



Finding Adventure in the World Around You

In the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the wizard Gandalf said, “All those who wander are not lost.” Gandalf was speaking of Aragorn, a Ranger and a wanderer, who always knew where he was and the nature of his quest. But he could also have been talking about Scouts on a hike.

Hiking is a kind of wandering—but wandering without being lost. You can plan adventures or come upon adventures by surprise. You can follow marked trails through well-known parks, wilderness areas, or even large cities. You can learn about nature and the history that’s all around you. No matter how or where you hike, you can always have an adventure and learn something new.

In fact, as you plan hikes, you may want to plan special activities to do along the way: nature study, orienteering, geocaching, or some other skill Scouts will enjoy. The destination of a hike can provide activities, too: fishing in a lake or stream, cooking a meal over a camp stove or open fire, or helping with a conservation project.

To wander without getting lost (or getting hurt), you need to have some skills. The wanderers in *The Lord of the Rings* all used a map. They also had a guide—sort of—in Gollum; they did not go without some guidance. The hikers also took things they needed to make the journey. They were prepared for the journey. In the end, they arrived back home safely. You can do the same after a day or weekend of hiking adventure.

Objectives

This month’s activities should:

- Lead to improved physical fitness.
- Teach Scouts to understand, prevent, and mitigate hazards that may be encountered while hiking.
- Teach first aid for injuries that may occur while hiking.
- Help Scouts grow in skill and confidence in their ability to take care of themselves on the trail.
- Foster a sense of communion with nature and God.
- Lead to greater appreciation for the outdoors and a strong determination to follow the Outdoor Code.
- Build increased understanding of and commitment to no-trace methods for hiking.

RELATED ADVANCEMENT AND AWARDS

- Second Class requirement 1a
- First Class requirement 1a
- American Heritage, Backpacking, Citizenship in the Community, Geocaching, Hiking, Orienteering, Personal Fitness, and Wilderness Survival merit badges
- 50-Miler, Historic Trails, and Leave No Trace awards
- Ranger: Leave No Trace core requirement



Leadership Planning

As a leadership team, you may want to discuss the following items during your planning meetings when choosing hiking as your program feature.

1. Where do we want to hike for our main event?
2. What other activities do we want to include?
3. What type of program do we want, and which group should be in charge?
4. What equipment will we need?
5. Should we plan a meal or lunch in small groups or as one large unit?
6. Who needs to learn orienteering and map and compass skills?
7. Are permits or other forms of permission required to hike on public or private land?
8. Where can we acquire maps for the route?
9. To meet our needs, what should we change in the sample meeting plans?
10. What additional skills and training are recommended for Scouts and leaders as prerequisites to safe hiking?

PARENTS CAN HELP WITH THE HIKING PROGRAM FEATURE BY:

1. Providing transportation for the main event
2. Assisting in obtaining permits from public officials or owners of private property, if necessary
3. Helping with purchasing food before the hike
4. Making sure every Scout has appropriate equipment
5. Assisting in acquiring route maps
6. Accompanying the group on its trek
7. Maintaining current Youth Protection certification, which is required of all adults providing transportation for or participating in outings

TRIP PLANS

A trip plan prepares you for the challenges of a hike, a campout, or any other outdoor activity. Write down the five Ws of a trip plan:

- **Where are you going?** Decide on a route to your destination and back. For backcountry trips, include a copy of a map with your route marked in pencil.
- **When will you return?** If you are not back reasonably close to the time on your trip plan, Scout leaders and family members can take steps to locate you and, if necessary, provide assistance.
- **Who is hiking with you?** List the names of your partners. If you need a ride to or from a trail, write down who will do the driving.
- **Why are you going?** To fish in a lake? Climb a peak? Explore a new area? Write a sentence or two about the purpose of your journey.
- **What are you taking?** Always carry the Scout Basic Essentials. If you are camping out, you may need additional food, gear, and shelter.



HISTORIC TRAILS AWARD

Your unit can earn the Historic Trails Award if you locate and study a historic trail or site, hike or camp two days and one night along the trail, and help a group like a historical society with a project related to the trail or site.



Hiking Trip Plan

Name of this trip: _____

WHERE are we going and how will we get there? _____

WHEN will we go and return? _____

WHO is going with us? _____

Adult leaders: _____

Patrol members: _____

WHY are we going? (Write a sentence or two about the purpose of the hiking trip.) _____

WHAT do we need to take with us? What training is required in advance?

