



Saplings Gear Guide

At Saplings, we aim to spend as much time outside as we can each day. **Dressing your child in durable, weather-appropriate clothing is the most important thing you can do** to ensure they enjoy their time in our forests, meadows, and wetlands, no matter the weather. This gear guide will explain what your child needs in each season to be fully prepared for outdoor fun!

Some general guidelines:

At Saplings, we embrace exploration, and we joke that the kids will find a muddy puddle even on the driest day. **Expect any clothing that comes to the farm to get wet and dirty.**

It's easy for gear and clothing to get misplaced in a program like ours. To help us reunite lost items to their owners, **please label everything with your child's name** – even socks and underwear!

To keep the fun going, we may need to change into fresh clothes or gear during the day. **Packing multiple changes of clothing and keeping backup shoes and coats in your student's assigned cubby helps the day go smoothly.**





Year-Round Essentials

Food and Drink

- Reusable, leakproof water bottle
- Morning snack
 - Something filling and easy to eat on the go (protein bar, trail mix)
- Lunchbox with a nutrient-dense lunch
 - We do not refrigerate lunches, please use an ice pack
 - We cannot reheat any student's food
- Afternoon snack for full-day students
 - Something filling and easy to eat on the go (protein bar, trail mix)

Saplings provides a small backpack for each student during the school year. This “adventure pack” stays at Fernbrook and is packed each morning with snack, water, and any gear accessories needed that day.



Rest Time (Full-Day Students Only)

All full-day students take rest after lunch to prepare their bodies for afternoon adventure. Please pack a nap mat or a fitted sheet and blanket set to cover their cot.

- Additional blankets may be needed during the colder months.
- Rest items stay in your child's classroom during the week and are sent home for washing on their last school day of each week.



Year-Round Essentials

Rain and Mud Layers

Rain gear should be kept in your child's cubby at all times. You never know when we'll need it!

- Rainboots (best paired with long pants or tall socks to avoid blisters)
- Waterproof raincoat
- One-piece rainsuit (preferred) or waterproof rain pants/bibs
- Optional: waterproof rain mittens

Saplings provides each student with an additional pair of rain bibs during the school year, to be worn on their own on mild wet days or paired with a personal raincoat for extra protection.



Dressing for Fall and Spring

Fall and spring weather can change quickly. Layering is key! Remember to pack multiple changes of clothes and swap out seasonal layers as needed.

Recommended Clothing

- Tops: T-shirt or long-sleeved shirt, layered as needed
- Outer layer: Fleece pullover, sweater, or light jacket as needed
- Bottoms: Shorts or long pants
- Socks: tall and light-colored is best
- Shoes: Sturdy, closed-toed, closed-heel shoes for hiking
- Recommended: Sun hat
- Recommended: Sunglasses

Preparing for Creek Play

When the weather is warm, we often head to the creek to cool off in the water. We do not recommend swimsuits for the school year, preferring instead to splash about in our normal clothes.

Every child needs a designated pair of **creek shoes** for water play. Creek shoes must be closed-toed and closed-heel and must allow water to drain out (no rainboots). Expect these creek shoes to get heavily stained with Fernbrook's orange creek mud. We recommend Native brand shoes for creek use, but any sturdy water shoe or an old pair of sneakers can work. Please label these shoes clearly as designated creek shoes.

Other Items

- Sunscreen and mosquito/tick repellent: Families should apply these in the morning before school. Teachers can help full-day students reapply after rest upon request.
- Recommended: Reusable bag for wet/muddy items to go home in

Dressing for Winter

Staying warm and dry is essential for outdoor winter adventures. Using the right materials with proper layering allows us to play outside for as long as possible. Always remember to pack extra layers and accessories!

Base Layer: A thin, moisture-wicking set of clothes worn closest to the body

Base layer pants and shirts keep us warm and dry during winter exercise
Wool, silk, or polyester work best – no cotton!

