



GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR HIKE LEADERS



These guidelines are not hard and fast. Actual situations and conditions require good judgment on the part of the leader.

1. Choose a location you have already hiked and know well. Or choose an interesting looking route and scout it with a friend before leading it for the club. Part of planning and scouting is to locate alternate routes or bailout points in case someone is having difficulty or the weather turns bad.
2. Have and use a current map. Even if you use a phone app, such as [Avenza Maps](#) or [AllTrails](#), bring a physical map with you in case cell service fails or your battery dies. Maps for trails in Harriman, the Hudson Highlands, and many other places we hike may be obtained through the NY/NJ Trail Conference ([NYNJTC Trail Maps](#)). More [Trail Resources](#). Looking for a hike, [here's the place to find some suggestions](#).
3. Have participants register in advance rather than listing the meeting place and time. This allows you to screen participants. Don't promise anyone that you will be back at a specific time. Unforeseen events can happen, and it puts undue stress on the group. If you don't know the person who is registering, ask about their hiking experience and make sure they have the necessary equipment (such as, boots and raingear). If your hike does not seem like a good fit, politely tell them so; and if possible, suggest a different outing.
4. The time designated in the hike notice is the starting time the hike begins so remind participants when they sign up.
5. Before the hike begins, the leader and all participants should fill out and sign the attendance sheets, using the forms for both [ADK](#) and [WTA](#) if the hike is joint; otherwise, use the WTA form only. Please mail the original ADK release form to Jeanne Thomson at the address on the form, if applicable.
6. The leader should go first and set the pace; or if you let someone else go ahead, be sure he or she is an experienced hiker who will stop at all trail junctions. Unless the group is very small, the leader also should appoint a sweep and tell everyone who that person is.
7. Stop as appropriate on the hike to let people get water, adjust clothing, have a separation, or just catch their breath. Don't let the group become strung out. It is a good idea to share with the hikers when and where you are planning the lunch break. A lunch spot with a view is always appreciated.
8. Carry a first aid kit, have a basic understanding of what to do if a person is injured, and carry a phone with plenty of battery life in case assistance is needed. Injuries serious enough to require medical treatment are infrequent but they do happen. If that occurs, fill out the applicable [WTA Accident Report](#) and/or [ADK Accident Report](#), which asks for basic information. After you have obtained the details, contact Eileen West at eileenw1000@gmail.com for WTA, and she will pass the information on to the appropriate person. Also notify Trish Johnston at patcjohnston@gmail.com and send the Accident Report as requested on the form.
9. When a participant on an organized hike makes the decision to leave the group, they assume all responsibility for their own safety. There may be circumstances where a hike leader feels it is unsafe for the participant to leave the group unattended. In that case, the leader can suggest another hiker return with the participant until they are safely back to their car.

When in doubt think – SAFETY FIRST! Good leadership skills will prevent participants from becoming injured or lost.