



Equipment Shop American Alpine Institute

Home of The Guides Choice Testing Program | Alpine Equipment & Clothing

The Lead Equipment Specialist Position

The American Alpine Institute is looking for a creative and energetic person who has great enthusiasm for people, climbing, and a desire to work for a company that is committed to providing the best climbing education in America.

Introduction to the position

As Lead Equipment Specialist you will be a step above the Equipment Specialist position in the hierarchy and have some responsibility for oversight. The role of Lead Equipment Specialist is dynamic, with core responsibilities plus other, secondary tasks that arise out of a variety of circumstances that vary week to week. The core responsibilities include:

- Lead specialist on rendezvous (RV's, for short) meetings with climbers for orientation and rentals the morning that their courses head to the mountains and working on returns (RT's for short), helping clients on courses coming back from the mountains to turn in rental gear, pick up luggage, etc.
- Lead specialist on equipment maintenance
- Retail shop sales person and rental service duties
- Inventory receiving and updating
- Perform tasks requested by the two Equipment Shop Managers
- Fulfilling online orders

Secondary tasks include:

- Running errands
- Assisting the Van Fleet Manager with servicing the Institute's vehicles
- Performing tasks for the Institute's administrative office

Introduction to the company

The American Alpine Institute (AAI) is a mountaineering climbing school and guide service based in Bellingham that operates in 6 states and 16 countries. Many national reviewers have

judged the Institute to be the best business of its type in North America. We are grateful for the praise and work hard to re-earn that reputation every day.

Sixteen people work in program administration and equipment services, and 55 guides lead courses and expeditions worldwide. The Institute offers programs at all skill levels in rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, backpacking, backcountry skiing, avalanche skills, and expedition climbing.

The Institute is an outdoor industry leader in environmental education and protection. AAI is committed to offset 100% of its carbon emissions, including energy consumed in the office, travel, and field programs. The Institute is also committed to leading by example in business ethics and through innovative programming and operations in environmental protection, conservation, and preservation. AAI staff members serve on boards of directors of non-profit environmental research and educational organizations, and the Institute provides financial support to those organizations as well.

AAI staff members have many interests, enjoy the outdoors in general, and pursue many forms of outdoor recreation. They are kind, good humored, smart, and enthusiastic, and they are a lot of fun to work with. Many long-term friendships are established while working at the Institute.

The Equipment Shop was established to provide the highest quality equipment to climbers going on the Institute's courses and guided ascents as well as to the climbers in the general public. We have a retail shop that focuses on the best gear available for mountain sports as well as a rental shop that rents very high quality gear. Staff in the Equipment Shop supplement the sale and rental of top equipment with education that is based on thorough knowledge of the gear. If you don't know the gear in great detail when you begin the job, you will by the end of the first month.

Climbers work with very detailed equipment lists that we provide to them before they arrive in Bellingham for their program. Most arrive very well equipped or with a plan to complete their checklist of needed clothing and gear with purchases at the Equipment Shop. The shop carries a complete line of clothing and gear, so if the need were to arise, a climber could be totally outfitted on the spot.

The Equipment Shop also plays a major role helping the guides who work at the Institute. Shop process sales of gear to guides at a major discount, facilitate pro-deals for them, and help them check out technical and specialized gear that is needed on some courses.

Desired Qualifications in the Candidate

The successful applicant will have most of the following attributes:

1. Experience working in the outdoor industry with at least basic knowledge of mountaineering, climbing, and equipment.

2. Some experience supervising others or using team leading skills
3. A willingness to learn, but also an ability to teach
4. Excellent task management and prioritization skills
5. Good communication skills
6. Creativity in problem solving
7. An ability to work with a high level of energy, commitment, and personal responsibility
8. Flexibility in scheduling and a willingness to work as part of a team

Personal characteristics of the candidate

- strong work ethic
- honesty and dependability
- enthusiastic personality (!)
- sense of humor (Ha!)
- pride in work and a sense of achievement in bringing tasks to completion
- ability to provide and receive feedback
- experience backpacking, rock climbing, or mountaineering

Hours

The Lead Equipment Specialist is a year-round position, with work 40 hours a week during the main climbing season (April - September) and approximately 32 hours a week during the slower winter months. During the busy season, the work is usually five days a week, and it includes working weekends and taking a share of evening trip returns while on-call. Trips are scheduled to return in the late afternoon, but delays are not uncommon.

Pay

Pay is commensurate with experience.

Benefits

COURSES: As Lead Specialist, you are entitled to take an AAI course for free once a year. Choice must take into account guide/client ratio limits and getting coverage of shop hours by colleagues. For example, it is a lot easier to take a course in late August or September than earlier in the summer when courses tend to be booked up and the shop is very busy. July tends to be the busiest month, so taking a 12-day course is not practical, but you could potentially take such a course in one of the slower months. Courses that are 3 days and 6 days long are more manageable in busier times.

TIME OFF: We have a pretty awesome dynamic in the shop in terms of working to make each other's time off for special trips work out. We are after all "outdoorsy"

ourselves, and quality time for play in the mountains is really important to us. We are pretty flexible and try to cover each other to take off a long weekend or a random week day to go and have fun. We run a really well 'give and get back' dynamic. Outside of the busy season, if there are longer periods of time off that you would like to request, team members are asked to make the request well in advance, and then we will make it happen.

PRO DEALS AND DISCOUNTS: All employees at the American Alpine Institute are able to purchase items in the Equipment Shop at 35% off.

We also have many pro deal opportunities with companies that we work with in the shop. Some prominent examples are Patagonia, Arc'teryx, La Sportiva, Rab Equipment, and Black Crows. These prodeals tend to be anywhere from 40%-60% off.

Application Process

- Complete a Wufoo application form here:
<https://alpineinstitute.wufoo.com/forms/z2llbw60ymnmd8/>

Be sure to include your:

- Résumé
- Cover Letter

Your cover letter is a very important part of the application. In addition to providing us with an introduction to who you are (perhaps touching on where you've been and where you're going in life), would you please specifically address the following questions:

1. Why do you feel this job could be a "good fit" for you (in terms of both duties and hours)?
2. How do you meet the desired qualifications?
3. What aspects of the work do you think you would enjoy the most?
4. If you do not live right in Bellingham, please explain how you will be able to work some short shifts without it being very inconvenient because of your commute.

Thank you in advance for your application and letter!