HOW will we respect the environment by using outdoor ethics and following the principles of Leave No Trace? _____



KINDS OF HIKING

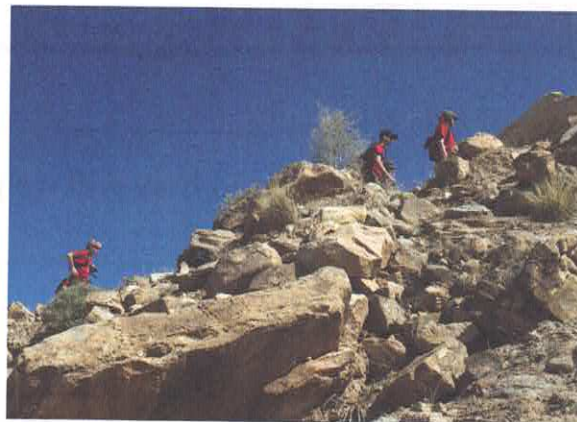
If you think hiking just means following a trail around your favorite Scout camp, think again. There are all sorts of hikes you can take.

Urban hiking. Of all Scouting adventures, city hikes can be among the most interesting and easiest to plan. Set a course that will take you through parts of town you would like to see, or to a zoo, an exhibit, a museum, or a historical site.



Back-roads hiking. America's quiet back roads can offer miles of wonderful hiking. They may lead through farm fields, hug riverbanks, drift along in a shady forest, or head out into open prairie.

Snow hiking. A winter hike can be a terrific way to enjoy cold-weather adventures. Remember that territory familiar in the summer can look very different when it is blanketed with snow.



Tundra hiking. Hike high enough in mountainous regions, and you will reach an elevation where conditions are too harsh for forests to survive. A tundra hike can take you up among the summits and surround you with tremendous scenery.

Desert hiking. Hiking across arid country will bring you close to remarkable vegetation, wildlife, and land formations. Consider doing desert hiking in the early morning and evening; spend the hottest part of the day relaxing in the shade.

Cross-country hiking. Cross-country hiking invites you to escape everything made by humans, trails included. You might cross a river or a lakeshore beach, or the crest of a hill. Or your way might be determined by a series of compass readings and a map to keep your bearings.

Night hiking. The world looks very different at night. Some animals are more active, and the sky can be ablaze with stars. Night hiking lets you explore this altered world.

Trail hiking. Scouts do much of their hiking on trails. They may choose pathways leading deep into the backcountry, or shorter routes connecting points of interest in a Scout camp or a city. A trail can lead to a mountaintop, a lake, a neighborhood park, or a prairie.



HIKING GAMES

Hot Isotope Transport

Equipment: A log, 6 to 8 inches in diameter and 10 inches long (the “radioactive isotope container”); a length of rope to mark a 20-foot circle; a 2- or 3-inch-wide rubber band cut from an inner tube (the “transporter”); several lengths of rope (tied to the rubber band)

Object: To pick up the radioactive isotope container with the transporter, lift it out of the circle, and place it on the ground outside of the circle

How to play: Set the radioactive isotope container in the center of the rope circle. Have each team, in turn, line up around the circle. Each Scout grasps a length of rope. Under the leader’s guidance, the Scouts pull the rope to stretch the rubber band, then bring the expanded band down over the container, relax the band to fit tightly around the container, then lift and deposit the container upright outside of the circle.

Scoring: The team that completes the task in the shortest time wins.

Variation: Instead of having only one container, have several containers. The team to transport the most containers in a given time wins.

Ringleader

The group is seated in a circle. “It” leaves the room. While it is out, the Scouts select a ringleader and begin copying their motions. The ringleader must change motions at least every 15 seconds. When it returns, they try to determine which Scout is the ringleader. The ringleader may clap their hands, rub their head, scratch their leg or arm, pat their knee or stomach, etc. If it can identify the ringleader in three guesses, they can play it again for the next round. If they fail, the ringleader becomes it.

Long, Short, Round

This is a good game to sharpen alertness, if the leader keeps it moving fast.

Equipment: For each team, two coffee cans or similar containers. Place three objects in a can for each team: a long one, such as a pencil; a short one, such as a toothpick; and a round one, such as a penny.

How to play: The teams line up single file, each Scout a good distance behind the one in front of them. Then they sit down, feet extended, and count off so that each Scout in the team has a number. There must be the same set of numbers in each team, so some Scouts might need to take two numbers.

Set the can with the objects in it at the front of the team line, and the empty can at the back end. The game leader signals with their arms to indicate long or short or round, then calls a number. The Scouts who share that number race to their can, pick out the appropriate object, transfer it to the can at the end of the team line, and return to their places.

Scoring: The first Scout back in place wins 1 point for their team. Keeping track of the location of the objects soon gets to be a mental challenge, and, of course, if a Scout heads for the wrong can they’re bound to lose the race.

Human Obstacle Race

Equipment: Stopwatch or a watch with a second hand

How to play: This is a series of races in which team members form obstacles for the runner, who is one of their teammates. (One runner from each team competes at a time.) First race: The team members stand side by side in a straight line about 5 feet apart and clasp hands. The runner must zigzag through the chain, going under each pair of hands. Second race: The team members get down on their hands and knees; the runner hurdles the team members one at a time. Third race: The team members stand in a line with their feet spread apart; the runner scrambles under each pair of legs.

