Welcome to WWOOF Canada

Welcome to the Coast to Coast WWOOF Canada organization. We are delighted that you would like to be part of the WWOOF Canada farm host volunteer network. WWOOFing is a wonderful way to travel economically across a new country, share the daily lives of your host family learning a new culture and making new friends, as well as learning and sharing about organic growing and other sustainable living practices.

Membership of WWOOF Canada will mean entering into some very special relationships. You’ll have the chance to share the lives of complete strangers and will be treated as a member of their family. This guide is designed to help you make that relationship work. It has been put together from the feedback, comments and advice of your fellow WWOOFers and hosts. It will prepare you to enter the unique world of WWOOF and get the best out of your membership. Our thanks to all the WWOOFers and hosts whose input has created this handbook!

There are nearly four thousand volunteers per year who come from within Canada and from 40 other countries worldwide who look forward to an experience on a Canadian farm, homestead, residential or urban property. And there are now over 800 WWOOF hosts all across Canada.

Please take the time to read this book as it is jam-packed with tips to get the best out of your WWOOFing experience.
If you have any questions please contact us at admin@wwoof.ca.

**Translate into your preferred language:** You can copy and paste any of the text in this book into any of the available online translators in order to convert from English to your preferred language.

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And others.....
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How WWOOF works

By offering your services to your WWOOF hosts in exchange for accommodation and meals, you will be given the chance of a lifetime to learn about organic growing, other sustainable living practices, and experience a unique cultural exchange. Any member who joins WWOOF will not be receiving any salary or daily allowances for their services at their host establishment. Receiving payment for tasks done on a volunteer exchange jeopardizes the host and the entire WWOOF program as stringent laws must be followed when hiring an “employee”. Do not pressure hosts for payment. If you wish payment then you must find a job. Each farm uses their own schedule so depending on which host establishment you decide to choose, you will be requested to perform tasks at certain hours in accordance to your host establishments requirements.

Do you have to be of a certain age?

To WWOOF alone in Canada you must be at least 19. There are special conditions if you are under 19. The Age of Majority is 19 in most Canadian provinces and territories. **This is actually a legal issue.** A person younger than the age of majority is considered a “minor child.” If you are under 19 then you must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. **WWOOF Canada is firm on this policy.** There is no upper age limit for WWOOFing in Canada, so you could do it if you were 100 if you are up to the physical demands required. The average age is 20-33. Many are in their 40’s, and 50+. And 60% of the participants are women.

Best time to WWOOF in Canada

Anytime! WWOOFing in Canada in winter is substantially different than during the growing season of March/April through September/October.

In the months of November through February the planting, growing and harvest seasons are over and WWOOF hosts are often focused on some or all of these typical winter activities: firewood gathering and chopping; animal care - feeding, grooming, moving between pastures, etc.; and building, equipment and infrastructure repair and maintenance. There could also be efforts related to marketing - in preparation for market season - which could include: creating brochures, posters, etc.; packaging; website development; social media campaigns; etc. It is important to discuss the types of tasks with your potential hosts to ensure clear expectations are understood and therefore not open to surprises upon arrival or possible disappointment.

If you are planning on WWOOFing your way across Canada and are beginning in the Spring, it is best to start on the West Coast as they are frost-free and planting first, then move your way East.

**THIS IS THE SERIOUS BIT...**

As a WWOOFer, certain things are expected of you. These are found listed below.

**We would like to stress:**

a) You are responsible for ensuring your own safety. You must have adequate insurance and travel safely (see further details on subsequent pages).

b) The WWOOF list contains personal information about hosts. You must never give this information to non-members.

If you do not fulfill the expectations listed below, your membership of WWOOF Canada is invalidated.

**Reasonable Expectations**

**Always remember that WWOOFing is an exchange. These expectations form the basis of that exchange.**

**You can expect...**

- to receive warm, dry, clean accommodation and adequate food in return for your help;
- to receive hands-on experience of organic growing, country living or ecologically sound lifestyles;
- to receive learning opportunities as part of your stay, by performing alongside your host in their everyday tasks;
- to be treated with respect at all times;
- to be able to complain to WWOOF if you feel these expectations have not been fulfilled.

**You are expected...**

- to negotiate with your host, before you arrive, concerning the needs and expectations of both parties;
- to be genuinely interested in learning about organic growing, farming, country living or ecologically sound lifestyles;
- to give the agreed hours of help in return for your food and accommodation;
- to ensure your own safety by having adequate insurance and not taking on tasks you are not competent to perform;
- to treat the information on the WWOOF list as private and not to share this information with non-members;
- to keep an open mind when meeting people from other cultures;
- to treat your host with respect at all times;
- to accept or decline, as soon as possible, an offer of accommodation made to you by a host;
- to let the host know immediately if you cannot keep to an arrangement that has been made;
- to tell WWOOF if your experiences fall short of what should be expected.
Using the WWOOF Host Listings to contact your host

"Now that I’ve got the WWOOF list, what do I do with it?"

The WWOOF list is an online directory of hosts who may be interested in taking you as a volunteer. You search the list for hosts that interest you and then make direct contact with them to arrange a stay. More detailed information can be found on the next few pages. First, here are a few things to help you in your initial choice of hosts.

Look through the list, choosing hosts who are doing the sorts of activities or who live in the particular regions you’re interested in. This can take time but it’s time well spent!

Choosing the right hosts for you is the first step to having a successful WWOOF stay.

Remember that hosts’ descriptions in the WWOOF list are very brief. They give you only a very basic introduction. Try not to build up expectations based on a few brief lines.

Hosts usually have other things to do with their time than worrying about when they last updated their WWOOF list entry!

Bear in mind that things may have changed since the descriptions were written.

Life on the land depends on the seasons (you don’t say…) People don’t pick strawberries in winter and they don’t plant fruit trees in summer. Don’t assume that the activities mentioned will be happening at the time you want to visit.

If the basic description for a host interests you, follow the link by clicking on the View tab for more information about this host.

