

TRISTATE RAMBLERS PADDLE LEADER GUIDELINES

*Both experienced and new paddle leaders are welcome and valued.
You are the core of our TSR mission, both in care and enjoyment.*

Summary

SAFETY SHOULD BE THE TOP PRIORITY

In Advance of the Trip:

1. Learn the route for your trip.
2. Carefully write a description with distance and duration that welcomes paddlers with similar abilities. Confirm/provide directions.
3. Post your trip.
4. Check your boat and gear; have your PFD (Personal Flotation Device), and ECC (TSR Emergency Contact Card).
5. Communicate any trip changes.
6. Approve any guest requests.

Just Before the Trip:

1. Check your travel time and allow 30 minutes to launch your boat.
2. Address any guests.
3. Check your paddlers' equipment, emergency contact cards, and PFDs.
4. Appoint a sweep or co-leader.
5. Circle up for introductions and explain that all boats should be between the leader and sweep for safety and friendliness.
6. Start on time.

During the Trip:

1. Remind all paddlers to stay between you and the sweep.
2. Help paddlers when needed.
3. Choose places for separations, rest, drink, and food.
4. Address injuries.
5. Oversee decisions on unanticipated situations.

After the Trip:

1. Account for all paddlers.
2. Remind members bringing guests to submit the signed waiver form.
3. Address any post-trip issues.

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Details

In Advance of the Trip:

1. **Learn the route:** Scout the area by paddling your route before the trip date. Find a gentle entry, possible stopping spots, and points for early outs. Take into account the potential for and implications of low or high water conditions, fast currents, algae blooms, etc. Obtain the contact information for the park office or staff in case of emergency.
2. **Write the trip description:** This is important to set the paddlers' expectations. Give distance and duration so paddlers can tell if the trip might be too strenuous or too easy. (See the [About Us/Our Activities page](#) of our website.) Make sure that the meeting location is clear, especially if the location is not in the [TSR Directions document](#). The Outing Coordinator for paddling is a good resource if you need assistance. Refer to the [Guidelines for Add-on and Show and Go Events](#). It is permissible to coordinate your event with another club but it must be disclosed in the description (e.g. This paddle is jointly offered to members of ABC Club).
3. **Post your trip:** Learn how from the [TSR Leader FAQs](#).
4. **Check your equipment and be prepared for possible emergencies:** A TriState Ramblers Emergency Contact Card is required (available online at www.tristateramblers.org/forms). Bring a TSR Incident Report Form (available online at www.tristateramblers.org/for-leaders). Also bring a first aid kit, whistle, and extra water.
5. **Consider other equipment:** Food, hat, additional clothing, dry bag, cell phone, extra paddles, sunscreen, insect repellent.
6. **Change of schedule:** If needed, communicate your new plan (e.g., on a different day or with a different leader) or cancellation. Learn how from the [TSR Leader FAQs](#).
7. **Approve any guest requests:** If there are no members on the waitlist and you are willing to allow a guest, approve any members who have requested to bring a guest. Approval is solely at the discretion of the leader.

Just Before the Trip:

1. **Don't forget to pack your PFD, ECC, and extra paddles:** These are required and not always available on site.
2. **Leave early to arrive early:** Allow extra time for your drive, for traffic delays, and for finding the launch spot. Add approximately 30 minutes more to check that your paddlers have the required equipment and to launch your boat. Confirm that any guests have a signed waiver form complete with emergency contact information.
3. **Help the paddlers reassess their capability:** Describe the day's activity, including its level of difficulty. Common problems are wind and a fast group pace. Listen to the paddlers and advise them if there are future trips that would be better for them. TSR wants trips to be safe and enjoyable for everyone. It is the leader's discretion to not allow a participant to join the group.
4. **Determine** who will be the sweep or co-leader.
5. **Introductions:** Form a circle, state your name and hometown, and remind paddlers to stay between you and the sweep. Lead introductions. Invite attendees to join you "at the front of the line" for a real-time leader coaching session. Offer to speak with anyone at the end of the paddle about becoming a TSR leader.

6. **Be ready to start on time:** Out of courtesy to paddlers who are ready, you are encouraged to start at the time listed in the schedule. Waiting for late paddlers is not recommended because it may lead to a tradition of later arrivals and complicate the preparation for the launch. You are responsible only for paddlers who are with your group.

During the Trip:

1. **Enjoy the trip:** Remember that you are an ambassador of TriState Ramblers. If you are having a good time, others will, too! Going together has a substantial advantage in safety as well as in building friendships.
2. **Communicate:** You and your sweep should remain in touch to help keep your group together. Being nearby will improve the response time to problems and will ease socialization.
3. **Check paddlers for their needs:** Watch for anyone having trouble keeping up early in the trip and discuss a solution with them. If anyone needs to leave your group (drop out), see if someone in the group can help as a companion. Tell them that the part of the group with the leader is the leader's only responsibility. **If someone leaves, they should have the leader's cell phone number to let them know they arrived safely at the trip's starting point.** The leader should respond to requests to stop for water, rest, separation, or other breaks.
4. **Lunch breaks:** Following breaks during the trip, ensure that everyone cleans up the area and checks for items that might be left behind (trash, clothing, PDFs, etc.). Give a 5-minute warning and take a head count to ensure all paddlers are ready to depart. Occasionally, a group may plan to dine together after the trip.
5. **Changes:** Explain to the group any change in route and inform them of an option to shorten or modify the trip when necessary (for bad weather, lightning, etc.).

After the Trip:

1. Remain long enough, if possible, to ensure that all participants start their cars and leave the parking area. Help people with directions, if necessary.
2. Remind members bringing a guest to submit the signed waiver form after the hike; follow the instructions on the form.
3. Complete the Incident Report form if someone was injured during the paddle and had, or is likely to require, treatment at a medical facility. Scan or take a photo of the report and send it via email or text attachment to the club treasurer.
4. In the event of a major accident involving rangers/police/EMS, notify the TSR president at your earliest opportunity and no later than the end of the day by providing a full written report, including whether medical attention was offered but refused.
5. Contact information for club officers is available on the Officers page of our website.
6. Keep copies of the document(s) for your own records.