September 2006
Capital District Roundtable

Hiking

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OUTLINE

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Hiking: Not Covered, but should be considered

- Backpacking/Hiking Gear
- Hiking Organizations
- Long Distance Trails
- Hiking in Extreme Environments
American Hiking is turning 30!

American Hiking Society was formed in 1976 to provide a national and collective voice for hikers and to help bring foot trail dreams into focus. Join us as we commemorate three decades of promoting hiking, protecting foot trails and being the voice for hikers across the nation.

We will be celebrating all summer and into the fall. So head to Utah in August for a Benefit Concert with G-Love and Special Sauce or visit our home office in Silver Spring, MD in late September for a full weekend of camaraderie, entertainment and celebration. Get details here!

Watch our NEW VIDEO celebrating 30 years of the American Hiking Society!
“There is nothing like walking to get the feel of a country. A fine landscape is like a piece of music; it must be taken at the right tempo. Even a bicycle goes too fast.

Paul Scott Mowrer, *The House of Europe*
Merit Badges
Merit Badges

- Hiking Merit Badge
  - Hobbies Merit Badge Group
  - Eagle Required

- Source
  - www.meritbadge.com/home.htm
  - Learning Worksheet
  - Test Your Knowledge
Hiking Merit Badge Requirements

1. Show that you know first aid for injuries or illnesses that could occur while hiking, including hypothermia, heatstroke, heat exhaustion, frostbite, dehydration, sunburn, sprained ankle, insect stings, tick bites, snakebite, blisters, hyperventilation, and altitude sickness.

2. Explain and, where possible, show the points of good hiking practices including the principles of Leave No Trace, hiking safety in the daytime and at night, courtesy to others, choice of footwear, and proper care of feet and footwear.

3. Explain how hiking is an aerobic activity. Develop a plan for conditioning yourself for 10-mile hikes, and describe how you will increase your fitness for longer hikes.
Hiking Merit Badge Requirements

4. Make a written plan for a 10-mile hike. Include map routes, a clothing and equipment list, and a list of items for a trail lunch.

5. Take five hikes, each on a different day, and each of 10 continuous miles. Prepare a hike plan for each hike.*

6. Take a hike of 20 continuous miles in one day following a hike plan you have prepared.*

7. After each of the hikes (or during each hike if on one continuous "trek") in requirements 5 and 6, write a short report of your experience. Give dates and descriptions of routes covered, the weather, and any interesting things you saw. Share this report with your merit badge counselor.
Hiking Merit Badge Notes

- Hiking merit badge should be started on immediately upon joining a Boy Scout troop. The reasons are simple:
  - The first four requirements are relatively easy for most Scouts. Knocking these out allows you to work on requirements 5 and 6.
  - The following is a direct quote from the requirements: The hikes in requirements 5 and 6 can be used in fulfilling Second Class (2a) and First Class (3) rank requirements, but only if Hiking merit badge requirements 1, 2, 3, and 4 have been completed to the satisfaction of your counselor.

- In other words, if you go ahead and knock out the first four requirements early, you'll be able use later hikes to kill two birds with one stone.

- This is an Eagle required merit badge. It generally takes a long time to earn so the faster you get started, the earlier you'll get done.

- In the past, hiking merit badge was often earned as an afterthought. Now that it is on the Eagle required list, it will hopefully receive the attention it deserves.
Teacher’s Guide
Hiking: General

- Definitions and Terms
- Touring Comparison
  - Motorized Vehicles
  - Animals
  - Biking
- Why Go Hiking?
Hiking: Impacts

- Ecological Impact of Hiking
  - Environmental Impact
  - National Parks
  - Human Waste
  - Animal Impacts
- Leave No Trace
The BSA is committed to Leave No Trace, which is a nationally recognized outdoor skills and ethics awareness program. Its seven principles are guidelines to follow at all times.

