



Alaska Avalanche School

AAS Avalanche Course Gear List

AAS students must be prepared for a variety of challenging conditions during the outside field portions of our courses. Depending on conditions, you may not need or use every single item listed below. Your time outside may fluctuate between periods of inactivity (standing for a demonstration or viewing and discussing terrain and snow conditions) and high activity for backcountry travel to relevant terrain. Courses head out into the field in all weather conditions. Be prepared for snow, rain, wind, sun, arctic temperatures and everything in between.

Please feel free to contact the AAS office if you have any questions about this list. Our AAS office in Anchorage has a small avalanche specialty retail store. **All proceeds for the sale of items at our shop directly support our non-profit mission. Gear we sell is denoted with an asterisk (*).** Our office staff can assist you with the pros and cons of gear on the market to help you find the correct items for the backcountry. We also rent Beacon, shovels, and probes.

Technical Equipment: required for all field portions of the course

- ___ **Beacon***: Digital with direction arrows. **Must be less than 10 years old.** AAS choice: Pieps DSP Sport.
- ___ **Batteries**: Always carry an extra set of Alkaline batteries for your beacon. No lithium or rechargeable.
- ___ **Probe***: Must be at least 240cm. A quality probe will have cable instead of string to hold it together and a quick and easy locking mechanism. AAS choice: Black Diamond Quickdraw Carbon 280 or 320 Probe. Ski pole probes are not acceptable.
- ___ **Shovel***: Must be a metal backcountry avalanche shovel. **No plastic shovels.** Avoid cheap shovels such as brands sold at Costco and Fred Meyer. AAS choice: Black Diamond Transfer 3 or BCA B2-EXT.
- ___ **Snow Saw***: Required. AAS choice: MSR Beta
- ___ **Inclinometer***: Any type. This may be included in a compass, as a swinging weight on a plastic card or bubble type. AAS choice: AAS inclinometer card.
- ___ **Extended Column Test Cord*** 3 meters of 2mm cord with overhand knots every 15 cm.

Rentals: beacon \$35/ course, probe \$7.50/ course, shovel \$7.50/ course, snowshoes \$10/course

Travel: practice and be familiar with your gear before the course

Note: you can use skis or splitboard.

- ___ **Skis**: Alpine touring or telemark skis with bindings and skins for uphill travel. Make sure your boots and bindings are sized to match and the DIN is set appropriately.
- ___ **Split Board**: In combination with a pair of skins for traveling uphill.
- ___ **Skins**: For use with your skis or split-board. Skins are essential for uphill travel. Make sure they are trimmed to your boards and that they work before arriving to your class. AAS choice: Black Diamond Ascension or G3 Alpinist.
- ___ **Ski Poles**: Mandatory for everyone. Everyone needs these for quick tests. AAS choice: Black Diamond Traverse for skier/snowshoe and the Expedition or Compactor for snowboard/split-board.
- ___ **Helmet**: Optional but recommended. Ski or snowboard helmet.
- ___ **Elastic Ski Strap**: Recommended to hold your skis and poles together. Also useful for emergency repair. AAS choice: Voile or Black Diamond ski strap.



Alaska Avalanche School

Day Pack Essentials

- ___ **Backpack:** 30 to 45 liters. This needs to be big enough to carry all of your gear inside your pack for the field portions of the course. AAS choice: BCA Stash 40.
- ___ **Lunch Food:** This should be field type food that does not freeze. Bring plenty. There is not typically a designated lunch break. Instead we eat at short breaks throughout the field session.
- ___ **Water Bottle:** 1 liter, or a Thermos. AAS choice: Nalgene 32-oz wide mouth.
- ___ **Sunglasses:** Good to have even in mid-winter as a backup to your goggles.
- ___ **Headlamp:** Bring extra batteries. AAA alkaline to match your beacon batteries.
- ___ **Extra Clothing:** Gloves/mittens and warm puffy jacket. Be prepared for all types of weather: rain, snow, wind or sun.
- ___ **Notebook and Pencil:** To take notes. Bring extra pencils.
- ___ **Goggles:** Recommended.
- ___ **Hand/Foot Warmers:** Optional. These are helpful during blustery cold days.
- ___ **First Aid Kit:** Optional. A small simple kit for blisters and cuts. Ibuprofen, Tylenol, personal prescriptions, etc. Instructors will have a larger kit on hand.