Mid-Layer: The insulating layer

Mid-layer clothes comfortably fit under the outer layer and provide extra warmth and protection.

On top: Fleece or knit sweaters and zip-ups work well

On bottom: Look for fleece pants or looser knit wool

Outer Layer: Waterproof is key!

These insulated, waterproof gear items keep the wind and wet out during active winter play.

Snow jackets or snow pants/bibs are recommended.

One-piece snowsuits are another option.

Required Accessories

- Tall, wool socks that keep toes warm and won't slip down inside boots
- Warm hat that covers the ears
- Long-cuffed waterproof mittens (warmer than gloves and easier to put on)
- Recommended: Neck warmer (doesn't snag on branches like scarves can)
- **Insulated, waterproof boots!**

Even if it is not actively snowing, the Saplings may find residual snow, ice, or mud to explore. Once a student gets wet beneath their layers, they must be brought in to change. Having extra items on hand keeps the playtime going.

What's in the Cubby

Each Sapling will be assigned a cubby in the barn on their first day. Here is a sampling of what should be found in a Sapling's cubby on any given day.

The Home Pack: A large backpack, bag, or bin from home that holds extra changes of clothes

- Includes 1-2 complete sets of clothing: underwear, bottoms, tops, seasonal layers, socks, and shoes
- Can stay in the cubby long-term or go home each day
- If your child is going home in different clothes than they arrived, you may need to replenish the layers in the home pack! Check daily for any items that need to be restocked.
- Layers should be seasonally appropriate, so will need to be changed out regularly (plus, Saplings tend to outgrow things quickly!)

The Adventure Pack: A Fernbrook-issued daypack to take on adventures

- Gets packed at drop-off with snack, water bottle, and any needed accessories (sweatshirt, gloves, hat, sunglasses)
- Gets emptied out at the end of the day and stays in the cubby overnight

Other Gear to Always Have on Hand

- Creek shoes
- Rainboots (and snow boots in winter)
- Rain gear (and snow gear in winter)
- Seasonal accessories: Hats, mittens, sunglasses, neck warmers
- Fernbrook-issued rain pants (stay in cubby overnight)
- Recommended: Reusable bag for wet/muddy clothing to go home in

Additional Items

- Lunchboxes are placed in the designated crates in the barn
- Rest items for full-day students get dropped off in your child's classroom at the start of the week and are sent home at the end of the week to be washed and returned

Helpful Tips and Tricks

Preventing Lost Items

We cannot stress enough how easy it is for personal items to get misplaced at Fernbrook. **Please label EVERYTHING with your child's name.**

- Many companies offer personalized stickers to make labelling easier
- Mitten clips reduce the chances of losing mittens

Protecting Against Ticks

We recommend treating clothes and gear with 0.5% Permethrin spray. Permethrin is a long-acting insecticide that kills ticks as they climb up clothes. You can apply the spray yourself or use a clothing treatment service such as [Insect Shield](#) for long-term protection. And don't forget to do regular tick checks at the end of each day.

Where to Purchase Gear

- [Outdoor School Shop](#) is an online outfitter specifically designed for outdoor schools. **Use code FERNBROOK for a 15% discount**
- [REI](#): quality gear + members have the option to shop or trade in used gear
- [Sierra](#): a discount outdoor gear store. Brick location at Moorestown Mall.
- Local Facebook groups

If your family needs support to supply your child with the required gear, Saplings may be able to help through our gear lending library.

Trusted Brands

Oaki • Polarn O. Pyret • Didriksons • Helly Hansen • North Face • REI Co-op
Smartwool • Darn Tough • Native • Keen • Sorel • Bogs • Merrill • Kamik

Maintaining Your Gear

- The less often you wash your waterproof gear, the better. A wipe down with a wet cloth or outerwear sponge cloth is better than machine washing
- Some suppliers sell patch kits for waterproof gear. Electrical tape is another good option for small rips or tears.

Great Gear Examples

