialized terms used in describing the parts of the saddle.
- II. Students will become familiar with the many styles of controlling devices (bits and bridles).
- III. Participants will learn how a saddle blanket or pad helps the saddle fit the animal and the importance of having the proper fit of the riding and pack saddle.

### **MATERIALS:**

- Class handout on parts of the riding saddles, and various types of bits. A handout on faulty equipment that is on the market today
- Six different styles of riding saddles, accessories to include saddle bags, breast collar, kruper, rifle scabbard, flank cinch, etc.
- Six different styles of bridles and bits that are commonly used in recreational riding
- Eight-ten different styles and materials of riding and/or pack pads

### **PROCEDURE:**

- I. Lecture on the main styles of riding saddles. Students will observe and have the opportunity to examine and thoroughly study each saddle and its accessories.
- II. Students will develop an understanding of the many types of bridles and bits and how they work.
- III. Students will have an opportunity to observe the great variety of saddle blankets and pads used in recreational riding and packing.
- IV. Questions, answers and group discussion.

## **LESSON THREE**

3 hours – This is a lecture and a hands-on demonstration on the decker and sawbuck pack saddle, their parts and how they work. We will also discuss the history of the decker and sawbuck pack saddle.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- I. Students will learn the history of the decker pack saddle and the saw buck pack saddle.
- II. Students will learn how the pack saddle works. They will learn proper fitting of these saddles and how their parts can be adjusted to fit individual equine and how all these parts work so that they could make emergency repairs on the trail if necessary.

### MATERIALS:

- A diagram of the parts of the decker pack saddle
- A decker and saw buck saddle for demonstration purposes
- A decker pack saddle for every two students to disassemble and reassemble (hands on)

### PROCEDURES:

- I. Participants will learn the parts, and the special vocabulary used to describe the decker and sawbuck pack saddles.
- II. Students will observe a demonstration in dissembling and reassembling the decker pack saddle and a discussion of the parts and how they work.
- III. Students will be divided into pairs, two per pack saddle and will be assigned a pack saddle to disassemble and assemble, learning the parts and the vocabulary.
- IV. Students will learn proper fitting of the saddle tree to the animal's back.
- V. Questions, answers and group discussion.

## **LESSON FOUR**

3 hours – The participants will learn the art of cargoing, (mantying up) and how to assemble a good load.

### OBJECTIVES:

- I. Students will learn how to manty up or cargo (mantying up is a Spanish term, defined as bundling or packaging). The students will learn the proper load size, shape and weight distribution within the cargoed load.

### MATERIALS:

- A handout on the theory of cargoing, mantying up and ideal mantie and rope equipment requirements
- Twenty-eight 7' x 8' 12 oz. canvas manties and twenty-eight 3/8" spun nylon, 35' mantie ropes
- Cargo items, i.e., boxes, sleeping bags, bales of hay or straw, sufficient for twenty-eight loads to be mantied up (cargoed)

## PROCEDURE:

- I. A thirty minute demonstration and lecture on how to assemble and tie up the proper mantied cargo load.
- II. Students working individually will mantie cargoed loads. This will be practiced until students can achieve a 3 minute mantied load.
- III. Questions, answers and group discussion.

## **LESSON FIVE**

3 hours – Safety around livestock and safe saddling techniques. Demonstration on how to properly catch, halter, brush, saddle, and adjust the saddle to the pack animal. A demonstration on how to safely load, balance and adjust the cargoed load.

## OBJECTIVES:

- I. Students will be trained in how to be around livestock safely, learning how to catch, halter, and brush equine.
- II. Participants will learn how to saddle and properly adjust the decker pack saddle on the pack animal.
- III. Students will learn how to safely load the basket hitch on the pack animal.

## MATERIALS:

- Handout on the proper fitting of a saddle tree
- Twenty-eight cargoed loads
- 1 pack animal for each team of two students, equipped with halter, pad and decker pack saddle
- Curry and brush for each pack animal

## PROCEDURE:

- I. Each student will manty a load.
- II. Participants will develop an understanding of how to properly catch and halter loose livestock safely (hands on).
- III. Participants will work with the pack animals, learning how to proceed through the five steps of currying and brushing pack animals.
- IV. In teams of two, students will learn how to properly saddle and adjust the pack saddle to fit the animal properly.
- V. In groups of two students will load and balance cargoed loads, using the basket hitch.
- VI. Questions, answers and group discussion.

## LESSON SIX

3 hours – The barrel hitch will be demonstrated and its primary use discussed.

### OBJECTIVES:

- I. Students will learn when and how to use the barrel hitch for specific items to be packed, i.e., hind quarters of game animals, and round large objects.
- II. Students will learn the unique balancing process used in the barrel hitch.

