



GREAT OUTDOORS CALIFORNIA OUTDOORS EXPERIENCE EDUCATION

SECTION I

DAY HIKE LEADER



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INTRODUCTION

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn.

--John Muir

Hiking is a healthy, social and pleasant activity, and hikers enjoy meeting and conversing with their fellow hikers. Hike leaders will enjoy the opportunity to interact with the other hikers and to lead an activity where everyone is upbeat, friendly and enjoying their day on the trail. These guidelines will help the hike leader to make the hike a successful experience for all.

More seasoned trekkers know from experience that it takes planning and organization to lead a group safely in the wilderness. Careful preparation before departure eliminates potential problems that can plague a group from the start.

The hike leader is responsible for the overall organization of the hike. This person will scout the trail prior to the hike. When practical, this involves actually hiking the trail. Before heading out on the trail, the hike leader will conduct a survey of the group's level of hiking experience, level of physical conditioning, adequacy of equipment, first aid background, and specific medical information that might be important in the event of an emergency (allergic reactions, etc.)

Goals/Objectives

Introduce participants to the skills, knowledge and attitudes of a trained hike leader, including appropriate risk management for day hikes. Present skills for leading a safe, environmentally responsible and enjoyable hike.

Content/Topics Covered

Hike planning, risk management, leadership, trail guides, map reading and navigation, outdoor techniques, environmental protection, practical problem solving on a group hike.

GREAT OUTDOORS (GO)

California Great Outdoors, Inc. is our parent or “Corporate” entity. GO was organized in 1977 and incorporated as a nonprofit California Corporation (1981) in Palm Springs, California. We currently have five chapters governed by a set of [Bylaws](#)¹. The defined purpose of the Corporation:

GO is a voluntary organization which provides low-cost outdoor activities, programs, education and leadership training to its members.

GO provides a network for sharing outdoor and other healthy recreational activities with other similar organizations throughout the country.

GO seeks to instill in its members a respect and appreciation for the environment and a desire that it be protected for this generation and for many to come.

GO conducts Outdoors Experience classes offering:

- Day Hike Leader
- Trip Leader Overnight Events
- Backpacking
- Camping Techniques

History of GO - [click here](#)²

All five GO chapters are on a consolidated website powered by Wild Apricot (WA). We use that system to publish our hike descriptions, send announcement emails, registration confirmations and cancellations.

¹ <https://greatoutdoors.org/admin-bylaws>

² <https://greatoutdoors.org/about-history>

SELECTING A HIKE

What Makes a Good Hike?

- It's interesting to you and others, perhaps a favorite place
- Great scenery or beauty - views, mountains, washes, rivers, waterfalls, woods, canyons
- Important natural features - earthquake fault, mountain pass, meteor showers, full moon walk
- Representative or unusual flora or fauna
- Ecological interest - wetlands, dunes, oasis, preserves
- Environmental importance - new preserves, areas of current interest
- Historical interest - mines, ghost town, prehistoric sites, early ranching, archeological sites
- An especially challenging hike
- An easy walk for elderly, physically challenged, etc.
- Exercise

Activities Other Than Hiking

- Bird-watching at your favorite wetland
- Movie night with an environmental focus
- Plan a creative celebration of the equinox or solstice
- Organize a docent-led tour of museum or park
- Take a docent tour and then lead a similar one yourself for Great Outdoors
- Attend a conservation lecture with other members
- Organize a service trip to repair or build trails or weed out exotic plants
- Set up a potluck brunch organized around a letter-writing campaign
- Photography hike and follow-up potluck to review photos
- Tour city dump or county watershed
- Tour a sewage treatment plant
- Tour little known public parks or open space
- Bicycle ride
- Mountain biking
- Old-fashioned potluck picnic
- Special events or exhibits
- Ride horses
- Planetarium or museum or zoo visit on free day
- Anything that broadens our awareness of our environment is a valid outing

PLANNING YOUR HIKE

Define Limitations - Purpose

Hike profile - Type of activity, rigor, and duration. Easy-Moderate-Advanced?

Participant profile - How many participants can safely and legally take part in the hike; do they need special outdoor skills or experience? Who may participate in the hike? Members, nonmembers, guests, dogs, etc.

Unsanctioned activities - Due to liability issues, GO does not lead advanced technical outings requiring expertise and special equipment such as ice axes, ice crampons, rock climbing gear.

How to Choose a Hike

Guidebooks and websites are great resources because you can get all the stats you need: trail difficulty, distance, elevation gain, directions, water sources, trail features and whether dogs are allowed. Websites often display recent trip reports that may give you a sense for what current trail conditions are like. For trail suggestions near you, check out the website Hiking Project. [Find Your Hike](https://www.hikingproject.com/)³.

Word of mouth: Ask your hiking friends or other hike leaders.

Talk to locals: Contact a local hiking organization or call a ranger station in the area where you want to hike. Rangers typically have up-to-date trail conditions and are skilled at suggesting hikes for all skill levels.

Consult the GO database of past hikes.

Tips for Choosing a Hiking Route

How much time do you have: Do you have a couple hours or a full day? The amount of time you have can determine where you go. Don't forget to factor in how long it takes to get to and from the trailhead.

Your fitness level: Honestly assess what kind of shape you're in. You want to have an enjoyable time out there rather than suffering through a long, strenuous hike that you're not prepared for.

Distance: Think about how many miles and hours you're comfortable hiking. Your hiking pace may be slower than your hiking pace, depending on terrain, elevation gain and how much weight you're carrying on your back.

Elevation gain: The amount of elevation gain on a hike is one factor that determines the difficulty. With a little experience, you'll come to know how much elevation gain you

³ <https://www.hikingproject.com/>

can comfortably handle and what is too much. For a point of reference, if a trail gains 1,000 feet in one mile, that is considered quite steep. Also, a general recommendation is that for every 1,000 feet of elevation gain, add one hour to your trip.

Time of year and weather: Always check the weather forecast before heading out so you can dress and pack appropriately.

Logistics: Certain hikes require a bit more planning. For instance, if you end up doing a hike that starts and finishes at different places, you'll need to shuttle cars to your start and end points.

Scout the Hike - Things to Note on a Scouting Survey

Trail conditions: Terrain, steepness, trail junctions, landmarks, points of interest.

Trail profile - Miles, cumulative elevation gain.

Timing - Set a schedule. Most people average about 2 mph. Add time for unforeseen delays, breaks, hydration stops, and elevation gain and/or loss. How much time does it take to get between major points in the hike?

Lunch location - Where and when will you eat lunch? Shade, places to sit?

Interesting features - Geological formations, identify plants, wildlife, and history.

Route - Out and back, loop, shuttle?

Side trails - Are there side trails worth exploring? Do they lead to viewpoints?

Identify potential hazards - Rock falls, narrow drop-off, stream crossing, low tree limbs.

Group size -

- The ability to safely and enjoyably manage a group in this terrain.
- The land agency restrictions and legal limits.
- Number of leaders.
- Environmental impact of the group size.
- The more people you allow, the more difficult it will be for you to keep everyone together, the more likely someone will slow the group down and the more likely there could be an injury. Also keep in mind how disruptive a large group will be to other hikers. It's best to limit your hike between 10-15 people.

Permits, gate codes and closing times

Fees

Transportation

- Will carpooling be feasible?
- How long does it take to get to the trailhead from carpool site?
- Adequate parking at trailhead? How many?
- Road conditions: Will drivers have to take rutted dirt road?
- Do they need a high clearance vehicle?
- Is a car shuttle necessary to get back to trailhead?
- Are there toilet facilities at the trailhead?

Emergency resources - Note the location of the nearest facilities for emergency aid, such as telephone, ranger station, evacuation routes, cell phone coverage.

After-hike options - Lunch, pool time

Potential Problems/Issues To Note When Scouting/Researching

Weather concerns - Excessive heat, wind, fog, rain, flash floods?

Changing conditions - Are trail conditions likely to change between the date you scout and the time you lead the hike?

Scheduling conflicts - Heavy traffic for local events. High visitor use times.

Access - Public or private property? Open to the public? Permits? Gate code?

Restrictions - Are dogs allowed on ALL of the trails on your route? Must they be leashed?

Closures - Time limits, gate closures, exit times required?

Generally, you will scout your hike before you offer it. If you don't, you should reveal that in your write-up describing the hike. For example, you can describe it as, "This will be an exploratory hike." If scouting is not feasible, use maps, guidebooks, other leaders, local sources to obtain as much information as possible.

How Much Water is Needed?

Hydration Requirements⁴ - How much you need to drink depends on a number of factors, such as the activity you're doing, intensity level, duration, weather, your age, your sweat rate and your body type. A good **general recommendation is about a half-liter of water per hour of moderate activity** in moderate temperatures. You may need to increase how much you drink as the temperature and intensity of the activity rise. For example, strenuous hiking in high heat may require that you drink 1 liter of water or more per hour. It's a good practice to carry extra water.

⁴ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/hydrate.html>

WRITING UP YOUR HIKE

THE ART OF *ATTRACTING* WHILE *SCREENING* PARTICIPANTS

The details you provide in the activity description about the demands and risks of the trip are essential to the self-screening and preparedness of your participants.

Basics

Your write-up is your invitation for participants to join you. Be sure to give all the details they need to understand the nature and difficulty of the hike. Include who, what, where, when and how. Spell it out - even if you rate your hike accurately, people may not understand the rating. Thus, **describe length, elevation gain, any specific challenges and the difficulty rating** in your write-up to make sure people grasp it.

You may include a link to [Hiking Requirements](#)⁵ for participants to self-evaluate.

Description

- Text describing the hike and points of interest
- Hike length (round-trip miles)
- Cumulative hike ascent
- Type of hike - Out and back, loop, shuttle or key swap
- Type of route - trail, off-trail, old road, wash, cross-country
- Difficulty rating
- Identify any obstacles, challenges
- What to bring*
- Driving distance
- Maximum number of hikers
- Starting time and meeting place. Include map location with a link.
- List second meeting place and meeting time, if to be used
- Hiking time/duration. Qualify: This is an estimate. Plan to end one hour before sunset (all-day hikes) or 30 minutes before sunset (half-day hikes).
- GPS information optional
- Carpooling - **GO does not arrange carpools for liability reasons. Leaders must limit their involvement to making participants aware of who needs and who is offering a ride.** (This precaution limits exposure to liability as a result of carpooling activity.) Example: "Carpooling is encouraged and may be available if offered by a driver. You are responsible for arranging your own transportation or ride share. If you do carpool, consider contributing to the driver's round-trip gas cost."

*What to bring examples:

⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/11VHKluJaKkD1A_k5q1gp0WiaWsJPCUNS/view

[Ten Essentials⁶ \(click here\)](#), daypack, water (x-x liters recommended), lunch, energy snacks, sun protection, layered clothing and hiking poles may be helpful. Carry Emergency Contact Information (ICE). Sturdy hiking footwear with good tread and adequate drinking water are required.

Screening and Your Hike Description

The hike description will help the readers decide if they are qualified for the hike. This allows for ***self-screening and preparedness of your participants***. This helps screen out those who are not suited for your hike and helps those that are to better prepare. Include descriptors indicating the fitness level required. You may include indicators such as fast pace or slow pace.

