

# Day Hiking-Normal Risk

## Normal Risk

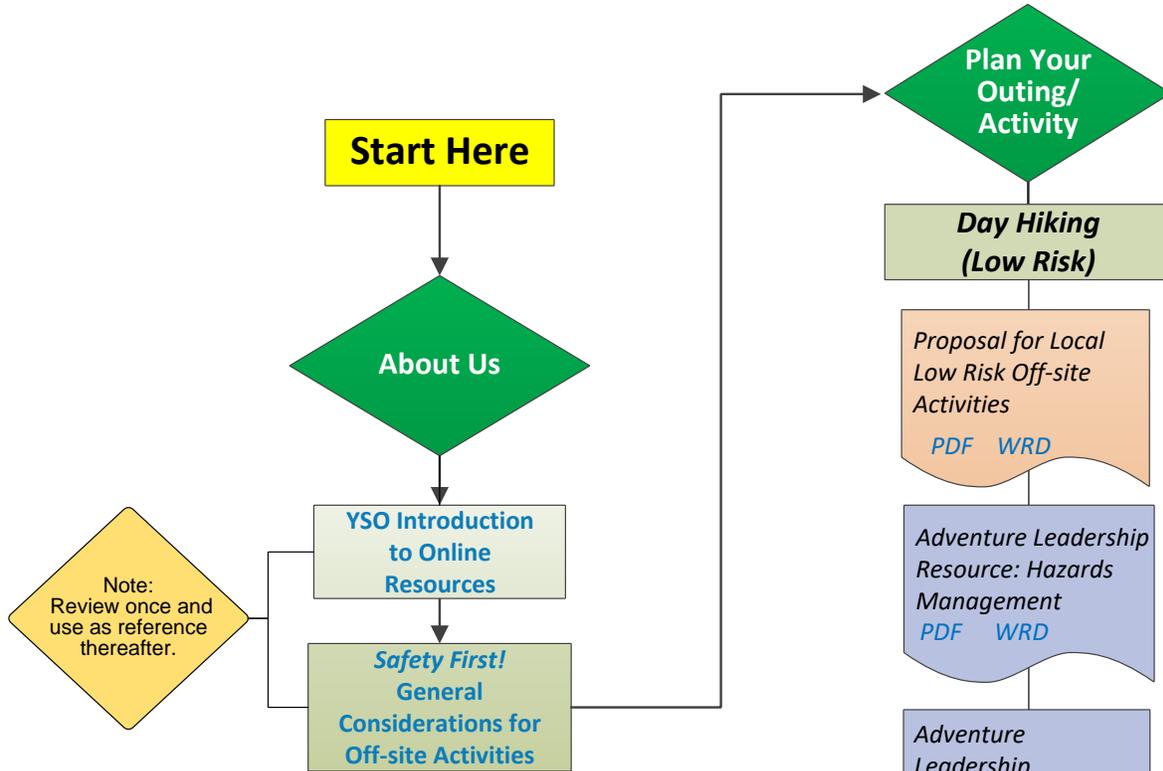
**Criteria:**

- Simple terrain: few junctions, relatively short and gentle slopes, reasonably smooth trail surface
- Local: in the community (e.g., urban park, nearby regional park)
- Low inherent risk in the activity
- Minimal fitness required
- Clear boundaries for activity: hard to be lost for more than an hour
- Short duration: typically (but not always) less than a half-a-day in duration
- Near support services: e.g., buildings or vehicles accessible
- Close to emergency services: less than 20 minutes from EMS arrival on-site
- No specific teacher/leader qualification or certification required: an adult could implement the guidelines without specific technical training
- Minimal preparation time of students: an hour or less student prep needed

# Day Hiking-Normal Risk

Flow Chart, Steps to Success, and Safety Guidelines

Activity Instruction Grade 1+  
Day Tripping Grade 5+



## Additional Resources and Information

- [SF! Risk Management and Legal Liability Primer](#)
- [SF! Special Considerations](#)
- [Universal Forms](#)
- [Adventure Leadership Resource](#)
- [Self-Reliance Instruction Resource](#)
- [Parent/Guardian Resource](#)
- [SF! Glossary](#)

# Safety Guidelines

## Normal Risk-Day Hikes

Day hiking refers to walking with light daypacks, without the expectation of camping out overnight. For the purposes of this document, the context is generally limited to half-day or shorter outings involving trail hiking (i.e., referring to the use of routes that should be obvious, relatively hazard-free, and with little or no route finding required under normal weather conditions, utilizing official and/or unofficial trails, hiker-set trails, old roads, cart tracks and/or cut lines).

