



ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Colorado Outward Bound School (COBS) courses range from one-day teambuilding programs to 81-day semester courses with the mission of changing lives through challenge and discovery. The physical and mental health and safety of our students and staff are a top priority along with the educational quality of the course experience for all participants.

COBS values inclusion, equity, and diversity and strives to provide a positive learning environment for all participants, but does not specialize in experiences for people with disabilities or significant mental, emotional, or behavioral conditions. COBS instructors are not therapists and are not trained in adaptive programming, nor are they able to provide specialized individual support for these conditions.

The Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) are applied to all participants on all COBS courses. **The EEC is a list of the minimum essential criteria that a participant must possess for each activity to be eligible for a COBS course, not an all-inclusive summary of what may happen on your course.** If an applicant does not meet specific criteria, COBS might be able to accommodate an applicant if it does not significantly alter the fundamental nature of the course activity, jeopardize the health and safety of COBS students or staff, or place an undue administrative or financial burden on COBS. **Once on course, inability to meet COBS' Essential Eligibility Criteria may result in removal from course.**



COBS General – (These criteria apply to all COBS programs)

It is essential that each participant must:

- Be able to understand and follow verbal and/or visual safety instructions from COBS staff whether supervised or not. Instructions may need to be delivered just prior to or during exposure to the risk and often must be delivered orally.
- Be able to understand and recall subjective safety concerns posed by other people present, whether supervised or not. These may include but are not limited to: physical and mental fatigue, complacency, distraction, desires to please others, and other actions that may influence judgment and decision making.
- Be able to understand and recall environmental safety concerns whether supervised or not. These may include but are not limited to: hot/cold temperatures, sunburn, potential falling objects, unstable surfaces, rugged terrain, cliff edges, water depth and speed, non-potable water, lightning, and potentially hazardous animals and insects.
- Be able to act reliably and responsibly around safety concerns to minimize risks whether supervised or not.
- Be able to effectively communicate to instructors or other participants regarding personal distress, impending danger, or, if requiring assistance. Participants must be able to make warnings in limited visibility, and/or with loud background noise such as thunderstorms or whitewater rapids.
- Be able to refrain from verbally or physically inappropriate behavior including harassment, bullying, discrimination, sexual activity, or alcohol/tobacco/drug use/misuse of prescription or OTC drugs. (See COBS Course Culture document)
- Be able to perform necessary self-care, including maintaining adequate personal hygiene, nutrition, and hydration; dressing appropriately for environmental conditions; and managing known medical conditions.
- Be able to stay alert and engaged to attend group meetings throughout the entirety of a day.
- Be able to move about a camp or course site to attend classes.
- Be able to understand and follow instructions from COBS staff to respect the human-made and natural environments that COBS operates in, whether supervised or not.
- Be willing to engage with unfamiliar cultures and diverse perspectives.
- Be able to equitably share daily course responsibilities and cooperate as a team member under potentially stressful and difficult conditions with limited personal time.
- Be willing to work with team members to resolve conflicts, compromise, and accept differences.
- Be symptom-free of communicable diseases for 72 hours prior to course start and arrive at course start symptom-free of communicable diseases. Arriving with symptoms of communicable diseases may result in isolation or non-admittance to course transportation.

Wilderness-based

It is essential that each participant must meet all the COBS General EEC and must:

- Be able to lift at least 35% of their body weight, or 40 lbs. (18 kg) (whichever is less).
- Be able to travel and camp during periods of inclement weather and/or at night-time in a remote backcountry environment for the length of course. Course sites may require one or more days of travel to reach the nearest road or advanced medical care.
- Be able to stay alert and engaged for extended periods of expeditionary travel under their own strength over consecutive days.
- Be able to manipulate small objects (fine motor skills) to accomplish functions (ex. knots, carabiners, zippers, buckles, etc.)

The following are additional Essential Eligibility Criteria specific to different course activities:

Alpine Backpacking

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, and must:

- Be able to ascend, descend, or traverse rugged, uneven, and steep terrain (on and off-trail) covered in snow, water, loose rocks, or thick vegetation at elevations of 12,000 ft (3650 m) or more while properly wearing a backpack weighing at least 35% of their body weight or 40 lbs. (18 kg) (whichever is less) for five miles or more over consecutive days.
- Be able to cross rivers or streams lacking bridges with the assistance of others.
- Be able to wear a helmet to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate head-sizes from 18.9-24.4" (48-62 cm)].

Canyon Backpacking

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, and must:

- Be able to ascend, descend, or traverse rugged, uneven, and steep terrain (on and off-trail) covered in slickrock, water, loose rocks, or thick vegetation at elevations of 6000 ft. (1800 m) or more while properly wearing a backpack weighing at least 35% of their body weight, or 40 lbs. (18 kg) (whichever is less) for four miles or more over consecutive days.
- Be able to wear a helmet to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate head-sizes from 18.9-24.4" (48-62 cm)].
- Be able to travel through moving or stationary water with assistance.

