

Roundtable Safety Moment

Hiking



Hiking is one of the most exciting activities for Scouts. Exploring new places, venturing into the wild, and discovering new environments. Hiking is a great activity, but it can be dangerous, and we need to know what to expect when planning a group hike.

One of the most important things is to make sure you plan a hike that fits your youth's ages, abilities, and readiness. You wouldn't take 5-year-olds on a 10-mile hike, and you wouldn't take Life Scouts on a 1-foot hike. Ensure your youth and adults are physically prepared to complete the planned hike. Nothing is worse than coming back from a hike where no one had fun, and no one wants to try again.

Hiking is a great way to spend time in the outdoors and can be a good way to get into better shape for more strenuous activities. Hikes can range in length, from covering just a short distance to the 20-mile hike required for the Hiking merit badge. Some hikes can be on maintained trails that are relatively flat; others are on rough terrain that is physically demanding. Regardless of how long a hike is, it is important to be prepared.

General Information

- Decide where you will go and review the route on a map. Is the hike within your capabilities? Are you prepared for the terrain?
- Ensure all youth have at least one buddy to hike with. Everyone should have a buddy, and it makes it more fun too!

- Always let someone know where you are going, when you are leaving, and when you will return, plus what trail you plan to take. That will ensure that if something goes awry on the hike, someone will know that you haven't returned and can alert authorities if needed.
- Review the weather for the hiking area. Will it be sunny, raining, or snowing? Windy or calm? Plan accordingly, including considering postponing the hike if the weather is especially inclement.
- Bring the age-appropriate Scout Basic Essentials with you. Doing so will help you be prepared for most situations that might arise.
 - **Pocketknife or multitool:** A clean, sharp pocketknife can come in handy for a variety of situations.
 - **First-aid kit:** While a youth or adult leader will bring a group first-aid kit along, everyone should bring a personal kit.
 - **Clothing:** Bring extra clothing to match the forecast and be ready for changes in the weather. You might bring an extra layer or two. Comfortable and appropriate footwear will help protect you. Break in new footwear before heading out.
 - **Rain gear:** Rain gear can be used to protect you from the wind and block the wind.
 - **Flashlight or headlamp:** Finding your way in the dark is critical.
 - **Trail food:** Snacks like granola, dried fruits, and trail bars can give you the energy you need to complete your hike and in emergency can provide needed rations.
 - **Water:** Staying hydrated is essential, regardless of whether it is a hot or cold day. Make sure you have enough water for the hike you plan.
 - **Matches and fire starters:** You might not be planning to need a fire, but it might become critical in an emergency.
 - **Sun protection:** Includes a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunblock. Sunburns can happen even on cloudy days.
 - **Map and compass:** Knowing where you are going and how to get back are absolutely critical. Know how to use the map and compass before you begin your hike. Plan how you will communicate with emergency personnel in the event of an emergency. This might be a satellite phone if there isn't cell service.

RESOURCES:

- [10 Scout Basic Essentials](#)



- [Troop Leader Resources for Hiking](#)



- [Cub Scout Six Essentials](#)

