

HIKE LEADER GUIDELINES - TRISTATE RAMBLERS

NOTE: You must never lead a hike for TriState Ramblers and another club at the same time. Our insurance would not cover such an event. The exception is the Interstate Hiking Club because we share an insurance company agreement.

Prior to the Day of the Hike

1. Scout the hike area. This should be done if at all possible prior to putting the hike in the schedule, unless you know the area already, or are using a published guide. Be sure to also scout the hike close to the actual date to be sure there have been no major changes. (Fallen, trees, etc.)
2. If you are unable to do a scheduled hike, try to find a replacement leader. If you cannot find a substitute on your own, send a Yahoo message asking for a leader for your hike or one at an alternate location. Once a new leader is secured, send a notice to Yahoo Groups with the name and contact information of that person.
3. Plan for possible emergencies:
 - Bring a first aid kit.
 - Carry what water/food/clothing you need, plus a little extra.
 - Know the best "bail outs" along your route.
 - Know the emergency phone numbers for the park where you are hiking.
 - Bring a cell phone, especially on the longer hikes.
 - Consider CPR/First Aid training or take a review course.
 - Bring an extra whistle (possibly for sweep).

Day of the hike

1. Be sure to bring sign-up sheet, whistle, first aid kit, and maps with you, beyond the usual things needed for hiking (See #3 above)
2. Arrive at the starting point at least 20 minutes before start time (half an hour is preferable).

At Starting Point

1. Have people sign up on the waiver form. If they are new to the club, they should be especially urged to read the form. If they are not members, they are especially urged to read and sign it. **Monitor this carefully!**

2. At the published starting time, hold a circle, at which you should introduce yourself and your hometown. Then each person in turn should do the same around the circle. Welcome new members and any guests. Whenever there are guest hikers, whether through Meetup or another source, please mention during the circle that guests are invited to attend up to 3 events before we ask that they join the club.

If you discover that there have been serious delays on the highways getting there, it would be good to wait 5 or 10 minutes before starting the circle.

3. Describe the day's activity, including its level of difficulty. Urge people who are not capable or feeling well enough to complete the entire hike to not continue. A hike leader can request a hiker to try another hike better suited to their abilities at another time.

4. If you can determine that a participant is unprepared for the nature of the day's activity, you should urge them to not participate, and do so in the hearing of at least one other person. Lack of preparation might include inadequate clothing, shoes or water. A leader is not obligated to include a participant that he/she determines does not conform to TSR safe hiking guidelines.

5. Find someone either before the circle or during it to be a sweep. Ask that no one walk behind the sweep or in front of the leader without their permission since **they are not then on the hike**. Participants should be informed that if they are leaving the hike, **they must let the leader or the sweep know**.

6. Count participants and check that your count matches the sign-in sheet.

8. If someone appears with a dog, inform them that dogs are not allowed by the club's bi-laws.

During the Hike

1. Start at the pace indicated in the schedule for the hike, but check frequently, especially at the beginning, to be sure everyone is keeping up and there are no wide gaps in the line between hikers (a wide gap would mean the hiker behind can not see the hiker in front of him/her). If you are going too fast for the particular group present that day, you should slow down so the group is basically together.

2. Within the first 10 minutes of the hike, check to be sure that everyone is capable of continuing on the hike. If it is apparent that someone is not capable of completing this hike, ask someone to return to the parking lot with that person. If no one volunteers, walk back to the parking lot with the entire group.

3. There should be separations as needed. Schedule these ten minutes into the hike and, especially 10-15 minutes before the end of the hike.

4. Whenever you turn onto a differently blazed trail or trail juncture, you should stop and wait for the entire group to be together so everyone makes the correct turn.

5. At appropriate times during the day, stop for a water break or a shedding break.

6. If a slower group drops back, wait for them to catch up. Do not immediately start up, but allow them to rest before going on.

7. If your hike includes lunch: Choose a place for lunch which is the best available in the area: one that is not as likely to have many insects, and will have good seating (logs or rocks). A place with a view is nice. Lunch should be at approximately noon, but if it is necessary to have lunch quite a bit later in order to have a good spot, have a snack break at about 11:30. Five minutes before the end of lunch, give a "5 minutes" call.

8. At lunch see if the sweep wishes to be replaced.

9. Count occasionally to make sure no one is missing.
10. Check in regularly with your sweep.
11. Be conscious of the weather and flexible enough to shorten a hike when necessary (for example, the possibility of lightning on a ridge).
12. Bushwhacking: Some parks request that there be no bushwhacking (usually for environmental reasons) and we should honor that request. In other areas, remember that if an accident occurs during a bushwhacking segment of the hike, it may not be possible for emergency crews to locate you.
13. In case of an accident, you, as leader, should decide what needs to be done. A band aid and antiseptic cream is usually all that might be needed.

If the injured person needs professional help, call for help 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 phone numbers. Those best qualified to help should stay with the injured person. If the injury is less serious, assist the person in walking out. Do not immediately call park rangers or 911 for a minor problem that you and the group can handle on your own.

After the hike

1. If possible, remain long enough to make sure everyone is able to get their car started and leave the parking area. Help people with directions, if necessary.
2. Write up any incidents, however small. If an accident (even minor) occurred during the hike, record that information on the sign-in sheet with the name/contact information of the person involved. If it was a major accident involving rangers and/or police, a full report on a separate sheet of paper should be mailed to the president with the sign-in sheet as soon as possible. If medical help was offered and the victim refused, that should be noted. If this information can be sent by e-mail to the president, it would facilitate dealing with the insurance company. Otherwise an immediate phone call to the president is called for, in addition to the written report.
3. Mail all sign-in sheets to the president of TriState Ramblers.
7. Sweep Duties: The Sweep should have a map and know how to use it, and stay behind the last hiker. The Sweep should give an "OK" signal to the leader when a stop is made at trail junctions. The Sweep should let the leader know privately if any hikers appear to be having difficulties. The Sweep should keep the hikers in front of him in sight.

Cancelling a Hike: Leaders should send a cancellation notice to YahooGroups if inclement weather or other emergencies necessitate cancelling a scheduled hike.

Be sure to check your email to confirm that the message went out. If you do not see it within a few minutes, re-send or call the President.

Most Important: Have a great day and enjoy yourself! These directions try to cover all the possible problems that might, but almost never, arise. Relax and provide a wonderful hike for all your hiking friends.

Meetup Hikes: Please also mention that the club has many more events than we post on Meetup, and for \$15 a year dues, it gives them access to many more opportunities, including bike rides and canoe/kayak events, and organized hikes 6 days a week. If you don't have any new member applications with you, you can tell them that they can download the form from the Meetup site under Pages, or they can go to the main TSR website.