

Outing Leaders Guide



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OVERVIEW

The objective of this guidebook is twofold: (1) to provide a common certification program for ADK trip leaders; and (2) to provide best practices for trip leaders to enhance the outings experience for all participants.

In doing so we wish to encourage our members to become more active in the outdoors and more involved in ADK's mission. We hope that chapters and trip leaders will find this guidebook useful in planning safe, enjoyable and environmentally sound trips in the second hundred years of ADK's existence.

ADK recognizes that given the number and variety of outings offered by the chapters (e.g., hiking, paddling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, bicycling, fishing, birding, etc.) no guide could be comprehensive enough to cover all of these activities. We have therefore focused on two of the most popular types of outings – hiking and paddling – but we believe that many of the best practices and principles stated in this guide can be applied to other ADK activities as well.

Thanks to the many chapters and individuals who contributed material for this work, and whose cumulative experience in the woods and on the waters provides invaluable advice for all who venture into the great outdoors.

ADK MISSION

The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) works to protect New York's wild lands and waters by promoting responsible outdoor recreation and building a statewide constituency of land stewardship advocates. Since 1922, ADK has worked to increase access to the backcountry by building trails, conserving natural areas, and developing a stewardship community that supports the ethical and safe use of New York's outdoor spaces.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The ADK Advisory Council representing chapters and members at large was established under the ADK Bylaws to advise and provide counsel to the Board of Directors. Chapter led outings are part of ADK, and the Advisory Council and its committees are thanked for their contributions to this guide and updates.

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HIKE LEADER RATINGS

Leader Level	Rating	Effort Level	Elevation Gain (feet)	Miles	Time (hrs.)
1	C	Easy	Under 1,000	< 5	< 5
	C+	Fairly Easy	1,000	5 to 8	4 to 6
2	B	Moderate	1,000	5 to 10	5 to 7
	B+	Moderately Strenuous	2,000	5 to 10	6 to 8
3	A	Strenuous	3,000	5 to 10	8 to 10
	A+	Very Strenuous	4,000	10	10

NOTE: Trip Ratings in some cases will not fit precisely into the multiple criteria shown above (e.g., where elevation gain compared to miles or time indicate different levels). In such cases the leader or chapter outings chair may use discretion in assigning a rating. Elevation gain and other data are understood to be estimates. Winter hikes may also imply greater preparedness and safety considerations (not accounted for solely by estimated duration) and should be classified accordingly.

FLAT/MOVING WATER LEADER RATINGS

Leader Level	Rating	Effort Level	Miles	Portages	Water Class
1	C	Beginner	< 6	< 1/2 mile	Flat
	C+	Advancing Beginner	6 - 12	< 1 mile	Flat/moving
2	B	Intermediate	12	Longer	Flat/moving
3	A	Advanced	12+ multi-day	Various	Flat/moving

NOTE: Flatwater paddle ratings may be adjusted by the trip leader with the approval of their outings chair, chapter chair or event chair (as applicable) in instances where the criteria over- or understate the difficulty.

WHITewater LEADER RATINGS

Leader Level	Rating	Effort Level	Water Class	Miles	Notes
1	C	Beginner	Class 1	< 15	
2	B	Intermediate	Class 2	< 15	Leader Level 2 will be permitted to lead trips on Sacandaga
3	A	Advanced	Class 3 -	15	

OUTINGS LEADER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

This certification program provides uniform standards to ensure outing leaders have the requisite skills and experience to safely and responsibly lead ADK outings. There are three levels of certification, each with a minimum set of requirements. In order to lead an outing, an outing leader must obtain the necessary certification for the outing's respective level of difficulty as provided.

The Outings Leader Certification Program is administered by ADK staff, which will keep an updated list of authorized outing leaders and their respective level of certification, available to chapters. Information on training available to meet certification requirements is available <https://adk.org/outing-guide-resources/> or from your chapter's Outings Chair.

