

Scout Skills

Hiking



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0845 300 1818

Hiking can be an excellent activity for Scouts, not only from a physical fitness aspect but also to encourage them to develop the skills of planning, teamwork and leadership when preparing for and undertaking a hike or expedition. Hiking can also be a means to an end, for example, hiking to a campsite, to a National Trust property, or to a place of interest.

Planning a Hike

Listed opposite and overleaf are the steps required to plan a hike. If you are new to hiking, then it may be a good idea to discuss your plans with an experienced hiker, so that he or she can give you some help and advice.

The first thing you will need to do is to decide where and how far you want to go, and if there is a purpose to the hike. Are you going just to walk, or are you visiting something en route? When this has been decided, you will need to plan the specific route and produce a route plan (route planning sheets can be purchased from the Information Centre at Gilwell Park). For more information see Route Planning in this series.

Once the route and purpose have been decided, you will need to inform and ask for permission from the parents or guardians of the Scouts taking part (if applicable). This must be done in writing.

Nearer to the day of the hike, you will need to gather your equipment, check that it is in working order and pack it. You will also need to check that all of the Scouts taking part have all of the required equipment.

Equipment

The equipment you will require is dependent on where you are going, the time of year, the terrain and the weather. There follows a list of items that you will need:

Map and compass - These are essential, and it is best to have a 1:25,000 or 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey map. A 1:25,000 map is required if you are going up into the hills or into remote areas. The map should be contained in some type of waterproof carrier (such as a stout plastic bag or transparent plastic folder). Please also see Scout Skills factsheets on Map and Compass.

Route plan - You will need to take a copy of your route plan with you and also leave a copy with someone. This is a form completed with details of where you intend to go, type of terrain, escape routes, names of those taking part, weather forecast and so on. A route plan factsheet is available.

Whistle - This is another necessity and should be available for use in case of an emergency when you need to attract other people's attention.

The Scout Association

Gilwell Park Chingford London E4 7QW Tel + 44 (0)20 8433 7100 Fax + 44 (0)20 8433 7103 email info.centre@scouts.org.uk www.scouts.org.uk

Torch - If you are planning to be out after dark, then this should be carried as well as spare batteries and a spare bulb for the torch. Fluorescent clothing will also be necessary if walking in the dark.

Mobile phones – These can be a useful resource, but should not be relied upon as the sole means of contact. They may not work in poor reception areas and batteries can drain down.

First aid kit - This is an essential item for any sort of hike. Apart from the usual requirements, it should include plasters and dressings to deal with blisters. Further information is available within the factsheet First Aid and Medical Chests.

Survival bag - This is a heavyweight plastic bag, which is large enough for someone to get into in an emergency to prevent hypothermia.

Walking boots - If you are intending to go hill walking, then you will require a good pair of walking boots - do not attempt to go hill walking in ordinary shoes, as they do not give adequate support to your ankles. If you only intend to go for an easy stroll in the local forest, then you can wear shoes, but make sure that they are stout enough for the job. Always 'break in' new boots before undertaking long hikes.

Waterproof outer clothing - It is necessary to have with you waterproof clothing that is both wind and waterproof whatever the weather is like when you start out. It is important to keep yourself warm and dry, as a lot of accidents occur when people are cold, wet and miserable.

Layers of clothing - It is better to wear several layers of thin clothing, rather than one thick

garment, as several tops, for example, will trap layers of warm air around you. If you get very hot, then one or more layers can be removed and you can still keep warm. Do not wear tight fitting clothes or jeans, as they will not keep you sufficiently warm and they may possibly rub and become uncomfortable. Thick socks also help with not only keeping feet warm, but also with reducing the possibility of blisters. Depending on the terrain, weather forecast, and time of year, you may also require a hat, scarf and gloves.

Food - When walking, you expend a lot of energy, so you will need to take food with you. Have a good breakfast before you set out and take something rich in carbohydrates for lunch, for example, sandwiches, biscuits, nuts, raisins, cakes, chocolate. It is also a good idea to have something that you can eat whilst walking, such as glucose sweets, to keep your blood sugar level high.

If the weather is cold, a thermos flask with a hot drink, such as hot chocolate, tea or soup will be appreciated!

Rucksack - Finally, you will need a daypack or small rucksack to carry all the equipment. A pack with padded shoulder straps and a waist belt is best. Any spare clothing should be packed in plastic bags to ensure that it is kept dry.

If you are going for an overnight hike, you will need to bring extra equipment, such as spare clothing, sleeping bag, carry mat, tent, cooking equipment, and so on. The Group leader should carry a bothy large enough to house the whole group.

It is important to remember that whatever you take, you will have to either wear or carry it. Try the weight of your pack before you leave home to check that you feel comfortable carrying it around for a day.