Screening criteria language to consider in your description:

- **Fitness** - Participants should be physically and medically fit enough to enjoy the outing and not compromise their or the group's safety. Please review and select a hike that matches your fitness level. We want to ensure that your skills and abilities match those of your fellow participants. Note that the ratings are guidelines. For a person who is very active, a hike rated strenuous might not pose a challenge or a moderate rated hike could be very difficult for someone not used to walking outside in the described environment at moderate elevations.
- **Experience** - Participants should have the experience and skills appropriate for the type of outing, such as off-trail travel, rough terrain, or bouldering.
- **Equipment** - Participants should also have the necessary equipment to participate in the outing safely such as a day pack, food, water, sturdy footwear, and clothing.

Hike Rating General Guidelines

- Elevation gain and loss
- Distance
- Time of year - weather
- Pace
- Terrain

Pace ratings

- Easy: Less than 1.5 mph (average with rest stops)
- Moderate: 0.5 - 2 mph average
- Fast: Greater than 2 mph

Trip math

- Average hiking pace is 2 mph. Add one hour for every 1,000 feet elevation gain.
- When walking in groups, calculate the speed of the slowest person.

⁶ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/ten-essentials.html>

- Rules are only approximate - individuals vary greatly.

Considerations for Hike Rating

The elevation gain and loss, exposure to the elements, steepness and the natural obstacles (boulder field, creek crossings, etc.) figure prominently in the hike difficulty equation.

You may modify the description based on the following variables:

- Difficult footing or involves climbing boulders, sandy washes, or vegetation.
- High or low temperatures and climatic conditions.
- A very steep climb or descent
- Will be a brisk/fast pace
- Off-trail route
- Some bouldering - requires scrambling which involves the use of hands and feet at the same time to overcome rocky obstacles.
- Stream or creek crossing(s)
- Requires agility, flexibility and some scrambling experience to negotiate the boulders and vegetation that crowd sections of this remote canyon.
- Narrow trail with steep drop-offs and/or exposure
- Loose rocks, uneven trail, dry waterfalls, sandy areas
- High altitude

The “degree of difficulty” for a particular hike is inevitably subjective (*when in doubt, increase the difficulty level*). Rate each trip conservatively, based on the average casual hiker - not based on how easy it would be for you. Here is a [Hike Rating Calculator](#)⁷ used by another hiking club.

Hike Description Template / Outline

Description:

Date:

Time:

Meeting Place: Map click here

⁷ <http://www.nwhiker.com/HikeEval.html>

Trail Length:
Total Elevation Gain/Loss:
Trailhead Elevation:
Maximum Elevation:
Difficulty Rating:
Hiking time:
Expected time of return:
Type: Trail, old road, cross country
Trail Route: Loop, out and back, shuttle
Terrain: (rocky trail, sandy areas, steep area, stream crossing, some bouldering, off trail routes, loose rocks, uneven trail, narrow drop-offs, dry waterfalls, boulders.)
Road conditions to trailhead:
Directions: Map [click here](#)

Bring: [Ten Essentials](#)⁸ water (2 to 3 liters recommended), lunch/ snacks, sun protection, layered clothing, hiking poles may be helpful. Carry Emergency Contact Information (ICE). Sturdy hiking footwear with good tread and adequate drinking water are required.

Hiking Requirements - You will need to be in good physical condition for this hike. [Click here](#)⁹ for more information.

Please notify the hike leader if you cannot make a hike for which you have registered, there may be a waitlist. Remember to be punctual at the meeting place or you will be left behind.

Contact hike leader: Email [click here](#).

Carpooling is encouraged and may be available if offered by drivers. You are responsible for arranging your own transportation or ride share.

Weather Policy: Inclement weather cancels.

Health Problems/Allergies: *Discuss any medical concerns with the hike leader that may affect your ability to complete the hike.*

⁸ [The Ten Essentials for Hiking & Camping | REI Co-op](#)

⁹ Hiking Requirements 101: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iFLu9yal2C8qjxMq4LjrByWyCINW8iIV/view>

Difficulty Rating Chart:

Difficulty	Expectations
EASY	Leisurely to moderate pace up to 3 miles per day through relatively flat terrain with frequent stops.
MODERATE	Moderate steady pace up to 6 miles per day with some elevation gain and loss through some rocky or uneven terrain.
STRENUOUS	Longer rigorous hikes at a moderate to brisk pace up to 12 miles per day with significant elevation gain and loss up to 3,000 feet through rough steep terrain, with possible rock scrambling.
ADVANCED	Course includes rock scrambling throughout a significant portion of route, good balance, full range of motion, and three points of contact while scrambling are necessary.

Additional hike rating reference - examples of narrative description for each level:

[How to Determine Hiking Difficulty - Shenandoah National Park \(US National Park Service\)](https://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/how-to-determine-hiking-difficulty.htm)¹⁰

Easy - suitable for anyone who enjoys walking. Mostly level or with a slight incline. Generally less than 3 miles.

Moderate - suitable for novice hikers who want a bit of a challenge. The terrain will involve a moderate incline and may have some steeper sections. Generally 3 to 5 miles.

Moderately Strenuous - will generally be challenging for an unconditioned person. The terrain will involve a steady and often steep incline. Generally 5 to 8 miles.

Strenuous - will challenge most hikers. The hike will generally be longer and steeper, but may be deemed "Strenuous" because of the elevation gain. Generally 7 to 10 miles.

Very Strenuous - only well-conditioned and well-prepared hikers should attempt very strenuous hikes. The hike will generally be long and steep, and may include rock scrambling, stream crossings, and other challenging terrain. Generally 8 miles plus.

¹⁰ <https://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/how-to-determine-hiking-difficulty.htm>

Trip Types

Out-and-back - Trip leaves from a beginning destination (trailhead) and continues to a designated turn-around location before returning on the same trail to the starting point.

Loop - Trip goes out by one route and returns by another with relatively little or no retracing of the same trail.

Shuttle - Trip starts at one trailhead and ends at another. Usually, the trailheads are too far apart for you to walk between them, so you will need to leave a car at the ending trailhead.

Key exchange - Hikers start from two different trailheads and exchange car keys when they meet.

Trail Description

Mileage - State as round-trip total miles.

Time - Average time of leisure hiker (average is 2 mph).

Elevation extremes - Lowest and highest.

Total elevation - Total ascent in the trail profile.

Route Description

Trail - Marked and maintained.

Road/Trail - Old road now a trail.

Cross-country - May be in washes, along ridges, saddles, or open desert.

Registration

Members and non-members shall consent online or sign in person the Sign-In Sheet & Acknowledgement of Outing Member Responsibility, Express Assumption of Risk, and Release of Liability for all outings and activities (see Appendix C)¹¹.

All participants should register online where they sign the electronic waiver of liability. This will provide contact information, including important **emergency contact information** and allows you to **limit the number of participants**. People might show up without calling or reserving, whether there is space for them or not. You have the option to not identify the meeting location in your write-up. In this case, state, *“Meeting location will be provided with registration confirmation email”* and insert the location/address in the WA confirmation email.

Approval-Submission

Send your hike description to your chapter VPO or Day Activities Coordinator. Hikes are posted on the WA website and email announcements are sent out. You can update details and add additional information in Event Reminder Email.

You may also send a pre-trip special email with additional details or updates.

Posting on WA Website

Coordinate with VPO or Day Hike Leader or WA Webmaster.

Avoid conflict with other calendared events.

Email Announcements: **Your chapter members only** unless you intend it for all. You may include specific saved groups, i.e, Saved Contact Searches: Mailing List -All Hikes Schedule reminder 1,2 or 3 days prior.

You may include additional updates and details in the reminder email.

Publicity

Submit an article for your chapter’s newsletter.

Mention your hike at a monthly meeting or some other event.

May post approved hikes on your chapter’s Facebook page and/or on the GO “Corp” [Facebook page](#).

Canceling

If you need to cancel your hike due to weather, illness, etc., contact the Day Activities Coordinator or VPO immediately. They will send an email to all registered participants and update the website. Do not hesitate to cancel a hike if safety is an issue. You may include a rescheduled date in the cancellation email that goes out. If cancellation is done at the last minute, you or a representative should go to the meeting location to advise anyone who shows up.

¹¹ [Bylaws-Revised-2021-10-16.pdf - Google Drive](#)

CONDUCTING THE HIKE

What Hike Leaders Should Bring

- **Hike roster** from WA which includes Emergency Contact information. Tip - print the roster on the back of [Sign-In-Out/Liability](#)¹² form and take it with you on the hike and use it in case someone must sign out early and/or someone shows up that did not register for the hike and has not signed the electronic waiver.
- **Trail map** and navigation aids (GPS). Extra map for trail sweep if available. Although not a requirement, preparation of a hike map for distribution to hikers (especially for complicated routes) is always appreciated by the hikers.
- [Hike Leader Checklist](#)¹³.
- **Directions/maps** to trailhead and/or share links on smartphones.
- **Day pack** with [Ten Essentials](#) including a **first aid kit**.

Preliminaries At Meeting Place

Arrive 15 minutes early to greet hikers and reassure them they are in the right place. Introduce yourself and others in a friendly, informal way. It is a good idea to have a name tag or to wear a GO T-shirt so people can identify you. Offer Club brochure/business card to non-members if available. Check with VPO for the form.

Check in participants listed on the hike roster from WA. Everyone that registered for the hike “signed” the electronic waiver and will be on the roster. If anyone shows up that has not pre-registered, the hike leader has discretion to add them to the hike and have them sign the printed [Sign-In-Out Sheet](#). You may delay some of the hike overview and briefing until you reach the trailhead, especially if you have hikers meeting you there.

Let people find their own ride with drivers that are offering rides at the meeting location. Verify that everyone has a ride if drivers are offering rideshare.

GO does not organize carpools! Liability risks mean leaders CANNOT assign, require or arrange carpools. Leaders may encourage carpooling if offered by drivers. Let everyone make their own rideshare arrangements. Remind people that it’s an important courtesy to consider contributing to the driver's round trip gas cost. Carpooling, ride sharing, or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the drivers and riders.

Identify drivers and **give directions**, verbal or printed, and **count cars**. For complicated routes, it is helpful to prepare a map for drivers and give them your cell phone number. If driving in a caravan to the trailhead, drive at a speed that enables everyone to keep up. When making a turn, assure that all cars have made the turn.

Screening at the Meeting Location

¹² [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RGw9yeR1q1lp6LvyL-WXRaTS8O6czGaz/viewility Form.pdf](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RGw9yeR1q1lp6LvyL-WXRaTS8O6czGaz/viewility%20Form.pdf)

¹³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11poVdNcuY95NsQn4-Mhpbc174RNfPk8/view>

Pre-outing communication is an opportunity to screen potential participants in terms of the appropriateness of the outing. Potential participants should be screened on the basis of group and individual safety. The goal is to determine whether the outing is appropriate for the participant. Screening is best done in advance but can also be done when the group meets at the meeting location or trailhead.

Screening Criteria

Fitness / Ability - Participants should be physically (conditioning and stamina) and medically fit enough to enjoy the outing and not compromise their or the group's safety.

Experience - Participants should have the technical expertise appropriate for the type of outing, such as off-trail travel, climbing, or bouldering.

Equipment / Water - Participants should also have the necessary equipment to participate in the outing safely such as a day pack, food, water, sturdy footwear, and clothing.

Observe the participants and their equipment as you gather. If you think someone is not in good enough shape to keep up with the group, talk to that person privately and ask about their previous hiking experience. Be sensitive and tactful. Don't make automatic judgments about a person's hiking experience and ability based simply on that person's appearance, but if the hike is strenuous and the pace is brisk, you need to make sure all participants can keep up.

