

# **HIKE LEADER SUGGESTIONS**

***Updated March 2012***

The following suggestions for Indianapolis Hiking Club hike leaders are based on years of experience and are intended to insure that everyone's hiking experience will be safe and enjoyable.

1. The leader is in charge of and responsible for the hike. However, each member and guest is responsible for his or her own behavior and safety.
2. Contact the weekday or weekend Pathfinder to schedule your hike. They will assist you with the hike description. In some cases, they may need the specific address of the start point. Remember spring and fall seasons are especially popular to lead hikes, so submit your request early. If your hike involves a car shuttle, you will be responsible for coordinating it at the beginning and end of the hike and including that information in the description.
3. You should scout the trail or drive the route before scheduling a hike. Check for parking and rest room facilities along the route and plan adequate breaks. Estimate the mileage for the hike description as accurately as possible (round up if .5 or greater). Please don't overstate the mileage.
4. As leader, you may reroute, shorten or cancel a hike because of severe weather or any other circumstance you deem appropriate. If you decide to cancel a hike before the scheduled start time, try to have someone available to answer phone calls at the number published in the schedule. Also, please notify the members that you anticipate might do the hike that it is cancelled. If you are a member of the indyhike Yahoo! Group, send a cancellation message to all members. Also, contact the webmaster so cancelled hikes may be posted on the Club website home page. For out of town hikes try and make cancellation decisions by 6 PM of the day prior to the hike (e.g., pending blizzard) and get the word out.
5. If you are scheduled to lead a hike, but for some unforeseen reason are unable to lead, it is your responsibility to find another member who will lead the hike on your behalf.
6. Before the hike, the leader should become familiar with the information on the sign-up sheet which is available on the Club website (see Forms). If a guest requests a copy of the schedule and a membership application, refer them to the Club website where they may be printed.
7. If the hike you are leading requires an advance registration fee, such as the Mini Marathon or the Walk for the Cure, every participant should have registered and paid the appropriate fee and, if applicable, wear their registration tag. Please confirm this before the hike starts. The Club does not condone "bandits", i.e., people walking without paying the registration fee.
8. Arrive at the hike venue at least 20 minutes early in order to welcome guests and be available to answer questions.

9. Before starting the hike, the leader should:
  - Have all members, guests and children sign the sign-up sheet
  - Ensure that names are written legibly so mileage credit can be given
  - Briefly describe the hike, its difficulty, estimated time of completion, and the amount of water recommended, if the length or conditions warrant
  - If concerned that a hiker(s) may have difficulty, discuss options with the hiker(s)
  - Explain multiple distance options, if applicable, and be certain everyone indicates their desired mileage on the sign-up sheet
  - Introduce guests
  - READ the liability release printed on the sign-up sheet for every hike.
10. As a general rule, hike leaders should not permit hikers to depart ahead of the start time listed in the schedule (i.e., everyone should start as a group). This applies to self-guided as well as led hikes. The hike leader may waive this rule if the situation does not lend itself to everyone starting together, such as the Mini-Marathon, a Volksmarch or a charity walk.
11. Even though coverage can be spotty in remote areas, it is wise to carry a cellular telephone (or ensure someone on the hike has one) and to know the local emergency numbers, e.g. 911 or 112 in the woods, the local park contact numbers and the numbers to hit even when the battery is dead.
12. Start the hike as close to the scheduled time as possible.
13. Stick to the listed speed and distance. The number one complaint of hikers is that leaders go faster than the speed they listed in the schedule.
14. It is a good practice to count everyone at the beginning of the hike and again periodically to ensure everyone is still with the hike. Watch for hikers who are having difficulty and wait if hikers become too separated from the main body. Ask someone who you trust and knows the way to bring up the rear.
15. Use common sense when hiking on a road. Request that everyone stay on the left facing traffic. Ask for single file if the road is heavily traveled and the shoulder narrow. Use sidewalks whenever possible and cross at marked crossings. Be alert for oncoming vehicles and warn those behind you of a "car up". Have someone at the rear watch for vehicles coming from behind and warn "car back".
16. On a trail be courteous to oncoming and overtaking hikers, runners and bikers and provide them room to pass. Warn the group via a "runner up" or "biker back". If you encounter horses, be sure everyone stands off the trail, gives them a wide berth and removes hats and glasses, which may spook the horses.

17. If the hike has shorter mileage options, you must be familiar with each option and make everyone aware of each turnoff point. Unless directions are obvious, ensure that at least one person who knows the way and who will not leave people behind accompanies hikers choosing a shorter option.
18. Although it is usually appropriate for all hikers to stay behind the leader (except on self-guided hikes), the leader, at his or her discretion, may allow faster hikers to go ahead as long as there is a clear understanding between the leader and the fast hikers when and how they will link up.
19. Adjust your pace to give consideration to other hikers, particularly if obstacles, such as a stream or steep hill, slow the group.
20. After completion of the hike, the leader should mail the sign-up sheet to the Mileage Officer who records mileage and initiates guest follow-up. The leader should be certain the name of the hike on the sheet matches the name in the schedule, the date is correct and the leader's name is legible. This should be done in a timely manner even if the hike was cancelled.
21. Some hikers may request the leader to give them extra mileage credit for miles they walked before the hike officially started or after the hike was completed (e.g. I'd like to walk a couple extra miles). Club rules do not permit this. It is unfair to other hikers who might also walk on their own time. This is a club and mileage is accrued as a group.
22. The leader is not a policeman. Everyone is responsible for his or her own actions. That said, it is appropriate to remind everyone of the Club's intent to "Leave no Trace", especially if you see trash being left behind.
23. Hike leaders are requested to contact a member of the Board of Directors as soon as practical following any incident that occurs on a hike or other Club sponsored event that may concern the leader. This may include an accident, injury, possible crime or property damage. The Board member may ask the leader or anyone else involved in the incident to complete an Incident Report to capture information about the incident while it is still fresh in their minds.
24. Leading a hike is a rewarding experience and all members are encouraged to do so. In-town moderate distance hikes are quite easy to plan and lead and that is where most new leaders start. Longer out-of-town woods hikes require more preparation, but can also be rewarding. To be a good leader all you really need is common sense, a spirit of adventure and sensitivity to the needs of others. Contact a Pathfinder or speak to someone who leads hikes regularly for some good ideas. If you'd rather not lead a hike on your own, find a partner and lead a hike together.