Scoring: Award 1 point per heat for the runner with the fastest time. When all Scouts have raced, the team with the highest score wins.



E.D.G.E. Ideas

Explain how it is done—Tell them.

Demonstrate the steps—Show them.

Guide learners as they practice—Watch them do it.

Enable them to succeed on their own—Have them practice/teach it.

EXPLAIN

- Tell about different kinds of hikes.
- Explain what should go in a trip plan.
- Introduce the Historic Trails Award.
- Review the rules for safe hiking.
- Discuss additional training required as part of a safe hiking plan.

DEMONSTRATE

- Demonstrate different types of hiking packs.
- Show Scouts walking techniques that help the hiker conserve energy.
- Demonstrate Leave No Trace hiking techniques.
- Show Scouts how to use trekking poles.

GUIDE

- Have Scouts brainstorm destinations for hikes.
- Guide Scouts in using maps and compasses.
- Help Scouts make trail mix or other trail foods.
- Have Scouts practice first-aid techniques for hiking.

ENABLE

- Have Scouts assemble the Scout Basic Essentials.
- Play a game that requires map and compass skills.
- Have Scouts plan hiking routes on topographic maps.
- Send teams out on separate hikes in a large urban park.

MAIN EVENT SUMMARIES

● ESSENTIAL

Day Activity

Ten-mile hike—Follow an established trail of 10 miles or so. Have Scouts complete hike plans so that the hike will count toward the Hiking merit badge.

■ CHALLENGING

Overnight Activity

Back-to-back 10-mile hikes—Take 10-mile hikes on consecutive days during a weekend campout.

◆ ADVANCED

Overnight Activity

Continuous 20-mile hike—Camp in a favorite spot and use part of the time to work on the Hiking merit badge. Be sure to take advantage of other activity and advancement options at the campsite.



HIKING

Meeting Plan: Hiking 101



Week 1 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	If it is dark enough, practice following directions by using the North Star method (see the Scouts BSA handbooks) or play Hit the Bucket (see the Activities section at www.programresources.org).		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Outdoor Code Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the group brainstorm as many types of hikes as they can. (See the <i>Hiking</i> merit badge pamphlet for ideas.) Talk about unusual hikes the unit has done in the past (night hikes, urban hikes, etc.). Discuss additional trainings and certifications that are pre-requisites to safe hikes. 		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 35 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice reading a compass and learn how to set a pace. Review the rules and particulars of trail, cross-country, and back-roads hiking. (See the <i>Hiking</i> merit badge pamphlet.) 		7:20 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the above skills. Review the rules and particulars of night and urban hiking. (See the <i>Hiking</i> merit badge pamphlet.) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the above skills. Review the rules and particulars of snow, tundra, and desert hiking. 		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss plans for the hike this month and make sure everyone knows what their assignments are and what to bring for the outing. If any members have not been hiking yet, make plans for a training hike. Plan any meals that will be needed for the outing. If it is going to be an overnigher, begin to make plans for equipment distribution and tent needs. 		7:55 p.m.
Game 15 minutes	Play Hot Isotope Transport (described earlier).		8:10 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Outdoor Code Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews the next meeting and plans for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.






HIKING

Meeting Plan: Stuff to Bring



Week 2 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Have Scouts arrive in the shoes or boots they plan to wear hiking. Inspect their shoes or boots and make recommendations (e.g., break in new boots, choose shoes with better ankle support, etc.).		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate different types of packs for hiking: fanny packs, day packs, backpacks.• Point out advantages and disadvantages of each.• Explain features Scouts should look for, such as well-padded shoulder straps and accessible water bottle holster.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 35 minutes   	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice figuring the heights and widths of objects (Scouts BSA handbooks, "Navigation" chapter).• Review the Scout Basic Essentials.		7:20 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work on packing up for a group hike; study maps of the hike route.• Review outdoor ethics principles.		
	Review unit equipment needed for a group hike. Make plans to acquire any equipment needed.		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review assignments for the hike.• First-time hikers continue working on procedures for hiking. All other groups continue to work on activities for advancement on the outing.		7:55 p.m.
Game 15 minutes	Play Ringleader (described earlier).		8:10 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