Additional information will tell you about the type of accommodation, host’s diet, languages, and lots more.

When you access the Host list via the Internet, narrow your search.

Look for keywords

Cross-reference the information in the Host list with a map or guidebook. WWOOF obviously can’t provide all the information you will need.

Use as many sources as possible to learn more about the country or region you’ll be visiting. That farm up in the north may be further than you think!

Make a list of the hosts that you’ve found, a Copy of the messages you send can be found in your “My Messages” or “My WWOOF Visits” box, and by marking their profile on-line as a Favourite, as you’ll need to contact more than one host to increase your chances of a positive reply.

There’s no need to contact a lot of hosts at once - a handful of hosts is invariably enough. You may be tempted to think that sending a lot of requests will increase your chances of securing a place. That may not be the case. Hosts can tell when you are sending identical emails to everybody. A few, carefully written requests which make it clear that you have read the host’s description and describing how you might fit it to the farm are more likely to generate a positive response from your chosen hosts. You can always contact more hosts if your initial contacts don’t succeed in arranging a visit.

Arranging Your WWOOF Stay

Once you have paid your membership fee and received your membership number you will be able browse our list of hosts and contact them through the members’ pages of our web site.

When browsing the Host listings, you only see a preview of the host profile. Be sure to click on the “View” tab in the listing and read the full host Profile to be sure this is a place of interest for you. Contact hosts by sending an email directly from the website. Click on the “Request Visit” tab. Use the “Google Translate” option in the upper left corner of the webpage to translate the listings into your language for easier understanding. Hosts can be very busy, and it takes them significant time to respond to WWOOFer inquiries. Only contact them if you are serious about your desire to stay with them and be prepared to answer questions the host may inquire of you.

You should conduct a thorough interview with your prospective hosts. This should involve a number of communications including email, phone calls, and sharing of pictures, giving you each a chance to get to know one another and the opportunity to identify expectations of your wwoof-stay. Putting up your profile on the website is an opportunity for your prospective hosts to learn more about you, as you were able to learn about them from their profile. Include information about why you want to go wwoofing, your skill sets, and what you hope to experience and learn on your wwoofing adventures.
What should I say in my Email?
Remember this is just the initial contact - keep it brief.
- Contacting hosts through the messaging system should re-assure hosts that you are a member but giving your membership number is good practice.
- Tell them a little about yourself and what interests you about that host.
- Ask if there’s space for you at the time you want to visit. Be specific about preferred arrival and departure dates, and ask hosts about pick-up location, date, and time.
- Ask what tasks will be happening at that time.
- Try to write in the host’s language, if at all possible.
- Always write a personalized email or letter, telling the host why you’re interested in their place in particular.

When can I expect to get a reply?
- Don't expect an immediate response. Living on the land means long hours and hard effort, so hosts may not have the time or the energy to write emails or letters at the end of the day.
- Don’t assume that your email or letter has arrived at its destination. If you don’t get a reply within 5-7 days, follow it up with another email or a phone call.
- Always give your email a sensible title, such as “WWOOFer enquiry”. Emails entitled “hello” or “your farm” are likely to get deleted as spam without even being read.

**HOW TO ARRANGE YOUR STAY**

“**What should I tell the host and what should I ask?**

Having received the offer of a place, you need to negotiate the details of your stay with the host.

This involves:
- telling the host about yourself;
- asking the host for more information.

This process of ‘negotiation’ is the key to a good WWOOF. You should be aiming to build up an idea of what your host expects from you and what you can expect in return.

**What to tell your host:**
- Your dietary requirements (vegetarian, gluten-free...) or any other specific needs you may have.
- Any illnesses, allergies or disabilities that may affect your ability to help.
- Your experience of farming or gardening and other skills you have (whether plumbing, building, desktop publishing or whatever!)
- What you’re interested in learning during your visit.

**Questions you might ask**
Below are some sample questions you may wish to ask of your prospective hosts. But be prepared to answer similar & more questions asked of you by the host(s).

1. Tell me about your property and your organic and sustainable living practices? (For example: Co-op or farm? Practice permaculture? How organic are you? etc.)
2. What chores will be going on at the time of your visit?
3. How many hours a day will your host expect? How many days a week?
4. What’s the rhythm of the day?
5. What kind of tasks are you expecting from a WWOOFer?
6. Do I need special skills to WWOOF on your property?
7. What’s the climate like at that time of year?
8. How do you reach the host or where will you meet?
9. What should I bring with me? (sleeping bag, clothing...)
10. What can your host provide (waterproofs, boots...)?
11. Can I/We bring our children? Can we make arrangements with you if our children are unable to contribute enough volunteer hours to earn their food and accommodation?
12. Are you looking just for labour or someone to be social with as well?
13. Who besides yourself will be at your place during my WWOOF-stay?
14. What kind of food is prepared?
15. What kind of accommodation will I be staying in?
16. How far is your farm from the community?
17. Do you go to a weekly farmers market?
18. How do I get around?
19. How long should I plan to stay?
20. Do you practice a religion? If so, which religion? Are WWOOFers expected to follow your practice?
21. I have a local job opportunity; can I be a "part time" WWOOFer?
22. Can I bring my pet with me?
23. I am not in Canada. Would you be willing to provide me with a letter of invitation for my visa application if it is required?
24. What is the next step?
25. And any other questions you care to ask....

Trial Period
For longer stays some hosts and WWOOFers agree on a trial period of a week or two, with an option to extend the stay if things are going well.

Once you've made arrangements with a host:
• Keep in regular contact with your host so they know you’re definitely coming.
• Let your host know immediately if your plans change, the sooner the better!
• If you start exchanging phone calls with your host, remember:
  ✓ To take account of the time difference if you are phoning from abroad.
  ✓ Try to phone at meal times when there is more likely to be someone in the house.
  ✓ Not to phone after 9 p.m. Country dwellers often go to bed early.
  ✓ Don’t expect the host to speak your language.

