

## Oregon Trail: Supplies

### *Reading for Details*

**Directions:** Read about Oregon Trail supplies and then answer the questions.

The **Oregon Trail** was one of America's true adventures. From 1840-1869, over 400,000 pioneers made the 2,000-mile journey, traveling 15 miles a day for 4-6 months.



### Trail Conditions

Oregon Trail basic supplies included a sturdy farm wagon, 4 to 6 oxen, a milk cow, as well as all the necessary food, clothing, and utensils needed for the journey. Heavy items like furniture, stoves, and pianos were quickly abandoned along the trail once the trip began.

For the journey, a family of four would need 600 lbs. of flour, 120 lbs. of biscuits, 400 lbs. of bacon, 60 lbs. of coffee, 4 lbs. of tea, 100 lbs. of sugar, and 200 lbs. of lard. These were just the basic staples. Other foodstuffs included sacks of rice and beans, plus dried peaches and apples. Thick slabs of smoked bacon would keep as long as it was protected from the hot temperatures. Bacon was packed in large barrels with bran, so the sun would not melt the fat. Eggs could be protected by packing them in barrels of corn meal. As the eggs were consumed, the corn meal was used to make bread. Coffee was another important staple. It was consumed by adults, children, and animals, since it was the best way to disguise the taste of bitter, alkali water.

Each man took a rifle, shotgun, or a pistol; a good hunting knife was also essential.

In the early years when game was more abundant near the trail, pioneers often hunted buffalo and antelope. However, a more dependable supply of fresh meat was to bring along a small herd of cattle and trail them behind the wagon. Many also brought a cow for milking purposes. Milk could be churned into butter by simply hanging it in pails beneath the bumpy wagon. By the end of the day, fresh butter would be ready.



**COOKING UTENSILS:** Dutch oven, kettle, skillet, reflector oven, coffee grinder, teapot, butcher knife, ladle, tin tableware, water keg, matches.

**CLOTHING:** wool sack coats, rubber coats, cotton dresses, wool pantaloons, buckskin pants, duck trousers, cotton shirts, flannel shirts, cotton socks, brogans, boots, felt hat, palm-leaf sun hat, green goggles, sunbonnet.

**BEDDING & TENT SUPPLIES:** blankets, ground cloths, pillows, tent, poles, stakes, ropes.

**TOOLS & EQUIPMENT:** set of augers, gimlet, ax, hammer, hoe, plow, shovel, spade, whetstone, oxbows, axles, kingbolts, ox shoes, spokes, wagon tongue, heavy ropes, chains.

**LUXURIES:** canned goods, plant cuttings, school books, musical instruments, dolls and toys, family albums, jewelry, china, silverware, fine linens, iron stoves, furniture.

**HANDY ARTICLES:** surgical instruments, liniments, bandages, campstool, chamber pot, washbowl, lanterns, candle molds, tallow, spyglasses, scissors, needles, pins, thread.

Daily Schedule

**4:00 am:** a bugler blows a trumpet, or the night guards fire a rifle, to wake the camp.

**5:00 am:** cattle are rounded up after grazing during the night (except when Indians threatened).

**5:30 am:** women and children are up and fixing breakfast usually of bacon, corn porridge or “Johnny Cakes” made of flour and water.

**6:30 am:** women rinse plates and mugs and stow bedding, while the men haul down tents and load them into wagons.

**7:00 am:** after every family has gathered their teams and hitched them to wagons, a trumpeter signals “Wagons Ho,” to start the wagons down the trail. Average distance covered in a day was usually fifteen miles, but on a good day, twenty could be traveled.

**7:30 am:** men ride ahead on horses with shovels to clear a path, if needed.

**“Nooning Time”:** the wagon train stops to eat, drink, and rest.

**1:00 pm:** back on the trail.

**5:00 pm:** when a good campsite is found with ample water and grass, pioneers stop for the evening. Wagons are corralled into a circle.

**6:00 pm:** families unpack and make supper.

**7:00 pm:** mothers do chores, men smoke and talk, young people dance.

**8:00 pm:** camp settles down for the night, guards go on duty.

**Midnight:** night guards are changed.



Oregon Trail Family

Source: [oregontrailcenter.org](http://oregontrailcenter.org)

Questions:

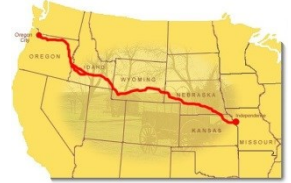
1. Advise pioneers how to prepare for the Oregon Trail. (**use exactly 11 words**)
2. Mules are strong, can go faster, but are often tricky to handle. Mules also had tendencies to bolt and become unruly. Oxen are slower, but more reliable and tougher than mules. They will eat poor grass. Oxen were very strong and could haul fully loaded wagons up ravines or drag them out of mudholes. A large wagon needed at least three pairs of oxen to pull it. Which animal would be best to pull your heavy wagon? (**≥2 sentences, use “because”**)
3. What are three questions you would ask the pioneers about their supplies? (**≥3 sentences**)
4. Names and tools have changed since the mid-1800’s. List three supplies you do not understand. (**≥1 sentence**)
5. How do you think children helped during mealtime? (**1 sentence**)
6. Your wagon is too heavy and falling behind the main group. Eliminate eight non-essential items from the wagon to help the oxen pull faster. (**List 8**)
7. Pack your car for a two-month camping trip across country, without electronics, hotels, and only \$500 to spend while on the journey. What are your *essential* supplies? (**≥4 sentences**)

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Oregon Trail Family

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Questions:

1. Advise pioneers how to prepare for the Oregon Trail. (**use exactly 11 words**) *Bring extra food, supplies, and light tools to survive all conditions.*
2. Mules are strong, can go faster, but are often tricky to handle. Mules also had tendencies to bolt and become unruly. Oxen are slower, but more reliable and tougher than mules. They will eat poor grass. Oxen were very strong and could haul fully loaded wagons up ravines or drag them out of mudholes. A large wagon needed at least three pairs of oxen to pull it. Which animal would be best to pull your heavy wagon? (**≥2 sentences, use “because”**) *The strength and durability of the oxen may be better because of the unexpected situations, like mudholes. A mule with a stubborn attitude could make a bad day even worse.*
3. What are three questions you would ask the pioneers about their supplies? (**≥3 sentences**) *Where did you purchase the supplies? Were supplies traded once the journey started? Besides food, what are the two most important supplies?*
4. Names and tools have changed since the mid-1800’s. List three supplies you do not understand. (**≥1 sentence**) *Supplies I do not understand include gimlet (hole boring tool), brogans (leather shoe reaching the ankle), and chamber pot (toilet bowl).*
5. How do you think children helped during mealtime? (**1 sentence**) *Children probably fetched water, gathered wood or dung, and kept the fire going.*
6. Your wagon is too heavy and falling behind the main group. Eliminate eight non-essential items from the wagon to help the oxen pull faster. (**List 8**) *Heavy items such as plow, spokes, iron stove, furniture, china, musical instruments, augers, and campstool.*
7. Pack your car for a two-month camping trip across country, without electronics, hotels, and only \$500 to spend while on the journey. What are your *essential* supplies? (**≥4 sentences**) *Essential supplies would be canned foods or dried foods that can be boiled for a meal. A waterproof tent is needed, along with pads and sleeping bags. Cookware and utensils are essential for cooking, eating, and cleaning. Toothbrushes and soap are needed for hygiene. Simple medicines are essential, like aspirin for headaches and sunscreen for outdoors.*