### MATERIALS:

- Twenty-eight cargoed loads
- 1 pack animal for each team of two students, equipped with halter, pad and decker pack saddle
- Curry and brush for each pack animal

### PROCEDURES:

- I. Each student will carry a load.
- II. Participants will catch and halter loose livestock (hands on).
- III. Participants (in groups of two) will curry, and saddle, and adjust the saddle to fit the animal they are working on.
- IV. In groups of two, students will load and balance cargoed loads, using the barrel hitch.
- V. Questions, answers and group discussion.

## LESSON SEVEN

3 hours – Demonstration in the art of throwing the historically significant diamond hitch and the box hitch.

### OBJECTIVES:

- I. Each student will successfully tie a diamond hitch and a box hitch, using cargoed loads and panyard or alforkas (Spanish).
- II. Participants will understand the proper balancing of the Diamond and box hitch so that the livestock is not injured.

### MATERIALS:

- Twenty-eight cargoed loads
- 1 pack animal for each team of two students, equipped with halter, pad and decker pack saddle

- Curry and brush for each pack animal
- Lash cinches with 50' of rope
- Items to be top loaded - 1 per animal (tents, stoves and grain)
- Eight to ten cover tarps 7" x 8"

**PROCEDURES:**

- I. Each student will mantle a load.
- II. Participants will catch and halter loose livestock safely (hands on).
- III. Participants (in groups of two) will curry, and saddle, adjusting the saddle to the animal they are working on.
- IV. In groups of two students will load a barrel hitch and/or panniers, and top load an additional load, throwing the diamond hitch (hands on).
- V. Students will load panniers, and tie a box hitch (hands on).
- VI. Questions, answers and group discussion.

**LESSON EIGHT**

3 hours – This is a complete review of all the hitches and procedures demonstrated in lessons 1-7. It also includes a discussion on controlling loose livestock in back country conditions.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- I. Students will have an overall review of all the subjects demonstrated in Lessons 1-7.
- II. Students will learn systems of controlling livestock in wilderness conditions, i.e., hobbling, picketing, electric fence and/or belling loose stock.

**MATERIALS:**

- Twenty-eight cargoed loads
- 1 pack animal for each team of two students, equipped with halter, pad and decker pack saddle
- Curry and brush for each pack animal
- Lash cinches with 50' of rope
- Items to be top loaded - 1 per animal
- Pickets, hobbles, electric fence system, and bells

**PROCEDURE:**

- I. Each student will mantle a load.
- II. Participants will demonstrate the ability to properly catch and halter loose livestock (hands on).

- III. Participants will work with the pack animals, demonstrating their ability to proceed through the five steps of currying and brushing pack animals.
- IV. In teams of two, students will saddle and adjust the pack saddle.
- V. In groups of two students will load and balance cargoed loads, using the basket hitch, the barrel hitch, the box hitch and with a top load, the diamond hitch.
- VI. Students have the opportunity to properly picket, hobble and bell livestock.
- VII. Students will learn how to properly construct an electric fence enclosure.
- VIII. Questions, answers and group discussion. Critique.

### EVALUATION:

Students will be assessed by direct observation of the instructor using a performance assessment scale for all major skill areas. The scale will identify four proficiency levels:

- Novice
- Nearing proficient
- Proficient
- Advance

Students will be determined to be passing if they perform sixty-five per cent of the skill based tasks at the proficient level or above.

## **WILDERNESS OUTFITTERS *Consulting Group L.L.C.* OUTFITTING & PACKING COURSE**

This course is offered as an undergraduate 1 credit Recreation Management 395 class.

It is taught by Smoke Elser, who has 50 years of experience in teaching this class to both recreational users, USFS, Dept. of Agriculture, Fish, & Wildlife Service, U.S. Park Service (Department of Interior) employees, Special Forces (Ft. Bragg) and Navy Seals, and FBI.

The class is a hands-on class, held in the barn and classroom facilities located at 3800 Rattlesnake Drive, Missoula, MT 59802

This year's class starts, Sunday, January 22th. The current schedule is listed below:

### **CLASS SCHEDULE OFFERED:**

**Sunday 2 - 5 P.M.**

**Monday 7 - 10 P.M.**

**Tuesday 7 - 10 P.M.**

**Thursday 7 - 10 P.M.**

**Students need to call instructor (Smoke Elser) to be sure the section they prefer has space before registering if registering on campus or on line. Space is limited by the number of horses that can be brought in to work on in any one class period.**

This class is credit/No credit. Students will be assessed by direct observation of the instructor using a performance assessment scale for all major skill areas. The scale will identify four proficiency levels:

- Novice
- Nearing proficient
- Proficient
- Advance

Students will be determined to be passing if they perform sixty-five per cent of the skill based tasks at the proficient level or above