The Importance of Showing Up for your Arranged WWOOF-stay!
A frequent complaint from hosts concerns WWOOFers who arrange a stay but don't show up. Many don't even call or email to tell the host their plans have changed.
• Firstly, remember that in arranging a stay you are making a commitment to your host.
• Remember also that the host has made a commitment to YOU. Hosts will have turned down other WWOOFers because they've offered YOU a place. Not showing up robs someone else of the chance of visiting that host.
• A lot of hosts produce their own food, but few are self-sufficient. They will have bought food for your visit, especially fresh produce like milk and bread. It is a real inconvenience and waste buying for people who don't show up.
• Hosts often organize their activities to fit in with volunteers, so not turning up can really mess up their schedule.
• The host can be left stretched when it’s too late for them to find other people.
• Often hosts live in remote places and have to drive a long way to collect their WWOOFers.
• Hosts have busy lives and don’t enjoy making wasted trips, using up their valuable time and resources.

Let your host know if your plans change! Don’t just fail to show up!

WWOOFer Emergency Contact Information

Always be sure to record your emergency contact information and give to each host upon your arrival. Also you may wish to keep in regular contact with friends or family and provide them with current contact information of where you are presently staying. This ensures that in case of emergency it will be easier to either find you, or for your hosts to connect with your emergency contacts.

Canadian Emergency Phone No. is 911 (Police, Fire or Ambulance) or 911 from mobile

WWOOFer Helping Hands description

Helping Hand Hours
WWOOFers perform tasks for approximately 4-6 hours per day, not including daily meals or breaks. For those who will be staying over one week, they will be given one to two days off; WWOOF doesn’t have any specific requirements on volunteer hours or days off. Since planting crops depend on the season in which it is best to grow, and farm animals need care at specific times throughout the day, it is uncertain as to the exact hours you will be volunteering. When encountering the busy season, WWOOFers may be asked to toil for over 6 hours. Specifics depend on the situation of the farm at that time. In other words, the activity load will not necessarily be fixed and repetitive, nor will the tasks be similar at any farm.
Duration of Stay

The length of your stay is not fixed. Actual length of your stay will depend on your host's and your situation.

With a visitor’s visa you can volunteer a maximum of 4 weeks on any 1 farm. But you could volunteer on multiple farms, up to 4 weeks each. Or you could apply for a Work visa if you wish to stay longer than 4 weeks on 1 farm.

Job Description

- Plants and vegetation are conditional to the time and season for cropping and planting. Certain jobs can include how to get rid of weeds, sowing, seeding, applying fertilizer, watering, harvesting, producing hay, etc.
- Caring for animals typically involve daily care: watering and feedings, cleaning their living area, grooming, exercising, herding.
- Other times you may be asked to help out with cleaning or even helping customers and other business affairs.
- Every WWOOF host is unique and will have different tasks they may ask you to do. Be sure to clarify with each host what work they will expect you to do.

Appropriate Clothing to Bring

Leave your "city" clothes behind ------------------

Tips:
1 - Make sure ALL of your clothes are machine washable and do not require ironing/pressing.
2 - Coloured everything so you can pop everything together in the washer and dryer and not have to separate whites and colours.
3 - If you plan on winter WWOOFing - bring warm clothes! This should go without saying, but apparently some WWOOFers don't realize just how cold Canadian winters can be. Some necessities are –

- long socks (preferably a wool blend);
- looser clothing so you can put undershirts and long johns underneath;
- make sure your shirts (undershirts/T-shirts) are long enough to tuck into the top of your pants to keep your back warm;
- hooded sweatshirts are great at keeping the cold wind from blowing down the back of your neck;
- at least 1 pair of warm mitts/gloves long enough to keep the wind from blowing up your sleeves;
- at least 1 scarf and a warm hat that covers your ears;
- warm, waterproof boots;
- a pair of warm slippers
  and last but not least,
- a warm coat, preferably with a zip out lining or at least big enough so you can "layer" according to the cold and long enough to keep your back and butt warm.

The most important thing to keep in mind is PRACTICALITY. Don't waste valuable backpack space with bulky, inappropriate, non-washable clothes. A few (2 or 3 NOT 5) pair of COMFORTABLE work pants/ jogging pants, and wear them every day until they walk away by themselves 😃 and 4 or 5 work tops. There is no need to be changing your work clothes EVERY day, after all they are meant to get dirty (and even a little smelly 😔). 1 or 2 pair of nicer pants and 2 or 3 nicer tops for other occasions. If you go overboard on anything, it should be underwear and WORK socks (not tiny, thin ankle socks). Even in summer, it would be good practice to wear long pants and socks because of biting insects.

Safety

Use your own judgment to make decisions carefully and thoughtfully. In case a WWOOFing arrangement doesn’t work out always have a back-up plan in place and enough cash in reserve for a hostel if needed. Know the emergency numbers to call in the area you are in and provide your emergency contact information to your hosts, in case of a crisis situation.

While staying and working with hosts, always ask hosts about the work they ask you to do as to whether it is safe or not. If you are asked to do work that you don't properly understand, that it may seem unsafe, or something that you have not done before and cannot judge its safety, don't do it. Safety is priority one. Be sure to bring appropriate clothing including work boots/shoes and gloves, and ear and eye protectors if you think they may be needed. Clarify these requirements with your host(s).

Insurance

Your WWOOF membership does NOT include insurance of any kind. We recommend that you arrange insurance to cover yourself in the event of sickness or injury. It is unlikely that anyone will be injured while WWOOFing in Canada nor has there been any injury in the past. But we recommend you take insurance against injury. Depending on what country you are in, there are different products available, often from travel agents. You should make clear on your injury insurance application the details about WWOOF, that it is an exchange program giving you meals and accommodation in return for helping the host with the work they do, and that many hosts are farms.

✓ Make sure you are insured for health, accident, travel and liability.
Visas & Requirements to Enter Canada

It is your responsibility to obtain any necessary visas and work permits before making travel arrangements. WWOOF hosts and WWOOF itself cannot assist with this. Membership of WWOOF does not confer any right of entry to Canada. Never set off for a foreign country without being certain that you have the right to enter that country on arrival.

