

OUTDOORS AT UVA

Leader's Manual

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The Club and Its Mission

Before we delve into how to lead trips, we need to cover what this club is and why it exists.

Our Mission

Outdoors at UVa is a group of students and community members united by their desire to enjoy outdoor activities with friends, while promoting safety and environmental preservation, educating others about nature, and developing leadership skills.

Overview of our club

Outdoors at UVa is a Contracted Independent Organization (CIO). CIOs receive money from Student Council, which derives its funds from student activities fees. Between the money that we receive, club gear, and the ability to set up trips online, we are able to be so much more than a list-serv.

It is important to recognize the privilege we are afforded to have many expenses reimbursed. Many of our policies have been developed so that we can reimburse as many trips as possible, and thus give everyone the chance to get outside.

Our club supports trips of all sizes, but our limited funds make local trips far easier. These are the backbone of our club, and allow for the most people to get outside.

Preface to the Leader's Manual

This manual tries to be fairly exhaustive and cover the majority of potential scenarios (trips) that could be led. While our primary driver for enacting policies is our mission, many of the policies listed here are done so because in at least one trip, we have encountered a hindrance to achieving our goals.

Thus, there is a lot of information, which is a lot to absorb at first, but as you lead more trips we hope you'll find leading trips to be an easy and enjoyable endeavor.

Furthermore, this manual is not always updated at the moment that new policies are implemented. You should assume the most recent (update) to a policy is the accurate policy. The date that this manual has last been modified is on the cover (first) page.



Communicating with officers

In regard to any club matters (e.g. setting up any trip, especially in an effort to adhere to club policies), all communications MUST be addressed to outdoors-officers@virginia.edu (as primary destination, or carbon copy). That is, for club communications, you should use the "Reply-All" function!

Communicating with trip attendees

If there is an issue with your trip that extends beyond your trip, it is good practice to include the officers on such an email as well. One such issue is member absence(s). This can simply be a frustration, or it can be a bit more, if the participation fees have risen. There is a built in function to email the absentee. If you wish to email the trip attendee (or reply if they have emailed you post-sign-up deadline), you should absolutely copy the officers on the email! A further point to make is that your tone should not condemn the absentee. It is OK to express frustration, but it should be tempered. We want the absentee to realize absences to be avoided, but we also want them to still be excited about going on another trip. Remember, everyone makes mistakes, and many younger members are still learning time management skills. If you really need to rant, direct it simply to the officers (not the attendee/absentee!) - we'll listen.

Leadership Privileges

Leadership responsibilities

Regardless of whether you are a current leader or looking to start leading trips, we require that all leaders be familiar with this manual. The officers will update this manual as is necessary. Our primary concern is safety for all participants on a trip, so if we find we can better ensure everyone's safety by implementing a policy, we will do so. Other policies are set in place based on the gear we have and our desire to increase the longevity of each piece of gear we own. Of course, we are also fortunate enough to be able to reimburse some expenses for trips, but our reimbursement policies are revised each semester depending on how much money we have available to us, and in some cases updated to Student Council's reimbursements policies.

Officers only revoke leadership privileges when we feel your leadership is somehow detrimental to the club; an infraction of any of our policies set forth here, is grounds for revoking leadership privileges. The officers reserve the right to revoke leadership privileges of our own discretion. Because our club relies on leaders, we prefer not to revoke privileges when we can work with you to correct an issue.

Semantics: leaders vs. organizers

In many ways, the term "organizers" would be more appropriate than "leader", but that doesn't encompass all that leaders do for the club. That said, it should be clear to members that our club is not a guide service. Similarly, if anyone external to the club asks about your role in the outing, saying



that you are a "leader" may be misconstrued to mean that you are a guide. Be clear that you have organized a trip within a club, and that you are not a guide / guide service.

Requesting privileges

If you are not a leader yet, simply contact the officers: outdoors-officers@virginia.edu. For most activities, approval of your leadership privileges relies on your knowledge of our policies.

Additional Requirements

Certain activities, such as climbing, kayaking, whitewater rafting and caving require a skillset and responsibility greater than most other sports because of the increased risk. Approval to lead these trips is contingent on the officers knowing that your skillset will keep all attendees safe. Each activity has specific officers that oversee approval for leading trips of that nature. In general, even if you are leading non-beginner trips, the ability to communicate proper safety protocol and maintain as safe an environment as possible (as if it were a beginner trip) is what we are looking for when it comes to leading trips for these activities.

Climbing

Please visit the [ClimbingRules](#) resources page for information on climbing approval. You should also be familiar with our climbing [checklist](#).

Whitewater Sports

Please contact [Dave Clark](#) about leading these trips.

Caving

Approval for caving is done through the entire officer corps. Please email the entire officer listserv for approval. You should also be familiar with our caving [checklist](#).

Other

Just because a type of trips is not listed here does NOT mean that you are de facto approved that type of trip. For instance, mountaineering and canyoneering present substantial risk, and would require approval. Of course, Virginia does not offer much (if any) in the way of these trips, so we have not outlined specific guidelines for these trips.

If you suspect that your trip is riskier than a typical hiking trip, you should probably contact the officers. If you set up a trip that the officers deem that you are unfit to lead, we reserve the right to cancel your trip.



Exceptions

A possible exception is guided trips, where the exception is only that your mastery of the activity in question is not under as much scrutiny. However, the guide service itself will be under scrutiny. Thus, you should email the officers. Please also see Guided Trips.

To be clear - approval to lead a trip that will be guided by a guiding service does NOT give you the ability to lead such trips without the guide in the future.

Setting up the trip online

Once you have leadership privileges, you may navigate to the [create](#) adventure from the adventure tab (under Member's Area).

