

MAP READING: STAYING ON TRAIL

TO: Running, Walking & Hiking Teams FROM: Coach Gunn

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Guidelines for staying on the correct trail:

- 1) Secure a good map (waterproof if possible) and a flat transparent compass. When in question, lay the compass flat on the map, orient the map to compass north.
- 2) Develop or sharpen your directional awareness. It is vital that you have basic knowledge of north, south, east and west. You should always have an idea of which general direction you are traveling. Guess your direction and then verify with your compass often until it is second nature. And practice your directional awareness in your car.
- 3) Consult your map often and when in doubt, stop. Know the basic course configuration and read the narrative, if you have one, it can be very helpful. Taking the time to carefully study your map is an important part of adventure hiking.
- 4) At every intersection check for signs, tree color marks, or painted arrows and consult your map and narrative (markings always on left side). I have also been known to construct cairn stones or stick arrows at trouble spots.
- 5) Tree markings appear every 200 meters when there is no question about the trail. At all intersections there should be tree marks within the first 30 meters or so. If you don't see marks after a 100 meters go back and do 2 & 3 above.
- 6) On some courses, I will paint arrows with ecologically friendly paint. Once again, concentrate at every intersection or side road and look for arrows. Follow the flow of the arrow from back to tip. On many of our training courses we will reverse the course. If you see a double pointed arrow that means you will be coming back in reverse at some point during your hike.
- 7) It doesn't take a rocket scientist to stay on course, just someone who is alert and focused.
- 8) Don't be afraid to question your *leader*, don't simply follow whomever is in front of you. Double check at every intersection. It is everyone's responsibility, not just the person(s) ahead of you.
- 9) If you find yourself off course, backtrack until you find markings and can locate yourself on your map. Do not attempt a short cut to get back on course unless you can make both visual and audible contact with others in your group who are on the course. You must be 100% sure.

10) Fire Up for Happy Trails!