You are responsible for your own travel expenses and obtaining the necessary VISA to visit Canada, if applicable. **With a visitor’s visa you can volunteer a maximum of 4 weeks on any 1 farm. But you could volunteer on multiple farms, up to 4 weeks each, on Non-Commercial farms only.** Or you could apply for a Work visa if you wish to stay longer than 4 weeks on 1 farm.

It is important to understand the law regarding WWOOFing in Canada. The Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) "Foreign Worker Manual FW 1, Item 5.1..." states the following:

"There may be other types of unpaid short-term work where the work is really INCIDENTAL to the main reason that a person is visiting Canada and is not a competitive activity, even though nonmonetary valuable consideration is received. For instance, if a tourist wishes to stay on a family farm and work part time just for room and board for a SHORT PERIOD (i.e., 1-4 weeks), this person would NOT BE CONSIDERED A WORKER."

PRINT THIS QUOTE AND TAKE IT WITH YOU AND SHOW THE CUSTOM AGENT. It is important that your main reason for visiting Canada (without a Work Permit) is for a holiday and that you will be doing tourist activities and WWOOFing part of the time. Also, you will be WWOOFing with WWOOF hosts who are NOT a commercial operation and therefore you could not be considered an employee.

IF YOU HAVE PROBLEMS TELEPHONE US (COLLECT) IMMEDIATELY at 250.999.7131. GET THE CUSTOM AGENT’s TELEPHONE NUMBER AND NAME and WE WILL HELP YOU IF YOU HAVE PROBLEMS ENTERING CANADA.

If you require documents in order to visit Canada, WWOOF Canada can supply a letter verifying your membership with WWOOF Canada. WWOOF hosts may be willing to supply a letter of invitation but this you would have to request from the host(s) directly.

Requirements to Enter Canada

The following information was extracted from the Going to Canada (www.207.219.111.92/requirements/steps4.aspx) website. Visit this website to check requirements for your own unique situation.

Requirements vary based on which country you are from. This example assumes you are from a country that does not require a visa to visit Canada, and that you are visiting for less than six months.

**Step 1.** Gather the necessary documents—a valid passport or travel document that guarantees re-entry to the country that issued it.

Note: Other documents may be required. Contact a Canadian embassy, high commission or consulate for information on what you will need before coming to Canada.

**Step 2.** Make sure that you have proof of funds available to support yourself and your family members during your stay and to enable you to leave Canada, such as a bank statement, pay stubs, proof of employment or proof of travelers’ cheques. When entering Canada, you will also need to convince an immigration officer that you will leave Canada at the end of your visit.

**Step 3** in addition to the above documents WWOOF Canada recommends you print and present a copy of your WWOOF Profile as proof of membership. Go to your profile page and right click your mouse to print your profile.

Legal Disclaimer: This information is intended for general guidance and reference only.

Religious Beliefs

Some hosts presently on the WWOOF list may have strong spiritual beliefs and practices, with which some WWOOFers may feel uncomfortable. We advise that WWOOFers should properly inform themselves before visiting hosts with affiliations to religious groups that are unknown to them.
**Travelling Safely**

WWOOF does not know personally and does not have the resources to visit all the hosts in our listings - we only give you the means to make the initial contact. Make sure you travel safely.

When arranging to visit a WWOOF host, take all the precautions you would take when visiting someone you do not know.

If you are travelling alone, here’s some helpful advice:

- Keep in touch with family or friends so someone knows where you will be and what dates you expect to be there.
- Make sure you can leave a farm easily if things don’t work out.
- Prepare your mind, your attitudes and knowledge about yourself and the cultures to which you are going. Know your own level of awareness, your ability to assess situations and take appropriate action at the right time.
- There are a large number of web sites to which you can go for essential hints. Put ‘travelling alone’ in Google!
- In choosing a WWOOF farm, read the listings carefully. You will see in the additional information provided about each host that they state whether they are a family, community or single person; and whether they are in an isolated location or near other houses. These are points you need to consider if you are travelling alone.
- When you are negotiating your visit with the host, feel free to ask about accommodation. Obviously, it’s a little over the top to ask: ‘Is there a bolt on the door?’ But ask if you’ll be in your own room or in a dormitory space. If the accommodation is a caravan, will it be shared?
- Trust your intuition! If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, do not stay in that situation. Make sensible, calm (but firm) plans to leave as soon as you can.

The positive experience of travelling alone will usually far outweigh any problems but, obviously, we want to know of any negative situations so we can take action.

**What to Prepare Yourself For**

"What should I expect?"

"I try to remember when I’m freezing cold, soaked to the skin, exhausted after a day’s earth-moving - that this is fun! I could be in a back-stabbing office, contemplating the commute home." - Geneviève, Canada (WWOOFer)

You should try not to have too many expectations - they’re usually the cause of disappointment, so try not to build up too much of a picture of what you think it will be like.

There are two expectations you should have, however - you should expect to work hard and you should expect to get dirty!

What to take with you:

- Torch / Flashlight / Headlamp
- Work clothes
- Gloves
- Waterproof jacket and pants
- Strong footwear, preferably waterproof
- Indoor footwear (slippers, flip flops)
- Sleeping bag
- Towel
- Membership card (Print your membership Profile from the website to use as your membership card.)

Remember that hosts are often in remote areas, with all that implies in terms of other personal supplies you may need.

**Things to Remember When Visiting a Foreign Country**

Always remember you’re a guest

"WWOOFing has given me the chance to see many beautiful parts of the world that I would not have visited had it not been for a host’s generous hospitality. I have been able to share in a life totally different from that of my own upbringing and meet people that have chosen different kinds of lifestyles." - Mathias, Germany (WWOOFer)
• You are visiting people who belong to a culture that may be very different from your own. The opportunity of exploring this different culture is part of the fun.

• The climate may be very different from what you’re used to. WWOOFing usually means working outside - be prepared to find it tough going if you’re not used to the same climate as your host. Also, not everyone has central heating or air conditioning!

