

Hiking with Kids!

Before you go checklist:

- Bring a 1st aid kit on ALL hikes. Make sure it has enough band-aids and gloves.
- Do any campers need inhalers or other meds to be brought on the hike?
- If campers are hiking with backpacks and lunches, check backpacks to make sure campers are not carrying too much extra stuff (changes of clothes, books, etc). Tighten up backpack straps so backpacks are snug to backs, not hanging way down.
- Does everyone have a water bottle (*if needed, depending on weather and duration of hike*)
- At least one staff person MUST be carrying a cell phone that has saved contact information for program directors.
- Designate a hike leader and a sweep.
- Know how many hikers you are starting with – announce that number to the group!

Hiking policies:



Leader and sweep need to be able to see each other at every intersection. The hike leader must pause until he or she can see the sweep. This prevents campers in the middle from missing a turn.

For large groups that have three or more staff: staff must spread out and have some staff in the middle. Do not bunch up at the rear of the group. At intersections, the leader must pause until he/she sees the middle person, and the middle person must pause until he/she sees the sweep.

Use caution and respect around wildlife and hikers with dogs. Do not pick up snakes (copperheads are native to West Rock), and remember that even a very friendly dog may bite when suddenly surrounded by lots of noisy children!

Staff must escort campers to the bathroom in public places (Amhryn Field, Lake Wintergreen).

When you return: STOP before you come back onto main campus and count heads BEFORE the children get mixed up with other groups.

Keeping kids engaged and motivated on the trail



Hiking should be an activity, not just a way to move from place to place or keep kids busy.

Be ready with a trail game (clothespins, 20 questions, Natural Disaster, etc) to keep it fun and engaging. Depending on age group and length of hike, it may work to just let kids hike and chat early in the hike when energy is fresh. The longer you are out, the more important hiking games and songs become!

Hiking can be a way to help kids make new friends. Consider assigning trail buddies and giving each pair a challenge or mission. For example:

- By the time we reach Judge's Cave, be ready to tell a nature joke
- At our next water break, be ready to show us one cool thing you found together while hiking
- While we hike, see if you can find two feathers
- By the time we get to the Nature Center, be ready to tell the group one favorite thing we did in camp already and one thing you hope we can do before the end of camp

Let kids know what to expect before heading out. What are some landmarks we will pass? How many times will we stop? This helps reduce anxiety around a "long" hike.

For example:

- We will go up past the cabins
- Down the right or left side of the trail split
- Past Witch's Cove
- Stop for water at the Birch Grove
- Around the track
- Through Poison Ivy Alley
- Arrive at Amhryn Field!

Pause at each of these landmarks and let the group know what progress they have made! You can make up your own landmarks and spots (we will go past the troll's hut, over the place where the skunks live, up the hill where we look for red rocks....just make up some fun things and call a stop as needed to name the spot!).

Fire and Water Safety



Campfire safety

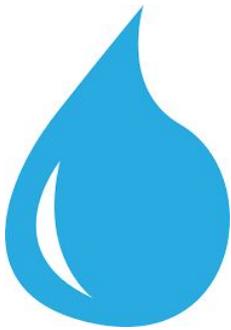
Always have a full jug of water available. Bring it up BEFORE you start the fire.

Campers may not walk around inside the bench circle when a fire is lit. If they want to change position, they need to walk around the outside of the smaller bench circle.

Beware of flaming sticks and marshmallows! Talk to campers about fire safety and about not swinging around burning sticks before the activity starts.

Staff must supervise at every moment – eyes on the children.

Fires must be very thoroughly extinguished – use a stick to stir around ashes and make sure there are no hot embers remaining.



Water safety

A child can drown in 2 inches of water. Before all water activities, review water safety with staff. All eyes on the campers.

Stay out of fast running water or any water that is more than knee deep (**no camper/staff may enter water deeper than their knees**).

Lake Wintergreen is a drinking water reservoir – it is NOT for swimming or wading. Campers may go into the lake to their ankles.

One teacher or counselor must be IN the water for every 6 campers in the water. Supervising from the edges or the bridge is not acceptable – staff must be in the water, in close proximity to campers.

Staff and campers must wear sneakers, water shoes, or other closed toed shoes in the stream. No exceptions.

Campers may play, explore, move rocks, sit in the water and get all wet, and have fun. They may NOT chase each other, have splash fights, or otherwise have rowdy behavior in the stream that could cause a slip and fall.

Campers may NOT put their faces in the water or pour stream/lake water over their heads. They may not put stream/lake water in their water bottle, even just to pour on themselves - this contaminates the water bottle..

Staff must escort campers to the bathroom in public places (Amhryn Field, Lake Wintergreen).