Canyoneering

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, Climbing EEC, and must:

- Be able to ascend, descend, or traverse rugged, uneven, and steep terrain (on and off-trail) covered in slickrock, water, loose rocks, or thick vegetation at elevations up to 7000' (2150 m) while properly wearing a backpack weighing at least 40% of their body weight or 45 lbs. (20.4 kg) (whichever is less) over consecutive days.
- Be able to maintain composure and follow instructions while in dark, tight, or enclosed quarters while in a slot canyon.
- Be able to wear a helmet to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate head-sizes from 18.9-24.4" (48-62 cm)].
- Be able to travel through moving or stationary water with assistance.

Climbing

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, and must:

- Be able to use at least three points of contact to climb or descend obstacles.
- Be able to wear a helmet to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate head-sizes from 18.9-24.4" (48-62 cm)].
- Be able to fit and wear a harness to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate waist-sizes from 23-43" (58-110 cm)].
- Be able to maintain composure and follow instructions in environments with heights and exposure.

Mountaineering

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, Climbing EEC, and must:

- Be able to ascend, descend, or traverse rugged, uneven, and steep terrain (on and off-trail) covered in snow, water, loose rocks, or thick vegetation at elevations of 12,000 ft (3650 m) or more while properly wearing a backpack weighing at least 50 lbs. (22.7 kg) or 45% of their body weight (whichever is less) for six miles or more over consecutive days.
- Be able to cross rivers or streams lacking bridges with the assistance of others.



Nordic Skiing (Cross-country skiing)

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, Winter EEC, and must:

- Be able to ascend, descend, and/or traverse flat to steep ungroomed snow-covered terrain on foot.
- Be able to stand up independently after a fall.
- Be able to learn and independently perceive and differentiate visual signals from an avalanche transceiver; and efficiently move over avalanche debris with or without skis.

Ropes Course

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC and must:

- Be able to wear a helmet to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate head-sizes from 18.9-24.4" (48-62 cm)].
- Be able to fit and wear a harness to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate waist-sizes from 25.6-41" (60-105 cm)].
- Be able to maintain composure to follow safety instructions at heights of up to 40 ft (12 m).
- Be able to manipulate safety devices above head level.

Skiing & Snowboarding

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, Winter EEC, and must:

- Be able to ascend, descend, and/or traverse flat to steep ungroomed snow-covered terrain on foot and skis or snowboard.
- Be able to descend slopes with a blue square rating at ski resorts with comfort and control.
- Be able to stand up independently after a fall.
- Be able to learn and independently perceive and differentiate visual signals from an avalanche transceiver; and efficiently move over avalanche debris with or without skis or a snowboard.

Snowshoeing

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, Winter EEC, and must:

- Be able to ascend, descend, and/or traverse flat to steep ungroomed snow-covered terrain on foot.
- Be able to stand up independently after a fall.
- Be able to learn and independently perceive and differentiate visual signals from an avalanche transceiver; and efficiently move over avalanche debris with or without snowshoes.

Water-based (Rafting, Canoeing, or Kayaking)

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, and must:

- Be able to wear a Personal Flotation Device (a.k.a. lifejacket) according to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate chest-sizes from 24-58" (61-147 cm)].
- Be able to wear a helmet to manufacturer specifications. [Can accommodate head-sizes from 20.9-24.4" (53-62 cm)].
- Be able to remain seated and balanced while holding a paddle with two arms.
- Be able to control a paddle and move it through the water to steer and propel a boat forward in or out of current for up to 8 hours for consecutive days.
- Be able to respond to audible commands given by instructors or team members.
- Be able to maintain composure to follow instructions while in cold or turbulent water.



- Be able to orient self in the water while wearing a PFD to face downstream with head and feet above the water.
- Be able to actively make 20 ft (6 m) of progress while immersed in water and wearing a PFD.
- Be able to ascend, descend, or traverse rugged, uneven, and steep terrain (on and off-trail) covered in slickrock, wet surfaces, loose rocks, and/or thick vegetation.

Winter

It is essential that each participant must meet all of the COBS General EEC, Wilderness-based EEC, and must:

- Be able to ascend, descend, or traverse rugged, uneven, and steep terrain (on and off-trail) covered in snow, ice, loose rocks, or thick vegetation at elevations of 11,000' (3350 m) or more while moving gear weighing at least 50 lbs. (22.7 kg) or 45% of their body weight (whichever is less) over consecutive days using a sled, backpack, or a combination of the two.
- Be able to shovel snow for periods of at least 15 minutes.
- Be able to maintain composure, dress for the environment, and manage nutrition, hydration, hygiene at 0° F/-18° C or colder for consecutive days.