



# W.G.A. Standards

## Wilderness Guide Level 2-3

### Arctic & Sub-Arctic



## Signature Table

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

A Wilderness Guide is an integral leader, trained up to date with experience and a high level of self, group environmental awareness. A Wilderness Guide is competent to develop, organize, promote and guide activities in a safe way, in remote natural landscapes, with a high level of self-sufficiency up to several weeks according to the level of training, experience and legal competences. We are leaders of leaders and as Wilderness Leaders we always develop and practice our vision and moral purpose.

## 1.1 Scope

The Scope of this document is to define the WGA certifications and the requirements to obtain them in a way that they can be assessed uniformly across the different training centers to guarantee a good standard of education.

## 1.2 Reference Documents

RD-1 Earth Charter	<a href="https://earthcharter.org/discover/the-earth-charter/">https://earthcharter.org/discover/the-earth-charter/</a>
RD-2 Mission Statement	<a href="https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/mission-statement/">https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/mission-statement/</a>
RD-3 Code of ethics	<a href="https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/code-of-ethics/">https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/code-of-ethics/</a>
RD-4 Ecoregions	<a href="https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/w-g-a-eco-regions/">https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/w-g-a-eco-regions/</a>
RD-5 Policy for firearms	<a href="https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/policy-for-firearms/">https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/policy-for-firearms/</a>

## 1.3 Terminology

Abbreviation/Term	Meaning
Frontcountry	The Front Country are Wilderness Areas useful for trips like hikes and/or multiple day hikes in areas where rescue services can reach them (normally) within 12 hours.
Backcountry	Back Country has none, or hardly, cell-phone reception. There is no human settlement within a day walk. Accessibility is difficult and help in case of emergency could (and normally does) take longer than 12 hours to reach the injured person. There is also wildlife to consider in decision making (egg. Bears).
Ecoregions	Ecoregions cover relatively large areas of land or water, and contain characteristic, geographically distinct assemblages of natural communities and species. The biodiversity of flora, fauna and ecosystems that characterize an ecoregion tends to be distinct from that of other ecoregions. The W.G.A. uses the Walter Biome system to determine the Ecoregions. Ecoregions are not season specific unless otherwise stated.



Specialization	Skill or set of skills where the guide has a knowledge and experience deeper than the one provided by the basic WGA trainings. (see Appendix A)
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The difference between Front Country and Back Country is subjective and a thin line.  
What does a WGA Guide make a Front-Country Guide or a Back-Country Guide?

- Days of training
- Knowledge and Skills
- Ecoregion specific / Training
- Other experiences in the field
- Hours and experience in Guiding
- Experience level in Back Country and tough environment
- Level of Certification (WGA level or similar IML etc.).

## 1.4 Document Structure

Section 2 contains the definitions of the different levels and its requirements according to the ecoregion.

Section 3 explains the requirements to be a guide instructor or a training institute.

Appendix A explains what specializations are and presents a list of examples for the levels on Section.

Appendix B lists and maps in more detail the skills and knowledge needed to obtain the different levels defined in Section 2.

## 2 LEVELS AND COMPETENCES

In the following sub-sections the different levels, its structure and competences are explained in detail. As a general overview, there are 3 levels (see Figure 1):

- Level 1 is the entry point and provides the basic skills for every WGA guide.
- Level 2 is a more advanced training; it has different modalities that focus on one of the available ecoregions (the student has to choose a modality).
- Level 3 is the highest level of training in the W.G.A., it gives further knowledge and skills applicable to the modality chosen on level 2.