Appropriate Trips

A list of appropriate trips is available [online](#). Except for hunting, most things that are commonly accepted as outdoorsy are appropriate in the eyes of the officers. If in doubt, email the officers! Some trips have a maximum allowance per week (i.e. only so many trips can occur within a week).

Beginner Trips

We love to see beginner trips! We also use "beginner" trips in a broad sense. We define a **beginner trip**, as any trip that is accessible to any member, regardless of ability / experience. Some examples would be:

- An easy to moderate hike (less than 10 miles of hiking)
- A swimming hole trip (just be sure everyone can swim)
- Any introductory trip (any activity).

Just be sure you are approved to lead that type of adventure, and if you're not, email the officers to see what it will take so that you can lead the adventure you want (e.g. an introductory climbing trip).

Proficiency Dependent Trips

The following trips have been deemed proficiency-dependent:

- Climbing
- Caving
- Kayaking
- Whitewater Rafting
- Mountain Biking

This list is not exhaustive. If you are unsure, please contact the officers.

For these trips, you should set an intended proficiency of attendees (e.g. beginner, intermediate, or advanced). Furthermore, you should not mingle



(attempt to combine) advanced trips with beginner trips. Joining two adjacent abilities (e.g. beginner / intermediate, or intermediate / advanced) trips may be done, but we ask only experienced leaders lead such trips. (Please email the officers to verify that you qualify.)

Why do we have this distinction? For almost any trip, the proficiency of attendees not only sets the enjoyment of attendees, but most crucially, it affects the safety of the group. That is, a large dispersion (range) of abilities can lead to danger; see, for example, [GMS Safety & Etiquette](#). The problem may not lie in a dispersion between the leader (who should be adequately proficient), but others who are more proficient than the intended level of the trip, and thus look to tackle more difficult objectives than they should. We think that the above list represents the trips where the concerns just listed are most acute.

Service Trips

Service trips must also be outdoorsy. While we can appreciate service to our community, many projects are not appropriate for our club. That said, there are still plenty of projects that are appropriate for our club. Service trips that are appropriate should focus on conserving our environment and/or making an outdoor area safer and more enjoyable for those that use it. Some appropriate service trips are:

- Clean up projects (e.g. highway, stream)
- Tree / shrub planting (gardens, like UVa gardens do NOT count)
- Trail building / maintenance

Outreach Trips

So far we have seen very few trips that qualify as outreach, and much of it has been done on an individual basis, and so little consideration regarding reimbursements has been necessary. Outreach is distinguished from service by its inherent educational nature (whereas service is often labor-oriented), but it is still a valuable way of connecting with our community.

While we encourage members to share their expertise with other members and non-members, these trips may start to blur the line of what is "outdoorsy", and thus the default should be to assume we would not reimburse such a trip. That said, you may send out an email to the club to find others interested in such a trip/event, and you can email the officers if you think your outreach event is exceptional and deserving of consideration for reimbursement.

Limits on trips

Currently, there are two limitations we put on trips:

1. The number of trips allowed to a particular destination in a week
2. The total expense of a trip (esp. expense to the club). See the reimbursement Reimbursement.



As for the number of trips allowed per week, to any given destination, it should be assumed to be 2. The most relevant destinations here are climbing gyms (i.e. Peak or Rise Up), and Snowshoe Resort.

To add some clarification: more than two trips within a week to a large area (e.g. Shenandoah National Park) is permissible so long as they are not to the same particular hike (e.g. 3 or more going to RipRap Hollow).

Any trips beyond the allowed 2 per week will NOT be eligible for reimbursement! Exceptions to this rule may only be made by obtaining prior approval from the officers (as a group) and will require some justification on your part as to why a third trip should be allowed to be reimbursed.

Departure Location

Because our club is predominantly students, **all trips must be accessible to students**. For this reason, we **strongly prefer** that trips depart from a location on grounds. However, there are times where this is impractical (e.g. trips on a football game day). If a trip leaves from a location off grounds, it is the trip leader's responsibility to make sure everyone has a ride to the departure location (and organize the rides if need be). You will want to mention this in the description as well.

Description

This is the most crucial part of setting up your trip. The description is where you can *sell* your trip (make the description exciting!). But you also want to show that this trip is well thought out. Tell us (potential attendees) as much logistics as you have on hand. For instance, overnight trips allow for some meals to be covered (see reimbursements); let us know which meals will be covered, if we need to bring our own food, or if we need to bring money for food.

For an example of descriptions, take a look at past adventures (descriptions), and see which one makes you want to go on that adventure. That's likely a good starting point.

Aside from an enticing pitch, and at least an outline of logistics, you **NEED** to include a list of what attendees must provide and a list that the club is able to provide. Be clear whether you expect attendees to check out gear themselves, or whether you intend to check out gear on behalf of the attendees. (NB checking out gear also bears the responsibility of below.)

Finally, the best rule to abide by is to assume attendees know little to nothing about (a) the club rules and (b) what they should bring - for ALL trips (i.e. advanced trips just the same as beginner trips). We get new members throughout the year, and often members may not get to go on a trip until mid-semester. Do NOT assume your attendees have the same knowledge you do! Be thorough! Poor trip descriptions can result in leader suspension or outright revocation.



Links

Links aren't necessary, but we like to see links to relevant resources. Often, it is good to put up a link that spells out the regulations for where you will visit (e.g. a campground). Often for hiking trips, information about the trail can be found on [hikingupwards](#), and thus a link to that posting is relevant.

Fee

For most trips, the club can cover all expenses, so you can just put 0. However, if there will be shared expenses that we are unable to cover then you will want to put that here. For instance, to climb at Peak, the typical group rate is \$10, and everyone should expect to pay that much and it is reasonable to put that number down. If you tell people to bring money for a meal, but the price is unknown, you can leave that number off.

For ski trips, you can add the cost to a lift ticket to the fee section, or, if you think most people have season passes, you can leave it off the fee section. EITHER way, note in the Description that the club covers neither lift ticket nor season pass costs.