• The food may also be very different from what you’re used to. Don’t expect your host to provide you with ‘special’ foods to suit you - trying the local foods is part of the rich experience of another culture.

• Hosts are a broad cross-section of the society in which they live: don’t expect them to necessarily share your attitudes (regarding religion, sexuality or race, for example).

“Essentially, human nature is as it is in its many forms, and as my old dad used to say: It takes all sorts to make a world” - Steve, UK (WWOOFer)

“Different countries, different customs.”
WWOOF is an opportunity to experience a different way of life.
A once in a lifetime chance to experience Canadian life and sustainable living far from tourism and commerce.

**Rules of Conduct**

“Any tips for making things go smoothly?

You’re going to be living in someone’s home and sharing their life.

Here are a few tips that may help you to get along!

• Please do not post anywhere on-line - on blogs, Facebook, Twitter, or other Social Media sites - anything regarding your host(s) or their family including names, addresses, contact information, pictures, stories or comments about your stay with them, etc. without their explicit permission. Doing so without permission is an invasion of privacy and a courtesy you should also expect in return.

• Sign in when you arrive. Show the host your membership card and give them a contact address in case of emergency.

• Start the day well. Get up early! You’re there to help the host with their everyday tasks, not on holiday, so keep your sleeping-in for your days off.

• Help around the house. Take a turn at cooking, washing up, tidying - it’s appreciated. Household tasks like this are extra to the hours of help that you have agreed!

• Electricity, water, etc: hosts may have limited resources of things you take for granted. Many have solar power - turn things off when not in use or you may find yourself in the dark! Water is very precious in some countries. Don’t waste resources.

• Tools: Expensive, so look after them! If you misuse and damage them, your host will be cursing you!

• Be flexible in the hours of help you give. Don’t expect to stop at the end of your agreed hours if you’re in the middle of a task. Your host should give you the extra time off on another day.

• Make sure you contribute your share. The object of WWOOF is to benefit both host and WWOOFer. The future of WWOOF depends on maintaining this special relationship.

• Some hosts may occasionally use ‘non-organic’ techniques. You should not be asked or expected to be involved in these practices.

“I just want to remind WWOOFers that the principle is based on an exchange. They are considered like a member of the family. Some of them regard the farm like a place for holidays.” - Agnès, (WWOOF host)

“I realized very early on that it was an enormous privilege to be invited into somebody’s home.” - Isabelle, Australia (WWOOFer)

“I do not think it is too much to demand help in cooking and household chores as a WWOOF member of a home.” - Shoshana, USA (WWOOFer)
Food, there are limits!
A large number of the complaints WWOOF receives concern food!
Please try to keep some of the following points in mind.

- **Hosts should aim to provide organic food** but this will depend on the availability of organic food where they live and on their financial circumstances. Don’t expect a 100% organic diet.

- **If you require unusual items in your diet, bring them with you.**

- **Many WWOOF hosts live on below average incomes for their country.** For many hosts, feeding you is a big expense.

- **Be aware that food will often be basic.**

- **Don’t help yourself to snacks outside of mealtimes without asking.** Your host has agreed to provide you with adequate food but that doesn’t mean you get a free run of the pantry!

- **Drink water when you have a thirst to quench.** Save any bought drinks until they’re offered to you.

- **When you take a turn at cooking, keep it simple.** Foods you may take for granted (such as dairy products) may represent a very significant part of the budget and should be used sparingly.

- **Be aware of any ‘special’ items that your host keeps as treats.** Some hosts have a separate shelf for such things - hands off!

- **In short, be content with simple but filling meals.** If you really can’t live without luxuries like fizzy drinks, buy them yourself.

**What if there isn’t enough to eat?**

- Talk about it calmly with your host. Make it clear that you’re happy to eat simply but that you need larger portions.

- Be sensitive to the fact that your host may be giving you all they can afford. In some cases, you may need to supplement your diet or you may feel it appropriate to buy food staples to contribute to your host.

"One of the best things about WWOOF is that you get to share the homes and way of life of your hosts. Be prepared to have some not-so-fun tasks. Hosts are understanding, though, and there is generally plenty of variety. It’s always worth asking for a change if you’re stuck on the same task for ages." - Flora, UK (WWOOFer)

"It needs to come from two sides. It does not work if the WWOOFers think they’re on a laid back holiday in a catered hotel. We realised that when we willingly worked very hard, our hosts were more than willing to show us the sights and a fantastic time." - Eef and Amy, Netherlands (WWOOFers)

"I am limited to how many WWOOFers I can invite because of my finances. I always have to think about my ability to feed them. Most WWOOFers I have hosted are in their twenties. Young adults of this age eat a lot! They eat more when they are working hard!" – Denise (WWOOF host)

"I shan’t forget two girls who were most upset I hadn’t bought chocolate every day for them. They still bring a smile to me when I think of them!" - Lily (WWOOF host)

"It needs to come from two sides. It does not work if the WWOOFers think they’re on a laid back holiday in a catered hotel. We realised that when we willingly worked very hard, our hosts were more than willing to show us the sights and a fantastic time." - Eef and Amy, Netherlands (WWOOFers)

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If Things Go Wrong

“What if it’s not working?”

Sometimes, even with the best intentions on both sides, things just don’t work out. If it’s not working out, neither you nor the host are expected to continue with it.

The golden rules here are:
- Don’t let your disappointment make you unreasonable - keep calm.
- Communicate with your host.
- Try to work things out between you
- If it can’t be resolved, at least part on good terms.

“The important thing to me is to realize that both parties to this exchange are in a position of choice and therefore can initiate change if anything is not working as the parties would wish.” – Aspen (WWOOF host)

“I had to regularly remind my hosts that WWOOFing is not simply an exchange of accommodation and food for work. There is some training or knowledge that the host must take the time to pass on to his / her WWOOFer.” - Marie, France (WWOOFer)

The first thing to do is analyze why you’re unsatisfied. Most often it’s simply that it doesn’t match your expectations. Keep your curiosity alive and give your hosts a chance. You may end up having an enriching experience, even if it’s not the experience you had in mind!

