



LIFE HAPPENS OUTSIDE

## **RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTINGS WITH STUDENTS**

### **1. Dress appropriately for the outdoors**

Provide students with a seasonally-appropriate packing list and check to make sure their attire is sufficient. Students should wear sneakers or hiking boots, not sandals. Weather can change quickly. They should have extra layers (including rain gear), for warmth and in case of rain, even when it's warm. Proper clothing reduces the opportunities for sunburn, frostbite, mosquitoes bites, etc. Materials that dry quickly or maintain heat even when wet (e.g., synthetics, wool) are better than those that do not (e.g., cotton). Consider having gear dropped off the day before & review packed items before heading out. Accumulate extra gear for club members to have or borrow. Teens to Trails can help!

### **2. Carry safety essentials and know how to use them**

Each student should carry personal safety items such as a whistle, map/compass, garbage bag or rain poncho, and a flashlight or headlamp as well as water and food. Leaders need additional safety items, especially a first aid kit and copies of student medical forms.

### **3. Check the weather before you leave**

Unexpected weather conditions are probably the **number one reason people get into trouble on an outing**. Always know the weather forecast at your trip location for both low and high elevations. Weather at high elevations may be significantly cooler, windier, and more variable than at home or even the starting point of the hike. Continue to reassess weather conditions on the trail and turn back if necessary.

### **4. Stay together**

Practice good "Expedition Behavior" — students should stay in a group and keep to the trail. Tell students to wait at all trail junctions until the last hiker has arrived. **Make sure students know what to do should you get separated or in the case of an emergency.**

## 5. Teach students how to “stay found”

Students should stay put when lost — **not** go looking for the rest of the group. If lost, they should blow their whistle (three short blasts) every few minutes.

## 6. Stay hydrated and fed

Make sure students are eating & drinking — take frequent water and snack breaks. When outside and being active, students should consume approximately 4 liters of fluid per day. Bringing appropriate water filtration/purification allows you to refill water bottles.

## 7. Encourage students to be proactive about self-care

Empower students with the information they need to make good decisions about risk and health. Discuss the importance of being *proactive*, not *reactive*, around issues such as cold, hydration, sun protection, bathrooming, and blister prevention.

## 8. Watch for fatigue

The most common source of accidents is fatigue. Take breaks, rest often, don't rush and plan appropriate-length outings for your group of students. The pace of a group should allow the slowest member to feel comfortable.

## 9. On day long trips and overnights, someone in the group needs Wilderness First Aid training

When there is an injury on the trail; help may be hours away. The group should have a good first aid kit and someone with current [Wilderness First Aid or a more advanced wilderness response certification](#).

## 10. Share the plan

All participants should know what the plans are for the trip to ensure they are prepared and ready for any challenges that might occur. This can vary from one outing to another but generally should include the route, anticipated weather, turnaround time, and who is carrying group gear and emergency contact information.

## 11. Share the trip itinerary with a responsible party

There should always be one or more people who have a copy of the trip itinerary, participants, contact information etc. that can be ready to take action if the group does not return at the expected time.

## 12. Be aware of human factors that can affect group decision making.

Leaders and groups in the outdoors sometimes make poor decisions. [There is a great deal of good information about factors that interfere with good decisions](#). Being aware of what these are can help groups avoid them.