Participants should have the necessary **equipment** to participate in the hike safely, such as a pack, food, water, sturdy footwear, and appropriate clothing. Did they bring the 10 Essential items? Not necessary to verify they have the 10 essentials. Tennis shoes may be okay for an easy hike, but sturdy trail shoes with good tread should be a minimum on more extensive hikes. Sturdy boots may be required for loose stones, rocky areas and off-trail routes.

Screening Questions (do this privately):

- What is your hiking experience?
- How long have you been hiking? How often?
- What is the longest hike you have done?
- What and when was your last hike?
- How often do you hike (if never, what sort of exercise do you do?)
- When have you done a hike of this length and duration before?
- What kind of pack do you have?
- How is your general physical condition?
- Do you have any medical/physical condition that may limit your ability to complete this hike?

It is best to get the participant invested in screening him or herself off an outing. The leader should **emphasize the real challenges of the outing** and how the participant's fitness or equipment may prevent him or her from having a safe and enjoyable outing.

If you believe someone is not qualified for the hike, explain it is for their safety and the safety of the group. You may offer the following explanations:

“Generally, this outing is more appropriate for people who are able to hike longer distances [for a longer time/at higher elevations/inclement conditions]”

“I am concerned that this outing may be too long [hard/strenuous/etc.] for you and will not be enjoyable”

“Though this hike does not seem like a good fit for you, we have a great hike coming up next week that I think you might enjoy.”

If the leader believes the outing is not appropriate for the participant due to fitness, experience, or equipment concerns, **the leader has the authority and responsibility to deny participation in the outing.**

Summary

As hike leader, you have the right and obligation to:

- **Limit** the number of hikers.
- **Exclude** those who, in the opinion of the leader, are not physically capable or experienced, or not properly clothed and equipped for the hike. Especially take note of footwear on new hikers.
- Change the hike from the printed description if trail conditions have changed, particularly if hiker safety will be jeopardized. Avoid changing the difficulty of the hike significantly. If the hike has changed, be very clear, at the meeting places, what the changes are and ensure all participants are qualified.

Preliminaries at Trailhead

The Trailhead Talk

Wait a few minutes for all cars/hikers to arrive. If they do not arrive within a reasonable amount of time, **do not delay the hike**. If you have hikers meeting you here for the first time you can screen them and check them in as described above.

- Welcome the participants. Provide an **overview of the hike** including the level of difficulty, distance, elevation gain, terrain, hiking pace, leave no trace, and points of interest.
- Identify any potential hazards, obstacles, challenges.
- **Hike organization:** GO usually hikes as a **group**, either as one big group, or two smaller groups, but nobody will be left alone or behind.
- Explain **trail conduct** and **safety issues**. Faster hikers are expected to stay with a group to maintain safety and social cohesion. Each person is responsible for their own safety. State the importance of staying hydrated on this hike.
- Introductions - fun fact (or some variant).
- Advise that the expected time of return is only an estimate and not a guarantee.
- **Identify a sweep** and explain the role and function. **Give preference to another hike leader or experienced hiker you know.**
- Make a mental note of those on your hike who have medical expertise.
- Ask:
 - a) Is anyone **allergic** to anything, particularly bee stings?
 - b) Does anyone have a health or **medical condition** that could be influenced by this hike? Advise hikers to let you know privately if they have any medical issues that would make hiking difficult today.
- Ask hikers to inform you if they **encounter any problems** on the hike (e.g., hot spots or blisters, accelerated heart rate, cramping, etc.).
- Advise hikers to inform you or the sweep if leaving the trail for a 'nature call' and they should leave their pack or clothing item near the trail. The sweep watches for packs, stops and waits until the hiker returns to the trail.
- Take a **headcount**.
- Take a group **photo**. This may be useful if someone becomes separated.
- Put cell phone on Airplane Mode

THE HIKE - ON THE TRAIL

Group size. Three (3) is the smallest independent hiking group that is considered safe. This is known as the “rule of three.” If there is an injury, one person can stay with the injured, and the other can go for help.

Closed group. This is the simplest and most common group and the easiest to monitor because everyone is together. You have the resources of the entire group in case of emergency. The trail sweep and hike leader are close together and maintain communication.

The trail sweep is to make sure no member of the group gets behind them and inform the hike header if there is an incident that needs attention. The trail sweep should have a first aid kit. The trail sweep(s) needs to keep an eye on the condition of the group and should look particularly for signs of exhaustion, foot problems, altitude sickness, hypothermia, heat exhaustion or other physical problems and provide assistance as needed.

No one will be left alone on the trail.

All hike leaders and trail sweeps should have **map and navigation aid**, especially when going cross-country off-trail or in areas where the trail is not well defined. Two-way radio communication may be helpful. Check with your VPO to see if radios are available.

First aid - Carry a first aid kit on all hikes. Watch those hikers who seem to be straining. Look for signs of exhaustion, dehydration. Ask about hot spots (blisters) at stops before a participant gets a blister. Privately talk with anyone showing excessive strain and insist that the person rest or take water if necessary. Remember your first aid training. First aid/CPR/AED training is recommended and all hike leaders are encouraged to complete the training. Check with your VPO for options in your area.

Breaks and rest stops - A rest stop should be made every **20 to 60 minutes** depending on the physical condition of the group, climate, and trail conditions. **Three to six minutes** is recommended as the best duration for a rest stop. Your body has done most of its recovery by then, and additional time only serves to tighten muscles. Rest stops are a good time to be an interpretive guide. Share your knowledge of flora, fauna, geology, landscape features and history of the area. Rest stops are also a good time to make adjustments and remind everyone to stay hydrated. Get rocks out of your boots, adjust laces, add or remove layers, and have a snack. Generally, the lunch stop is the longest break (30 to 60 minutes). Announce the time allotted for lunch and give a two-minute notice before you resume the hike. Keep the trail clear for other hikers to proceed.

Weather - Check the weather report prior to the hike. Be alert to indications of a change in the weather and make adjustments accordingly.

Mark the trail - If you need to mark the trail or if you marked it while scouting, use colored plastic flagging. The sweep should pick up these markers.

Set the pace -The hiking pace should be controlled by the leader to keep all hikers within a reasonable distance behind the leader. Occasionally, check that the sweep is visible to assure that the group stays together. Set and maintain an appropriate pace. Be sensitive to your group and ***adjust your pace as necessary***. It's dangerous to push the group faster than it wants to go, even if you are running late. Call for rest stops if you notice some people are showing signs of fatigue. Pacing technique is critical to the success of a hike. The hike leader and trail sweep should use their **motivation skills** to encourage those who may be struggling to keep up.

The average rate is 2 mph. Trail conditions will affect pacing such as steep slopes and loose rocks.

Recommendations: Aim for a leisurely, fun pace. Plan for ample breaks for photos, bathroom, etc.

Who's in front? - The hike leader is at the front of the group. Hikers must not go ahead of the leader or behind the sweep except by specific permission of the leader/sweep. What do you do if some participants want to go on ahead of the group? It depends on the situation and your knowledge of the people who want to go on ahead. Will they be ok? Do they know where they are going and where to meet you later? Will they notice the junctions in the trail? *The hike leader makes the final decision for the hike organization.*

Split group? - If some hikers just seem slower than others *and you have a co-leader* who knows the route, consider breaking the group into two parts with two different paces. Have a plan for the meeting location to regroup. If the route can be shortened, perhaps the slower group could take the shorter route. Or perhaps the faster hikers can add a side trip that others skip.

Stop at prudent intervals for:

- Trail breaks/junctions.
- Rest and water stops.
- Snack and lunch stops.
- "Catch-up" stops to assure that slower hikers catch up with the rest of the hike, and to allow them resting time if needed (note: Beginning hikers especially get frustrated by a leader who hikes way ahead, then waits for everyone to catch up, and then starts hiking as soon as the last hiker shows up, without allowing the last hiker to rest.)

Wait and count - Wait at trail junctions to make sure everyone knows where to go. Both the leader and sweep should quietly conduct periodic headcounts to make sure nobody is missing.

Sweep - Keep in contact with the sweep. Don't get too far ahead or stretch the group out too much. If there is no radio contact, then the leader should wait for visual contact of the sweep at various points during the hike before proceeding.

Encourage good environmental manners - Leave No Trace: Be aware of local rules and regulations regarding the natural and historic features you are visiting. Encourage members to pick up and pack out litter if they see it. Set a good example by picking up and packing out any trash you see. You might carry a plastic bag in your backpack for this.

Mix with the group - Be friendly and try to talk with each participant. Stay on schedule.

Route change considerations - If or when considering any optional changes to the planned route, either before or during the outing, be sure to consider the impact on the difficulty and the expectations and capabilities of participants. All participants must agree to and be qualified for any optional changes to the planned hike. If anyone hesitates, do not make any changes.

Any unexpected conditions encountered on the hike may require the leader to modify or change the route.

Turn around - If the time needed to complete the hike would be later than the minimum “ending-time-before-sunset,” the hike leader must stop the hike and return to the trailhead. Hikes should end one hour before sunset (all-day hikes) or 30 minutes before sunset (half-day hikes).

Early sign-outs - This rarely happens. Voluntary departure - If a participant wishes to depart from the group before the end of a hike, you should **discourage this** and advise it is best to stay with the group. If the hiker insists on leaving, have them sign out and enter the time (or make a note with the time witnessed by others). If you do not think that the participant can safely return to the trailhead, you should assertively try to persuade the person to remain on the hike, or provide an escort back to the trailhead or reroute the hike. Before they leave, make sure they have adequate water, etc. to make it back to the trailhead and make sure they aren't carrying something essential to someone else (e.g., lunch or car keys). While some situations may require the leader to allow a participant to sign out of the group, **this should be the exception and should be done only when it is safe.**

On rare occasions a participant may be creating a problem for the group or other participants. **Signing out the problem person may be done only when safe**, but it may be necessary to ensure the enjoyment of the entire group. The leader may have to cancel a hike by returning the group to the cars to deal with a problem person if it is not safe to sign him or her out on the spot.

Failure to stay with the group - If a hiker insists on hiking in front of the hike leader or not staying with the group, that hiker may be informed that he/she is now on his/her own. He or she will no longer be considered as part of the hike group and assumes all risk for safe return.

If someone cannot keep up, it may be advisable to send him/her back with qualified escort(s). Do not leave someone alone on the trail

Signing out a participant is a judgment call, which should not be made lightly, and alternative solutions (modifying trip objectives or turning the entire group around) should always be weighed in the light of the following considerations:

- Group objectives.
- Length and difficulty of the return route.
- Prevailing weather conditions and any other special hazards.
- Physical and mental condition of the person to be signed out.
- Experience, ability, and equipment of the person to be signed out.
- Availability of sufficient personnel to provide an escort if needed.
- Level of confidence that the person to be signed out expresses in his or her ability to return safely to the trailhead.

Sign-out options:

- Return alone or with a companion if no medical or physical issues and it is a very short distance back and a safe return is assured.
- Escort back with qualified people.
- Return the entire group to the cars to ensure the participant gets out safely.

People Problems

Great Outdoors is committed to fostering a culture of Allyship, where members are encouraged to support marginalized communities and/or people, and that continuously affirms our organization's bylaws and code of conduct. GO seeks to bolster the below values of equity, diversity, and inclusion by expanding on our non-discrimination bylaws (II. B. 1.). Provisions within the GO Code of Conduct enable event leaders to address any people issues that may cause concern.