Another instance of a fee is to cover mutual costs when the club's rate is not enough (e.g. lodging for Snowshoe trips). It is helpful to know typical rates for the lodging and have a guess at number of attendees. Put your best guess for what the shared expenses will be, and note in your description that it the actual number depends on how many people sign up. If your trip has such an expense, you are responsible for collecting these fees and keeping track of who has paid. We strongly encourage that you do so on paper (print out a spreadsheet with names and amount to be paid) and check off who has paid. For more on fees, see [below](#).

Maximum Number of Attendees

This is often your choice to make, but sometimes there will be a limit already imposed based on where you are going (e.g. campgrounds, national parks, wildlife management areas, and wilderness areas tend to have maximum group sizes). Some of these require special use permits for groups over a certain size.

That said; **do not artificially restrict the maximum number of attendees**. If your trip can easily support more attendees, it will be a source of frustration for members as well as officers. Moreover, it will look to us as if you are trying to do a trip for just your friends, which is ground for revoking your leadership privileges.

Conversely, while this is rarely a problem, please set the maximum number of attendees to a reasonable maximum. That is, even if the trip can in theory support a large number (say, more than 25 members), please do not post the maximum as, say 1000. If you think about 50 people is reasonable for the venue and interest, put that number, and not 1000!



Finally, let it be clear that ONLY members of the club can go on club trips. If you know a non-member that would like to join the club (to go on a trip), notify the officers so that we can try to expedite the joining process.

Some known (external) limits:

- Peak Experiences Climbing Gym: 14
- Wildlife Management areas: 12 (apply for Special Use Permit above this size)
- Wilderness Areas: 10

Some internal limits:

- 10 for backpacking trips. This is a practical limit set by above limits as well as helping manage gear that is checked out.

Waitlist Only

Use of the waitlist only function is often discouraged. A primary intention is for use when a trip requires attendees to have a certain skill level or experience, for which the leader must review the questions and then decide who can join. However, another common reason is for lack of drivers.

We prefer to see trips made without the waitlist only option used. Be sure to email the officers if you intend to use this function, and be aware that officers do watch to ensure that this function is not abused.

Waitlists & Modifying Attendance List

If you did not select the "waitlist only" option, then members will automatically be joined from the trip as attendees withdraw. Perhaps you have set the max size at 5 (if you have a car) and intend to add others when another driver signs up.

Modifying the Attendance List

The only modifying we expect is moving waitlisted members onto the attendee ("joined") list. We trust that you will be judicious in joining the first qualified (if skill/experience is important) waitlisted individual to the trip. However, if a driver drops, you may move attendees ("joined") to the waitlist.

Another, yet unsettled reason to modify the attendance list, is if a member - in particular, an attendee has joined, but the attendee has an absence on his/her record. You should be able to view the list of absence(s) by clicking the number corresponding to the number of absences. Similarly, you can go to the member's profile and see previous trips she has joined (waitlisted or not). In this fashion, you should look at how often (percentage) the member has been absent. If the absence frequency concerns you (you suspect the member may be absent for your trip), please email the officers, and we can investigate the matter!



Timeline: Announcing, Signup, Departure, and Return

Announcing

The only strict impositions with when you announce the trip are those given for Eligibility for reimbursement. However, there are some members that prefer to schedule their time far in advance. Overall, it's your call, but we encourage you to post your trip as early as you know you can commit to it.

Signup Deadline

There are two considerations with the signup deadline. The first is very obviously, when will members know their schedule concretely, and really be able to commit to the trip. The second is, when do you need to make reservations, and have logistical plans finalized (this is most important when lodging indoors). We leave the second point largely unaddressed here, but you should be aware of your responsibility for collecting Participation fees.

The two considerations share the fact that member absences can very adversely affect the trip.

Departure

There are no formal restrictions for the departure time. However, you may need to consider sporting events, access to gear room, and other events that could dictate the meeting time and place, as well as the conditions of the roads and travel time.

Return

Again, there are no formal restrictions, but the same concerns for departure exist for the return. Chapter 0

Minors

As the trip leader, you can see member's birthdays. Please be aware that this is considered private information. That said, leaders should pay attention to the ages of members, as some destinations require a waiver, and would require a parent or guardian signature for a minor. Proper planning should include notifying the minor of this requirement. Furthermore, you should consult with the minor, and if deemed appropriate, the minor should withdraw him/herself from the trip - this is not an action the trip leader should, in general, take.

Questions

Where the description is all about informing the attendees what your trip is about, the questions are your chance to collect as much information as you need to organize the logistics of your trip (and potentially decide who is eligible to attend as per the Waitlist Only feature.) Additionally, the questions is where you can find if members already have necessary gear or whether they will need to borrow club gear.



Another good practice is to ask about each member's experience. Even if you have no minimum requirement, this lets you know who can help in case of an emergency, etc. Also, while a member may want to go on a hike with you to a swimming hole, you would want to know if he/she can swim or not. That is, if you plan to swim, be sure to ask if members can swim!

When possible, use questions that are already in the database. When making a new question, phrase it as suggested on the website so that the same question is not phrased various ways in our database of questions.

Required Questions

IMPORTANT: We require that ALL trips ask what medical conditions a person has. And we do ask that you keep this information confidential (and relay it to emergency responders if needed.)

If **any** meals are to be shared, then you must ask if attendees have any dietary restrictions.

For any Proficiency Dependent Trips, **you must also ask a question addressing attendee's experience, proficiency, and/or ability (skills) in that activity.** This definitely applies to beginner trips for these activities! We recommend you ask this question even for trips that we have not deemed "proficiency dependent".