HIKING

Meeting Plan: Hiking Techniques



Week 3 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display an array of hiking guidebooks and maps for your area. Encourage Scouts to explore possible destinations for future hikes. 		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 10 minutes	Teach and practice these hiking techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slack-legging: As you walk, let your back leg go slack momentarily as you take weight off of it to reduce fatigue. Caterpillar (for climbing steep trails): When the leader needs a break, they step off the trail and let the second hiker take over. The new leader does the same thing when they need a break. Continue in this manner until the original leader is back at the front. 		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 35 minutes	Practice reading topographic maps and review what to do if lost (Scouts BSA handbooks, "Navigation" chapter).		7:20 p.m.
	Plan a game for the troop to use during the hike. Use a topographic map of the hike's destination and lay out an area to play the game.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help younger Scouts with map-reading skills. Review options for extra activities you can do during the hike (scenic overlooks, historic sites, recreational opportunities, etc.). 		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize the menu for the outing. Review clothing and equipment and make sure everyone knows what to bring. Go over the route to be hiked and consider potential weather conditions and how to prepare for them. 		7:55 p.m.
Game 15 minutes	Play Long, Short, Round (described earlier).		8:10 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.






HIKING

Meeting Plan: Food, First Aid, and Outdoor Ethics



Week 4 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Set up a station where Scouts can make trail mix from individual ingredients.Have other kinds of trail foods available for Scouts to sample.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 10 minutes	Review the principles of Leave No Trace.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 40 minutes	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Learn how to prevent and treat blisters.Learn how to treat a sprained ankle.		7:20 p.m.
	 Review the above skills, along with the other first-aid techniques described in the <i>Hiking</i> merit badge pamphlet.		
	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review the above skills.Discuss how to avoid getting lost and how to get found if you are lost, including leaving a travel plan with someone at home, emergency signaling, and using GPS-based emergency locators.		
Breakout Groups 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review plans and assignments for the hike.Make sure everyone knows travel plans and equipment needs.Practice any activities that will take place.		8 p.m.
Game 15 minutes	Play Human Obstacle Race (described earlier).		8:10 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



HIKING

Main Event: 10-Mile Hike



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: 3 to 4 hours

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Essential (Tier I)

Follow an established trail of 10 miles or so. Have Scouts complete hike plans so the hike will count toward the Hiking merit badge.

Equipment List

- Trail map
- Hiking gear
- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Research nearby parks or natural areas where you can hike on an established 10-mile trail (or multiple trails for a total of 10 miles).
- Have Scouts develop hike plans for the trip.
- Secure any permits or permissions needed.
- Follow proper hiking and no-trace techniques.
- During the hike, look for advancement and other program opportunities.

Safety

- Use the buddy system; cellphones are a good idea as appropriate. Have a first-aid kit.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes



HIKING

Main Event: Back-to-Back 10-Mile Hikes



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: Overnight

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Challenging (Tier II)

Take 10-mile hikes on consecutive days during a weekend campout.

Equipment List

- Trail maps
- Hiking gear
- Camping gear (individual and group)
- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Research nearby parks or natural areas where you can hike on two established 10-mile trails (or two combinations of trails, each totaling 10 miles).
- To add interest, make one hike a night hike, cross-country hike, or another special kind of hike.
- Find a place to camp that's convenient to both trailheads.
- Have Scouts develop hike plans for the trip.
- Secure any permits or permission needed.
- Complete one hike on each day of a two-day campout.
- After the first day's hike, reflect on the day and discuss ways to make the second day's hike better.
- Follow proper hiking and outdoor ethics techniques.
- Plan related activities to do at the campsite.

Safety

- Use the buddy system; cellphones are a good idea as appropriate. Have a first-aid kit.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes



HIKING

Main Event: Continuous 20-Mile Hike



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: 9 to 10 hours

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____



Advanced (Tier III)

Complete the ultimate hiking adventure by hiking 20 miles in a single day.

Equipment List

- Trail map
- Hiking gear
- Food
- Water
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Develop a hiking route of 20 miles. If your route is in a city, you might want to hike 10 miles to a destination like an ice cream shop and then back to your starting point.
- Have Scouts develop hike plans for the trip.
- Secure any permits or permissions needed.
- Follow proper hiking and outdoor ethics techniques.
- During the hike, look for advancement and other program opportunities.

Safety

- Use the buddy system; cellphones are a good idea as appropriate. Have a first-aid kit.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes



RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Books

American Heritage, Backpacking, Bird Study, Camping, Citizenship in the Community, First Aid, Geocaching, Hiking, Nature, Orienteering, Sustainability, and Wilderness Survival merit badge pamphlets

Scouts BSA Handbook for Boys

Scouts BSA Handbook for Girls

Websites

American Hiking Society

Website: <https://americanhiking.org/>

Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics

Website: <http://lnt.org>

Local Hikes

Trails.com: www.trails.com

Sierra Club: www.sierraclub.org

Related Program Features

Backpacking, Camping, Caving, First Aid, Fitness and Nutrition, Geocaching, Nature and Environment, Orienteering, Outdoor Ethics, Sustainability, Wilderness Survival, Winter Camping

Photo and Illustration Credits

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