

SUMMARY OF KEY HIKE LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES & TASKS

- Before the hike
- At the meeting place
- At the trailhead
- On the trail
- After the trip

Before the hike:

2-3 weeks in advance (or more if needed):

- Research trail conditions, review recent trip reports to select a destination
- Identify any reservations or permits required. Make arrangements for your group or tell your group what they need to do.
- Post the hike on the website, with clear and concise description of the route, difficulty rating, pace, hazards, physical and gear requirements.

The detail 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.

1 week to 3 days in advance:

- Check the **weather forecast**, road and trail reports – adjust destination or gear and skill needs; change destination if needed.
- Review the **route**, ensure you have up to date topo map
- Send out ‘Hello Hiker’ email to confirm meeting time & place, hazards and demands of the trip, gear requirements, facilitate carpooling
 - Emphasize critical items in description and pre-trip communications
 - Consider carrying extras of especially critical items.

Screening Participants

- Check roster – screen participants to be sure that everyone is conditioned and experienced to be safe and have fun on your hike at the planned pace. *Most problems on hikes or backpacks reflect poor match of participant capabilities/interests with the planned activity.*
- Set expectations with clear activity descriptions and pre-trip communications - help participants **self-screen**.
- If your trip requires certain skills and/or conditioning, and you don’t know a person on your roster:
 - Check their activity and course history on the website
 - Set up a phone call or initiate an email conversation. Ask detailed but considerate questions to ensure that they are capable. Discuss:
 - *Recent activities they’ve been on? Who led? Pace?*

- *If they don't know their pace, ask how long it took them to complete a recent hike*
- *Be caring and respectful – explain that you want to be sure everyone will have fun and be successful. Suggest an alternate activity if yours isn't a fit*
- *It can be awkward, but can have a big effect on trip success and safety!*
- ❑ If a person never responds, you have the right to turn them down or cancel them from your roster.

At the meeting place (P&R)

- ❑ Arrive at meeting place 10 minutes early
- ❑ Have trip roster (hard copy), map, weather reports handy for reference.
- ❑ Keep cell phone turned on
- ❑ Introduce yourself as leader, check off names of hikers on roster.
- ❑ Make sure everyone has a ride – leaders and staff cannot assign or require carpools, but you can facilitate arranging carpools.
- ❑ Identify no-shows for reporting on Activity Report
- ❑ Be sure that everyone has directions to the same trailhead, and the right permits!
- ❑ Equipment check - not required to check everyone for all ten essentials before every trip, but hike leader is responsible for ensuring hikers are prepared for the conditions.
- ❑ Teach and lead by example but don't be more rigid than the circumstances require for safety.

If someone shows up without a piece of critical gear, see if someone else can share or decide if it's truly essential before leaving someone behind. That could be the last Mountaineers trip they choose to take. Be a teacher – help them succeed.

At the Trailhead

- ❑ Introductions and ice-breaker
- ❑ Ask for a volunteer to be first-aid leader, sweep (“rear guard”) – explain the role of each of these
- ❑ Ask participants to inform First Aid leader of relevant medical/health conditions - in private or with whole group (e.g. – if a hiker uses an Epi-pen they might want everybody to know where they keep it).
- ❑ Describe the hike and trail conditions, potential problems/challenges, pace, side trails, scenery, stream crossings, etc.
- ❑ Review the map – route, junctions, rest stops, water sources, lunch, turnaround time
- ❑ Establish trip expectations: be explicit about :
 - How you intend to keep group together (i.e., wait at intersections, stream crossings); party separation procedure; front guard; sweep.
 - Manage pacing dynamics.
 - ALWAYS require that all participants re-group at all junctions and significant stream crossings or hazards
 - **Safety first! Will turn around if you judge conditions to be unsafe.**

- Remind drivers to post any necessary passes; remove valuables from view
- Encourage communication of safety concerns, needs, any illness or injury as you go along – why this is so important to everyone’s safety

On the Trail

- Plan to stop within 10-20 minutes for a clothing adjustment and pacing check.
- Check-in with people to see how they are doing
- Stay vigilant for participant, weather, route issues.
- Manage the pace for safety and morale of everyone in the group. Don’t let the group get too spread out.
- At rest stops allow slower hikers to rest after catching up with the faster ones
- Splitting the group - Avoid doing so if possible.
 - If an individual insists on leaving the group have them sign out in front of witnesses by initialing name on trip roster with date & time
- If conditions change or the route proves more difficult than the weakest member can complete safely, find a safer alternative or turn around the group.

After the Hike

- Ensure everybody has returned to trailhead
- Remind passengers to reimburse carpool drivers
- If dinner/food stop planned ensure all have directions (and ride back to P&R!)
- Make sure all cars start before leaving
- Close the activity online within 1 week
 - Indicate no-shows and late cancellations
 - Report all accidents or injuries, even minor ones