Clothing

Do not bring cotton. It holds moisture and dries slowly leaving the user cold and wet. Synthetic and wool layers dry out quickly and they do not lose their warmth even when damp. A winter environment is conducive to hypothermia, and you will miss out on class time if you are sitting inside because you are cold.

- ___ **Long Underwear Top and Bottom:** Light to mid-weight synthetic or wool.
- ___ **Mid-Weight Top and Bottom:** Polartec or light fleece top. Bottoms for extra cold conditions.
- ___ **Hard Shell Top and Bottom:** Wind and waterproof/breathable with Gore-Tex or equivalent. Pants should fit over boots.
- ___ **Gaiters:** To keep snow out of your boots. Most ski/snowboard pants have these built in.
- ___ **Warm socks:** Synthetic or wool. Make sure they fit comfortable with the boots you will be wearing. A common mistake is to wear two pairs of socks that are too thick, which constricts blood flow and creates cold feet.
- ___ **Warm Hat:** Fleece or wool.
- ___ **Face Mask:** AAS choice: Buff
- ___ **Warm Gloves/Mittens:** Bring a few pairs of varying warmth.
- ___ **Glove liners:** A good combination for with heavy gloves/mittens. Important for warmth when taking notes, packing, etc.
- ___ **Insulated Parka:** Synthetic or down puffy with hood. Your parka should fit over all of your other layers and be warm. This is helpful when standing around outdoors on the field portion of the course. Bring two if it is to be extra cold or if you tend to get cold easily. AAS choice: Patagonia Micro puff or DAS parka, Wild Things Belay Parka.
- ___ **Puffy Pants:** Or puff skirt. Optional. This is a parka for your legs. Good for sub-zero temps. AAS choice: Mountain Hardware Compressor pant or Patagonia DAS pant.
- ___ **Boots:** Assure they are warm and comfortable enough to stand around in the cold for an hour or more. No leather hiking boots as they are not warm enough. A good pair of boots is essential to being happy outside on cold days. If you have any doubts, spend a day outside in cold temperatures testing them before the course. Please break in your boots to avoid cold feet and blisters.



Alaska Avalanche School

Independence Mine Visitor Center or Hut Based Additional Notes

- ___ **Sled or Large Backpack:** To haul gear up to the Visitor's Center or Hut.
- ___ **Sleeping Bag:** This should be a medium to light-weight sleeping bag.
- ___ **Sleeping Pad:** The floor is hard.
- ___ **Toiletries:** Toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, personal prescriptions, wet wipes, etc.
- ___ **Indoor Footwear:** Sandals, slippers, booties, etc.
- ___ **Earplugs:** Some people snore...

Food

Note: Independence Mine Visitor Center only has hot and cold water and a microwave. A stove is not available. The fridge is outside the door. Coffee will be provided at both locations! There is NO ELECTRICITY at Manitoba. There is gas stove for cooking. For more information, please visit www.alaskahuts.org.

- ___ **Bowl, Plate, Utensils, etc:** You are required to bring all of your own eating and cooking utensils and supplies.
- ___ **Food:** You are required to bring all of your food for the full duration of the course.
- ___ **Water:** There is clean running water at the Hatcher Pass Visitor Center. Manitoba has river water that some people purify.
- ___ **Potluck Item.** For the end of the first field day.

Required for Level 2 Courses, Optional for Level 1 Courses

- ___ **Field Data Notebook*:** AAS recommends the Snowpit Technologies Field Notebook.
- ___ **SWAG Book*:** Snow, Weather and Avalanche Observation Guidelines (SWAG):
- ___ **Compass:** Some compasses have an inclinometer built in. AAS choice: Silva Ranger.
- ___ **Mechanical Pencil**
- ___ **Magnifying Lens/Loupe**
- ___ **Crystal Card**
- ___ **Folding Ruler or Marked Probe*:** marked in centimeters