



Note: Although this handout refers primarily to hiking, it is applicable to most TATC outings.

INTRODUCTION

The Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club wants those who participate in outdoor activities sponsored by the club to enjoy themselves in a safe manner, respectful of resources we all enjoy.

This handout is intended to help those new to the TATC prepare for an activity, and to remind those who frequently travel our trails about safety and preparedness.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Signing Up for a Hike

For a variety of reasons the number of participants in an activity may be limited. Please respect this limit. If you sign up for a hike and for any reason can not participate, please let the leader know. Informing the leader that you can not participate could save a possible delay in the group departure while they wait for you, and may allow someone on a waiting list to participate in your place. Refer to the TATC Education Handout titled: "ACTIVITY SIGN UP SHEET INFORMATION - WHY IT IS NEEDED."

Do not attempt to participate in an activity without first signing the ACTIVITY SIGN UP sheet or calling the leader. Plans, meeting places, times, and other details may change from the original activity announcement. The leader needs to know who, and how many, will participate, and who to contact if activity details change.

To sign up for a TATC activity, contact the Activity Leader listed in the bi-monthly TATC newsletter, "The Appalachian Hiker", or on the TATC web site , www.tidewateratc.com. (click on SCHEDULE), or sign the ACTIVITY SIGN UP sheet at a TATC meeting.

ACTIVITY SIGN UP sheets, used for all TATC activities, are available from the Vice President/Hikemaster, and on the club web site, www.tidewateratc.com. Refer to the TATC Education Handout titled: "ACTIVITY SIGN UP SHEET INFORMATION - WHY IT IS NEEDED."

Be Mentally and Physically Prepared

Know what to expect. Use your past experiences to gauge the physical requirements for the planned activity, or make sure that you ask the leader how hard or strenuous the activity will be. Newer participants may not have the benefit of much experience with the club, and should make sure they thoroughly understand the strength and skills essential to the activity in which they will participate.

Equipment

The participant should have clothing and previously tested (familiar) equipment , and be acquainted with the use of all necessary equipment. If you are uncertain, or have questions, ask the leader for advice on clothing and other necessary items

Boots should be broken in before starting out. Carrying some Moleskin ®, and either small nail scissors, or a Swiss Army Knife ® with small scissors, is a good idea.

Minimize the use of cotton clothing. Wearing synthetic fibers can help keep you warmer and drier in damp conditions. Also, synthetic fabrics wick away your dampness in either warm or cold weather. Hypothermia and heat problems are usually preventable.

Before the Activity

During the week before the hike, confirm the leader's plan for the trip, including meeting places and times. Be sure to inquire if there are any hazards or special situations of which you need to be aware. If you do not hear from the leader, call him or her because the leader may not have been able to reach you.

Make the leader aware of any medical problems you might have, including any allergies. If you have to carry any special medications, let the leader know where they are kept, and how and when they are taken.

Be aware of changing weather conditions and trail conditions. Make sure you are prepared for both expected and unexpected weather conditions at the activity location. If you are ready for the worst weather that can occur, at that time of year, at the activity location, you are way ahead in being prepared.

Know what meals you should carry, and which ones will be eaten along the road (at a wayside stop or in a restaurant, on the way to and from the activity).

Make sure that you have enough food and water. Carrying some extra food and water is a good practice. You can do without food longer than you can do without water.

Ask the leader's permission if you plan to bring a dog. If you receive permission to bring a dog, remember your dog is your responsibility, not a responsibility of the group or the leader. Keep your dog on a leash at all times during the activity. It is your responsibility, not the leader's, to know where dogs are allowed / not allowed,. Read the TATC Education Handout titled: "HIKING WITH A DOG - INCLUDING: THE WILD FILE [DE-SKUNKING A DOG], and DOGS AND GIARDIA."

You should be familiar with the TATC Waiver and Release of All Claims included on each ACTIVITY SIGN UP sheet. Signing the ACTIVITY SIGN UP sheet acknowledges that you have read and understand the waiver.

Be sure you are in physical and mental shape for the planned activity, and have your doctor's OK to participate in such an activity.

Auto Etiquette

If you have not told the leader you need a ride, be prepared to drive. Fill your gas tank before reaching the carpool location. Be on time and ready to roll when you reach the meeting place. If you ride with someone else, you should share trip expenses such as gasoline, and tolls.

During a Hike

Please make every effort to stay with the group. When it is necessary to leave the group to answer nature's call, make sure someone knows that you are away from the group, and in which direction you went.

Drink water often, especially during hot or cold weather. Dehydration and heat stroke are a threat during many outdoor activities, and are usually easily prevented. On a cool day two quarts of water a day may be adequate. In warmer, or cold weather, three or four quarts may be required. Strenuous hikes and trail maintenance require more water than a casual hike. Replacing just some of your water with Gatorade®, or other sport drink, 'may' be a good idea.

Remember, you are the first one responsible for your own safety. Just because everyone else can do something does not mean that you can or have to do it.

Snack often. Rest as you need to, but stay with the group. If necessary, request the leader to take a break.

Take only pictures - leave only footprints. Pack out any trash you create and, if you can, pick up trash left by others. Please follow those Leave No Trace principles.

Off the Trail

Take advantage of educational and skill increasing activities offered by the TATC and other sources, preferably before you

undertake an untried activity. Backpacking and trail maintenance skills are offered by the TATC. First aid, CPR, and skills related to other activities, are offered by sources outside the TATC.

THE HIKE LEADER

The leader has volunteered his or her time to research, organize, and scout the activity beforehand. The leader deserves your respect, and needs your cooperation during the activity.

The leader has the right and responsibility to examine the qualifications of any and all participants, their clothing and their gear. He or she may ask you questions concerning such things as your medical history, your experience, your equipment and clothing, and etc.

The leader, at his or her discretion, may refuse to allow the participation of a person ill-equipped, or not physically prepared. To allow an unqualified, or unprepared person to participate may inconvenience or delay the group, and may endanger personnel.

Among others, refer to TATC Education Handout titled "ACTIVITY LEADER POCKET GUIDE,"

- "GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION BY MINORS,"
- "LEADERSHIP STYLES,"
- "SCHEDULING YOUR ACTIVITY - ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE, NEWSLETTER, WEB SITE," and
- "TRICKS FOR OUTDOOR LEADERS - FORMULAS, HINTS, AND HANDY CALCULATIONS."
- "ACTIVITY SIGN UP SHEET INFORMATION - WHY IT IS NEEDED."

A GOOD TRIP IS NO ACCIDENT

Remember, you should be mentally and physically prepared. You should have the correct equipment, and be familiar with proper use of your equipment. Pay attention to changing conditions. By being aware of any hazards. By cooperating with your activity leader, you can be assured of enjoying the best experiences that TATC activities have to offer.

Happy Hiking, Canoeing, Kayaking, Biking, Backpacking, Trail Maintenance !