Level 1

To be certified as a Level 1 Leader, the person must:

- Be eighteen (18) years of age or older;
- Be a current member of ADK;
- Take Sexual Harassment Prevention Training either online or in person annually (proof of training taken pursuant to employment or some other requirement is acceptable). ADK-provided sexual harassment training reflecting our volunteer environment will satisfy this requirement.
- Complete basic Leave No Trace training, provided by ADK or Leave No Trace, either in-person or online at: https://lnt.org/courses/online_awareness_take_action_html5/
- Co-lead at least one outing with a certified outings leader or have equivalent experience; and

- Have knowledge of the board- approved ADK Outing and Trip Leaders' Guide.

Level 2

To be certified as a Level 2 Leader, the person must:

- Complete Level 1 Certification;
- Co-lead at least 2 outings with a certified outings leader at this level or have the equivalent leadership experience from having led previous outings;
- Complete Red Cross First Aid or equivalent;
- Complete Map & Compass Fundamentals or equivalent (not necessary for paddling leaders); and
- Complete ADK's Outdoor Leadership 101 or equivalent.

Level 3

To be certified as a Level 3 Leader, the person must:

- Complete Level 2 Certification;
- Complete Wilderness First Aid Certification (may also take this in lieu of Basic First Aid); and
- Complete 8 hours of Leave No Trace training. (ADK will develop a specific one-day course, but any other one-day course will suffice.)

PRE-TRIP BEST PRACTICES

PLANNING AN OUTING

- Scout out a trip before leading it; this is particularly important for Level 2 and 3 trips. As part of the scouting, leaders should: (1) note approximately how long the outing will take, to include how long it will take to any turnarounds; (2) note any potentially hazardous conditions or navigation problems on the route; (3) note any natural history and flora and fauna associated with the route. If such a trip is not scouted in advance, any description of the outing should state that it has not been previously scouted;
- Rate the trip using the attached classification table for both hiking and paddling, taking into consideration the mileage, elevation change, and terrain;
- Consider and set the appropriate group size for the outing and, in doing so, determine whether co-leaders will be needed. Leaders should not let groups get larger than they can comfortably handle. This should be evaluated in terms of the nature of the trip, the terrain, and their own experience as a leader;
- Set a minimum of 3 (4 in winter) participants for hiking and backpacking and a minimum of 3 boats for flat water and whitewater trips. ADK guidelines and DEC regulations set a maximum of 15 in Wilderness and Canoe areas of the Adirondacks and Catskills. Maximum group size is 20 in any other land classification, unless Temporary Revocable Permit (TRP) is submitted and approved by DEC;
- Learn the applicable private and state regulations governing individual and group activities on lands and waters to be traversed during the outing;
- Provide a description that is sufficiently detailed to help potential participants determine whether they are physically and mentally fit for the outing;
- Require participants to contact the outing leader so they can be screened in advance (see section on Screening Trip Participants); and
- Maintain a waiting list when the outing is full in the event there are any cancellations.

POSTING AN OUTING

- Publicize the outing in the chapter newsletter, ADK website, and/or on social media;
- Note the meeting time and location, to include whether it will be, for example, at a particular trailhead or boat launch;
- Note whether there will be carpooling or public transportation available, whether adequate parking is anticipated, and whether there is a fee to park;
- Note whether there is adequate parking available or if reservations are required.

OTHER INFORMATION TO COMMUNICATE

- The type of gear required;
- How much food and water is recommended for each person;
- That no alcohol or drugs are permitted on ADK outings;
- Whether permits are required for access and/or camping.

BEFORE THE OUTING

- Send a reminder to participants providing any updated information and reminding them of the meeting time and itinerary for the day and required gear. Request that if anyone is unable to make it, they should let the leader know ASAP so they can keep an accurate headcount and allow someone from the waitlist the opportunity to go;
- Prepare and disseminate any handouts (e.g., trail descriptions, maps, and rules that participants are expected to follow);
- Check the weather and trail conditions, available at:
 - Statewide Trail Conditions: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7865.html>
 - High Peaks Trail Information: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9198.html>
 - Catskill Information: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/77168.html>
- Cancel a trip if the anticipated weather would make the trip unsafe. Contact those to who have signed up as soon as possible to let them know of the cancellation;
- Leave the itinerary and a list of the trip's participants, including telephone numbers, with a reliable person. Include the estimated time of returning home after the outing;
- Make sure to screen the participants.

