

The Trail Crew Method of Hiking and Backpacking

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I was first introduced to this method on my first High Adventure Trek at Philmont in 1972. As time went on, and several High Adventures later, I came to realize that it was the most efficient, practical, and safest way to get a Trail Crew from point to point together as a team.

Team is the key word here. The Trail Crew Method (TCM) utilizes everyone's resources. By using the TCM method, we find out each Crew members strengths, and put them to the best advantage for the crew.

Each member of the crew has a job. Crew Chief, Scout, Navigator, Pacers, Medic, Sweep, Adult Trail Advisor, Assistant Adult Trail Advisor. Each has a place in the hike line with a specific order. Here are some basic rules of the Trail Crew Method.

First Rule: YOU MUST SEE THE HIKER IN FRONT OF YOU AND THE HIKER IN BACK OF YOU AT ALL TIMES.

Second Rule: ANYONE, AT ANY TIME, CAN CALL A STOP IN THE HIKE IF NEEDED. Use 3 blasts of a whistle and have the crew come together to the hiker.

Third Rule: THE ADULT ADVISOR BRINGS UP THE REAR; HE OR SHE IS THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE.

Hike Lineup

#1 The SCOUT: Forges out ahead, looks for trail markers, and reports trail conditions, is in constant communication with the Navigator and Crew Chief as needed. Must be able to read the trail and also navigate (is cross-trained as a navigator). Stops at ALL trail junctions, turns, and trouble spots. Needs to know where his crew is at all times.

#2 The NAVIGATOR: The Crew's best Map and Compass person. Knows where the Crew's location is at all times. Gives directions verbally to the Scout. Reports to the Crew Chief (is cross trained as a Scout).

#3 The PACER: The Crew will need several pacers. Depending upon the need will determine which Pacer will be in the lead (fast, moderate, ascending or descending). Placement will be the job of the crew chief. The pacer does just that, they set the speed of the pace for the crew so that everyone in front slows to their pace, and everyone behind picks up to their pace. The pacer needs to accommodate the slowest hikers and move them a little, and slow down the faster hikers.

#4 The rest of the Pacers fall in behind. Your best First Aid person will be in charge of the First Aid Equipment. This person does not necessarily do the First Aid, but must know the equipment and how it is needed. His location must be centered in the group. One of the pacers can hold the job of MEDIC.

#5 The MEDIC is responsible for checking on the well being of the crew. Reminding them to hydrate, take a snack, break when necessary, and watching out for hot spots on feet before they become problems.

#6 The SWEEP: This is your fastest hiker. This person is responsible to pick up any stragglers. Has to be able to move up and communicate to the Crew Chief as to the condition of the Crew and suggest the pace of the Crew. He is also responsible to keep in touch with and know where the Adult Advisor is at. This person can also be referred to as the Assistant Crew Chief.

#7 The CREW CHIEF. This has to be your most resourceful and best people-person scout. A natural leader. Must be able to read the crew and put the best person in charge of whatever job is called for. This person is the heart and soul of the Crew. Needs to be proficient in Outdoor Scout Craft, but does not need to be an expert in all. His key attribute is how to use his resources, and be able to make quick responses to unforeseen situations. Must have a working relationship with the Adult Crew Advisor. His position in the Hike Line is wherever he or she is needed at the time. The Crew Chief is also responsible for the overall well being and morale of the crew. This scout should have the ability to motivate and inspire other scouts to do their best and adapt to the situation at hand.

#8 The ADULT CREW ADVISOR. He or She is the last person in line. He or She is the last line of defense. Is responsible to Advise and direct the Crew through the Crew Chief, but must know when to step in when the situation calls for it. Is responsible to see that the Crew's Training matches their abilities and scope of the Adventure. Oversees the planning and preparation of the Trek selection. Has the overall responsibility of the welfare and actions of the crew. It is strongly suggested that the Adult Advisor have some type of First Aid/CPR certification, and for more rigorous treks, the American Red Cross Wilderness First Aid certification.

Note: There needs to be two deep Adult leadership on all treks or adventures. If females are part of the crew, a female adult needs to be part of the crew. If you have more than one hiking crew, each Trail Crew needs two deep leadership.

THE CREW IS A TEAM. IT HIKES, CAMPS, EATS, AND MEETS ITS GOALS AS A TEAM. PERSONAL SUCCESS COMES FROM THE SUCCESS OF THE TEAM.

WHEN IT COMES TO HIGH ADVENTURE, YOUTH AND ADULT WELFARE IS DEPENDENT ON ALL MEMBERS OF THE CREW!!!