Recommended Questions

Some questions that are independent of the type of adventure that you should consider are:

- How many people can you fit in your car?
- Please enter any comments here

Other questions will depend on the type of adventure you are leading. In general, if members will need to get gear, you should ask what gear they need. The exception would be if you very explicitly give them directions to obtain gear at gear rooms (you should include gear room dates and times for their convenience).

Joining

Once you are done with questions, you must join the adventure yourself before the adventure is saved on our website. Once you have joined your adventure, and if this is your first adventure you have set up, you **MUST** email the officers so that they may review the adventure.

Trip Number

When you have joined the trip, note the URL. The last four digits in the URL gives you your trip number. Note this number on your below!



Activating

Again, if you have just set up your first trip, you must email the officers before activating the trip! **Do NOT email just one officer, email the entire list at: outdoors-officers@virginia.edu.**

Upon officer approval, you may activate the trip. Until this is done, no one else can join the trip.

Announcing

All trips must be announced upon activation. Failure to do so will lead in your leadership privileges being revoked.

You may also re-announce your trip if you update your description. If your trip has undergone significant logistical changes, we strongly encourage you to re-announce the adventure.

Alternative Methods to Announcing

The announcing script that has so long served our club well has caused issues with our host server(s). The process of rectifying this has been protracted. In the interim, we have adopted a listserv, outdoors@outdoorsatuva.org, which can and should (must) be used to announce trips while the normal script is being fixed. Note that these emails are moderated. When sending an email, please copy and paste the description, along with the URL to read and/or join the trip. You can also add other relevant text (but likely if you are adding it in the email, then you should add it to the description).

Regardless of the email script, you are also highly encouraged to announce the trip on our Facebook Outdoors@UVa Members group page.

Expenses

Most trips will have some expense associated with it. However, not all expenses are reimbursed. It is your responsibility to know what will be reimbursed and what will have to be a shared expense. If in doubt, email the officers.

If there are shared expenses that are not covered by the club, it is the leader's responsibility to distribute expenses and collect debts.

Participation fees

Participation fees cover expenses that the club does not. Some examples of participation fees:

- Gym expenses
- Ski resort lift tickets / season pass
- Food, gas, and lodging costs above what the club reimburses

Some participation fees, like gym fees, lift tickets, and season passes, can be paid individually by attendees to the provider (of a good or service).



Other fees may need to be paid in advance or in aggregate (e.g. lodging reservations). For these, you will need to bear the cost and collect the fees from attendees. If this is the case, let us consider the participation fees to be debts that the attendees owe you.

If you anticipate that food or gas costs will exceed our reimbursable rate, you must communicate that participants will have to split the unreimbursed expenses. (You may choose to do this by car or as a whole group, but be clear as to how you expect expenses to be split).

It is not permissible for leaders to intentionally benefit from fees. That is, if we understand that the leader is pocketing any money from participation fees, this will result in immediate dismissal from the club.

Best Practices

The best way to keep track of debts is to print off the attendee report (you should be doing this regardless of participation fees), make a column for the amount due, and check off attendees when the debt is paid. You should also remind attendees that the debts are due at the start of the trip (you can specify the method; i.e. cash or check). It is permissible to deny attendance to any attendee who has not paid their debt at the time of departure; however, this may spread that debt across the remaining attendees, in the instance of prepaid lodging.

A common difficulty is balance when you make the reservation with the sign-up (and withdrawal) deadline, where the reservation cancellation policy is also pertinent. You may wish to explicitly state that attendees will be responsible for debts past the sign-up deadline, even if they do not show up (and don't stay at the lodging). However, if you do not *explicitly* state this, it will be assumed that the remaining debt will be split among the remaining participants.

Resolving Disputes

We typically get one or two complaints per year of an attendee failing to pay their debt. If the debt is not paid by the end of the trip, you lose your leverage to make them pay. The officers are NOT responsible for making attendees pay their debts; the typical recourse we impose is the restriction of that member from joining further adventures. However, we will hear each party's testimony before a verdict is reached.

In summary: make sure the adventure fees are crystal clear, remind your attendees, and keep good records of payment.

Reimbursement

Generally most expenses will be covered by the club. The club has caps on what it reimburses, and will pay the lesser of the cap and the amount spent. However, there are several conditions for eligibility of reimbursement. Additionally, it is important to know the reimbursement rates (and policies)



are often different over summer and winter below. Reimbursement is dependent on the *actual* attendance, not just who is signed up online.

Any trip with expected costs exceeding \$300 must have officer approval before the trip is posted! Any expenses over \$300 are NOT guaranteed to be covered! Send an email with your expected expenses and the officers will look at what the club's budget can bear.

Reimbursement forms

Before you meet an officer to get reimbursed, be sure you have a printed out and completed a reimbursement form with trip above, driver signatures, trip leader signature, and receipts stapled to the form. YOU NO LONGER NEED TO FILL OUT AN ONLINE EXPENSE REPORT. If **ANY** of the elements on the form are absent, then you will not be reimbursed. To make reimbursement simpler, we encourage you to show calculations on the back if you are seeking food and lodging reimbursement. Make sure you keep receipts for all (reimbursable) expenses! The trip number is the last 4 digits (characters) on your trip's URL.

As of fall 2014, Student Council requires signatures on *their own* form. This means that in addition to filling out our form, you must also sign their form, which is kept in the gear room. Strictly speaking, this is only a concern if Student Council is actually reimbursing us. For fall 2014 and spring 2015, Student Council is not reimbursing gas costs for trips less than 100 miles round trip. Rather, these costs are absorbed by the club. **Bottom line:** if the officer asks you to sign Student Council's form, please do so!

Eligibility for reimbursement

To be eligible for any reimbursement, day trips (at a minimum) must:

- Have a minimum of three attendees, one of whom must be a student at UVa.
- Have been announced the trip at least 24 hours in advance of the departure time.
- Have a destination at least 15 miles outside of Charlottesville.

