

Twenty-Mile Hike Preparation

Hiking twenty miles in a single day is a big deal. Not very many people accomplish this feat. All of the Scouts that have completed 4 or 5 of the 10-mile hikes are capable of finishing a twenty mile hike. It will however, still be challenging. Please use this guide to prepare your Scout/s for this momentous hike.

Rest

Be sure that your Scout is well rested. He needs to get to bed early the night before the hike.

Meals

Breakfast

Your Scout needs to start the day of the hike with a good breakfast. Avoid sugary foods. Oatmeal, eggs, potatoes, sausage, toast, and other “stick to your ribs” foods are a great start, and will stay with them so they won’t be reaching for a snack too early on the hike. Skip the doughnuts, sweet rolls, pop-tarts, syrup and sugary cereals.

Lunch

We will be stopping for a brief lunch break, ideally a little past the half-way point. The location will be announced in advance of the hike. It would be great if you would like to meet us and bring your Scout a good lunch, as well as resupply him with water and snacks. This will help to lighten his load. However, please keep lunch on the light side. A big lunch will slow him down, and we will have trouble getting started again. Nutrition is important here, but remember that he just hiked 10 miles or more. He still has quite a ways to go, and has probably been looking forward to lunch since, oh, about mile one. Skip the soda.

Water and Snacks

Be sure that your Scout has PLENTY OF WATER. Also, I recommend that they bring water, and not sugary drinks (yes, that includes Gatorade). Recommended snacks are items such as nuts, granola bars, fruit, crackers, small sandwiches (tuna is good, egg salad as long as it is not a warm day, lunchmeat is fine as well), dried fruit, cheese crackers with peanut butter (we don’t worry too much about cholesterol on a 20 mile hike), carrots, cheese, hard-boiled egg, etc.

Dress

Be sure to dress appropriately for the weather, and dress in layers. Pack rain gear, a cap and sunglasses. If it is cold, be sure he has a hat and gloves. Coats with hoods are a good idea (both a hoodie sweatshirt (fleece is best) and a coat with a hood are good). The first layer should be a moisture wicking shirt if possible. The next layer/s is/are for warmth, and the outer layer is for wind and rain protection. Don’t let them wear cotton socks. Wool or wool-blend hiking socks are the best. Moisture wicking socks are good, but make sure they are thick enough to pad his feet. **I want all of the boys to carry a second pair of hiking socks in their daypack. We will change socks at our lunch break.** Clean, dry feet reduce the risk of blisters. Be sure they have quality hiking boots that fit well and are worn in. Ill-fitting shoes will guarantee blisters.

Miscellaneous Tips

- Gold Bond medicated powder is a wonderful aid for hikers. Don't wait until after the hike to use it. Apply it anywhere that a rash may develop due to constant rubbing while walking. It can also be used in the hiking boots for moisture control.
- Some hikers rub Vaseline on their feet prior to a hike to help prevent blisters
- Be sure to waterproof your hiking boots
- As soon as you feel a "hot spot", take care of it (moleskin)
- New socks – old shoes. Good quality socks and boots that are worn in but not worn out
- Boots must be laced properly to create a snug but comfortable fit

Basic Items for the Day Pack

Bringing a positive attitude is number one on the list. Other important items to bring are: water, bandana, lip balm, first aid kit, moleskin, snacks, extra socks, rain gear, compass, contact information, any health issues and medications, tissues and sanitizer for hand washing.

Walking

Help me reinforce the importance of pace. The boys have all improved quite a bit since our first hike, but still need to be reminded to maintain a solid pace. It is also critical that they understand that we will complete this hike as a group. This is not a race. We start together and we end together. Hikers that are in the lead need to check that they are not way ahead of the group. Slow walkers need to be sure that they keep up with the group.

Mental Preparation

Help your Scout to be mentally prepared for this outing. While they need to be aware of the realities of this difficult challenge, be sure they are excited about this, and see it as a great adventure. I think I can, I think I can...I KNOW I CAN!

Don't Forget About the Hiking Merit Badge

Yes, there are other requirements that must be completed to earn this merit badge!

1. Show that you know first aid for injuries or illnesses that could occur while hiking, including hypothermia, heatstroke, heat exhaustion, frostbite, dehydration, sunburn, sprained ankle, insect stings, tick bites, snakebite, blisters, hyperventilation, and altitude sickness.
2. Explain and, where possible, show the points of good hiking practices. including the principles of Leave No Trace, hiking safety in the daytime and at night, courtesy to others, choice of footwear, and proper care of feet and footwear.
3. Explain how hiking is an aerobic activity. Develop a plan for conditioning yourself for 10-mile hikes, and describe how you will increase your fitness for longer hikes.
4. 4. Make a written plan for a 10-mile hike, including map routes, a clothing and equipment list, and a list of items for a trail lunch.
5. Take five hikes, each on a different day, and each of at least ten continuous miles. Prepare a hike plan for each hike.*
6. Take a hike of 20 continuous miles in one day following a hike plan you have prepared.*
7. After each of the hikes (or during each hike if on one continuous "trek") in requirements 5 and 6, write a short report of your experience. Give dates and descriptions of routes covered, the weather, and interesting things you saw. Share this report with your merit badge counselor.

Check requirements 4 and 7, which should really be done by now. We have reviewed requirements 1 & 2 on every hike, so talk to a counselor and get them signed off!

Rewards

You may want to consider some small reward for your Scout upon completing the 20-mile hike. Certainly, you should let them know how proud you are of them completing such a challenging task. Celebrate! Then let him get some rest...

Have fun! We will be enjoying the great outdoors practically from sun-up to sun-down this day. This is what Scouting is all about!