Plan Ahead and Prepare
Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
Dispose of Waste Properly
Leave What You Find
Minimize Campfire Impacts
Respect Wildlife
Be Considerate of Other Visitors
Hiking: Etiquette

- Activity is Recreational
- Passing on a Trail
  - Uphill group has right-of-way
  - Animals
- Pace
- Silence & Solitude
- Property Rights (Trespass)
- Low/Hanging Branches & Obstacles
Safety Guidelines (G2SS)

- Anything can happen.
  - “What would happen if _____ occurred?”

- Trail Safety
  - Know capabilities of group / possible injuries / lost drills / fire / orienteering / stay together / established trails / hazards

- Trek Safely Requirements
- Lightning
- Drinking Water
- BSA Property Smart
Hiking: *Plan Ahead*

Learn about the area you plan to visit before you get there. Where are the water sources along your route and what is known about their quality? What kind of wildlife inhabit the area? Contact the local land managers for information and safety concerns specific to the area you plan to explore. Review maps to learn the general lay of the land and familiarize yourself with prominent landmarks and terrain features. Once you’ve planned your route, including alternate routes and back-up camping destinations, leave your itinerary, including the time you expect to return, with a friend and with the local park or forest ranger.
Part of being prepared for a hike is being physically capable and knowing your own limits. If your idea of regular exercise is a trip from the couch to the ice box, attempting a three-day trek along the Appalachian Trail is not common sense. To get yourself physically prepared for a hiking adventure, begin a regular exercise routine that includes aerobic activity and strength workouts. You should always consult a doctor before beginning a fitness program. Remember that other factors, such as lack of sleep, insufficient food, or being too hot or cold, will affect your ability on the trail and may decrease your stamina, strength or coordination. Drugs, medicinal or otherwise, may also have hindering effects including drowsiness, slow reaction time, and impaired judgment.
Hiking: **What about the Weather?**

Pay close attention to current weather conditions and unique topography. What are the low and high temperatures for that season? Will you encounter snow or other severe weather conditions? When is the prime season for mosquitoes, black flies, or other pests that will take a bite out of you and your enjoyment if not properly reckoned with?
Your hike will be more enjoyable and safer if you wear the proper clothing. Synthetic or natural fibers, not cotton, are best for allowing your skin to breathe but a poly-blend will dry faster. You can regulate your body temperature by dressing in layers. When you stop to rest in cool weather, put on a sweater or jacket to avoid chills. Long sleeves and full length pants will protect you from sun, briars and insects. Finally, be sure to travel with a hat, which will help you retain body heat in the winter and shield you from other outdoor hazards, like insects and sunburn.
Hiking: Weather – “Temperature Troubles”

If you must be in the sun, cover exposed skin with sunscreen and wear sunglasses. Remember, even on cloudy days, the sun’s rays can still be strong. Also be aware that heat exhaustion, caused by prolonged physical exertion in hot temperatures, can afflict even the most physically fit. If this does occur, cool down by whatever means available. Have the person rest and drink lots of fluids.
Hiking:  

**Weather – “Bad Weather”**

Always plan for bad weather, even if your day starts out nice, by bringing a rain coat or jacket for cool weather. Particularly in high mountain areas, the weather can change rapidly. Typically, lightning storms occur in the afternoons, so begin your hike early, and be prepared to turn back and descend below the ridge tops should an electrical storm start.
Always carry a map and compass with you whenever you hike. And learn how to use them before you head off into the wilderness—otherwise, they won’t do you much good. Once you start your hike, stay on the blazed trail if trails are marked. Otherwise, be aware of your surroundings and make mental notes of unique landmarks so you’ll remember them on your way back.
Hiking boots or good sturdy walking shoes are a must. Avoid painful blisters by breaking in your boots or shoes before your hike. Walk around in them for several days, or wear them to work or to the store a few times. Two pairs of socks, one lightweight inner sock and a heavy outer sock, are strongly recommended.
Hiking: The Company You Keep