To be clear, a trip may be posted that does not adhere to these guidelines, but you should note (in the trip description) that expenses will not be reimbursed, and would be shared. Generally we suggest you simply email the club of your outing and make it an unofficial trip.

Overnight and multi-night trips have further requirements:

- A one night trip must be announced at least 48 hours before the trip departure time.
- A two or three night trip must be announced at least 72 hours before the trip departure time.
- Any trip four nights or longer (e.g. spring break trip) must be posted a week before the departure time.



- If a trip requires airplane tickets (not reimbursable) or other ticketed transportation, the trip must be announced at least two weeks before the departure time.

These are absolute minimum lead times, upon which we believe club members can react to announced trips and decide to attend or not. However, we strongly encourage posting far in advance, allowing others plenty of time to decide on adventures to pursue.

Some types of trips (in particular - destinations) have a maximum allowed number per week. Any trips beyond this maximum are not eligible for reimbursement (expenses must be shared among attendees).

Submitting your reimbursement

All reimbursements are due to officers within 30 days of your departure date. Failure to submit reimbursement within this timeframe will result in a loss of your ability to seek reimbursement from the club.

Be sure you have filled out a printed reimbursement form. Again, NO ONLINE FORM IS REQUIRED. You should have signatures on the reimbursement form and receipts attached (stapled) on the form when you submit to the officers. Finally, please calculate the amount reimbursable by the club, given our policies, on the reimbursement form.

Gas

Our general gas policy, during spring and fall semesters, is that each vehicle is reimbursable up to \$150! We also allow a 30% tip, which is capped at \$10 (per car). In addition to the above requirements, a car is eligible for reimbursement **only if it has at least three passengers**, or it can be shown that it was absolutely mandatory (to haul gear). If it is readily apparent to the officers that a car was not necessary, we will deny reimbursement for that car. For instance, a third car leaving at an earlier or later time than the posted departure for convenience, when two cars would suffice, would not be reimbursed even if all three cars had three persons per car.

The club only reimburses gas used on the trip. Thus, drivers must fill up their gas tanks before departure (their expense), and each car should be filled upon return to Charlottesville. You will want to coordinate so that drivers all meet at one gas station in Charlottesville so that they may sign a printed reimbursement form, and you can collect all receipts. Again, if it is readily apparent that a car was not filled up before the trip, the officers will deny reimbursement for that car.

Gas is one of our biggest expenses, and that's fine, we want people to get outside! The flip side is that money is limited, so we like to see efficiency (fuel efficiency plus maximizing car loads) as well as honesty (pay for your own gas, and we'll cover what we can for the trip).



During the summer and winter breaks we reserve the right to modify this policy. (See below)

Lodging

We split lodging options into (1) indoor lodging and (2) outdoor lodging. You can always email the officers to be sure. Where you lodge also determines your food reimbursement rate. We define the types of lodging below, as best as we can a priori. If you are in doubt, either ask an officer or assume that it qualifies as indoor.

Indoor Lodging

If your lodging structure has (at least) four walls and requires no setup, assume it qualifies as indoor lodging. If the space in which you sleep has any one of these utilities: electricity, heating, or plumbing, then this absolutely counts as indoor lodging. Thus, hotels, motels, and cabins (even PATC cabins) are indoor lodging.

The rate during fall and spring semesters for indoor lodging is capped at **\$5 per person per night** (that the person is actually present).

Outdoor Lodging

If your lodging option does not qualify as indoor lodging, then it probably qualifies as outdoor lodging. Tent, hammock, or sleeping under the stars at a campground will qualify as outdoor lodging. Lean-to shelters count as outdoor lodging.

The rate during fall and spring semesters for outdoor lodging is capped at **\$10 per person per night** (that the person is actually present).

Food

Only service trips are eligible for food reimbursement - **up to \$5 per person per day**. This is intended to allow volunteers (attendees) to have a snack or lunch, and to help promote service trips. Furthermore, this only applies during fall and spring semesters.

Reimbursement over Breaks

Spring 2015 (semester) reimbursement dates are from January 18, 2015 through April 28, 2015. For summer 2015 (starting April 29, 2015), the club has not established a reimbursement policy yet.

The previous summer, the club reimbursed only gas expenses, up to \$100 per car, without tips for drivers. The same eligibility requirements are in effect. To be clear: no food, lodging, or tips are reimbursed.



Other reimbursements

Pre-approved expenses

Although these are not reimbursed by Student Council, we still require your receipt for any of these expenses!

Most day group (i.e. per car) passes can be reimbursed. For instance, a daily (car) pass to any national park, state park, or recreation area is reimbursable. (Some are covered by your camping fees! No need to pay twice!)

The following expenses can be reimbursed AFTER you meet the associated requirements:

- Shenandoah National Park passes (\$30), on the grounds that you have **attended** 4 trips to the park (SNP) **where the pass is required** within a year (and after having purchased the pass).
- America the Beautiful passes, which cost \$80, will be reimbursed at the **same** rate as Shenandoah National Park passes (\$30) only after you have **led** 4 trips to any National park **where the pass is required** within a year (and after having purchased the pass).
- [Wilderness First Aid](#) training, on the grounds that you have **led** 6 trips within a year **after** training completion, where you are beyond the golden hour.
- Membership dues, on the grounds that you have **led** 4 trips with a year AND one of those is a Beginner Trips.

Renewing Membership

If you've led 4 trips and would like to simply renew your membership instead of having dues reimbursed, then YOU still need to go online and go through the typical renewal process. The ONLY thing different is that you do not need to pay for it. (Please email the officers that you have done so, and that you have led 4 trips. We will confirm that you have led 4 trips, and then activate you. If you do not email us, we may have forgotten that you led 4 trips and we are expecting payment.)