Safety

As with any activity, it is very important to consider the safety factors when hiking. You must never walk alone, always go in small parties. The party must not be more than seven people in size including the leader of the party. Each party should include a named and designated party leader. If you have more than seven in an area each party must move either on different routes or, if on the same route, with a clear time and geographical separation in order that they do not become mixed. The minimum size of a party must be four. **(See POR Rule 9.32)**

Make sure that you have got a Home Contact (see factsheet FS120078 Home Contacts). This is somebody, not related to anyone in the party, who has a list of members taking part, with their home contact telephone numbers, a copy of your Route plan and who knows what your estimated time of return is. This is appropriate even for a day hike. This person must know whom to call if you don't turn up at the time you have planned to.

Everyone in the party should be able to recognise and treat hypothermia and wind chill, especially if you are going up into the hills or on the moors. At least one member of the party should have a basic knowledge of first aid.

You should have several Members in your party that know the emergency procedure if someone becomes injured. (One person stays with the casualty, whilst others go for help.) You also need to know the international distress signal, which are six whistle blasts, one-minute silence and a repeating of this signal. The reply is three blasts, one-minute silence and repeat.

If you intend to go into hazardous country, that is, areas remote from habitation where bad weather is normal and good weather the exception **(see P.O.R. Rule 9.28/29/30)** you will need to have with the party, someone who is authorised by the home District Commissioner. This is more commonly known as having a Form M. Details can be obtained from your Assistant County/Area

Commissioner or Assistant District Commissioner (Activities).

Tricks of the Trade

When walking in a group, pair the Scouts off in twos, so that they can check on each other all of the time.

Always plan a route that is right for the weakest of your participants. If the route is too hard or too long, then you will stop having fun and may put those involved off hiking in the future.

If you are hiking with Scouts, try to have a purpose or objective for the expedition and discuss what you see on the way, as this might keep their minds off tired feet or aching backs!

When you go hiking, have a set number of planned breaks (for example, ten minutes an hour), but do not keep stopping, as this will not only use up a lot of time, but also in the long run, make people feel more tired as it will ruin their walking rhythm.

If planning to undertake an expedition or weekend hike without much previous experience, you will probably need to go on some training or practice hikes. These are relatively short hikes which give you an opportunity to find out about your own capabilities for walking (pace, distance and so on), to 'break in' new boots, and to practise carrying a loaded rucksac.

Finally, always remember to tell your Home Contact when you have arrived back, so that they do not call out the emergency services for no reason.

Further information and resources

If you want to know more about hiking, talk to other Leaders experienced in hiking, as they should be able to give you a hint or two. You can also obtain the publications ***Safety on Mountains*** and ***First Aid on Mountains*** (available from the Information Centre, Gilwell Park) or ***Mountaincraft and Leadership***, by Eric Langmuir. In addition you can obtain the factsheets detailed in this Information Sheet from the Information Centre at Gilwell Park.

TEACH YOURSELF

There is, of course, only one way to become familiar with hiking and that is to go out and do it! When practising hiking, it is possible to practice on your own (if what you are doing is not much more than a stroll), or with a friend locally, but if you want to go further afield in deserted or mountainous areas, you must go as part of a group. If you cannot take part in a hike with your own Troop, try asking other Troops in the District if you can join them. A local Explorer Scout unit or Members of the County Scout Network may also be happy for you to accompany them. A lot of Counties or Areas also run courses or hikes for less experienced Leaders, so talk to your Assistant County/Area Commissioner (Activities) to find out if there is anything planned which you can join in.

Time

This could take up to a couple of hours to plan the outline of where you are going, the exact route to be taken, and decide what equipment is required. The time required for the hike itself will, of course, depend upon your choice of hike or expedition, the destination, the route and how long you need to spend travelling to get to the starting point.

Equipment

For planning, a map, route plans, transport timetables and pencil and paper are probably all you require. For the hike itself, you will need the equipment outlined in the Information Sheet.

LEARNING ALL ABOUT IT

Before having a go at planning or undertaking a hike, you will need to read the Information Sheet, if you have not already done so.

Here is a checklist of the things that you might consider:

Before your hike

- Choose the area where you want to hike. This should be an area that you would enjoy seeing and that you think is within your capabilities. If you are not used to walking, do not start by climbing Ben Nevis!
- Get hold of a 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map of that area. You should also ensure that you are happy about reading a map and using a compass.
- Plan your route on a Route plan form. (see factsheet)
- Find out what the weather is like where you are going and at the time of year that you are planning to go. This can be done by phoning the local Tourist Information Office.
- Produce a list of equipment you need to take (see Information Sheet for details). Once you have got all of the equipment you need, pack it in your day sack and try it on. You may find that it is uncomfortable and you need to either rethink what you are taking or repack it.
- Make sure that you establish a Home Contact (see factsheet) and that they have got a copy of your Route plan and who is taking part. You should inform them of the time that you

expect to be home, so that they can contact the emergency services if you are not back at that time.