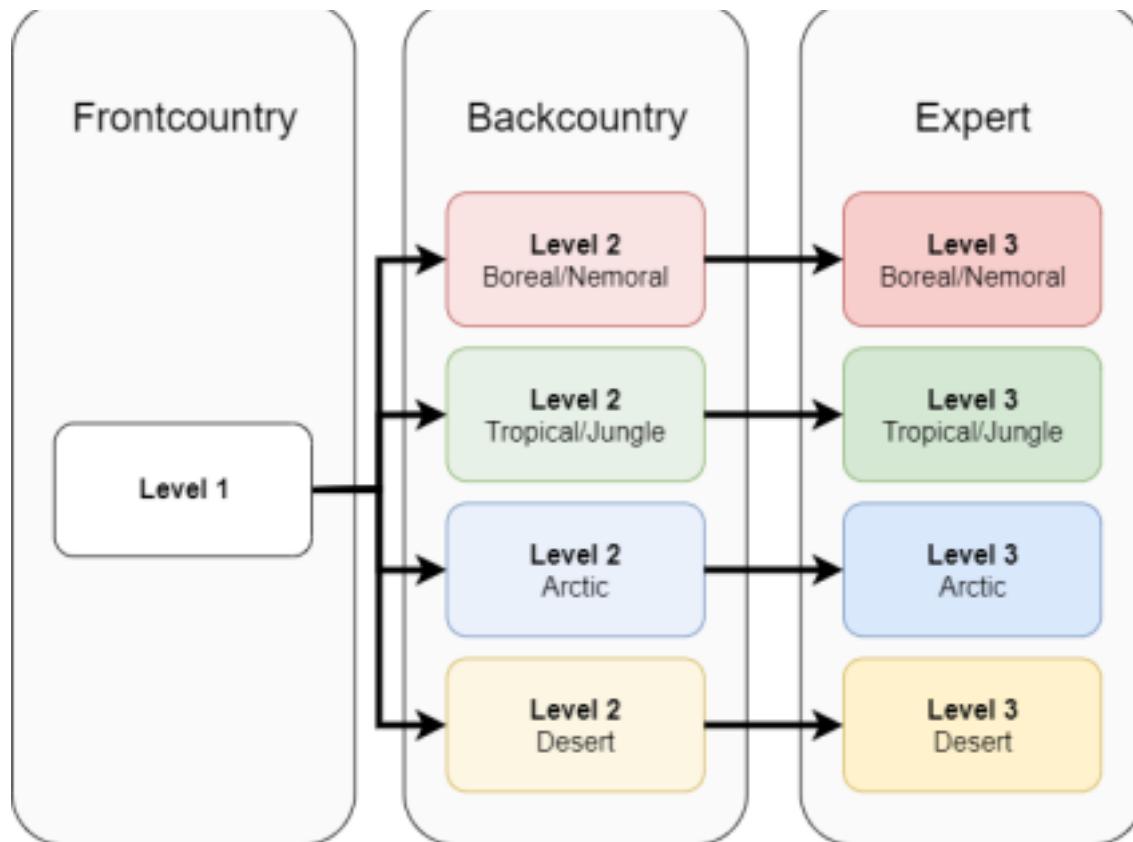


Figure 1 Level structure

Transfer of experience: the WGA applicant can proof experiences in other ecoregions, which can be applicable and will be evaluated during the assessment process.

## 2.1 Wilderness guide - Level 2 Arctic

### 2.1.1 Competences Level 2

- Can guide autonomously in territory with which they are familiar, where evacuation can surpass 12 hours.
- Can act as a guide off trail without direct supervision of W.G.A. Level 2 or Level 3 guides.
- Knows about his/her limitations and possibilities as a W.G.A. level 2 guide and his/her responsibilities towards nature and customers.

### 2.1.2 Qualification assessment

Qualifications:



28 days of extra training (224 hours counting 8 hours a day) from which at least 14 days in Remote/Backcountry areas within the (Sub) Arctic ecoregion.

A minimum of 28 days of extra guiding within Level 2 competences.

For Arctic Level 2 a minimum of 28 days during winter egg 14 days training, 14 days Guiding

For all counted days the general rule is: At Least 50% is in the Arctic, the other 50% can be done in the Sub Arctic during winter.

At least 4 specializations

Practical Period:

- A minimum of 28 days of (assistant) guiding under supervision of a W.G.A. Approved Level 2/3 guide or a W.G.A. approved organization within field overnight experience within the level 2 competences and ecoregion.
- At least 14 days of (assistant) guiding should be under direct supervision.
- Experience should be logged in the W.G.A. Logbook which can be found and downloaded on the W.G.A. Website.
- A W.G.A. approved organization for internships is published on the website of the W.G.A.
- The practical period should be well documented and submitted within the application.

## 2.1.3 Skills and Knowledge

See Appendix B.

<sup>1</sup> Any documented and suitable guiding experience with references either from the employer/supervisor or from the clients, supervised and signed off by a Level 2 or 3 WGA guide or another experienced guide from a suitable organization or association. At least 14 days should be under direct supervision.