Expenses requiring approval

Although uncommon, the club will sometimes be able to reimburse for expenses outside of those listed above. These reimbursements must be approved by the officers on an individual basis, and we offer no guarantee that similar expenses would be reimbursed in the future.

That said, we have, on occasion, reimbursed for gear rentals when our own gear inventory was insufficient. This does NOT include ski rentals!



Gear

The gear that our club has is a tremendous asset and benefit to our members. While members can check out gear for personal use, we give preference to club trips as they are the core of our club. Beyond what is listed here, be sure to check the [gear policy](#) online.

Requesting Gear

In order to effectually give trips preference, you will have to request the gear you need (email the officers) well in advance of a gear room. This will enable us to request gear be returned if need be, as well as give you preference when you visit the gear room. This is especially crucial for fall and spring break trips when the demand for gear is high and people start checking gear out early.

It should also be noted that we generally prefer that you visit a regularly scheduled gear room. If you have a large gear request, we can work with you to find another time as it may help you, as well as expedite regular gear room for others.

Checking Gear out

First, make sure it is clear whether you will check out gear, or whether attendees will check out gear. As a trip leader, all the trip gear can be checked out to you, or we can check some gear to individual members. Either way, we don't want you to check gear out and find out that a member has already checked out gear for him/herself.

The best way to avoid this is to clearly communicate in the above and in emails to attendees how gear will be checked out. Independent of to whom we check out the gear, it is best if attendees can attend the same gear room so that you have all the hands you need to carry gear to cars. This also tends to mean that only necessary gear gets checked out (no duplicates).

For small to medium-sized trips / gear requests, it is often simplest if the trip leader checks out all the necessary gear. This also eliminates the chance for people to swap gear that had been personally checked out (e.g. we see members, on occasion, return headlamps with a different number than they checked out)

Fuel and Stoves

Fuel and Stoves are not stored in the gear room as these are a violation of fire code. As you should already be contacting the officers in advance of a gear room, you should be able to find a time and place to meet with the officer responsible for the fuel and stoves.

Watersports

All of our watersport (boating) gear is also stored elsewhere. If given enough advance knowledge, the officer responsible for storing this gear may



be able to bring necessary gear in to Charlottesville. However, if this is not the case, you will need to make the trip yourself to obtain the gear.

Gear Maintenance

The downside of having gear checked out to you is that you will be held responsible for maintaining the quality of that gear. If damage occurs to gear, it is your responsibility to note the offending party and report it to us. The offending party will be responsible for paying for repair or replacement of any damaged gear when the damage is above normal wear and tear. We still want to know of the damage, but the club will be responsible for repairing or replacing gear that has lived a full life.

A critical part of gear maintenance actually happens after the trip. All articles must be clean and dry before return to the gear room. For most things, this simply means shaking off excess dirt, and letting gear dry out (especially tents and sleeping bags). For caving equipment, the cleaning requirements are more stringent (see our [caving checklist](#) and links therein). It may be hard to remove grease from stoves while on the trip, but before you return them, give them a good clean with household dish soap.

Returning Gear

When all your gear is clean and dry, you should return the gear at the next available gear room (or request a gear room if need be). Returning gear sooner rather than later gives other members the ability to check out gear as well as decreasing the likelihood that gear is lost (remember: whoever we check gear out to online is responsible for that gear).

Again, fuel and stoves are not stored in the gear room! Be sure to email the officers to return this gear to the appropriate person. Also, please work with the appropriate officer to return any watersports gear if you checked that out as well.

Before you meet

Check in With Attendees

Avoid Absences

Absences are in general rare. However, they occur, and they can be frustrating, raise shared costs, and potentially lead to less enjoyment. To avoid these consequences, and the frustration you may well feel from absence(s), you should email all joined attendees far enough in advance (24 hours or more, depending on the trip) so that members can re-check their schedules and, if necessary, you can add members from the waitlist. We have currently added to our "website wishlist" an email script that would email members so many hours (~6?) before the signup deadline to remind them that they are signed up for the trip in the hopes that this will reduce the number of absences. However, until then, we suggest that you email the attendees to remind them about the upcoming trip.



In your email to the attendees, make sure all attendees know the final plan. For instance, if some logistics were dependent on responses to adventure questions, then be sure you have contact all attendees with updated plans.

We **strongly** encourage you to be in close contact with your drivers. It is standard practice to email your drivers separately, reminding them to fill their tanks before meeting, going over route information, and any other question they may have.

Things to Print

One of the simplest and yet critical parts of a trip is having the list of attendees (with phone numbers) printed. Additionally, printed directions are more reliable than cell phone service. Make sure you have copies of directions for all drivers. And of course, you will want to have printed a reimbursement form **BEFORE** you go on the trip so that you can get signatures from your drivers upon your return to Charlottesville.

Note that trips to Peak Experiences Climbing Gym now REQUIRE a printed attendance sheet to receive the \$10 group rate. Otherwise it's \$12 on college night, or \$16 for individuals.

Must you print items?

We know many students do not have their own printers, and printing can be a hassle. It is possible to go without printing anything, **BUT** you still must be prepared for your trip!

Your absolute requirement is that you have provided drivers with directions, your contact information, that you are aware of who should be attending, and who is absent, and finally, you will want a reimbursement sheet so that you can be reimbursed! The club will try to have reimbursement sheets available in the gear room - get these **BEFORE** you go on your trip! If the club has run out of these, you will have to print your own.

Trips to Peak

Peak Experiences Climbing Gym now has stricter rules on how to get \$10 group rate. In addition to bringing a printed attendance sheet, one of the officers must email Peak the evening **BEFORE** we arrive with a list of attendees. Thus, if you should be sure to email the officers (email the whole officer list-serv unless told to email an individual officer) asking kindly for one of us to email Peak.