- Equity: Providing each individual person with different circumstances, unique resources, and opportunities to reach an equal outcome;
- Diversity: Including or involving people from a range of different identities;
- Inclusion: Creating an environment where all members feel respected, have a sense of belonging, and are able to participate to their fullest extent.

Prevention

- Hiker instruction at trailhead talk - trail rules, conduct, expectations.
- Limit-setting and group goals - Knowing there are **limits** on their behavior helps the individuals in your care feel safe. It also helps them learn to make appropriate choices.
- Prior Screening - Advance notice of requirements and qualifications.
- GO Code of Conduct (see [GO Bylaws, Appendix A](#))

Solving

- Public rebuke and peer pressure.
- A companion or friend of the person may be able to help resolve the issue.
- The private "talk" - state the problem and what needs to change in order for the outing to continue. Identify the inappropriate behavior. Acknowledge and tend to his or her concerns. Explain that this behavior has an impact on the group, and the behavior needs to change. Bring participant back into the group if compliance is expected (give them a task).

- Weighing all the factors, the leader bases the final decision on safety considerations for all participants.
- If all fails, remove the participant from the outing. Only do this if the behavior is truly disruptive to the progress or safety of the outing. Removing the participant should follow the early sign-out protocol shown above.

Trail Etiquette

- Horse traffic always has the right of way - step off the trail downhill side. Follow instructions from the horse rider.
- Hikers have the right of way over bikers.
- Bikers should give right of way to all other traffic.
- Uphill traffic has the right of way.
- No smoking on the trail.
- Be mindful of noise pollution - Use of electronic devices and cell phones are distractions and should be discouraged or prohibited.

Leave No Trace

- Be environmentally conscious
- Don't cut switchbacks
- Careful not to damage the ecosystem.
- Cryptobiotic soil crusts are created by living organisms such as algae, cyanobacteria, and fungi. The bacteria within the soil release a gelatinous material that binds soil particles together in a dense matrix. The result is a hardened surface layer made up of both living organisms and inorganic soil matter.
- Pack out everything
- Leave what you find

Ending the Hike

- Take a final head count to make sure nobody is missing.
- Thank each participant for accompanying you on the hike. It might be nice if you kept extra bottled water in a cooler in the car to offer at the end of the hike.
- Consider optional after-hike activities such as lunch/dinner, a pool, or a spa.
- Recruit - note anyone who has shown good judgment and other leadership qualities and encourage them to become hike leaders or at least join GO if they are not already a member.

- Bidding farewell - check that everyone has a ride. Make sure everyone's car has started before leaving the parking lot.

Lost Hiker

When you realize that someone is lost, the leader needs to take control of the group, explain to them what needs to be done, and begin delegating responsibilities. Don't let people run off shouting for the lost hiker. You need to stay calm and define a plan of action before you waste time on ineffective searching.

1. Identify who's missing
2. Determine when and where hiker was last seen
3. Determine what hiker was wearing and any equipment. Check photos
4. Keep everyone with you for resources
5. Did hiker get ahead/fall behind the group
6. Interview people (your hikers and others on the trail)
7. Evaluate mental and physical condition of hiker
8. Call/text the person
9. Evaluate weather, existing daylight
10. Consider the physical/mental condition of potential searchers in your group
11. Determine exigent circumstances that require immediate notification to call 911
12. Plan a search - review where searchers will go on the map (all must have a map)
13. Don't send anybody out alone
14. Designate a time and place to reassemble all search groups
15. If hiker is not found, contact local search and rescue via 911
16. Record latitude and longitude locations and times (available on smartphones)

After The Hike

- Let the VPO or Day Activity Coordinator know who checked in for the hike or canceled ahead of time. Another option is to use WA app to check in participants. If you used a paper version, send an electronic copy of the sign-in/sign-out sheet to VPO or Day Activity Coordinator with any information needed to plan a better hike in the future, including any issues during the hike. If you don't have a scanner or can't take a picture, send the sign-in sheet to VPO or Day Activity Coordinator who stores an electronic copy of the waiver form on Google Drive.
- Document any major injuries, problems, or incidents and advise VPO.
- Solicit someone to write an article for the newsletter, including photos.
- Advise hikers where to send photos for online posting or the newsletter.

SAFETY

Risk management: Self-care, Preventing Injury, Handling Risky Situations

- Proper planning and preparation can mitigate potential problems.
- Know your own physical capabilities and those of others in the group. This may be based on past hiking experiences.
- Have appropriate navigational aids and knowledge to use them.
- Check the weather forecast. Be prepared for changing weather conditions with appropriate clothing.
- Tell someone your hiking plans and expected return time.
- Know current road conditions if you are going into remote areas.

Mental Aspects of Safety Management

- **Fatigue** - Physical fatigue can dull mental awareness of risk and diminish concentration on the task at hand, such as descending a relatively easy slope and taking a misstep or misjudging the size of a rock and tripping.
- **Distractions** - Similar to fatigue in removing concentration from one's movement over the terrain, such as looking back to respond in a conversation and then tripping over a root. Talking on cell phone.
- **Overconfidence** - Overestimating the ability and experience of the individual or group, for example, assuming a group will move as quickly at the end of a long day as at the beginning.
- **Complacency** - For example, while the group climbed up with confidence, the return may present challenges because of fatigue or awkward maneuvers. What has been done before may present challenges in the current circumstance.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

STOP: Stop - Think - Observe - Plan

1. **STOP:** Get calm and stay calm.
2. **THINK:** Remember your training and procedures.
3. **OBSERVE:**
 - a. Any present dangers for entering the scene?
 - b. Is the scene safe?
 - c. What happened?
 - d. How many injured people are there?
4. **PLAN:** Develop an action plan.
 - a. Can participants/bystanders help?
 - b. If a casualty needs to be removed to a safe place, is it safe to do so?
 - c. Assign a primary leader (yourself) and a first aid leader.
 - d. Address the needs and safety of the entire group, manage resources and coordinate plans.

In an emergency situation, the objective of the leader is not to perform all the necessary tasks personally, but rather to identify the tasks and ensure that they are carried out. These guidelines are not a substitute for good judgment or a better alternate plan. A part of the pre-hike briefing is to ask if anyone has any special medical expertise; if so, what. Note the most proficient medical person. If a medical emergency occurs, consider taking the following actions:

- **Assign** (if that person will volunteer) the most proficient medical person (physician, EMT, nurse, first aid training, CPR training, etc.) to the immediate medical care of the individual. If you are this person, assign your remaining hike leader duties to another person whom you believe is most qualified to handle the situation.
- **Canvas** the group for any medical supplies needed from the individuals' first aid kits. If the victim is conscious, ask them if they want your help and if so, proceed. If not, ask them what they want and respect their wishes. If the victim is unconscious, consent to help is implied. *Remember to only provide care that is within the scope of your medical expertise without harming the individual.*
- **Keep the group calm**, organized and provide leadership. Try to keep people occupied and away from the emergency site. Give them something to do.
- **Initiate an emergency response**, if the medical person judges that outside assistance is required.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE: GETTING HELP OR EVACUATING

1. Direct contact with cellphone
 - a. Call 911 or Search and Rescue directly

- b. Hike up to get signal
- c. Send text message
- 2. Send a team out for help
 - a. At least two experienced hikers
 - b. Make sure team has coordinates or map with location marked
 - c. Decision for members staying - shelter/food
- 3. Directly evacuating victim
 - a. Consider advance team to provide notice for rescuers
 - b. Be sure the victim is stabilized, splinted and approves of self-evacuation
- 4. Helicopter Protocol
 - a. Let crew come to you
 - b. Do not mark the landing area with tarps, rocks, etc.
 - c. Can provide wind direction - banner/streamer
 - d. Have victim ready to go along with their gear
 - e. Follow the helicopter crew's directions

Call 911. You may need to try cell phones that represent different carriers (e.g., Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, etc.) as they have different capabilities, tower locations, etc. Give the 911 operator your location and all relevant medical information. If no one can get a connection, select a volunteer hiker(s) to hike to a location that may provide a connection. They should take several cell phones that represent different carriers and hike to the nearest high ground and/or toward the nearest trailhead, seeking higher ground along the way for a connection.

Summary

- Assign medical person
- Keep the group calm
- Call 911 or send hikers out to call
- Assist medical rescuers

SPECIFIC CONDITIONS INFORMATION

Protection: Elements/Inhabitants

Heat Exhaustion

- *Cause* - Excessive fluid loss leading to hypovolemic shock
- *Warning signs* - Gradual weakness, nausea, anxiety, excessive sweating, fainting, sudden loss of consciousness
- *Manifestations* - Pale, grayish, clammy skin; weak, slow pulse; low blood pressure
- *Management* - Patient positioned flat or with the head down out of the sun; drink plenty of water and dampen clothing to lower body temperature.

Heatstroke

- *Cause* - Inadequacy or failure of heat loss mechanism.
- *Warning signs* - Headache, weakness, sudden loss of consciousness
- *Manifestations* - Hot, red, dry skin with little sweating; forceful, rapid pulse: very high temperature > 104°F
- *Management* - Emergency cooling by wrapping or immersing in cold water (e.g., a nearby cold river or ice). Call 911. Heatstroke is a genuine medical emergency. This might require a helicopter.

Heat Cramps

- *Cause* - Fluid and electrolyte loss.
- *Warning Signs* - Painful, involuntary muscle spasms that usually occur during heavy exercise in hot environments.
- *Management* - Rest briefly and cool down. Drink clear juice or an electrolyte-containing sports drink.

Hypothermia

- *Cause* - Cold and wind. Unsuitable clothing (*cotton kills*) weather - windy conditions speed heat loss (wind chill), getting wet, exhaustion, dehydration, alcohol consumption
- *Warning signs* - Internal temperature below 96°F (35°C). Lack of coordination.
- *Manifestations* - Initially, involuntary shivering, loss of complex motor skills (but still able to walk and talk), shutdown of blood vessels in the hands and feet. As temperature falls below 35°C (95°F), violent shivering, impaired consciousness, loss of fine-motor coordination, especially in the hands, slurred speech, illogical behavior, loss of emotional cognition, 'I don't care' attitude. This is a life-threatening condition.
- *Management* - Replace wet clothes with dry. Get them moving to increase their activity and ensure their surroundings are as warm and still as possible. Get them to eat. The basic principles are to stop heat loss and preserve the heat the person has, and provide body fuel to generate more heat. If a person is shivering, they can warm themselves at a rate of 2°C an hour. Put on additional layers of clothing. Provide food, initially as hot liquids. Carbohydrates provide a rapid source of energy while fats can provide a prolonged source of fuel. Add warmth with a fire or heater, or by body-to-body contact. Severe hypothermia needs urgent medical attention - call 911.

Blisters

- *Causes* - The product of friction that rubs skin back and forth in a concentrated area, can mar an otherwise wonderful hiking trip.