## 2.2 Wilderness guide - Level 3 Arctic

### 2.2.1 Competences Level 3

- Can guide autonomously in territory with which they are familiar, where evacuation can surpass 12 hours.
- Can act as an expert guide off trail under without supervision of W.G.A. Level 2 or Level 3 guides.
- Knows about his/her limitations and possibilities as a W.G.A. level 3 guide and his/her responsibilities towards nature and customers.
- A level 3 guide can train level 1 guides (see 3.1.2 qualifications).



## 2.2.2 Qualification assessment

### Qualifications:

- A minimum of 120 days (960 hours) of (assistant) guiding from which at least 60 days (480 hours) in Remote / Backcountry areas within the (Sub) Arctic Ecoregion. From which at least 50 days in winter. For all counted days the general rule is: At Least 50% is in the Arctic, the other 50% can be done in the Sub Arctic during winter.
- Experience with at least 10 days of minus 30 Celcius and/or colder.
- A Minimum of 20 days of training in Group Management, Didactics, Teaching and/or Coaching or a Teaching Degree.
- The applying guide must have a valid WFA certificate (revalidated every 3 years) with a minimum of 40 hours training. Medical courses like WFA, WFRA, WAFA or WFR only count for maximum 2 days of field training.
- A minimum of 6 documented specializations by a W.G.A. Training institute or W.G.A. approved organization or similar. (Appendix A) These specializations will not be counted as field-training days for a W.G.A. Level 1, 2 or 3 application.
- The applying guide must have knowledge about Search & Rescue fundamentals (NASAR) The applying guide must have knowledge about Metabolic engines the phosphagen, the glycolytic, and the oxidative pathway.
- The applying guide must be able to organize and lead a rescue party in remote areas.
- The applying guide must have a letter of recommendation from an approved level 3 guide instructor and /or an approved organization.
- The applying guide have proof of good behavior or work in a field where that is already needed.
- Experience should be logged in the W.G.A. Logbook which can be found and downloaded on the W.G.A. Website.
- A W.G.A. approved organization for internships is published on the website of the W.G.A.
- The applying guide deliver proof of all above and certificates.

### Additional Qualifications to train aspiring level 2 or 3 guides:

- The applying guide must have at least 300 days (2400 hours) of guiding experience within the (Sub) Arctic Ecoregion, from which at least 125 days (1000 hours) in the Remote / Backcountry if he/she wants to train W.G.A. Level 1 guides to become a level 2 or 3 guide. For all counted days the general rule is: At Least 50% is in the Arctic, the other 50% can be done in the Sub Arctic during winter.

## 2.2.3 Skills and Knowledge

See Appendix B.

<sup>1</sup> Any documented and suitable guiding experience with references either from the employer/supervisor or from the clients, supervised and signed off by a Level 2 or 3 WGA guide or another experienced guide from a suitable organization or association. At least 14 days should be under direct supervision.



## APPENDIX A: SPECIALIZATIONS

The Wilderness Guide trainings provide knowledge about the different topics that are needed to perform as a guide at an adequate degree. But as there is so much knowledge it is not possible to make the student a complete expert on everything. To overcome this limitation, it is responsibility of the students to sharpen their skills and knowledge in order to become better guides. This self-learning process we call specializations, and every student can choose the areas that they see fit (Each certification level requires a certain number of specializations from the student). Specializations should be certified by a W.G.A. Training institute, W.G.A. approved organization or similar.

There are many areas where a Wilderness Guide can specialize so we are not listing them all, but some examples are:

### Specializations in the category Land:

- Hiking & Backpacking
- Equestrian travel
- Bushcraft
- Survival
- Primitive Skills
- Orienteering
- Rockclimbing

### Specializations in the category Water:

- Canoeing
- Rafting
- Kayaking
- Sea kayaking
- Canyoning

### Specializations in the category Snow & Ice:

- X-country Skiing
- Ice skating
- Mushing
- Winter travel & Survival
- Glacier Travel

### Specializations in the category Nature & Culture:

- Meteorology
- Interpretive Guiding
- Ecology
- History



- Geology
- Native/Aboriginal knowledge & skills
- Tracking
- Nature & Wildlife
- Edible & Medicinal plants

## Specializations in the category Safety& First aid:

- Wilderness First Aid\*
- Standard First Aid\*
- Wilderness First Responder
- Rope rescue\*
- Search & Rescue\*
- White water rescue technician\*

\*For these specializations is instructor level required

The student will provide valid certifications to the W.G.A. to claim a specialization. This can be done through recognized certificates or by demonstrating the skills.



