

HIKE LEADER GUIDELINES

The role of the hiking group leaders is to plan hikes and assume responsibility for the route and the progress of the hike they have planned. Each member and guest are responsible for their own behavior and safety.

Prior to the hike, Hike leaders are responsible for communicating an accurate description of their hike that will include:

- Description of the hike including meeting location – with directions if needed, and meeting time.
- Estimated hike length
- Cumulative elevation change
- Trail conditions e.g. rocky, exposed, shaded, steep climbs, etc.
- Type of hike (in and out, car shuttle, loop)
- Driving distance to trailhead if applicable

Hiking group leaders are expected to:

- Set a hike pace according to the hike level posted.
- Understand their hiking route
- Make decisions about trail conditions and weather conditions affecting their hike and communicate those decisions to club members
- Maintain control of their hikes
- Ensure that emergency procedures are followed in case of an emergency

The following expectations for Prescott Hiking Club hike leaders are intended to ensure that everyone's hiking experience will be safe and enjoyable.

1. **Scout the Hike:** Unless you are familiar with the hike you have volunteered to lead, you should scout the assigned hike at least one week prior to the scheduled hike. Locate the trailhead, determine parking capacity, assess trail conditions, and establish a lunch/break stop if that is appropriate.
2. **Leader Authority:** If it is apparent, based on the leader's experience, that a hiker is not properly equipped for the hike, the leader has the authority to deny a hiker the right to participate in the hike.
3. **Assign the "Sweep":** On each hike, the hike leader should assign a Sweep – the last hiker in the group. 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. The hike leader and the Sweep are expected to watch for hikers who are having difficulty and wait if hikers become too separated from the main body.

It is expected that an experienced and prepared hiker be assigned as the sweep and requested to remain the last person in the group. The hike leader should have contact with the sweep periodically during the hike.

4. **Maintain control of the Hiking Group:** It is the leader's responsibility to keep the hiking group intact between a leader and a sweep. It is good practice that no hiker loses sight of the walker in front of them.
 - At every trail junction, make stops to ensure that all hikers are still with the leader.
 - New hikers should be observed by the hike leader and the sweep to ensure they are keeping up with the group.
 - The leader, at his or her discretion, may allow faster hikers to go ahead or slower hikers to remain behind the group as long as there is a clear understanding between the leader and the fast hikers when and how they will link up.
 - If a hiker insists on hiking in front of the hike leader, that hiker may be informed that he/she is now on his/her own and he or she will no longer be considered as part of the hike group.
 - The hike leader and the sweep will maintain an awareness of anyone who has left the group during the hike.
 - If it is apparent that someone cannot keep up for health and safety reasons, it is advisable to send him/her back to the trailhead with someone or suggest the hiker finish the hike with someone at a slower pace with breaks. It may be necessary for the hike leader and the hiker to consider requesting emergency assistance.
 - The hike leader or their designee should remain at the start location/parking lot until all hikers are accounted for.
5. **Emergency Procedures:** All hike leaders should carry a first aid kit and a fully charged cell phone. It is suggested that hike leaders know the local emergency numbers and the local park contact numbers.
6. **Watch for lost hikers:** If any hiker is unaccounted for, the leader must assess the situation and is expected to use good judgment in determining the best course of action to find the lost hiker.
7. **Hike Cancellation/Re-rerouting:** Hike leaders may cancel their scheduled hike at their discretion. When cancelling a hike, contact the hike scheduler so cancelled hikes may be posted on the Club website home page and members be emailed of the cancellation.

When a leader intends to cancel a hike, it is recommended that the leader drive to the meeting place in case hikers are there ready to hike. Hike leaders may reroute a scheduled hike at their discretion if there is some justification that makes this action advisable.

8. **Incident Reporting:** Hike leaders are requested to contact the Chairperson of the Steering Committee 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.