SCREENING PARTICIPANTS

Prior to commencing an outing, every participant should be effectively screened; this is especially the case for difficult trips. As part of the screening process, outing leaders should discuss the outing plan with participants, describe the trip's anticipated difficulty, duration, risk factors and pace. The outing leader should familiarize themselves with what outings the prospective participant has engaged in recently, what kind of equipment they have, whether they have any medical conditions that could impact their ability to conduct the outing. This inquiry should be used to gauge whether the prospective participant has the requisite experience to engage in the identified outing. Remember when questioning prospective participants, the outing leader should:

- Be friendly and sensitive, but persistent in asking about prior experience and fitness levels to acquire the requisite information to determine suitability for the trip;
- Remind any prospective participants under the age of 18 that they must have a signed consent form from a parent or guardian, and whether they must be accompanied by an adult or a parent or guardian;
- Remind the participant about any rules (no drugs or alcohol) and requirements for the trip, such as gear, food and water that will be needed;
- If a prospective participant is not an appropriate fit for the outing, whether for health or other reasons, the leader should respectfully decline that individual from participating or steer them to a more suitable outing;
- Have a complete list of the approved participants, including names, emails and phone numbers, noting which are ADK members and which are guests.

OUTING BEST PRACTICES

BEFORE THE OUTING STARTS

- The outing leader and assistant leaders should introduce themselves and ask participants to do the same;
- Review gear, hydration and food requirements. It is ok to turn someone away who is not prepared or whose preparation is not consistent with the screening information. This includes an assessment of the participant's fitness;
- Present a printed copy of the ADK liability waiver form and writing instrument and explain that everyone must print and sign a waiver form. Make sure that an adult signs the ADK Liability Release form for themselves AND as parent/legal guardian of any of their minor children participating;
- Let participants know what to expect during the course of the outing, such as the weather forecast, when and where you expect to stop for lunch, and allow discussion of any particularly difficult portion of the outing;
- Share time estimations for the total trip, including estimated turnaround time;
- Let participants know that there will be stops for bathroom breaks;
- State expectations for the group such as waiting at trail junctions, avoiding large spreads, staying with group, letting leader know of stops for gear adjustment, separation breaks, etc.;
- Count the number of people in the group. Appoint a "sweep," unless the group size is three or less. Ask if the sweep has a first aid kit;
- Further ADK's goals of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion in speaking to the group. One of the leader's key roles is as an educator, including outdoor skills, Leave No Trace and the mission of ADK;
- Encourage participants to become ADK members and discuss any current ADK issues of interest while waiting for registrants to sign the waiver;
- Sign the trail register.

DURING THE OUTING

- Set a pace that all can handle;
- If you have a large group with co-leaders, ensure both have adequate first aid kits and all leaders are first aid certified (Level 2 and 3 hikes only);
- For each separate group, make sure there are separate sweeps and there is clear agreement about communication between the groups, including whether groups plan to meet up at checkpoints or the end of the hike;
- Keep track of the group's numbers with periodic head counts;
- Check on participants to see how they are doing, looking for signs that anyone is tired or not feeling well;
- Stop for rest breaks and wait for the last of the group to rest time before you begin again. Be flexible about goals and adapt to the abilities of the group;
- Plan to break for food or hydration and give the group notice in advance of rest stops or meal breaks;

- Observe Leave No Trace principles;
- Take photos for the chapter newsletter
- The trip leader is in charge when handling problems en route, it is ultimately up to them to solve any issues or conflicts;
- If someone leaves the trip, they must sign out on the waiver form indicating the approximate location, time, and reason for leaving the group;
- It is good and safe practice for everyone to regroup at trail junctions

ADDRESSING INJURIES

If a participant becomes injured, the outing leader should:

- Assess the injury and the ability of the injured participant to complete the trip safely and without further injury;
- Not let an injured or ill participant walk out alone. Assign another qualified participant, if possible, to walk out with them. For winter outings, the injured participant should be accompanied by at least two qualified participants;
- In some cases, having the entire group return to the trailhead may be the best decision in terms of safety of the group and the injured participant;
- In the event of a serious injury or fatality, the leader must first contact emergency services based on their Emergency Action Plan for the trip and then a person in position of responsibility at the chapter or ADK offices;
- If no cell service is available, a minimum of two participants (three in winter) should immediately return to the trailhead to seek assistance. First aid should be administered by qualified participants, giving priority to group safety and minimizing environmental hazards;
- The leader should assign someone to keep the group together and to make sure they stay in a safe area and have adequate clothing, shelter, food, and water while waiting for emergency assistance;
- Where cell service is available, do not move the seriously injured party or the group without asking for a recommendation from an appropriate authority (usually a ranger) about how to proceed when daylight is short or safety requires the group to move on.

ENDING THE OUTING

- Make sure no one is left in the woods or on the water. Take a head count. Don't leave until all participants have left or are accounted for;
- Make sure all participants have a way back to the meeting place or home;
- Provide non-members with an ADK membership form. Thank all participants for their participation and invite them to attend another event;
- If an accident or injury occurs on the trip, an accident report must be completed by the Trip Leader and returned to ADK offices with a copy of the signed waiver & release form the next business day. The accident report form can be found on ADK's website: www.adk.org.
- In the event of any serious medical event or accident involving serious injury or death, ADK Headquarters should be promptly contacted by phone at (518-668-4447) for a post-incident discussion;

- If required by the chapter, submit a trip report to the outings or newsletter chair along with any photos. You can also share photos with outing participants and post on chapter social media pages;
- Send a copy of the completed waiver of liability forms to the outings chair or person designated by the chapters. The forms must be retained for a minimum of seven years (longer when a minor child is participating).

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES FOR PADDLING

PLANNING AN OUTING

In addition to all outing best practices, paddling outing leaders should:

- Make sure the trip is appropriate for flatwater or moving water (when not a whitewater trip);
- Scout the trip to learn the put-in, shuttle route, and take-out locations;
- Understand the safe lines, thru rapids, and river hazards as much as possible (noting that such hazards can change with time);
- Determine if the water level will be appropriate; such information is accessible online where there are gauges: [https:// www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/view/](https://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/view/);
- Cancel or Substitute another trip if conditions become unsafe or unacceptable;
- Follow local rules where volunteer leaders need to be licensed for whitewater trips (not New York).

SCREENING PARTICIPANTS

When signing up participants, outing leaders should:

- Contact participants at least 48 hours in advance of the trip to determine if the person has adequate experience (e.g., what rivers have they done recently) and skills for the trip;
- Inquire as to their paddling experience and skill level, and make sure they have the appropriate paddling clothing for the trip and season (e.g., dry suit, wetsuit, polypro) (no cotton or bare feet);
- Remind participants that a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) and whistle are mandatory for all trips;
- Inquire as to the presence of any medical issues that might preclude participation on the planned trip;
- Inquire as to the participant's boat type (e.g., OC-1, kayak) and appropriate outfitting including flotation device and painters;
- Make sure the participant understands self-rescue and has the ability to eddy in the class of water to be run (for whitewater). If tandem, ask whether the paddlers have experience paddling together;
- Make sure the participant knows how to wet exit and roll if paddling a kayak, and that the person has an appropriate boat, skirt, helmet, and paddle;
- Remind the participant that helmets are mandatory for all kayaks and closed canoe paddling (and recommended for open boaters as well);
- Recommend an alternative trip if the outing leader determines that the person is not appropriately prepared for the planned outing.

After assessing the individual, the outing leader should:

- Collect the individual's name; contact number; rescue equipment (e.g., throw rope, carabiners, pulleys, first aid kit, breakdown paddle) and boat type;
- Provide the meeting time and place and the estimated time of completion;

EQUIPMENT

- For flatwater trips, a minimum of two (2) boats is required, and the American Canoe Association (ACA) recommends one (1) leader for every ten (10) boats. It may be necessary to split the trip into groups depending on size, noting that each must have a lead and sweep boat with boaters that are capable of rescue;
- For whitewater trips, a minimum of three (3) boats for Class 3 water and two (2) boats for class 1 or 2 is required. The ACA recommends one leader and one assistant for every ten (10) boats. A maximum of five (5) to eight (8) is recommended, depending on the difficulty of the water and the skills of the group. Each group should have a lead and sweep boat, with boaters capable of rescue and knowledge of the proper lines and hazards. Those who are not familiar with lines and hazards should follow someone who is.