Although it’s best not to hike alone, try to limit your group to less than 10 people. In fact, some areas require you to register your group prior to starting your hike. When hiking with a group, establish a leader, a sweep and a plan of action for forks in the trail or a change of direction. For example, you may decide the leader will wait at all forks until the entire group is present. Make sure everyone in your group knows the destination. Don’t leave the trail without asking a fellow hiker to wait for your return. If only one person has first aid knowledge, that person should be at the end of the group.
Hiking: *First Aid*

Pack a first-aid kit whenever you hike. Make sure it’s fully stocked (restock it after every hike) and everything is clearly labeled. You should have plenty of bandages, antiseptic, burn treatment, sun screen, insect bite treatment, and scissors or tweezers. It’s a good idea for at least one person in your group to have first-aid training or equivalent.
Always carry an extra day’s worth of food, because you’ll eat more than you think. Remember, you burn a lot of calories on the trail and will get hungry fast. Think before you drink. Even if it appears clean, all backcountry water should be considered contaminated and be treated before drinking, either by boiling, using a purification system, or using a chemical disinfectant filter. It is also important to drink before you feel thirsty to avoid dehydration.
Next to hypothermia, stream crossings take more backpackers’ lives than any other cause. It’s best to cross on a log or rocks, but if you must wade and the water is more than ankle deep, cross with a rope, if you have a safe means to set the rope in place. If not, use a triangle of people supporting each other or use a sturdy stick for support. Never face downstream. Stand or walk with your legs and body sideways to the current. And only move one foot or other means of support (stick or other person) at a time. It is also prudent to undo your hip belt and sternum strap on your backpack.
Hiking: *Poisonous Plants*

A good common rule is, “Leaves of three, then let it be!” Both poison ivy and poison oak fit this description. Another rule of the trail is, “Berries white - poisonous sight.” This fits ivy and oak as well as poison sumac. If in doubt, assume the plant is harmful. If exposed, wash immediately with soap and water.
Hiking: **Insects**

Avoid poisonous insects known to live in your hiking area. Ask a ranger what to look for before you start your hike. Don’t place your hands or any other part of your body in a place you cannot see, such as under rocks, bushes, logs or tents. Carry insect repellent for flies and mosquitoes. When hiking in a heavily wooded or grassy area, check often for ticks. If you do find one, remove it immediately by taking hold of its head and gently pulling. Ticks usually release their hold at once. Make sure all parts have been removed.
Hiking: Activities

**Get Started**
If you're new to hiking, this is the place to learn the basics.

**Where to Walk**
It's a big world out there.

**Planning 101**
Basic preparations every hiker needs to make before hitting the trail.

**Family and Partners**
Who you hike with is as important as where you go.

**Extreme Environments**
Winter snow, desert sun, and high-country storms.

**Trail Skills**
Hiking and camping tricks for more comfort on the trail.

**Volunteering**
How to help maintain the trails you love.
Hiking: Activities

**Route Finding**
How to find your way, get unlost, and use a GPS receiver.

**Boots and Blisters**
Tips and tactics for happy, healthy hiking feet.

**Gear**
What you need and how to use it, from packs to water filters.

**What to Wear**
Outdoor clothes are in. Learn how to separate fact from fashion.

**First Aid, Health, and Safety**
How to avoid danger and confront emergencies on the trail.

**Food**
Recipes, shopping lists, and cooking tips for your camp kitchen.
Sources
Sources

- Backpacking and Hiking Guide for Beginners
  - www.backpacking.net
- Wikipedea - Hiking
  - en.wikipedia.org
- National Trails
  - nationstrails.com
- National Historical Trails & G2SS
  - www.scouting.org
- Backpacker
  - www.thebackpacker.com
- Trails & Maps
  - www.trails.com
- Wildernet (Idaho & USA)
  - areas.wildernet.com
- GORP
  - gorp.away.com
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QUESTIONS?
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- Roundtable Archive and Info
  - www.capitalscouting.org/capital_rndtbl