While You're Out

Unexpected Events

An extra person

We have had a few trips where an extra attendee has been brought along. The first thing to note is that as the trip leader, you have the right to deny



access to the trip to that person. If logistics allow, AND the extra attendee is a club member (of course), then you may permit the attendee to join the trip. This is clearly not the preferred method, especially if there is a waitlist.

General Guidelines

It's hard to predict what is going to happen. Many of these guidelines also apply to the safety of the trip. First, communication is the centerpiece of safety. Inform attendees (especially drivers) of the plan for the day, giving as many details as you can. For instance, bringing supplies such as maps (on a hiking trip) for multiple attendees is a good idea. Another easy, but incredibly useful tip is to have a default meeting location and time. Set this as soon as you can; this avoids complications should cell phone reception be limited. That said, exchanging cell phone numbers is a good idea.

Safety

Safety is our number one priority, and it should be yours too. Simply put, it's hard if not impossible to have fun when injured. Preventing hazardous situations is crucial. Do your research on your destination (print maps, bring a guide book, etc.), prepare for the unexpected (e.g. bring headlamps and a first aid kit), and maintain awareness on your surrounding (weather, whereabouts of attendees, etc.).

We encourage leaders to take some kind of first aid course. This is certainly not a requirement to lead trips, but should you be looking to do many trips into the backcountry, you may consider taking a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) course. As an incentive, the club will reimburse up to 100% (max ofr \$200) of the course cost if you lead 6 trips that take you outside of the golden hour. See our [WFA](#) page for details.

Safety on the Road

This is easily overlooked, but is critical! Dangers can come from poor driving as well as poor road conditions. We do NOT condone aggressive driving. Furthermore, if ANYONE feels uncomfortable with a someone's driving, that attendee should:

1. Confront the driver: tell the driver he/she is uncomfortable, and ask the driver to change how he/she is driving (e.g. slow down).
2. Report to you (the trip leader) and the officers the incident.

On our end, if we are made aware of someone whose driving is reckless or consistently makes passengers uncomfortable, we will ask not to drive on any trips.

If the road conditions are poor, do what you determine to be the safest option (whether that is returning home, or staying put). Be sure you are able to communicate this with any other drivers (i.e. have their phone numbers with you, and tell drivers to keep their phones on!)



Take Pictures

If you have a camera, take pictures! Be sure to get pictures of both people and scenery! If you have a video camera, feel free to take video as well.

Promote leading trips

We don't want you to be evangelical about promoting the club, but the club does rely on members to lead trips. The best way to get members leading trips is to have current leaders explain how to lead trips and get people excited about leading their own trips.

Expenses

While you are not obligated to bear the expenses of the trip, it often simplifies the reimbursement process for you, as it does for us. To this end, if you are able to cover gas costs for each driver (don't forget to tip them at the end of the trip!), then we can cut you one check at the end.

However, sometimes cars need to fill up for gas at different times, and it is not feasible for you to be present to cover all costs (that are reimbursable). For whatever reason, if there are reimbursable costs that others incur, be sure that they come with you (with receipts) when seeking reimbursements.

When You've Returned

Accidents

If any accident occurred while you were out, send an email to the officers with a synopsis and assessment of the accident. It is critical to note all parties involved, and obtain contact information (especially if any are external to the club). See past [accident reports](#) for the kind of information we want.

Attendance

For every trip that goes out, the website allows you to mark members as having attended or been absent. Absences are often frustrating. They can cause a trip to no longer be reimbursable, they can alter logistics, and they can be a wasted opportunity for a waitlisted person. **For these reasons, do make note of absences, especially if they cause any of the above.**

Furthermore, if a member **withdraws past the deadline** (they would have to contact you, the trip leader), **please mark them as absent**. That said, you may choose the severity of the absence, and the appropriate action of the website to take (it can send an email if you so desire). If you have not already spoken to the member about late withdraws, you may want to send the email.

We want to be sure the members know that joining a trip is a commitment, and that there may often be others on the waitlist. Lastly, attendance can be



used by future leaders to assess if members are likely to commit to the trip or not.

Submitting Reimbursement

Recall all reimbursement policies (page 15). You must submit the reimbursement form within 30 days of the trip departure.

Send pictures to the officers

For pictures, we prefer that you send them to outdoorsuva@gmail.com. Be mindful of limitations on file sizes over email. If your pictures require a lot of disk space, you can email outdoors-officers@virginia.edu to arrange to transfer the files in person.

We will post pictures to a flickr account as well as to facebook.

Officer Preferences

Club Mission, Revisited

An implicit part of our mission that is worth making explicit is that we want to maximize our impact. Foremost, the more trips we have, the greater impact we expect to have, but it also comes down to number of attendees and cost per trip (after all, our budget is finite, and so we want to get many people outside while minimize costs, namely travel costs). (This is the primary reason for requiring review for trips above \$300.)

To this end, we love to see hiking (and backpacking) trips to Shenandoah National Park or along the Blue Ridge Parkway. We can get many students outside for not that much! Walnut Creek, Preddy Creek, or even around O-hill are excellent destinations for mountain biking.

Service Trips

Recently we have not had many service trips, but this is about to change. The officers are excited to see this development. Understanding what it takes to conserve the outdoors is necessary if we want it to be around for us years down the road. Service is just one aspect and probably more fun for our members. That said, policy is important, and something we may look to address in the future.

Policies Not Yet Covered

Believe it or not, this manual is not exhaustive. Although it's been said before, if you find a circumstance not (clearly) covered in this manual, [email us!](#)

Privacy

As a leader, you get to ask questions, such as medical conditions, and you can see attendees' birthdays. Be aware that a breach of confidentiality can



result in a loss of leadership privileges. This information is intended for emergency use, and in the case of minors (those under 18) you may notify the member if he/she is eligible to attend. By default, all members should have equal access to trips! However, some destinations – such as climbing gyms – also require a parent signature for minors, and thus a minor who cannot contact his/her parents would not be able to climb on such a trip.

