

The 5 W of Planning a Hike

1. Where are you going?
2. When will you return?
3. Who is hiking with you?
4. Why are you going?
5. What are you taking?

STEP ONE - Where are you going?

Come up with ideas for where to go. You can search Google/Apple Maps, your memory, ask friends and family, or check out city, state, and national park web pages for cool places. There are also books describing neat hikes, a chalkboard with suggestions at REI, and websites like Alltrails that have reviews of hikes.

Once you have a few places in mind, use a topographic map website or app to look for a good route, in this case 2 miles. Gaia GPS is a free app that will let you check route distances easily, but won't let you print maps. CalTopo is a free website that doesn't do route marking well, but that will let you PDF and print maps. MapMyRun.com will let you check route distances for free as well.

When you find your favorite, decide on a route to your destination and back and print a copy of a map with your route highlighted. (We want a printed map, because relying on mobile phones in the outdoors can be dicey. They lose signal, run out of battery, and break easily.)

STEP TWO - When will you return?

Look at your own calendar and the pack calendar, then propose a date and time of the walk. How long do you expect it to take? Considering the season, when should we start and when do we expect to be back home?

If you are not back reasonably close to the time on your trip plan, Scout leaders and family members can take steps to locate you and, if necessary, provide assistance.

STEP THREE - Who is hiking with you?

List the names of your partners and/or check the Scoutbook RSVP list. If you need a ride to or from a trail, write down who will do the driving.

STEP FOUR - Why are you going?

Think about the path and if there is anything that may be of interest along the way. Do you want to fish in a lake? Climb a peak? Explore a new area? Write a sentence or two about the purpose of your journey. Why should the group choose your suggestion?

STEP FIVE - What are you taking?

Always carry the Cub Scout Six Essentials. What else may you need to bring? If you're camping, you'll need clothes and gear for that, for example.