Talk to your host - if it’s not working for you, for whatever reason, then it’s quite possibly not working for them, either! Keep calm and remember that listening to what the other person has to say is the best way of ensuring that they’ll listen to you.

Tell your host why you’re unhappy. Do you need more varied tasks? Are you not doing what the host said you would be doing? Are you doing more hours than were agreed? Listen to the host when s/he explains the reasons why things are perhaps not as you thought they’d be. Renegotiate the terms of your stay. It is important to balance the commitment you have made, on the one hand, with your right to leave, on the other.

If you can’t agree, then perhaps you will decide to move on.
- Agree a departure date with your host - at least stay an extra few days. This may allow you to make last-minute contact with other hosts, as well as allowing your host to try and find another WWOOFer.
- Make sure you leave at a reasonable time of day, when you can travel safely, especially if the host lives in an isolated area.

“If a WWOOFer doesn’t do a job properly I think it is necessary to ask oneself why. Was the task explained in a way that was understood? Was it clear why the job had to be done in a certain way?” - Sarah (WWOOF host)

Remember that this cuts both ways – it may be your host who feels things are not working out and who decides to have a chat with you. Also remember that in the very rare cases when there is something seriously wrong, you are free to leave at any moment.
Membership is NON TRANSFERABLE. NO EXCEPTIONS

Each person who contacts and/or visits hosts must be a member of WWOOF Canada BEFORE hosts are contacted. If you are planning to travel with friends or family, those persons will each need to join, pay, and become a member before hosts are contacted. You may not take a friend with you citing them as a ‘visitor’ or other and not a WWOOF member. WWOOF Canada does offer a “joint” membership for a Couple or 2 Friends or Parent(s) & Child (or children) WWOOFing together.

All WWOOF Canada membership materials provided are for your exclusive use only as a paid member of WWOOF Canada, and must not be given to others.

Please understand the procedures regarding this, outlined below. Some people ignore this and it is unfortunate for us to action against them. When a WWOOFer has violated the above rules, we may:

- Inform hosts of the names of the WWOOFer and his or her friend, which may result in some hosts not accepting them.
- Terminate their membership.
- Ask the person to pay a penalty equal to the cost of one membership. This is in addition to the cost that they are required to pay for actual membership for themselves.
- In the case of a WWOOF Canada member giving a friend copies of his membership material, we ask both offenders to pay one penalty each. We use each additional payment to pay for a WWOOF membership for someone from a developing country, or a person doing research, or other who cannot afford to pay for it themselves. If the person(s) would like to specify the country to which we should work to give the membership the penalty will pay for, that is fine.

When you subscribed your WWOOF membership at www.wwoof.ca/ you were required to accept the following terms and conditions:

These terms and conditions of use may be changed at any time by WWOOF Canada without notice. Your continued access and use of this website will mean that you agree to be bound by the most current version of the terms and conditions of use. Please check these terms and conditions periodically for any changes.

Preamble: It should be noted that the reason and intention of these conditions is that both parties have a full & mutual understanding between them for a smooth and enjoyable WWOOFing experience, which may become the basis for establishing a long term and ongoing relationship based upon the love and enjoyment of WWOOF.

1. I/we acknowledge that I/we meet the age requirements to WWOOF in Canada. To WWOOF in Canada you must be the Age of Majority which is 19 in most Canadian provinces and territories. A person younger than the age of majority is considered a "minor child." Minors must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

2. I/we acknowledge the following risk of membership: Some visitors to Canada may require a "Letter of Invitation". WWOOFers (volunteers) with this requirement would have to ask a prospective WWOOF host(s) if they are willing to provide this letter on their behalf. WWOOF hosts are not obligated to do so, and must make their decision based on the interview they conduct with you, the inquiring volunteer. And you would have to risk paying for a membership in order to contact hosts and there is no guarantee. Your best bet is to secure your visa before buying a membership. "The "Letter of Invitation" requirements can be found via this link on the Citizenship & Immigration website "Letter of Invitation for countries whose citizens require a temporary resident visa to enter Canada".

3. I/we agree to be responsible for my/our own travel expenses, and if applicable, obtaining the necessary VISA to visit Canada. With a visitor’s visa a foreign national can volunteer a maximum of 4 weeks with each host. A foreign national must obtain a Work visa if they wish to stay longer than 4 weeks with one particular host. WWOOF Canada or any of its hosts cannot assist with visa applications or contribute towards travel expenses.

4. I/we agree to be responsible for my/our own safety and prepare accordingly and verify I/we have read Is WWOOFing safe?

5. I/we agree to obtain the necessary Health, Accident, and Liability Insurance to cover myself while travelling.

6. I/we agree that I/we will not transfer or provide use of my/our WWOOFe account to another person(s) for any purpose, nor contact members on behalf of anyone else. WWOOF Canada reserves the right to close accounts of members that have breached this trust. Members should notify WWOOF Canada of account theft or of unauthorized use.
7. I/we agree that I/we will come and help the hosts, when I/we said I/we would come and NOT back out of that commitment. It is very unfair to hosts, as well as requiring their extra time and money, to prepare for my/our arrival and then I/we fail to show up when expected. Also, I/we would likely be preventing another WWOOFer this opportunity as this host has reserved specific dates especially for me/us. If I/we fail to notify a host on more than one occasion WWOOF Canada may suspend or cancel my/our membership.

8. I/we AGREE TO NOTIFY HOSTS WELL IN ADVANCE IF DUE TO UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES I/we CANNOT HONOUR MY/OUR INITIAL COMMITMENT IN HELPING THEM.

9. I/we agree to produce the WWOOF-Canada membership number and suitable identification to my/our WWOOF host for membership verification upon contacting them and subsequently upon my arrival.

