

HIKE LEADER GUIDELINES – TRISTATE RAMBLERS

Note: Adjust guidelines as applicable to biking/paddling events.

Prior to Day of Hike

1. Scout the area, preferably before listing a hike in the schedule – unless you know the area already or are using a published guide. Scout again close to the actual date to see if there are any major changes (fallen trees, etc.).
2. If you are unable to lead a scheduled hike, try to find a replacement leader. If you cannot, send a Google Groups message asking for a substitute leader for the planned hike or one at an alternate location. When a new leader is secured, send the name and contact information via Google Groups.
3. If inclement weather or an emergency necessitates canceling a scheduled hike, send a notice via Google Groups.
4. Plan for possible emergencies:
 - Bring a first aid kit.
 - Carry the water/food/clothing you need, plus a little extra.
 - Know the best “bailouts” along your route.
 - Know the park’s emergency phone numbers.
 - Bring a cell phone (especially on longer hikes).
 - Consider taking or reviewing CPR/first aid training.
 - Bring an extra whistle (in case it’s needed by the sweep).
 - Bring blank emergency contact cards for those who arrive without them.
 - Bring an Incident Report form, which is available on TriState Ramblers website under “More” – “For Leaders.”

Day of Hike

1. Arrive at the meeting location 20-30 minutes before the start time. Bring a current list of people signed up for your hike (available on the SignUpGenius website) and maps, in addition to the items listed above.
2. Remind anyone who comes with a dog that this is a club for people; dogs are not allowed.
3. At the published start time, form a circle. (If you learn that there have been serious road delays, wait 5-10 minutes.) Introduce yourself as the leader and state your name/hometown. Each person in turn should do the same.
4. Have all attendees confirm that they are carrying *legible* emergency contact cards in their packs. If not, give them blank cards to fill out and place in their packs before beginning the hike. If not enough blank cards are available, members without cards must provide emergency contact information; keep it with you during the hike.
5. Describe the day’s activity, including its level of difficulty. If people indicate – or you determine – that they are not physically capable, prepared, or feeling well enough to complete the entire hike, request (in the hearing of at least one other person) that they not continue. Suggest trying a hike better suited to their abilities at another time.

Lack of preparation includes inadequate clothing, shoes, or water. Leaders are not obligated to include participants who do not conform to TSR safe hiking guidelines.

6. Count participants in the circle and ensure that your number matches the number of participants signed up.
7. Either before or during the circle, find someone to be the sweep and exchange cell numbers with that person before departing the trailhead. Ask that no one walk behind the sweep or in front of the leader without their permission; doing so will disqualify them from the hike and remove them from your responsibility. In addition, inform participants that if they choose to leave the hike at any point, *they must let the leader or the sweep know.*
8. The sweep should have a map and know how to use it. The sweep stays behind the last hiker, keeping those in front in sight and letting the leader know privately if anyone appears to be having difficulty. The sweep should give an "OK" signal to the leader when stops are made at trail junctions.

During Hike

1. Start at the pace indicated on the schedule. Check frequently, especially at the beginning, to be sure everyone is keeping up and there are no wide gaps (where any hiker cannot see the person in front of him/her). If the pace is too fast for a particular group, slow down to keep them together.
2. Within the first 10 minutes, ensure that everyone is capable of continuing. If it is apparent that someone will be unable to finish, ask another hiker to return to the parking lot with that person. If no one volunteers, walk back to the parking lot with the entire group.
3. Count occasionally to make sure no one is missing; check in regularly with your sweep. If some people drop back, wait for them to catch up and then provide time for them to rest before going on.
4. Schedule separations as needed/requested.
5. At appropriate times, stop for water and clothing transition breaks. Remember that hikers who are not using water bladders must stop to retrieve bottles from their packs.
6. When turning onto a differently blazed trail or juncture, stop and wait for the entire group so that everyone makes the correct turn.
7. If your hike includes lunch, choose the best available spot – with good seating (logs or rocks), a view if possible, and not likely to have many insects. Lunch should be at approximately noon; if later is necessary to reach a good spot, have a snack break at about 11:30. Give a five-minute warning before ending the lunch break. Look around to make sure nothing is left behind (trash, poles, gloves, etc.).
8. Ask if the sweep wishes to be replaced.
9. Be flexible enough to shorten a hike when necessary (for example, the possibility of bad weather or lightning on a ridge).
10. We do not bushwhack in areas where it is prohibited (usually for environmental reasons). In other areas, remember that if an accident occurs during bushwhacking, it may not be possible for emergency crews to locate you.

11. If an accident occurs, do not immediately call park rangers or 911 for a minor problem that you and the group can handle on your own; an adhesive bandage and antiseptic cream are often sufficient. If the injured person needs professional assistance, call if possible or designate a group to go for help (include someone who knows where the accident occurred and how to return); be sure to exchange cell numbers. Those best qualified to help should stay with the injured person. If the injury is less serious, assist the person in walking out.

After Hike

1. If possible, remain long enough to make sure all participants get their cars started and leave the parking area. Help people with directions, if necessary.
2. If someone was injured during the hike and had, or is likely to require, treatment at a medical facility, complete the Incident Report form. Scan or take a photo of the report and send it via email or text attachment to the club treasurer.
3. In the event of a major accident involving rangers/police/EMS, you must also notify the TSR president at your earliest opportunity and no later than the end of the day. Provide a full written report. If medical attention was offered but refused, be sure to include that information in your report.
4. Keep copies of the document(s) for your own records.

Most Importantly: Remember that you are an ambassador of TriState Ramblers. If you are enjoying the hike, others will, too!

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