

# Hiking is a Team Sport

This tip has received the "Top Tip" award year after year (\*)

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Watching crews hike at Philmont is a wonderful educational experience. Here comes a crew spread out all over the mountain. Two or three Scouts a half mile up the trail. Two advisors far back down the trail. And everyone else is somewhere in between. The end of the crew has no contact with the front or even the mid point. The crew members are expressing various degrees of unhappiness.

Then we have a crew hiking smartly. Each member spaced at about five or six paces. Everyone is in contact, but not so close that they only see the boots in front of them. Everyone is chanting and singing together. All are having a great time and enjoying the spectacular scenery and each others fellowship.

Which crew will you be? Well, if you would like to be the second, here are a few tips which will help make it happen.

1. **Hiking is a Team Sport:** Everyone must be trained to know that crew *Hiking is a team sport*. Everyone must be trained to be committed to the success of the entire crew. Everyone must be trained to ask at all times, "What can I do to make this hike a success for my crew mates". And everyone must be trained to know that the conduct of the hike is the responsibility of the Crew Chief. If the crew develops this *Hiking Mentality*, the Advisors, Crew Chief, and Crew will reap many surprising benefits along the trail. But this does not just happen. It requires training.

2. **Slowest hiker is always first:** It is amazing how much more territory a crew can cover if the slowest hiker is first. It prevents the crew from breaking up and causing the fast to wait for the slow. Then when the slow catch up, they need a rest. Yet the fast want to get going again. It turns into a vicious debilitating cycle that causes crew attitudes to go sour.

3. **Slowest hiker is not always the same person:** Everyone is subject to problems along the trail that may slow them down from time to time. The slowest person in the morning might be quick in the afternoon. The slowest uphill may be fairly quick downhill. Look for gaps to develop in the hiking file. *The person on the tail end of the developing gap is the slowest. That hiker goes to the front ... now.*

4. **Advisors hike in the rear:** If an advisor is very slow, that advisor may move forward. Maybe even up to second or third. *But an advisor never leads the crew.* Also, it is advisable to keep at least one advisor at the dead last position. This is the best position for keeping an eye out for safety. And a good spot for finding and picking up dropped essentials. Don't lose the toilet paper!

**5. The Crew Chief and the Navigator usually hike close to the front:** This helps keeps the crew on target and the Chief in control. Now and then the Chief may want to observe the crew from near the rear. Also, all members of the crew should be trained to keep an eye out for the navigational check points. *The Navigator is accountable for the days hiking plan, but every member of the crew is responsible for picking up the important landmarks.* If landmarks are missed, the entire membership of the crew is responsible, not just the navigator.

**6. Always hike single file:** Walk softly on the land. Stay on the trails narrow pathway. Remember the uphill crew has the right of way. If passing crews can't pass in single file, the downhill crew should get off the trail. When passing a crew on horseback, the un-mounted crew gets off the trail, usually to the down hill side to avoid spooking the horses.

**7. Ten foot spacing:** The spacing between crew members is very important. *Everyone should be separated by about four or five paces (10 FT).* This gives each hiker a good view of the environment ... which is much better than "boot and backpack" watching.

**8. Rule of Four:** *The Crew Chief must always have contact with ALL crew members.* In case of emergency, the *Rule of Four* applies. That is, if it is decided to send a team for help, the team must be composed of four members including an adult. Best case is to have a CPR/First Aid person and adult with both parties. By the way, the Rule of Four always applies. For example, going for water at a site removed from your trail camp.

**9. Mastering the breaks is an absolute:** *There are three types of breaks. Two minutes to catch your breath. Five minutes to replenish your energy. And twenty minutes if the crew can't get going in five.*

You will begin to know when *oxygen* is the problem. Usually this kicks in at high altitudes. When out of oxygen, a short two minute break gets you going.

If the crew is tired and needs an *energy* break, take five. If the crew can't get going in five you must continue the break for another fifteen, a total of twenty minutes. Acid builds up in the muscles after five minutes or so. You need additional down time to avoid complications resulting from the *acid build up*. So think OXYGEN 2 Minutes, ENERGY 5 minutes, ACID BUILDUP 20 minutes.

**10. Religiously "time" your breaks:** All crew members stick together during breaks. Crew Chief designates the *Break Master* who "times" the breaks with a watch. Timing prevents 2 minutes from turning into a half hour. Which is a real moral killer? So don't forget your stop watch.

11. **Caterpillar:** *When going up difficult hills use the "Caterpillar" method of hiking.* It is an outstanding way to keep the crew moving and at the same time everyone gets a quick break. We will cover the *Caterpillar* method of hiking during the Watchu Mountain Adventure.

12. **I need a break:** *Anyone in the crew can call for a 2, 5, or "Caterpillar" break whenever they need it. As in calling out "I need two!" or "I need the Caterpillar".* The Crew Chief decides if a five minute break should be extended to 20. Of course the Chief does this in consultation with the crew members. Usually following an "I'm not ready" answer to the question "Is anyone not ready?" after a 5 minute break.

13. **Hike on the Footpath:** *Never, never, never hike on a road when you can hike on a footpath, or hiking trail.* Hiking on roads is often longer, often much more difficult, always hotter, and never as much fun. Resist the urge of the scouts to take to the road.

**Extra Tip:** Always kick the heel of your foot back into the heel of your boot before tying your boot laces. This will protect your toes on those tough down hill trails.

**Another Tip:** Remember to trim your toe-nails just prior to departure from home.

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(\*) **The "Top Tip" Award:** This tip, *Hiking is a Team Sport*, has been rated the "top tip" by many an Advisor, year after year. Most who have religiously followed these suggestions claim they made the biggest and most surprising positive impact on crew performance. *Hiking is a team sport.* If you and your crew get that, we know you will have a great trek. Is anyone NOT ready for the hiking quiz at Watchu?

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**The Old Rayado does still flow,**

*Henri Lambert*

Chef for President Lincoln

Original Owner - St. James Hotel

Cimarron, New Mexico