10. I/we agree to be respectful to my/our host, the host family and their property.

11. I/we understand that there is no hierarchy between host and volunteer, no productivity expectations, no financial transactions, and as such WWOOFing encourages a partnership based on mutual trust and respect. I/we agree to offer, to the best of my/our ability my/our participation in daily activities in order to take advantage of learning opportunities involving organic farming/gardening and sustainable living.

12. I/we understand that if I/we wish to report about a host or WWOOFer for actions I/we deem as inappropriate or of a criminal nature, such concerns must be made through our “Problems or Concerns to tell the Administrator” links found throughout the WWOOF Canada website and not included in a comment on a member’s profile. Please see the WWOOFer Guidelines for full disclosure of WWOOF Canada’s complaint policy and procedures.

13. I/we acknowledge that WWOOF Canada reserves the right to edit or delete profile content if it is felt content is inappropriate.

14. I/we agree to indemnify and hold harmless WWOOF Canada and its officers and employees from any claim or demand, including reasonable lawyers’ fees, made by any third party arising out of or related to your violation of these Terms and Conditions of use, or your violation of any law, regulation or third-party right. WWOOF Canada is a network which allows members to contact each other. WWOOF Canada is not responsible for any actions of either WWOOFers or hosts.

15. I/we understand that the responsibility of WWOOF is limited to providing a means of contact between hosts and WWOOFers (volunteers), and that the arrangements I/we make with hosts are entirely my/our own responsibility.

16. I/we acknowledge that WWOOF Canada reserves the right at their discretion and with or without a refund, with or without cause (such cause may include my/our breach of the WWOOF Canada Terms and Conditions), with or without prior notice: (1) Cancel or suspend my/our access to their services, (2) Block or remove my/our membership and profile and all related information and files.

17. I/we acknowledge that I/we have read and understood these Terms & Conditions of membership and that this constitutes an agreement having the same force and effect as a signed agreement.

WWOOF Canada wishes to further request that you occasionally provide a testimonial of your WWOOFing experience, including pictures would be awesome (& any good vibes). We love to hear and share your stories! Please forward them to us via the Contact Us page.

Before you can subscribe you must agree to these terms and conditions
**Feedback and Problems or Concerns**

**“Do you want to hear how it went?”**

We love to get your feedback when you’ve been WWOOFing! In fact, your feedback is essential to us in the running of the organization. It helps us in regulating our membership and understanding how WWOOF is actually working for its members. We cannot stress enough how much your feedback helps future WWOOFers and hosts!

**General Feedback**

We’re always interested in hearing how things have gone. (We even get the occasional postcard!) We’re also looking for comments that help us improve the service we offer. We’re not asking you for a detailed report - just a quick email or letter is enough.

*Any feedback on improving this handbook is also welcome!*

**WWOOFer Feedback on hosts**

Presently WWOOFers can log in to their WWOOFer account at [www.wwoof.ca](http://www.wwoof.ca) and leave a comment directly on a host Profile. We encourage you to do so in order to provide descriptions of varied experiences for other WWOOFers considering this host for a WWOOF-stay.

WWOOF Canada is presently developing a new feedback system that will tie in with a booking/reservation system for WWOOF-stays. The booking system can help both hosts and WWOOFers manage their schedule of WWOOF-stays. It will include automatic reminders sent regarding upcoming bookings and a request to confirm or the booking will be cancelled. The system will also automatically request each party to submit feedback on the WWOOF-stay allowing for a rating on multiple criteria, different for both hosts and WWOOFers. This will provide a balance of opinions all found on the member's profile, allowing other members to decide more accurately if a potential arrangement would be a “best match” for them and their objectives, based on the profile and varied opinions reflected in feedback. We are still in the developing stage and hope to have this new system on-line by 2018. Any ideas you may have are welcome.

In the meantime you are welcome to leave comments regarding your opinions on any member’s profile. Comments are available for both host and WWOOFer profiles. *Any comments made or conclusions presented about WWOOF experiences or about WWOOFers/volunteers or hosts must be based on stated facts and must be moderate in language and tone.*

**Articles, Reports and Debates**

Our members’ newsletter always wants to hear of your experiences, both good and bad. This could be just an email; it could be a full-blown article, or an ongoing diary.

Contact the editors directly at: [admin@wwoof.ca](mailto:admin@wwoof.ca)

**Problems or Concerns to tell the Administrator**

The WWOOF system is based on trust. It is impossible for us to verify every new person that joins the organization. In certain cases, things do go wrong. It is important that we are alerted when this happens.

WWOOF has a clear complaints procedure. A group of people - both men and women – deal with complaints in strict confidence. Anonymous complaints cannot be considered.

If you wish to make a complaint about a host or a WWOOFer (or about WWOOF itself), it will be taken seriously.

**Guidelines**

The following guidelines are formulated for your benefit and protection, as well as the benefit and protection of WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) Canada.

WWOOF Canada believes that if a member wishes to make a complaint or register a concern they should find it easy to do so. It is our policy to welcome complaints and look upon them as an opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints or comments by members are taken seriously.

The policy is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation. This is NOT part of our disciplinary policy.

WWOOF Canada believes that failure to listen to or acknowledge complaints will lead to an aggravation of problems, member dissatisfaction and possible litigation. WWOOF Canada supports the concept that most complaints, if dealt with early, openly and honestly, can be sorted out between just the complainant and WWOOF Canada, and WWOOF Canada and the person(s) complained against.

To protect the complainant from retribution and to allow members to feel safe in coming forward, complainant information is considered confidential and will not be released to the person who is being investigated.
All Problems or Concerns may be reported to the Administrator on the website at https://wwoof.ca/problems-or-concerns-tell-administrator. Note: You must be logged in before you will see this option – “Problems or Concerns to tell the Administrator” listed under “Your Dashboard, middle of the page under “Important Info”.

By making a posting to this site, your purpose must be to communicate to the administrators and to other WWOOF members any problems and concerns you may have had with a WWOOF experience, whether as a host or a WWOOFer/volunteer, in order to help avoid future problems or concerns of that nature.

If that is not your purpose, please do not make a posting.