Changing your trip

We prefer as few changes to your trip as possible once it has been announced. That said, we know changes will happen. As long as you adhere to the above policies, and keep the trip as accessible as possible, you are likely in the clear. However, if we feel that you have changed your trip so as to exclude participants (intentionally or not), or in some manner that the changes are not in the club's interest, the officers may revoke your leadership privileges.

Changes made significantly before the signup deadline and while relatively few attendees have joined are generally admissible, and vice-versa.

Changing Leaders

Any change of trip leaders **MUST** be officers approved. In general, we discourage the change of leaders. However, if the trip would be cancelled except for a change of leaders, then the officers are more likely to approve of the change.

For a change of leaders, you must have a willing replacement leader in mind. This leader must **ALREADY** be approved to lead that type of adventure (this is important especially for climbing and kayaking trips, for instance.) If we feel the change of leaders is not acceptable, then the trip should be cancelled.

Cancelling a trip

In general, we discourage the canceling of a trip. However, we understand circumstances may favor cancelling a trip. The acceptability of cancelling a trip depends largely on whether the circumstances are particular to you (the leader) or are external (e.g. not enough interest / poor weather). We frown on cancelling trips for the former circumstance, while we are more accepting in the latter circumstance.

If you **MUST** cancel trip, please follow these steps:

1. Notify attendees (joined and waitlisted) **AND** the officers that you intend to cancel the trip (include the reason for cancelling).
2. Edit the trip description with the first line clearly stating, in caps, that the trip has been cancelled.
3. Edit the signup deadline to a time that has already passed.



Before you cancel (trying to save the trip)

Not enough attendees

You can also send an email out to the club seeking more attendees (or perhaps more drivers), and you may wish to make your trip description more enticing and re-announce your trip. If the above fails, you may look to modify the adventure itself so that it is feasible with the attendees you have.

Inclement weather / external circumstances

If there are external circumstances that prohibit the trip from going out (or being safe), there is not much that can be done. If you have an alternative destination with a better forecast, you may wish to

You are no longer able to lead

If you are no longer able to lead, the two options are to (1) cancel the trip, or (2) find a replacement leader. If possible, (2) is usually preferable. Refer to the section on change of leaders

Changing adventure details (online)

If you choose to change any of the other adventure details before the signup deadline, we strongly encourage you to re-announce the trip. Significant changes to a trip (e.g. change of destination) without re-announcing it may be seen as exclusionary. Similarly, advancing the signup deadline or reducing number of attendees can be seen as exclusionary. To be clear, these changes do not require officer approval, but be careful so as to not come into officer disapproval.

Change of plans (post signup deadline)

Sometimes plans change because of weather, number of attendees, etc. Just be sure whatever changes occur are necessary and reasonable. Unnecessary and unreasonable changes can result in privileges being revoked!

Whatever changes occur, try to accommodate as many attendees as possible. Note that reimbursements are dependent on the number of attendees that actually go on the trip (not just who is signed up, and perhaps don't show or aren't able to adjust to your changes)

Previously Absent Attendees

When you view the report for your adventure, you can see how many trips each attendee has (a) been absent for, and (b) been on the waitlist. Generally trips should join attendees on a first-come, first-served basis; however, it may be permissible to (a) rank members with absences lower in priority to join, and (b) rank members with multiple waitlists higher in priority. This should ONLY be done with officer oversight (i.e. requires approval, and



officers will look over the trip report and let you know what is permissible).

Applying to be an officer

Before you apply to be an officer, we want to see that you have led at least 3 trips. Being an officer is a great way to ensure current and future members can make the most out of our club.

Coordinating with another organization

Any trip coordination with another organization **MUST** be approved by the officers. In general we do not allow this for liability reasons (only club members can go on trips!). Furthermore, we feel that membership is relatively inexpensive compared to the benefits members enjoy.

That said, in-town events, that incur not cost to the club may be approved by officers. For instance, going to a film festival, and coordinating with that film festival's organizers.

Guided Trips

This refers to paying for a **certified** guiding service for a trip. As long as the trip still falls within the realm of being outdoorsy, this is likely fine. While guided trips do not strictly require prior approval, it is safer to email the officers first!

Expenses for guiding services are not covered by the club, and thus would fall under fees for members.

Self-Guided Trips

Members (i.e. leaders) are not allowed to charge guide fees for a club trip. This falls under leaders benefitting from participation fees, and will result in immediate dismissal from the club.

Favoritism for guides

As with stores, Outdoors at UVa strives not to unduly favor one company (i.e. store or guiding service) over another. Where safety is concerned, the club does have an interest in disfavoring (avoiding) unsafe guides. Furthermore, the quality of experience matters to us and our members. If we know a guiding service has provided poor guiding, it is fair to avoid that service (please let the officers know, so we can expand our database for future trips). Similarly, positive experiences are worth noting, and we can have that on hand for future trips.

Conflict of interest

If the guide is a friend of the trip leader (and a non-club member), there enters a conflict of interest: is the trip being led to benefit the guide, or to benefit the members? Avoiding this situation is preferable; however, a



final verdict on this matter has not been reached. Contact the officers before embarking on such a trip!

Pets (dogs)

Outdoors at UVa permits dogs to go on trips provided that:

1. The trip destination permits dogs
2. Trip attendees do not object to dogs being brought.
 - a. You **MUST** have a question on your trip about this if you intend to bring a dog!
 - b. If a trip attendee wants to bring a dog, we would like you to do your best to accommodate that attendee. Thus, you should email all other members and find if there are any objections.
(Certainly, you may object yourself as well).

Other pets are likely permissible, but it escapes the officers what other pets might be brought on a trip. Therefore, email the officers before attempting to bring a pet other than a dog along.