- *Prevention* - Blisters are easier to avoid than they are to fix. Hikers should start every trip with footwear that is broken in and fits their feet well. Wear clean, properly sized socks. Also, consider wearing two pairs of socks - a lightweight wicking liner and a thicker cushioning sock - to lessen the chance of abrasion
- *Management* - On the trail, address foot discomfort as soon as it develops. A quick response can often stop a blister before it becomes serious.
 - At the first sign of irritation, put a small patch of protective material - moleskin, 2nd Skin or even duct tape - over the affected area to minimize abrasion.
 - If you have a hiker who is prone to blisters, consider having them apply moleskin to their typical "blister zone" before they hit the trail.
 - If a blister develops and walking becomes too painful, the hiker could drain the blister by lancing it along its base with a clean razor blade or knife. Once this is done, soothe the area with some antibacterial ointment, and then cover it with a patch of 2nd Skin (or similar product) plus a small adhesive bandage to keep the blistered area clean.
 - If the area is still sensitive, cut a doughnut-shaped cushioning patch out of Molefoam® or duct tape and encircle the injured area. They may need to bulk up their circular pad with a number of layers to hold their sock and boot out away from the damaged area. This cushion will protect the area from further damage.

Altitude Sickness

- *Causes* - Traveling at high elevations (often above 8,000 feet or 2,400 meters). It is caused by the combination of reduced air pressure and lower oxygen levels. How fast you climb to a high altitude and how hard you push hikers can increase the odds of an occurrence.
- *Manifestations* - Sluggish sensation often accompanied by a headache, dizziness, nausea, loss of appetite, elevated heart rate and shortness of breath with exertion. In most cases, symptoms are mild, but acute cases can be debilitating, even fatal. Antacid tablets may help with nausea.
- *Management* - Descend. If you sense the symptoms are overtaking a hiker, seek out lower elevation quickly before their condition deteriorates and they are unable to walk unassisted. Aspirin or Tylenol can be beneficial for any head pain they may experience. ***A hike leader should not administer any medications.***
- Call for emergency help if the hiker has severe breathing problems, an altered state of alertness or is coughing up blood.

Sunburn

Sun protection clothing is one good line of defense against the sun, but don't forget to put sunscreen on exposed skin to help prevent sunburns. Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours, and more often if you're sweating or jumping in and out of the water.

Dehydration

Can contribute to illnesses, such as cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. How much to drink while hiking depends on a number of factors, such as temperature and humidity, your intensity level, age, body type and sweat rate, as well as the duration of the hike. A good general recommendation is about a half-liter of water per hour of

moderate activity in moderate temperatures. Learn more about hydration in REI's [Hydration Basics](#)¹⁴.

Overhydration

The flip side to dehydration is overhydration, or hyponatremia. This is a fairly rare condition but it's something that hikers should be aware of. In hyponatremia, sodium levels in the blood become so diluted that cell function becomes impaired. In very extreme cases, hyponatremia may cause coma and even death. The *symptoms* of hyponatremia are similar to dehydration: fatigue, headache and nausea.

Anaphylactic Shock

- *Causes* - An allergic reaction caused by an allergy to food, insect bites, or certain medications.
- *Manifestations* - Swelling of mouth, tight feeling in your throat and difficulty breathing, hives, vomiting, dizziness, fainting, rapid heartbeat. In severe cases, people collapse, stop breathing, and lose consciousness in just a couple of minutes.
- *Management* - A shot of epinephrine in the thigh is needed right away (EpiPen).

Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, Stinging Nettle

- *Prevention* - Recognize dangerous plants that are common in the area you'll be exploring. Poison oak and ivy leaves grow in clusters of 3, so remember the old adage: If you see "leaves of 3, let it be." Keep in mind that the oily, rash-causing resin found in poison oak and ivy – urushiol - remains present in the plants even during the dormant winter months. Contact with a leafless stem in January can still spawn an itchy rash. Pre-exposure lotion can be helpful.
- *Management* - Wash the area thoroughly with soap and cool water right away. Carry a small supply of hydrocortisone cream or another soothing, anti-inflammatory lotion to lessen the discomfort caused by skin irritations. Fluid from a rash-induced blister will not spread the rash. However, if the resin is not cleaned from clothing, boots, skin or tools, you can re-expose yourself or another person.

Lightning

- Get low relative to nearby terrain.
- Uniform forest is safest. Avoid open meadows, lakes, caves, rock overhangs, peaks, or ridges.
- Go inside a building or hardtop vehicle.
- Move away from a tall, solitary tree or any lone, tall object. Isolated high-rise objects are likely strike points for lightning.
- Descend from ridgelines or peaks. Lightning tends to strike prominent topographic features. In threatening weather, move away from high points and exposed areas. Head for lower ground.
- Stay away from water.
- Separate yourself from metal or graphite objects, including external-frame packs, ice axes, trekking poles and crampons.

¹⁴ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/hydrate.html>

- Keep out of shallow caves or overhangs. Lightning's current easily jumps across gaps and could jolt a person standing in the mouth of a cave.
- Insulate yourself from the ground; sit on an internal-frame pack or sleeping pad. Or crouch on the ground with your feet close together. If a ground current reaches you, it most likely will travel only through your feet. Do not lie down (since it expands your contact with the ground).
- Have members in your party spread out by at least 25 feet.
- A strike victim can be revived by CPR.
- Where is the best place to be? Within a group of trees of roughly uniform height in a low-lying area or, as a second option, in a low spot of an open meadow.
- Remember - no place is safe during a thunderstorm. If you are able to hear thunder, you could be struck by lightning. If inside a backcountry cabin, stay inside for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last sound of thunder. Once inside, stay off technology, such as a phone plugged into the wall. Also, stay away from doors and windows. Avoid plumbing like sinks and showers.
- Keep in mind that June, July and August are the peak months for lightning activity in the United States. If you do find yourself outside during a thunderstorm, never lie flat on the ground or take shelter under a solitary tree. Also, stay far away from water and avoid anything that could conduct electricity.

Flash Floods

Plan ahead. Check the weather forecast. Avoid hiking in or across washes and drainages during threatening or stormy weather. If caught out in a sudden downpour and you are in a wash or drainage, move to higher ground and be alert. Flash floods may originate many miles upstream and appear suddenly and without warning.

Wildland Fires¹⁵

If You Spot a Fire... decipher the wind direction by analyzing the smoke. If the smoke is going straight up, that means there's little to no wind—a good sign. But if you see it scattered about the horizon in one direction, that means the blaze will spread rapidly. It also tells you where the fire is heading. Fires burn uphill. It's preheating the vegetation in front of it, so your best bet is down low. Travel upwind and downhill on dirt roads or streambeds with little vegetation. Stay away from canyons and draws, which can work to amplify a fire. Keep your distance, and maneuver around the flames as fast as possible.

If You Get Caught in a Fire...

If you find yourself in an active fire zone, the safest place is “in the black,” meaning an area that has already burned. If you can find that, hold tight until the danger has passed.

¹⁵ <https://www.outsideonline.com/2321201/how-escape-wildfire-when-youre-hiking>

With no other escape options, outrunning the impending inferno is futile—you have to prepare to wait it out. Find a depression in the topography with no vegetation, such as a roadway with a ditch or a streambed. Lay down on your stomach with your feet pointed toward the fire. Dig a hole and stick your face in it to avoid breathing in smoke. If you have a handkerchief, put that over your face as well.

As the fire begins to consume the forest around you, it's important to stay there. Hunker down, and the fire might change directions. It also might burn around you. But stay there for a good amount of time so there's no chance of it coming back at you. If the fire passes around you, find a way out behind the path of the blaze, sticking to the black whenever possible.

WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

Spend enough time in the woods and you will encounter wildlife. Fortunately, dangerous encounters are extremely rare. A calm mind is your most valuable asset. Wildlife in general is more afraid of you than you are of them. If they hear you, their instincts will tell them to flee and leave you alone. An animal's motivation for attacking a human is usually out of a perceived fear for its life or the life of its young. How often do bear or mountain lion attacks occur? Nationwide, mountain lion and bear attacks are very rare.

Mountain Lion (Cougar) - Be aggressive and large, maintain eye contact, throw things, and shout. Being aggressive is the only way to make the cougar back off. Do not run! If attacked, fight back with whatever means are at your disposal.

Black Bears - If a black bear approaches, do not run. Remain calm, continue facing the bear and slowly back away. If the bear continues to approach, group together. Scare the bear away by shouting and acting aggressively while avoiding eye contact. If a black bear attacks, fight back using whatever means are at your disposal. Note that many bears charge as a bluff. They may run, then veer off or stop abruptly. Stand your ground until the bear stops, then slowly back away. Never run from a bear! It will chase you, running faster than 30 mph.

Coyotes and Bobcats - Aggressive behavior toward people is most often a result of habituation due to feeding by humans. If approached by a coyote or bobcat, make loud noises (bang pots and pans; blow a horn or whistle; shake a can with rocks). Show dominance and re-instill its natural fear of humans. Do not run, as this may elicit a chase response. If hiking with dogs in coyote country, keep them on a leash no longer than 6 feet and attached to a harness.

Dogs - Face the dog and say firmly, "Go home!"

Bees -

- Run away and pull your shirt up over your head to protect your face.
- Continue to run to reach shelter.
- Do not jump into water! The bees will wait for you to come up for air. If you are trapped for some reason, cover up with blankets, sleeping bags, clothes, or whatever else is immediately available.

- Do not swat at the bees or flail your arms. Bees are attracted to movement and crushed bees emit a smell that will attract more bees.
- Scrape the stinger out sideways using your fingernail, the edge of a credit card, a dull knife blade or other straight-edged object.
- If you have been stung more than 15 times, or are feeling ill, or if you have any reason to believe you may be allergic to bee stings, seek medical attention immediately. Additional information about bee stings/attacks at USDA website¹⁶.

Snakes - How to Avoid a Rattlesnake Attack -

Rattlesnakes are pit vipers, found in various parts of the United States. Rattlesnakes do not deliberately stalk human beings. Their natural diet consists of rats and mice, gophers, small birds, frogs, and even the occasional meaty insect.

Know your snake.

- A flat, triangular-shaped head
- May be a variety of colors
- A rattle may or may not be present.

Behave appropriately when hiking.

- Stay out of the way. Keep alert.
- Watch where you place your hands and feet.
- When walking, carry a stick, and whack bushes and undergrowth.
- The use of hiking poles creates vibration sounds that may warn the snake and allow it to retreat.
- Wear long pants, gaiters, hiking boots.

Snake Bite Protocol

SnakeBite911¹⁷ is a free app for emergency support

Avoid the following actions:

- Do not use tourniquets.
- Do not attempt to cut or apply suction.
- Do not apply cold packs or ice.
- Do not use NSAIDs (Advil, Motrin, ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory drugs).
- Do not use shock treatments or apply electricity to the bite.
- Do not attempt to capture or kill the snake.
- Do not attempt to transport the snake.

Take the following actions:

- Call 911. Time is tissue! Get victim to the emergency room.
- Remove constrictions - jewelry, tight clothes, shoes.
- Take photos to track the spread of venom - new photo every 15 minutes.
- Elevate wound - keep limb raised to the level of the heart. (drape arm over chest)
- Keep the victim as still as possible.