The trip leader should bring the following items and equipment:

- Liability forms for all paddlers;
- First aid kit;
- Whistle;
- Throw rope;
- Duct tape;
- Headlamp;
- Knife;
- Map of area and escape route;
- For whitewater trips: rescue throw rope; whitewater PFD and helmet.

BEFORE THE OUTING STARTS

- The outing leader should introduce themselves and have participants do the same;
- Make sure everyone has signed the waiver of liability forms, to include a parent/guardian if a participant is under the age of eighteen (18);
- Assess the participants to make sure they have the appropriate clothing and equipment (e.g., helmet, PFD);
- Assess the mental and physical preparedness of the participants;
- Designate lead and sweep boats;
- If necessary, divide the group into smaller sections;
- Institute the 'buddy system';
- Review rescue procedures; trip hazards; lines and whom to follow;
- Review river signals, including whistle and paddle when out of voice range;
- Review basic safety procedures if someone goes into the water, including safe position going through rapids, foot entrapment, and self-rescue and inform paddlers that they should assume they will enter the water at some point;
- Review landmarks and hazards, such as holes and harder drops;

- Decline participation to anyone the leader doesn't feel can participate safely.

DURING THE OUTING

- Make sure all participants wear PFD's;
- Keep the group from getting too spread out;
- Stop along the way to review any upcoming hazards;
- Communicate throughout and check to see if anyone needs a break.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR INFLATABLE KAYAKS

- Inflatable kayaks, also known as "Duckies", are less maneuverable due to their large surface area (especially tandems) and are more difficult to eddy and slow with a tendency to wash downstream more quickly. Therefore, outing leaders should make sure the pilot is familiar with the river and can follow lines carefully. Leaders should consider grouping boats together by boat type;
- Ducky pilots and passengers should be experienced paddlers (steering and eddying) and have experience in self-rescue.

ENDING THE OUTING

- Write a trip report (and any accident report) and send to the Outings Chair.

EQUIPMENT LISTS FOR LEADERS AND PARTICIPANTS

GENERAL DAY-TRIPS

- Backpack
- First aid kit (Refer to “First Aid Supplies”)
- Map and compass
- GPS if desired, as supplement to compass
- Whistle
- Swiss Army knife
- Flashlight / Headlamp with extra batteries & bulbs
- Waterproof matches and small wax candle
- Rope
- Thermal blanket / Bivy Bag / Bothy Bag
- Toilet paper
- Pen & paper
- Rain gear/poncho
- Sturdy hiking boots & socks
- Jumper cables in car
- Gloves
- Extra dry warm clothes
- Water bottle / filter
- Water purifier tablets (best in warm weather)
- High energy foods
- Small trowel for digging cat holes
- 2-3 garbage bags (for trash or emergency use) and spare stuff sack(s)
- Duct tape
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent (especially in areas where Lyme Disease is prevalent)
- Cell phones, but they cannot be relied upon for communication.

WINTER DAY-TRIPS

- Mittens, gloves and liner gloves, and hand warmers
- wool or synthetic head covering
- Bivy Bag or Bothy Bag
- Half-length foam pad for sitting and possible emergency use
- Extra food and water compared to a summer trip
- Insulated water bottle holder and method to attach to outside of pack for easy access.
- Snowshoes with traction devices and/or skis
- Microspikes or equivalent if conditions are expected to be icy
- Ski poles, hiking poles with baskets, or ice axe
- Emergency blanket/sleeping bag
- Snow Shovel/jumper cables in car
- 2 to 3 quarts of water in wide mouth containers (no waterbag/bladder systems)
- Sufficient high energy food to last 24 hours beyond expected stay
- Extra warm clothes, both upper and lower body

- If going above tree line - Balaclava, ski goggles, windproof face mask
- Winter tent
- Stove and fuel, cooking utensils & cook set
- Covered 2-to-3-liter pot for melting snow and boiling water