



Campfires are a place where people should be able to relax and enjoy the atmosphere and simplicity of life. But, sadly the actions of some can spoil it for everyone else. While we'd prefer that it wasn't the case, there are some rules, etiquette and laws that should be followed to ensure the enjoyment and safety of the campfire for all. There can often be many unknowns around the campfire, as everyone has different traditions and history when it comes to operating an integral part of the campsite. For some, there is not necessarily a right or wrong, rather an interpretation while for others, it is a non-negotiable out of respect for the environment and other campers.

Here are the top 10 campfire rules and etiquette:

1. Don't build a campfire if there's a fire ban in place

You really don't want to be the one responsible for a bushfire – it's not good for your reputation, your bank account or your freedom. Follow the rules, fire bans are in place for a reason! Even if there isn't a fire ban in place... if winds are high, think twice about whether a campfire is necessary.



Make sure you pay attention to signage and never light a fire when there is a fire ban. Image: Barry Peters

2. You don't always need a bonfire

While it can be tempting to build a roaring bonfire, keep it simple by building your fire *just* big enough to suit your purpose – whether it be cooking, staying warm, or just for the atmosphere.

3. If there's a fire-ring in your camping area, don't build another one

So many people end up doing this purely because they're a bit lazy, or it's too hard to incorporate the existing one into their campsite plans. However, there simply isn't any reason or the need to char another piece of the beautiful landscape for your own convenience – so think twice before you build another one!



If there's already a fireplace or fire ring at your campsite – use it! Image: Barry Peters

4. Have a shovel and a bucket of water or soil handy to extinguish your fire if needed

You never know what might happen if a log rolls out of the ring, or embers escape into the nearby bush, so having a bucket or jerry can of water and soil handy, along with a shovel to assist is a must when managing a fire.

5. Try not to exhaust the local area of firewood

If there is already firewood (collected by others) at the campfire, then replace it if you use it. In fact, the best thing to do is carry in enough firewood from home, or collect it away from your campsite, so you don't ruin the beautiful landscape around you, or deplete the habitat of native animals. For more on choosing the best wood for campfires, check out this guide [here](#).



Bring firewood or other eco-friendly options from home to prevent depletion of the landscape.

Image: Barry Peters

6. Avoid using loud machinery when collecting firewood

Chainsaws and generators can make a lot of noise, which can often be a major annoyance and disturbance to wildlife and your camping neighbours. If you can, use manual tools and if you do use louder machinery – avoid doing it in the early hours of the morning, so you don't cause a ruckus and wake your fellow campers up.

7. Never walk away from your campfire and leave it unattended

Never leave your campfire unattended, even if it's just for a few minutes. When departing your campsite, ensure you *completely* extinguish your campfire with water. Also, make sure you take the extra step to double-check that no hot coals are burning away under the top layer of ash by turning the campfire over with a shovel.

8. Be careful of what rubbish you burn

This one is always a little contentious, but only throw rubbish in the fire that is going to completely burn – aluminium foil, glass bottles/jars, steel and aluminium cans do not burn. You definitely shouldn't throw things like plastic in, as nobody wants to smell the fumes which are toxic for your health and the environment.

If you happen to throw something into the campfire that doesn't fully burn, either [pack it out](#) or throw it in the rubbish bin before you leave your campsite. Make sure you never leave or bury rubbish in a fire pits, and clear them out of any debris before you build your fire.



Always have someone manning the fire – that way it won't get out of control.

9. Seek permission before adding to a fire

Some people can be quite precious about their campfire set up, possibly because they might be burning the campfire a certain way for a particular reason. For example, they may not be adding wood as they need to access [hot coals for cooking](#), so that's why it's always good to ask permission from the person who is overseeing the campfire, before doing anything to



alter it.

10. Consider who else will be around

Always be mindful that the campfire is considered a special space where communal time is shared, especially as the night pushes on. Try to prevent unnecessary conduct like using torches, playing loud music, taking up lots of space, etc. – unless you have the permission of your group.



Make sure you think of others when chilling out around the campfire.

Laws

Rules and Etiquette #1 reminds us all of the importance of not having campfires during a fire ban. It's important to know the levels of bans which differentiate between each state and territory in Australia. In some instances, you may also require a permit to ignite a campfire. While no one wants to be a party-pooper, these bans exist to keep people's own lives and their livelihoods such as homes, tourist attractions, stock and infrastructure safe. Please don't be complacent. There are significant consequences for disobeying these bans, which are your responsibility to be aware of.

To find out what restrictions are in place in your area, you should check with your local fire service, the owner of the land in which you are camping and with your local council.

Further information regarding fire restrictions across the country can be found via these websites below:

- [South Australia](#)
- [Victoria](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
- [Queensland](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
- [Western Australia](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)

What about you? Are there any campfire rules or etiquette that you enforce to ensure a great and safe trip for everyone?