¹⁶ <https://www.ars.usda.gov/pacific-west-area/tucson-az/honey-bee-research/docs/bee-stings-safety/>

¹⁷ <https://crofab.com/crofab-resources/snakebite911>

NAVIGATION

[How to Read a Topo Map](#)¹⁸



Both a compass and a map are part of the [Ten Essentials](#). Learning to read a topographic (topo) map is every bit as essential. Your map will tell you a richly detailed tale about the terrain you'll be exploring. This article covers these concepts:

- How contour lines let you visualize your terrain
- How map scales work
- Other useful map details
- Where to find topo maps
- Also read REI's companion article, [How to Use a Compass](#). Then take a class with the [REI Outdoor School](#) or another outdoor organization and practice these skills until you master them.
- [Video](#)¹⁹: How to Read a Topo Map

How Contour Lines Describe Terrain

¹⁸ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/topo-maps-how-to-use.html>

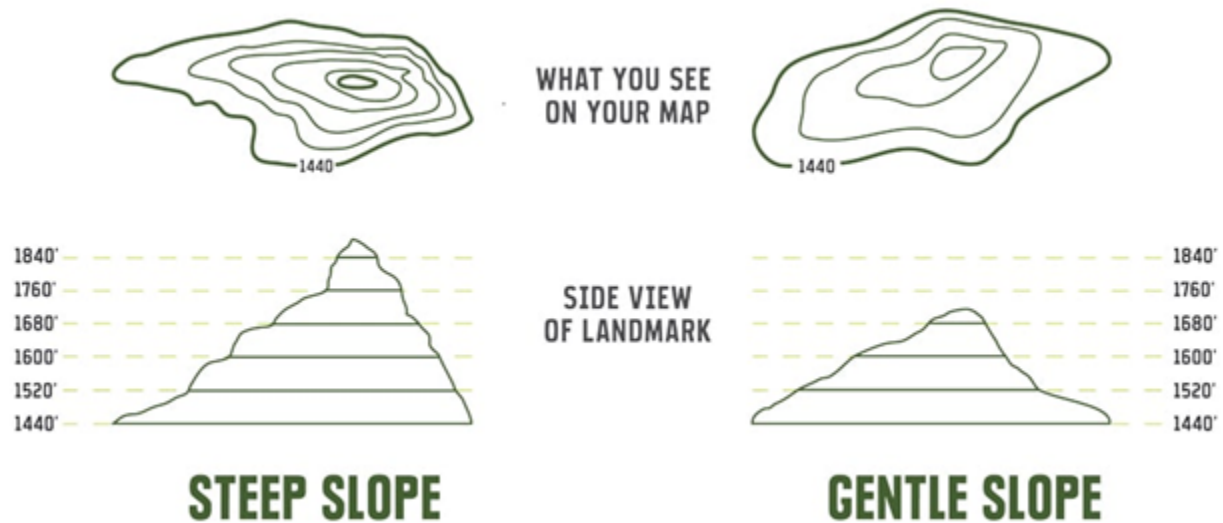
¹⁹ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/topo-maps-how-to-use.html>

Simple trail maps are useful for trip planning but NOT for navigation in the field. Topographic maps go further, giving you the power to visualize three-dimensional terrain from a flat piece of paper. The feature that makes this possible is contour lines.

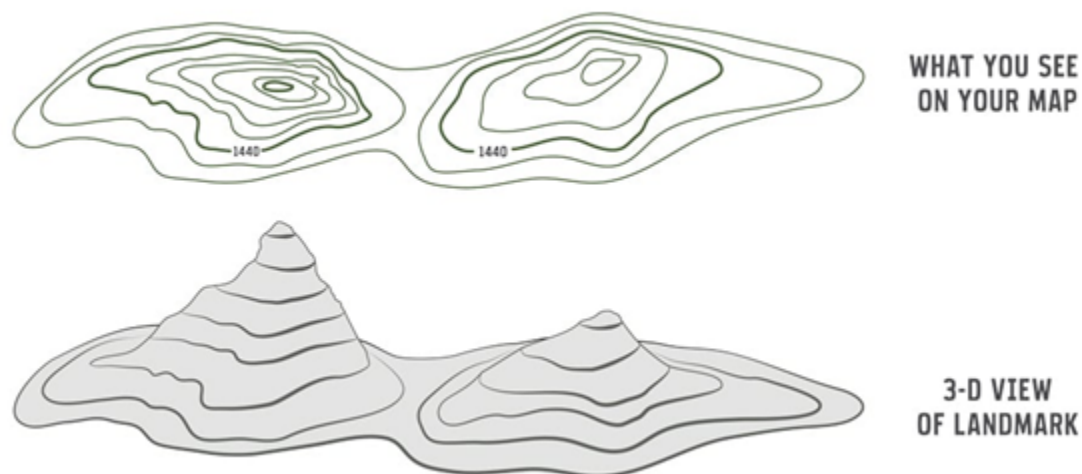
Contour lines indicate the **steepness of terrain**.

Contour lines connect points that share the **same elevation**.

- Where they're close together (they never intersect) elevation is changing rapidly in short distance and the terrain is steep.
- Where contour lines are wide apart, elevation is changing slowly, indicating a gentle slope.



Contour lines also indicate the **shape of the terrain**. Roughly concentric circles are probably showing you a peak, and areas between peaks are passes. Studying a topo map of a familiar area is a great way to learn how to match terrain features with the contour lines on a map.

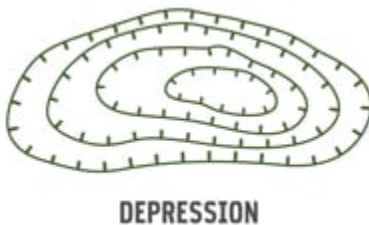




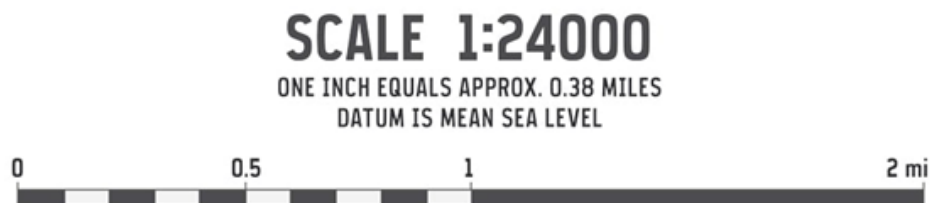
Index contour lines - Every **fifth** contour line is a thicker, “index” line. At some point along that line, its exact elevation is listed.

Contour interval - The change in elevation from one contour line to the next is always the same within the same map. Many maps have either a 40- or 80-foot contour interval: An 80-foot interval simply means that each contour line is 80 vertical feet away from the next closest line. You find the contour interval for your map in its legend.

Every once in a while, a circle indicates a depression rather than a peak. A circle with tick marks inside it indicates a **depression**, rather than a peak. You should also see elevations decreasing as you get near the depression.



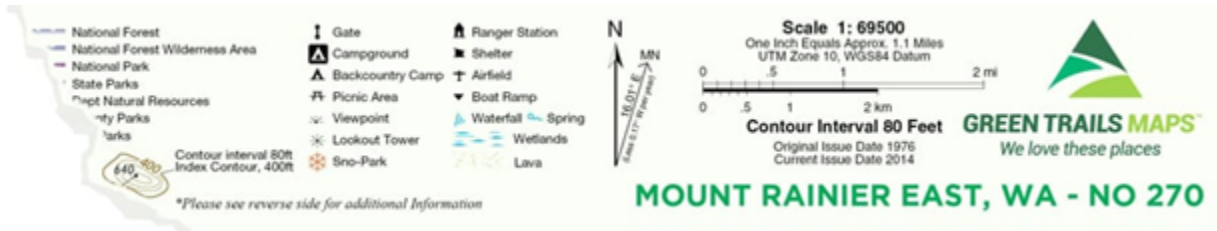
Map Scales - The map’s scale tells you how detailed your map is. A 1:24,000 scale, for example, means one inch equals 24,000 inches in reality. A larger scale, like 1:65,000, means that a map covers a larger area, but that it will have less detail.



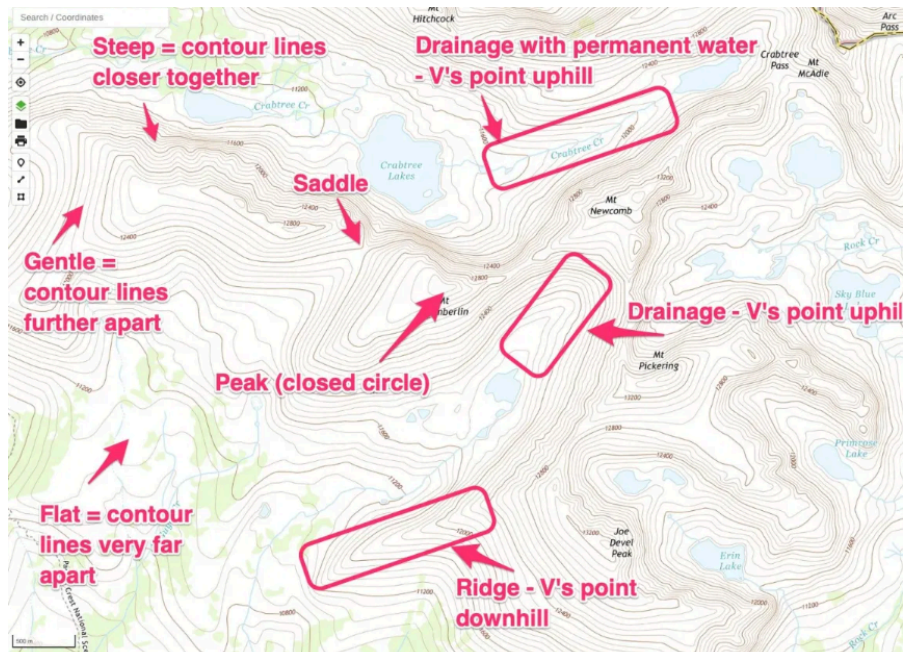
Maps also have a representative scale to help you visualize real-world distances. You can use this scale and an object (string or the edge of your compass) to get a rough estimate about hiking distances on your map.

Other Useful Map Details

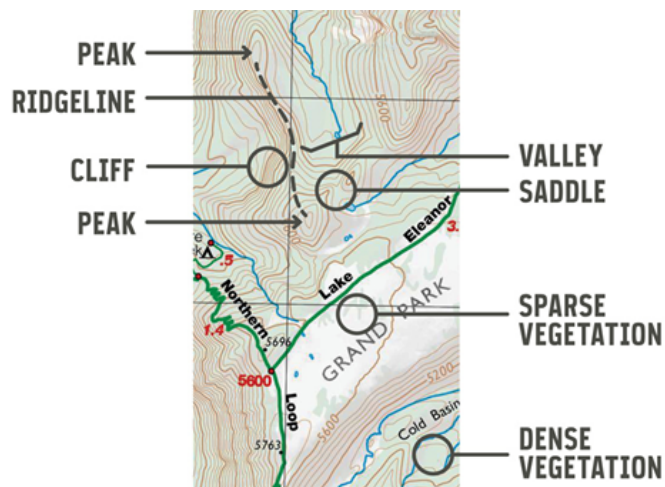
Look closely at the map legend. It is packed with map-reading clues and navigational data. Start by studying what each line, symbol and color means. Generally, green indicates denser vegetation, white light or colorless areas suggest open terrain. Streams and lakes are usually shown in blue.



The legend also lists key data like the map's scale, contour and index line intervals, grid systems (used for more advanced navigation), and magnetic declination (needed to set up your compass).