Your goal in making a posting must not be to get back at any person who caused problems.

If that is your goal, please do not make a posting.

Any posting you make must first state the facts as you honestly believe them and in a full and fair manner. The facts as you state them must be substantially true. Express the facts clearly and simply. Avoid anything which could imply more than you mean to say.

Any comments you then make or conclusions you present about your WWOOF experience or your WWOOFer/volunteer or host must be based on the stated facts and must be moderate in language and tone.

If you simply feel like venting, please do not make a posting.

Procedure
1. Reporting of Problems or Concerns need to be backed up with names, membership numbers, and dates if they are to be treated seriously.
2. The complainant must be willing to stand by their complaint. WWOOF Canada will not engage with a member about a complaint unless the complainant is willing to stand by their claim.
3. If a wwoofer or host confides in you of a bad experience involving another wwoofer or host, please have them contact us directly so that we can deal with the problem.
4. You must provide the name and membership # of the wwoofer or host for whom you are lodging a concern against. That person will be contacted so they may present their side of your concern.
5. For all concerns reported we will request the contact details of other WWOOFers or hosts who can provide information regarding their experience in relation to the specific problem.
6. All members involved in the problem or concern will be advised of the outcome of the investigation.

Click here to report -> Problems or Concerns to tell the Administrator

Reports of Concerns &/or Problems Policy

Reports of Concerns &/or Problems need to be backed up with names, membership numbers, and dates if they are to be treated seriously.

If a host or another WWOOFer confides in you of a bad experience involving another WWOOFer or host, please have them contact us so that we can deal with the problem.

We occasionally get reports from hosts regarding WWOOFers who are disrespectful of hosts or their property, unprepared to work for the required 4-6 hours a day, 5 - 5 1/2 days per week, or have not honoured their commitment. For these reports the following actions will be taken:

   First complaint, we will inform you of the complaint. We will request a reply in writing.
   Second complaint, we shall inform you again, and warn you a third complaint will result in your WWOOF membership being cancelled.
   Third complaint, we will cancel your WWOOF membership.

For all reports we will request the contact details of other hosts whom you have WWOOFed with. We will contact them and ask them about their experiences when you visited them.

Reports Regarding Contravention of Immigration Regulations

International WWOOFers must hold an appropriate visa that allows them to work if they will be volunteering beyond the maximum 4 weeks allowed on any 1 host property.

If there is a report of concern or problem in this regard, we will ask the person making the report to contact the Immigration Dept with their concerns. If the Dept finds a WWOOFer in contravention of Immigration Regulations, we will cancel the WWOOFer membership. (WWOOFers who are in breach of immigration laws may jeopardize the entire WWOOF program.)

Reports Regarding Health & Safety or Sexual Harassment

If we receive a report about health and safety or inappropriate behaviour including sexual harassment we have adopted the following procedure: -

The WWOOFer will be required to provide us with written statements regarding the initial report, and references from WWOOFers and from hosts with whom they have WWOOFed with.

WWOOF Canada reserves the right to cancel/suspend a member’s registration immediately if we believe the member’s actions may bring the name of the WWOOF program into disrepute or could pose a risk to the health and safety of other Members.
**About WWOOF hosts**

**WWOOF host Characteristics**

WWOOF hosts run and operate Organic farms or small holdings. WWOOF does not allow hosts who use pesticides or any form of chemical fertilizer. Those who sell organic product at stores, run organic restaurants, organic farms or gardens, hold educational activities similar to the WWOOF mission and are willing to provide appropriate accommodation for WWOOFers is welcome to join WWOOF. Every time WWOOF groups get together and talk about what are the basic requirements to be a WWOOF host they say ‘GROWING ORGANICALLY’ is the most important issue.

**WWOOF host purpose**

Just like WWOOFers who come to learn about life on farms, WWOOF hosts are able to not only receive help from their WWOOFer but also provide an opportunity to teach the value of farming in Canadian society. Since many volunteers do not have much experience in organic farming, it is important for WWOOF hosts to guide and lead their WWOOFer in a positive way. This way volunteers will be able to pass on their knowledge of organic farming lifestyles to others.

**What is WWOOF?**

WWOOF is an exchange - volunteer help in exchange for food, accommodation and learning opportunities in organic agriculture.

WWOOF ([World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms](#)) links volunteers with organic farmers, smallholders and gardeners.

**WWOOF organizations** compile a list of farmers and gardeners that welcome volunteer help at certain times. Volunteer helpers (“WWOOFers”) can then contact these farmers and gardeners (“WWOOF hosts”) to arrange a stay.

The aims of WWOOF are to:

- enable people to learn first-hand about organic growing techniques
- enable people to experience life in the countryside
- help the organic movement, which is labour intensive
- give people in the organic movement a chance to meet, talk, exchange and learn
- provide an opportunity to learn about rural life in other countries by living and working Together

**WWOOF hosts** are mainly pursuing a simple, sustainable lifestyle. Some farms are commercial producers; others practice farming as a hobby. Some farms are large properties, inherited or bought; others are smaller and have been conquered through hard work and sweat.

**WWOOFers** give help that is wide and variable, but includes: sowing seed, making compost, gardening, planting, cutting wood, weeding, making mud bricks, harvesting, fencing, building, packing, milking, feeding...

There are 50 national WWOOF organizations, listing thousands of hosts worldwide. hosts in countries with no national organization are listed by WWOOF Independents, which currently lists 370 hosts in almost 50 countries. So in total, nearly 100 countries where you can WWOOF!

Some WWOOF organizations also list locations that are not organic farms but are in keeping with the general ethic of respect for the environment and the idea of an exchange of knowledge and expertise, food and accommodation in exchange for voluntary help.

For a full list of all WWOOF organizations: [www.wwoof.net/](http://www.wwoof.net/)

*Have a great time WWOOFing in Canada.*

*May your experiences provide memories for a lifetime!*

**Bibliography**

*The WWOOF Independents pocket guide to WWOOFing – excerpts have been included in this guide.*