## APPENDIX B SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

This Appendix shows an overview of the skills that a Wilderness Guide level 2 and 3 should have when reaching a W.G.A. level 2 or 3 application.

### B.1 Leadership

	Required on level
Preparing and leading a 3 day trip in (Sub) Arctic terrain	L2
Public speaking	L2
Didactics	L2
Leading a team of Guides and/or Instructors	L3

### B.2 Nature & Wildlife (Local Flora and Fauna)

	Required on level
Good Knowledge Arctic Flora & Fauna	L2
Excellent Knowledge Arctic Flora & Fauna	L3
Good knowledge tracks and tracking patterns of the Arctic species	L2
Excellent knowledge Arctic species Animal track & Sign	L3
Good knowledge Edible Arctic Plants	L2
Excellent Knowledge Edible Arctic Plants	L3



## B.3 Navigation / Oriëntering

	Required on level
Find your way in the terrain using sun and/or stars only	L3
Now how to use Map, Compass and GPS with Declination	L2

## B.4 Survival

	Required on level
Making improvised snowshoes	L2
Making improvised snow goggles	L2
100% score on making fire with a ferro rod with natural tinder	L2
Purifying water	L2
Shelter building in (sub) artic areas during winter	L2

## B.5 Rescue, Safety, risk management & first aid

	Required on level
Wilderness & remote First Aid 40 hours	L2
Wilderness & remote First Aid 60 hours	L3
Cold Weather First Aid 16 hours	L2
Emergency Plan & Risk Analyses	L2
Firearm Training	L3



Search and Rescue 4 day training	L2
Search and Rescue 8 day training	L3
Wildlife safety	L2
Polar Bear Safety Training	L3
Avalanche Awareness 2 day training	L2
Avalanche Awareness 6 day training	L3
Be able to organize and lead a rescue party in remote Arctic areas (know what to do and what not to do)	L3
Ice safety training and know how to conduct an ice test	L3

## B.6 Environmental dangers (Hazards)

	Required on level
Related to the weather: cold temperatures, wind, water, humidity and use of equipment	L2
Related to wildlife: Polarbears, Black Bears and Brown Bears	L2
Related to terrain: Snow & Ice	L2

## B.7 Communications

	Required on level
Is experienced in using SPOT (or similar)	L2
Is experienced in using Inreach	L2
Is experienced in using radio	L2



## B.8 Travel

	Required on level
Mushing – Dogsledding at least ten days experience as a Musher	L3
Boats, pilot or crewmember at least 10 days in Arctic Back Country	L3
Helicopter travel experience at least 10 trips in the Back Country	L3
Skidoo experience	L3
Be able to travel in Arctic terrain for six days during winter	L3
X- Country Skiing	L2
Use of Pulka's	L2
Use of snow tools	L2
Use of Snowshoes	L2
Ice Travel lakes, rivers and/or brack water	L2

## B.9 Camping techniques (or Backcountry camping techniques)

	Required on level
Wilderness Camping	L2
Camping in Winter Conditions (Snow)	L2
How to build a Quinzee or Snow Shelter	L2
How to build an Igloo	L3
Camping in treeless (sub) Arctic areas	L2
Camping in treeless Arctic Areas during winter	L3



## B.9.1 Nutrition & cooking

	Required on level
Counting Calories	L2
Food Value	L3
Understanding of nutrition and metabolism	L3
Hydration during the Winter	L2

## B.10 Planning, logistics and organisation (or guiding & preparation)

	Required on level
Preparing and leading a 3-day trip in (sub) Arctic terrain during winter	L2
Be able to theoretical prepare and lead a week hike in Arctic Back Country	L3
Rules and regulations	L2

## B.11 Environment & culture

	Required on level
Arctic cultural knowledge, for example Inuit, Sami, Dene, Inuvialuit, Gwich'en.	L3



## B.12 Equipment & Clothing

	Required on level
is familiar with different approaches to clothing systems and understands the importance of and differences between systems in Arctic situations	L2
can create and recommend a clothing system suitable for various activities on the area of operation during winter	L2
is skilled in effective use, maintenance and repair of equipment required for his/her field of specialties before, during and after an expedition	L2
Maintenance of Snow tools and Winter equipment, Snowshoes etc.	L2

## B.13 Meteorology

	Required on level
know how to obtain information about the weather by natural and technical means with the accent on Arctic Weather patterns	L2

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