



BASIC GUIDELINES FOR LEADERS

The following is a brief summary of the leader's responsibility and duties. It is a brief "how to" guide not a fully comprehensive listing of all actions that a leader may or should undertake. For a much more comprehensive description go to the "South African Mountain Leadership Guide" which is available online as a pdf.

Trip Planning

Plan your journey with particular attention to hazards and difficulty.

Contact land owners in a courteous manner, well in advance, to obtain permission and explain your intended route. Should the meet be cancelled for any reason, be sure to let them know too.

It is strongly advised to take suitable navigational tools with you, especially if you are going off-trail. Such tools may include, but are not limited to a map and compass, a GPS or smart phone with offline maps. Never solely rely on one electronic device, preferably have a map and compass as backup and know how to use them.

Additional equipment may also be necessary, such as two-way radios, ropes, etc.

Be flexible if conditions change; check weather reports or other conditions that may affect the trip. Be aware of the potential of flash floods in narrow kloofs and of the likely arrival of cold fronts.

With large groups find another leader to co-lead the trip. The co-leader can help new leaders; can help with large groups; or can take over from the leader if necessary.

You have the right not to lead your trip for any personal reason. If you cannot lead it try to find an alternate leader. If unsuccessful, advise that the trip has been cancelled, on the web and phone those who have already contacted you regarding the trip. If the trip is cancelled at the last minute (miserable weather, for example) arrange for someone to go to the meeting place to inform any participants that may show up.

A minimum of three participants are required for a sanctioned club trip for safety reasons. Communicating with the group is important and WhatsApp groups are a great way to keep the group of interested participants up to date before the meet, but be mindful that not everyone may be using WhatsApp.

It is advisable that you notify Search and Rescue or a third party of your intended route and any alternatives.

Advise Members

A week to a week-and-a-half before your meet send a descriptive email out to the members advertising your planned meet. Do this *via* the secretary.

At the Rendezvous Point

Set a rendezvous point. Introduce yourself.

Have everyone sign in, you will want emergency contact information on hand.

Ensure each member has read and signed the indemnity form. Always ensure that you have a few extra copies of the indemnity form.

Arrange carpooling. Ensure that all drivers know the way to the trail head or can be led there.

Ask drivers to account for their passengers for the return journey.

Screen participants if you consider that they are not suitably prepared (fitness or clothing for example). You have the right to refuse anyone for legitimate reasons in the interests of the group. A good idea is to meet anyone you do not know at the Thursday evening social before the meet.

At the Start of the Meet

Ensure that everyone has arrived.

Have a brief meeting. Introduce and welcome new members and if necessary arrange for a buddy to accompany new members. Have this meeting a few meters up the start of the trail and away from vehicles.

Outline the trip with a brief review of the route, destination, and possible hazards.

Emphasize the importance of staying together or where to re-group.

Emphasize that no one leaves the group without notifying the leader.

Appoint a sweep person if the group is large or, if preferred, split the large group in two, each with a leader. If possible, use radios to keep in contact.

Indicate desired pace and frequency of rest stops.

Emphasize the "Take nothing but photographs and leave nothing but footprints" principle.

Ask for and answer any questions.

On the Meet

Try to keep the group together and under control.

Re-group often, particularly at junctions and hazards.

Assess the group dynamics and adjust the speed and route if necessary.

Be aware that some members might be unwilling to speak up if they are having difficulties.

Stragglers (individuals going unreasonably slowly for the planned trip):

Continue with a sub group of slower hikers with an experienced leader.

Have them wait at a suitable site for the main group to return (preferably at least 2 people).

Arrange for them to return to cars with suitable escort, bearing in mind the car pool arrangements.

Shorten or modify the trip.

Jackrabbits (individuals that want to surge ahead of the group):

Try to discourage.

Appoint a sub-group leader and arrange a forward regrouping site.

Stipulate re-grouping points.

Return to the Vehicles

Make sure that all members make it out.

Ensure that all vehicles are running and free to leave before leaving

After the Hike

The name's etc of the participants are needed on the indemnity form for liability reasons, the form makes it easy to report them. Further, if you have photographs for the trip report at the Club and for Facebook and a short report, they are welcome additions to the ongoing club history.

Safety Notes

If you feel that a person is not suitable to participate and could possibly jeopardize the trip, you have the right to refuse that person.

Regroup at hazardous spots, assess conditions and group dynamics before proceeding or deciding to detour. Consult with the group to assess comfort level.

In case of an accident give first aid if necessary. For more serious injury or illness the following actions may be necessary:

Designate an experienced/qualified member to take charge of the situation.

The whole group returns with the injured person, or at least two people escort the injured/ill person out, including the ride back to town.

If mountain rescue is required call SAR. Should it be necessary for a small group to go make the call elsewhere (with cellular network reception), maintain communication between the two groups with updates on SAR response, status of the patient(s), etc.

In the case of providing any type of first aid write up an incident report.

Search and Rescue contact details are: 10177 / 041 5851555 or 072 324 4985 / 073 755 2250

Specifically state that you are calling regarding a Mountain Rescue Emergency

What to do in case of an emergency when S&R are required:

Provide as much as possible of the following information:

- Name of caller, contact number and status of battery
- Present location, location of incident (remain stationary!)
- Alternate contact times - so phone can be switched off to preserve battery
- Alternative contact numbers
- Nature of incident, including date and time thereof
- Number of people injured/missing (state of injured), total number in group
- Description on immediate terrain, weather conditions
- Equipment and competency of group

Texting uses less battery power; if your phone battery is running flat, rather SMS once you have made initial contact. Ask other party members with phones to switch them off, so you can change to another phone if your battery should run out.

Discipline

Talk to any irresponsible participants expressing your concerns and, if deemed necessary, report the problem to the club committee.

Final Word

It is so important to maintain good communications with the group at all times.

Good luck and enjoy.