During the hike

- Go out and enjoy your hike! Compare your actual walking times with what you expected on your route plan and note down if there are any big differences, such as walking downhill much faster than expected. Use the opportunity to practice map and compass work, try out dehydrated foods and maybe pitch some lightweight tents 'en route'.
- If it becomes obvious that you will complete your hike later than you anticipated let your home contact know of your delay and revised estimated completion time.

After the hike

- When you get home, let your Home Contact know that you are back safely.
- Review the hike. Did you enjoy it? Was the route practical and appropriate? Did you have all the equipment you needed? What would you do differently next time?

Can you do it?

When you feel confident about hiking, see how many of the following questions you can answer:

- Can I describe what things need to be considered when planning a hike? (Such as destination, terrain, route planning, parental permission, and so on.)
- Can I list the equipment required for:
 - a) A day hike in familiar country?
 - b) A weekend hike in mountainous country?

- Can I state the safety requirements for hiking?
- Can I explain the purpose and function of a Home Contact?
- Can I outline the emergency procedure?

HOW TO TRAIN OTHERS

This section is designed to give some practical ideas about how you can help other people to learn about hiking. This might be Leaders or Scouts - either in an informal way on a Troop night or more formally on a skills workshop, training course or something similar.

Objectives

By the end of this session, the participants will be able to:

- I. List the steps required in planning a hike;
- II. State the safety rules for a day hike;
- III. List equipment required for:
 - a) A day hike in familiar country.
 - b) A weekend hike in mountainous country.

Time

For planning a hike, one to two hours will be required using three to four of the methods listed.

Equipment

You will need all of the equipment listed to go hiking in the hills in bad weather, as detailed in the Information Sheet. You will also need some 'red herrings' for example a swimming costume, axe, matches, running shoes, and so on. A pen and paper will also be required.

You will need a list of all this equipment, including the 'red herrings' and cards with the equipment written on.

List the steps to be taken for planning a hike on a sheet of paper or thin card. This should then be cut up into the different steps for use as a jigsaw.

Training method

It is difficult to learn about hiking without actually going on a hike, so wherever possible, encourage participants to take part in one. After introducing the subject, use one or more of the games outlined below, making sure that the safety factors and steps required in planning are understood. Then, if possible, plan and arrange a hike for everyone to take part in.

Training games

- Play charades, with people miming pieces of equipment or safety rules to the rest of the participants. All participants can then discuss that particular piece of equipment or rule, before moving on. This can also be done with the equipment and rules being written down on pieces of paper and Members then take a piece of paper and mime the text for the others to guess.
- Run a Kim's Game with the hiking equipment and 'red herrings' as listed before. Ask Members to write their observations immediately, in pairs or in small groups. When you go through the list of equipment, talk about each item.
- Participants, in pairs or small groups, should be given a copy of the hike-planning jigsaw as outlined before. Participants then have to fit the jigsaw together in the right order. When the jigsaw is laid out, the group can then discuss the different steps and the order of them.

- Participants are given a card with a piece of equipment listed on it. They will then need to debate in front of the others as to why their particular piece of equipment is needed. Everyone is given two minutes to prepare his or her argument and one minute for talking. At the end, they can vote to decide which of the presented equipment should be taken on the hike.
- As individuals, all participants are given a list of twenty pieces of equipment. They are told that they can only take ten, so they have to prioritise the ten most important. Then in small groups, they have to produce one prioritised list for the group. All the participants together then look at the prioritised lists, discussing what is most important.
- This game is to demonstrate hypothermia. Two people (who already have some understanding of the condition), act out a role-play of a hike where one person displays the symptoms of hypothermia. The other person then treats the person with hypothermia incorrectly, that is gives them whisky, urges them to carry on, and so on. The group, including the actors then discuss the different symptoms for hypothermia and the correct treatment. The participants are then asked to perform the same role-play, but giving the correct treatment to the person suffering from hypothermia.

Checking their progress

Ask participants if they can answer the following questions:

- Can I describe what things need to be considered when planning a hike? (Such as destination, terrain, route planning, parental permission, and so on.)
- Can I list the equipment required for:
 - a) A day hike in familiar country?
 - b) Weekend hike in mountainous country?

- Can I state the safety requirements for hiking?
- Can I explain the purpose and function of a Home Contact?
- Can I state the emergency procedure?

So they want to know more?

Discuss the requirements in terms of experience and equipment for hiking and expeditions in different weather conditions and terrain.

Plan and undertake a night hike.

Get one group of participants to follow a set of bearings that another group has worked out.

Instead of just hiking to a given point, have an objective that needs to be achieved along the way. This could be anything from surveying the area for plants or animals to following a set of clues along the way.