Basic topographic landforms (peak, saddle, ridge, drainage) and a comparison of relative steepness as seen on US Topo in



- Visualize how the terrain of the major landmarks relates to the contour lines on your map.
- Pick out features like peaks and saddles.
- Identify subtler features like cliffs with contour lines grouped tightly together, and ridgelines that connect peaks with contour lines that decrease in elevation on each side.
- Valleys are low elevation areas between ridgelines; some might have a creek running along the bottom.
- [How to Use a Compass](#)²⁰

Where to Get Topographic Maps

- The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) - Its maps consist of rectangular areas of land called quadrangles (quads)
- Look for an online [resource](#) that allows map data to be continually updated.
- Maps from Specialty Companies - These maps highlight key features and update details regularly. These maps are more likely to be available for popular areas.
- Additional features that can make a map more valuable include:
 - Highlighted trails
 - Elevation callouts
 - Distances between trail junctions and landmarks
 - Primitive trails
 - Backcountry campsites
 - Highlighted boundary lines

HIKE LEADER SUMMARY

²⁰ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/navigation-basics.html>

A hike leader is not just someone who knows the way, but someone who applies safety, best practices, fun, local knowledge and the ability to work with his or her group to make a successful hike. Keep in mind the goals and enjoy the adventure.

- Meet new people
- Explore new places and activities with others
- Hike when and where YOU want
- Hone your leadership skills
- Share a favorite hike with others
- Give back to the club
- Have fun!!!
- Remember a good leader:
 - Accepts responsibility
 - Knows appropriate outdoor skills and practices
 - Organizes and delegates
 - Is an enthusiastic, energetic self-starter with follow-through
 - Remains poised and confident under pressure
 - Possesses a sense of humor and is congenial and considerate
 - Can be tactful and understanding, yet firm and diligent
 - Has patience with the inexperienced
 - Is an effective communicator, good listener, and encourages others
 - Willingly imparts knowledge and skills to others
 - Recognizes her/his own limitations, capabilities and shortcomings
 - Identifies potential leaders

REFERENCES

Emergency Phone Numbers

Calling 911 will get you the Highway Patrol who will then dispatch you to the local emergency department. You may want to include agency direct contact numbers in your cell phone.

Liability - Legal Considerations

Volunteers are protected from individual liability by federal and state statutes as long as they are not “grossly negligent.” Duty of care to follow the standard of practice: In tort law, a duty of care is a legal obligation which is imposed on an individual requiring

adherence to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others.²¹

Good Samaritan Laws²² provide a deterrent against litigation, the purpose of which is to encourage people to help out voluntarily in emergencies. Although these laws do not prevent suits from being filed, they generally make it more difficult for the plaintiff to win because in theory they absolve from liability anyone covered by the statute who gives care gratuitously, *in good faith, and in accordance with his or her training and expertise in a bona fide emergency, except in the case of gross or willful negligence.*

California Health and Safety Code 1799.102 adds that no person who in good faith and not for compensation renders emergency care at the scene of an emergency shall be liable for any civil damages resulting from any act or omission.

Federal Volunteer Protection Act (1997) *protects volunteer members of non-profit organizations who are acting within the scope of their responsibilities.* Unlike the California Good Samaritan laws, the federal statute is not limited to medical situations. It protects a wide range of volunteer activities such as coaching Little League, being a Girl Scout leader and leading a wilderness hike for the Sierra Club. The full text of this section can be found at: [Volunteer Protection Act](#)²³.

GO does not organize carpools. Liability risks mean leaders CANNOT assign or require carpools. Leaders may encourage carpooling if offered by drivers. Let everyone make their own rideshare arrangements. Leaders must limit their involvement to making participants aware of who needs and who is offering a ride. (This precaution limits exposure to liability as a result of carpooling activity).

How to Limit Liability

- Complete leader training.
- Communicate any hazards in writing to participants before the trip.
- Ensure participants have signed the waiver.
- Ensure that your participants are prepared and capable [Screening].
- Review the hazards in a safety briefing before you set out, and along the way.
- Bring your participants home safely.

Members and non-members shall consent online or sign the Sign-In Sheet Release of Liability for all outing and activities (Appendix C)²⁴

Equipment and Resources

[REI](#)
[Amazon](#)

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duty_of_care

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Samaritan_law

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volunteer_Protection_Act

²⁴ [Bylaws-Revised-2021-10-16.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Hiking Apps

[Garmin](#) GPS [hiking - handheld devices](#)

[GAIA GPS](#)

[All Trails](#) (note: the data is created by users and may vary in accuracy)

[Hiking Project](#) A crowd-sourced trail guide built by outdoor enthusiasts (REI sponsored)

Suggested Reading Outdoor Experience

- [Wilderness Navigation: Finding Your Way Using Map, Compass, Altimeter, & GPS](#). Bob Burns, Mike Burns
- [Wilderness Medicine: Beyond First Aid](#), William Forgey
- [Hiking! The Ultimate Natural Prescription for Health and Wellness](#), Philip Ferranti
- [The National Outdoor Leadership School's Wilderness Guide](#), Mark Harvey

HIKING TIPS

- Hike in a group. Always have at least one other person (including when you scout out a hike) with you if you are going on low-traffic trails or be accepting of the risk you take in having no one able to aid you. Some of the benefits of hiking in a group:
 - Learn from more experienced hikers or pass on your knowledge
 - Aid for injuries
 - Distributing loads for common group gear
 - Meet new people or deepen relationships
- Drink often to stay hydrated. Drinks with electrolytes may be helpful
- Bring high-carb food such as trail mix and nutrition bars
- Embrace leave no trace ethics
- Leave your hike plan with someone and call them when you get off the trail
- Use sunscreen and a hat to prevent sunburn, even on cloudy days
- Keep your pack organized and put items back where you expect to find them
- Keep a bandanna tied to your pack strap for a quick wipe of your brow as needed
- Inspect your emergency and first aid kits before each hike
- If your hands swell while hiking, raise them. Hold onto your pack shoulder strap for a while and see how that helps. Use trek poles to keep your hands elevated a bit and keep the muscles active.

Clothing and Gear Tips for Hot-Weather Hiking ²⁵

Dress appropriately to help stay comfortable. Choose **light colors** - Wearing light colors that reflect the sun's rays rather than absorb them (as dark colors can) helps keep you cool. Look for shirts, shorts and pants in white, tan or khaki.

Wear loose, **breathable clothing** - Lightweight, loose-fitting clothing that breathes well will help your body regulate temperature. Nylon and polyester are good choices.

Cotton can be OK - You've heard it before, cotton kills. Cotton has a bad reputation in the outdoors because it absorbs lots of moisture and dries very slowly, which can create an uncomfortable and dangerous situation on wet and/or cold days. But in hot and dry conditions, the moisture can feel good against your skin, and as it evaporates it will leave you feeling cool.

You must be careful when wearing cotton though. Make sure you're OK with the feel of wet cotton next to your skin (some people just don't like it) and that it won't cause chafing if it rubs against your skin. More importantly, if there's any chance you'll be out when the temps dip in the evening, carry a change of clothes or choose to wear synthetics instead of cotton.

Open vents - Some shirts, shorts and pants designed for hiking incorporate vents. Opening these up on a hot day helps improve airflow.

²⁵ REI advice: <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/hot-weather-hiking.html>

Choose **UPF-rated clothing** - All clothing blocks the sun's rays to a certain extent, but clothing that has a UPF rating is guaranteed to provide protection. Common ratings include UPF 15, UPF 30 and UPF 50+. Learn more in REI's [Sun Protection Clothing Basics](#) article²⁶.

Cover up - It may seem counterintuitive to put extra clothes on in hot weather, but the added coverage can provide necessary protection from UV rays, especially for people with sensitive skin. A lightweight long-sleeve shirt, sun sleeves and a neck gaiter can provide effective protection.

Put a **hat** on - A hat provides essential protection from the sun for your face and neck. A baseball cap provides OK shade, but a sun hat with a brim that goes all the way around is even better.

Cool your neck - A bandanna, sun-protective neck gaiter or other lightweight cloth can be dunked in water and worn over your head or around your neck to keep the back of your neck cool and covered while the water evaporates. Special polymer-crystal filled neck scarves maintain the moisture for even longer periods of time.

Wear the right socks - **Never wear cotton socks** (choose wool or synthetic instead) and make sure they fit well. Socks that are too big can have wrinkles that rub and socks that are too small can create pressure points and sock slippage. [Blister Prevention and Care](#) article²⁷.

Carry a hydration pack - It might seem like a small difference, but having a sip tube always at the ready will make you more likely to hydrate frequently than if you have to reach for a water bottle.

Pack some heat - We're talkin' a water pistol here. When the going gets rough with your hiking mates, shoot 'em with a few squirts to cool them down. Alternatively, bring along a spray bottle that you can holster to your belt and pull out for some fine misting when you need it.

²⁶ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/sun-protection.html>

²⁷ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/blister-prevention-care.html>

TEN ESSENTIALS

Items to take on every hike for safety and emergencies



1. To find your way
 - a. Map
 - b. Compass
 - c. GPS devices
 - d. Smartphone apps
 - e. Flashlight (extra batteries)
2. For your protection
 - a. Sun protection: hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, umbrella
 - b. Extra food and water
 - c. Extra clothes (depends on kind of trip, when, where)
 - i. Rain gear (jacket and pants better than poncho)
 - ii. Jacket
 - iii. Shirt
 - iv. Head protection
 - v. Gloves
 - vi. Socks
3. For emergencies
 - a. Fire starter fuel
 - b. Waterproof matches
 - c. Pocket knife or multi-tool - considered one of the most important
 - d. First aid kit

REI expert article - [TEN ESSENTIALS: REI ADVICE](https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/ten-essentials.html)²⁸

²⁸ <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/ten-essentials.html>

Ten Essential Principles

The 10 essentials are more than just a list of the above items - they embody a set of essential principles that every outdoor leader should be aware of. By learning and incorporating the following principles, you'll know how to use the 10 essentials and why you should carry them with you at all times. So, here is a principle-based list:

Maintain a positive, creative, resourceful attitude of mind and spirit - Don't lay blame and shame for unplanned circumstances. Anger or frustration does not lead to clear thinking nor does it lend to problem-solving. Concentrate on prioritizing significant problems. Be flexible and creative in adapting the available resources to the situation at hand.

Problem solving - CHALT means whenever possible, avoid making crucial decisions when you are Cold, Hungry, Angry, Lost, or Tired. In other words, warm up, eat something, have a hot drink, calm down, reorient, and then work on the problem. Avoid activity and solutions that don't really improve the current situation.

Communication - Watch for, look for, and listen to the people around you. Hear what they are telling you non-verbally. Are they sweating, shivering, cursing, stumbling, giddy? Volunteer your ignorance, but don't be afraid to patiently communicate what you really know to the group. Be upfront and honest.

Thermodynamics - You should understand how heat gets around the universe so you can prevent the onset of both sudden and chronic hypothermia/hyperthermia. Insulate, ventilate, layer up, layer down. It will rain, it will blow, it will get worse! Make sure to bring and use appropriate clothing, rain gear, and shelter on your trip.

Hydration - Always maintain optimal hydration. Carry water in your stomach and have a means of purifying/filtering more as needed.

Nutrition - Main energy reserves - EAT! Carry extra high-carb food such as trail mix and nutrition bars.

Orientation - Stay oriented! Know how to use a map, GPS device and/or compass - and use them consistently. Familiarize yourself with the area and a map before you set out. Pay attention both on and off the trail. If you get turned around, get reoriented. Match the map to reality, not reality to the map.

Prevent injuries - Exercise good judgment, take sensible precautions, and consider the environmental hazards you may encounter on your trip.

Rest - Get adequate sleep and rest prior to and during the hike. Reduce exhaustion by avoiding overly ambitious routes or itineraries. Your body needs sleep, so does your mind.