### ***Known Potential Risks***

- Injuries related to motor vehicle incidents en route to and from activity area;
- Becoming lost or separated from the group or the group becoming split up;
- Suffering an injury while alone on a route/trail;
- Injuries related to slips, trips, and falls in the program area or en-route to/from it;
- Injuries related to colliding with another person or with a fixed object;
- Injury or delay related to equipment (e.g., poor fit, improper adjustment, malfunction, improper use);
- Foot, knee or other leg injuries (e.g., blisters, sprains, strains);
- Acute or overuse injuries/conditions;
- Injuries related to the physical demands of the activity and/or lack of activity skill;
- Weather changes creating adverse conditions;
- Hypothermia due to insufficient clothing;
- Loss of manual dexterity in hands during cold and wet weather;
- Hyperthermia (e.g., heat exhaustion, heat stroke) due to insufficient hydration, overdressing, and/or overexertion in a hot environment;
- Allergic reactions to natural substances (e.g., bee or wasp stings);
- Injuries related to interactions with animals and plants in the environment;
- Psychological injury due to anxiety or embarrassment (e.g., re: body size or shape, lack of fitness or skill);
- Illness related to poor hygiene or failure to adequately purify water; and
- Other risks normally associated with the activity and environment.

### ***Common Risk Mitigation Strategies***

#### **Teacher/Leader Readiness**

- The teacher/leader must be competent to organize the hiking activity; to demonstrate, instruct and supervise it, and to effect rescue and emergency procedures as necessary.
- The teacher/leader must be familiar with the area and/or route.

- Assistant teachers/leaders should have adequate knowledge, skill, fitness and related experience to support the group.
- At least one supervisor should have first aid training, the level dependent upon the time/distance from professional first responders (refer to *First Aid* in *General Considerations*).

## Location/Equipment

- Guidelines related to travel by bus or walking to/from a site are covered in *Travel to/from Off-site Destinations* in the *General Considerations*. If travelling by a means other than bus or walking, see *Transportation* in *Special Considerations*.
- Have a map of the route (e.g., park, trail or sketch map of trail area) and stay on designated trails.
- Be particularly conservative regarding hiking distance and time estimates when pending darkness may affect success and safety.
- All necessary equipment, including first aid kit, and survival and repair kits, as appropriate, should be checked and restocked before the trip.
- Encourage use of comfortable, durable, closed-toe flat shoes (e.g., running shoes or hiking shoes/boots).
- Each group member should carry their own day pack, complete with water, food, extra clothes, rain gear, and/or other items, as appropriate to the hike.
- Each group member should have a whistle.
- If hiking in known bear country, carry deterrent (bear spray).

## Instruction

- Consider the nature and severity of any pre-existing condition(s) of any group members.
- In an age-appropriate manner, students should be taught about the route and known common or unique hazards on it or in the area (e.g., steep-sided trails, water margins, wildlife, ticks) and procedures for avoiding or dealing with each.
- Students should be directed, as appropriate to the route, to avoid damaging any sensitive areas (e.g., marshes, wetlands, soft earth embankments and/or mossy rocks), and to avoid any machines or wild or domestic animals encountered).
- Wooden surfaces, be they roots or man-made structures can be especially slippery when wet, as can rocky beaches with or without vegetation.

## Supervision

Ensure students are appropriately supervised (considering age, maturity and context). In addition to the guidelines in *Supervision* in the *Safety First! General Considerations*, apply the following as appropriate.

- In-the-area supervision. On-site with K-6 students.
- K-2 students should be restricted to very short hikes (less than 2 km long), with the group kept together.
- Use lead/sweep, buddy system, head counts, regular rest breaks and/or other appropriate methods to keep the group together.

- Rendezvous at trail junctions to ensure no one goes the wrong way.
- Consider the use of communications equipment between lead and sweep or smaller hiking units (e.g., cell phones, Family Radio Service (FRS), walkie-talkies,).

The suggested minimum supervisor to student ratios for off-site participation in day hiking are:

<b>Student Grade</b>	<b>Number of Supervisors to Students</b>
K – 3	1:8 / 2:16
4 – 7	1:12 / 2:24
8 – 12	1:15 / 2:30

Where a 2:30 ratio is provided, the intent is to suggest that two supervisors can likely handle a full class of students. It is accepted that, in some cases, this might mean a few more than 30 students; class sizes vary. Adjust the supervision ratio if/as necessary due to the presence of any special considerations.

### Notes

1. If, when reviewing the guidelines above, terms and concepts presented are unfamiliar, this is a strong indicator that additional personal leadership preparation (e.g., a training course, reading) or contracting a qualified service provider is advisable.
2. This document is not intended as an instructional guide. The teacher will need to use other references to learn how to teach students the skills (e.g., how to brake when inline skating, how to do a diagonal stride when cross-country skiing).