



# Hiking Basics

"NOT ALL THOSE WHO WANDER ARE LOST" - - - - J. R. R. TOLKIEN

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**Hiking is a great activity to clear the mind, explore nature and stay active. Here are a few tips to keep in mind if you are just starting out.**

**Water:** Always bring enough water. It is an absolutely essential part of a safe and enjoyable hike. Your water needs will vary depending on weather and terrain. A good rule of thumb is to bring at least two liters per person for a day long hike. In hot weather, carrying enough water is even more critical.

**Footwear:** The first rule is comfort. Wear boots that fit well and will not cause blistering. When buying a pair of hiking boots, remember that feet swell. Consider purchasing your boots in the afternoon when your feet are bigger. Boots with ankle support vs. hiking shoes is a personal preference. Most stores have knowledgeable staff to help you make a good choice. **Remember to break in your boots before you hit the trails!**

**Socks:** Much like your footwear, the socks you wear can also have a significant effect on your comfort. Mid-weight wool socks are popular even in the summer months. To avoid blisters choose a sock that fits your foot well and extends above the top of your boot. A wool pair of socks plus a "liner" is an effective way of reducing blisters. A liner is a light, synthetic sock which protects your foot from the friction created by your shoe as you walk and wicks moisture away from your foot. **Stay away from wearing cotton socks when hiking.**

**Clothing:** Remember that weather can change quickly. Even if you are hiking on a beautiful, sunny day, you should carry a warm layer as well as an outer layer that will protect you from wind and rain. Keep your warm layer in a plastic bag or waterproof sack so that it will stay dry. Your warm layer should be wool or synthetic. A mid-weight fleece is generally the most popular option as it is light and dries quickly. Avoid cotton which dries slowly and does not retain warmth.

Choose synthetic pants or shorts that will not chafe your inner thigh. Many people opt to wear long, light, synthetic pants to protect the legs from stray branches and hazards like poison ivy. Remember not to overdress in hot weather. The best option is always to bring layers. When it comes to clothing, apply the **"layer principle"**. Dress in layers so you can respond to changes in weather and in your effort level as you hike.



**Food:** Whether going for a short hike or a long distance hike on the trail, always have some food along. On longer hikes, ensure you have sufficient food to provide energy for the whole day. Remember that a hiker can burn up to 6,000 calories in a day of intense hiking. A few light weight options for snacks include trail mix, energy bars and tortillas with peanut butter.

**Day pack:** Your pack should be comfortable and big enough to carry your necessary gear. Weight should be distributed equally on both shoulders or around your waist, if you prefer a lumbar pack (we don't call them "fanny" packs).



## Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate

Brought to you by H2O

### Sample Gear Checklist

- ✓ Water (lots of it!)
- ✓ Food
- ✓ Warm layers (in a waterproof bag)
- ✓ Rain or wind gear
- ✓ Sunscreen
- ✓ First aid kit (including moleskin)
- ✓ Insect repellent (recommend in spring/summer)
- ✓ Extra change of clothes (Shirt/Socks)
- ✓ Ziplock bags
- ✓ Flashlight
- ✓ Trail Map (especially if not familiar with the trail)



### A Few Basic Safety Tips

- Stay on the trail
- Set a reasonable pace and take breaks as needed
- Hike in a group or with a buddy
- If in doubt, turn back. If the weather looks like it might turn or you are tiring quickly, make a responsible choice.
- In the case of a lightning storm, make your way to shelter immediately.

*If you have specific questions, please ask a Bruce Trail Hike Leader for more information and in all situations use common sense and choose safety first. There are lots of additional hiking tips on the web that you can research. In the meantime, go outside and let's hit the trail!*