Treatment of Injuries - Carry and know how to use an adequate first-aid kit.

Red Cross [First Aid App](https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps.html)²⁹ on your phone.

²⁹ <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps.html>

BEYOND THE TOP TEN ESSENTIALS

Identification - Driver's License, In Case of Emergency (ICE), insurance cards - Take photos of this information and have it on your phone. Learn how emergency contacts can be opened from a locked smartphone.

Insect repellents - DEET or picaridin and/or clothing that has been treated with permethrin - sprayed on clothing or mosquito nets to kill the insects that touch them.

Whistle - For summoning help.

Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) - Notifies search-and-rescue, emergency contacts.

Communication devices - Two-way radios, ham radio, cell phone or a satellite telephone.

Signaling device - Some compasses come with sighting mirrors. If yours does not, consider taking a small mirror to signal rescuers in an emergency. A bright orange cloth panel can also be used.

Plastic trash bag - Rain protection, pack cover, water collection, shelter.

Knowledge - Having items in your pack has no value unless you understand how to use them. As one search-and-rescue leader told us, "People talk about the Ten Essentials, but the most important essential is between your ears."

Other Items To Consider Bringing:

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Lip balm | • Medication | • Sam splint |
| • Climbing rope | • Money for lunch/dinner/gas | • Toilet tissue |
| • Comb | • Moleskin | • Water purifying tablets |
| • Duct tape | • Nylon cord | • Water shoes |
| • Elastic bandage | • Pencil & paper | • PLB |
| • Hiking sticks | | |

FIRST AID CPR/AED TRAINING

Hike leaders are encouraged to complete First Aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training. (First Aid/CPR/AED)

[The American Red Cross](#) offers an online course for Adult First Aid CPR/AED. There is a one-hour skills test to complete the certification: [RED CROSS First Aid CPR/AED online course](#).³⁰

[American Heart Association](#)³¹ also offers classes.

Both online and in person classes are offered.

Check with your VPO to see if reimbursement for the training is available.

GETTING STARTED

New hike leaders are encouraged to initially co-lead two hikes with a certified hike leader. This will sharpen your skills and build your confidence.

Getting started as a new hike leader: FAQ - Prospective Hike Leader: [Click here](#)³²

³⁰ <https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class>

³¹ <https://cpr.heart.org/en/>

³² https://drive.google.com/file/d/1M5t0ltSDVaByvmQHW4kOP_Tzb4m4XRGB/view

HIKE LEADER CHECKLIST

HIKE LEADER CHECKLIST

- ☐ Introduce yourself to the group, club news, offer brochure.
- ☐ Give overview of the hike - level of difficulty, distance, elevation, points of interest.
- ☐ Ensure everyone has signed the sign-in waiver.
- ☐ If carpooling, give directions, mileage and mention gas donation.
- ☐ Check everyone for water, ability, proper equipment.
- ☐ If not prepared, respectfully deny hiker from participating.
- ☐ Make sure they know that the group is to stay together.
- ☐ Ask if anyone has any special medical expertise.
- ☐ Each person is responsible for their own safety.
- ☐ Introductions and take a count of persons and vehicles.
- ☐ Ask hikers to inform you immediately if they encounter any problems or have any medical issues.

Responsibilities at Trail Head:

- ☐ Take a count to see if all reached the trailhead.
- ☐ Identify sweep.
- ☐ Take the sign-in sheet with you.
- ☐ Start at a slower pace for warm up.

[Click here](#)³³ to print a copy of the above checklist.

³³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11poVdNcuY95NsQn4-Mhpbct174RNfPk8/view>

SIGN-IN/OUT LIABILITY / WAIVER

Sign-In Sheet & Acknowledgment of Outing Member Responsibility, Express Assumption of Risk, and Release of Liability



I understand that the activities engaged in by Great Outdoors, and specifically this activity, may involve dangers inherent in all outdoor activities, and by signing below, I, except as expressly prohibited by California statutory and case law, do expressly assume all risks and dangers of such activities and specifically this activity, and do hereby expressly release and hold harmless Great Outdoors Inc., including its event leaders, officers, agents, employees, administrators and assigns, from any and all liability for injury or death arising from said activities and specifically this activity, and agree to defend any lawsuits against any of them arising from those activities and specifically this activity.

"Great Friends, Great Times, Great Outdoors"

Date: <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>											
Activity: <input style="width: 250px;" type="text"/>				Leader: <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>							
Printed Name		Signature		Member?		Printed Name		Signature		Member?	
				Yes	No					Yes	No
1						15					
2						16					
3						17					
4						18					
5						19					
6						20					
7						21					
8						22					
9						23					
10						24					
11						25					
12						26					
13						27					
14						28					

Early Sign Out

Printed Name		Signature		Time		Printed Name		Signature		Time	
1						3					
2						4					

[Click here](#)³⁴ to print a copy of the above waiver form.

³⁴ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RGw9yeR1q1lp6LvyL-WXRaTS8O6czGaz/view>

CREDITS

Some of this material in this manual was adapted with permission from The [Gay & Lesbian Sierrans](#), Rainbow Sierrans³⁵ Hike Leader Manual by Paget Valentzas.

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LINKS:

Great Outdoors - www.GreatOutdoors.org

Training documents and resources - <https://greatoutdoors.wildapricot.org/resource/training>

Electronic copy of this manual - <https://greatoutdoors.org/resource/dayhike>

Acknowledgment Previous Editions

The existence of this manual is attributable to the efforts of numerous individuals who collaborated to bring the wisdom of many years and hiking miles out of the woods and into the readers' hands. First, thanks to Don Smith, Mack Gerighty, Greg Carmack, and other founders of California Great Outdoors who saw the need for a program of wilderness training and vigorously pursued it. Next, thanks to the authors of the first edition: John Pearson, Terry Turner, Rob Friday, Tom Thomson, Mike Burgess, and Ray Ferrying. They laid the foundation for what was to come. For the second edition, Robert L. Goodman researched, wrote, rewrote, and updated the material. Thank you to Danny Sternstein and Wayne Winstead for their help revising the section on planning and possessions,

HIKE LEADER REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Plastic trash bags are useful for: p.50
 - a. pack covers
 - b. rain protection

³⁵ <https://rainbowsierrans.org/page-18064>

- c. water collection
 - d. construction of an emergency shelter
 - e. all of the above
2. The Ten Essentials refers to: p.48, 49,50
- a. the GO code of conduct
 - b. items necessary for backpacking only
 - c. "leave no trace" rules
 - d. Items to take on every hike for safety and emergencies
3. What is not the job of the hike leader? p.17, 44
- a. screening hikers for water, ability and equipment
 - b. ensuring all have signed the sign-in waiver
 - c. organizing and assigning everyone to carpool
 - d. identifying a trail sweep
4. Which of the following is not part of a scouting trip: p.8, 9
- a. determine time and distance
 - b. total elevation gain/loss
 - c. identify nearby gift shops
 - d. Identify trailhead parking and points of interest
 - e. identify potential hazards
5. What is the smallest recommended hiking group size for safety? p.21
- a. one
 - b. two
 - c. three
 - d. four
 - e. depends on leader
6. Why are frequent and regular water stops necessary? p.21
- a. to rest tired legs
 - b. allow additional time to adjust clothing
 - c. create additional photos opportunities
 - d. to keep your body properly hydrated
7. Reading Topo maps will allow you to do all these things except: p.40-42
- a. locate interesting things to explore
 - b. plan a hiking route
 - c. identify flora and fauna
 - d. allow you to figure distance between land features
 - e. help you find your way if lost
8. Which of the following is not an option if someone says they want to go back? p.24

- a. have qualified escort(s) take the hiker back to the cars
- b. terminate the hike and return the group to cars
- c. convince the hiker to continue with motivation encouragement
- d. leave the hiker alone and continue the hike

9. What is the optimum time for a rest break? P.21

- a. 3 to 6 minutes
- b. 1 minute
- c. 15 minutes
- d. group consensus

10. Which of the following is incorrect: p.25

- a. horse traffic always has the right of way
- b. hikers should follow instructions from horse rider
- c. hikers have the right of way over bikers
- d. bikers should give right of way to all other traffic
- e. downhill traffic has the right of way

11. The details you provide in the hike description about the demands and risks of the hike are essential to the self-screening and preparedness of your participants. These include all except one of the following: p.12-14

- a. very steep climb or descent
- b. moving at a brisk pace
- c. off-trail route, bouldering, stream crossing
- d. scrambling involves use of hands and feet to overcome rocky obstacles.
- e. after hike options

12. The “degree of difficulty” for a particular hike may include all but one of the following: p. 12-14

- a. difficult footing or involves climbing boulders, sandy washes, or vegetation
- b. steepness and the natural obstacles (boulder field, creek crossings, etc.)
- c. distance to drive to trailhead
- d. high or low temperatures and climatic conditions
- e. steep narrow drop-off or exposure

13. Most people’s average pace is about 2 mph. p.8, 12

- a. true
- b. false

14. What is the estimated time for an average group to hike round trip 4 miles with 1,000 feet elevation gain? P.12, 8

- a. 3 hours
- b. 2 hours
- c. 3.5 hours

- d. 4 hours
15. Screening participants helps mitigate potential problems on the trail. p.18-19
- a. true
 - b. false
16. Hike rules include all except one of the following: p 23
- a. no one left behind
 - b. stop at all trail junctions, creek crossings, and landmarks
 - c. identify a “sweep” nobody gets behind this person
 - d. identify a “lead” nobody gets in front of this person
 - e. always reach the peak before turning around
17. The Ten Essentials are items that encompass all except: p.48,49
- a. to help find your way
 - b. for your protection
 - c. identifying flora and fauna
 - d. for emergencies
18. What should hike leader and sweep do if someone is struggling to keep up? P.22 ¶3
- a. use motivational skills for encouragement
 - b. sign them out and continue with the group
 - c. tell them they must turn around and go back alone
 - d. move the person to the back of the group
19. What is the minimum “ending-time-before-sunset” for an all-day hike? P.23 ¶4
- a. 30 minutes before sunset
 - b. 1 hour before sunset
 - c. 2 hours before sunset
 - d. 30 minutes after sunset
20. What is average water consumption needed for adequate hydration? P.32 ¶2
- a. 2 liters per hour
 - b. half liter per hour
 - c. 3 liters every two hours
 - d. drink when thirsty
21. Which of the following is not a criteria for hiking group size? P.8, 9
- a. land agency rules
 - b. safety issues
 - c. number of leaders
 - d. environmental impact
 - e. cell reception

22. Take the following actions for snakebite except: p.36
- a. call 911. Time is Tissue! Get victim to the Emergency Room
 - b. remove constrictions - jewelry, tight clothes, shoes
 - c. take photos to track the spread of venom - new photo every 15 minutes
 - d. apply cold packs or ice
 - e. keep victim as still as possible
23. Emergency Management Guidelines include all except one of the following: p.28
- a. Stop
 - b. Think
 - c. Plan
 - d. Observe
 - e. Accountability
24. The hike leader may do all the following except: p.23 4
- a. limit the number of hikers
 - b. exclude those who are not properly clothed and equipped for the hike
 - c. add an additional side trip if majority agrees
 - d. change the hike from announced description if trail conditions have changed
25. Can you ask about medical conditions as part of screening? 18-19, 20
- a. yes
 - b. no
26. Are member and non-member participants required to sign the Release of Liability?
p.16, 17, p44
- a. no
 - b. yes
 - c. sometimes