

OUTDOORS AT UVA

Leader's Manual



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Leader's Manual

outdoors at uVa

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The Club and Its Mission

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.

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. 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 them 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.

Leadership Privileges & Responsibilities

Leadership privileges

As a trip leader, you have the privilege to use our website as a means to organize your own trips and post them for other people to join! This privilege comes with responsibilities too, as outlined below.

Leadership responsibilities

Below are some of the basic responsibilities of being a trip leader for easy reference. Each of these bullet points is discussed in greater detail in other subsequent sections of the trip leader manual.

Being familiar with the trip leader manual

Regardless of whether you are a current leader or looking to start leading trips, we require that all leaders be familiar with this manual. This manual is not set in stone, and will be updated periodically by the officers 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.

Safety

We expect trip leaders to be generally aware of any dangerous situations that could arise on their trip and be prepared to deal with them. Some general safety guidelines are given below.

- **Physical safety:** it is a good idea for longer day/overnight trips and remote trips to bring a first aid kit, which can be checked out at the gear room. It is also always a good idea to encourage trip attendees to bring plenty of water, layers, and snacks. A lot of bad situations can be prevented/treated with these three things! Lastly, it is important to research the location of your trip beforehand and be familiar with the map and any unique hazards such as wildlife (maybe even bring a printed out version of the map!)
- **Harassment/discrimination:** We expect trip leaders to be welcoming and accepting to all their trip attendees, and create a comfortable environment to be in. If you notice someone making someone else feel uncomfortable/unsafe, consider talking to the person who feels unsafe and remind them of the clubs reporting policies/resources.
- **Driving:** Ask drivers to slow down, not look at their phone, etc, if needed.

Of course things go wrong unexpectedly sometimes, and we are not expecting you to be able to anticipate/fix everything. We just ask that trip leaders have a general awareness of potential dangers and be prepared to address them if needed.

Responsible gear use

All club members are expected to use gear responsibly and be considerate of the fact gear is a very valuable resource that is shared by hundreds of people in the club. We expect trip leaders to be responsible for any shared group gear on a trip, and set a positive example for their trip attendees for how gear should be treated.

Communication

We expect trip leaders to ensure that all their trip attendees are informed about the trip details (meeting time, place, etc) and promptly communicate any changes. Leaders should also remind attendees of any gear that they need to bring for the trip.

A positive attitude and excitement for the club!

The basis of outdoors club trips is to give people opportunities to enjoy time outside and meet like minded individuals. No matter the trip, we expect trip leaders to be welcoming and friendly towards their participants, and do their best to create a positive atmosphere.



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.

All Trip Leaders must act in line with the [Outdoors Club Code of Conduct](#), Harassment & Discrimination Policy, and the Sexual Misconduct Policy. The consequences for violating any of these policies could result in revoking your trip leader status, if not your club member status entirely.

Semantics: leaders vs. organizers

While we value and encourage the leadership and expertise our trip leaders provide club trips, it should be clear to members that our club is NOT a guide service. If anyone external to the club asks about your role in a trip, saying that you are a "leader" may be misconstrued to mean that you are a guide. Be clear that your primary role is as an organizer, having organized a trip within a club, and that you are not a guide / guide service.

However, as a trip leader you are responsible for the safety of your trip attendees. While you are not legally bound to this position or the club, you are bound by the bylaws of the club and can be removed or face consequences if found negligent.

Requesting privileges

If you are not a leader yet, simply contact [the officers](#). For most activities, approval of your leadership privileges relies on your knowledge of our policies.

Setting up the trip online

Once you have leadership privileges, you may navigate to the [add adventure](#) page from the hamburger menu in the upper right of the website.

Appropriate Trips

A (non-exhaustive) list of appropriate trips is available below. 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! No more than two trips can go to any particular destination within one week.

Outdoorsy

- Backpacking, rafting, rock climbing, hiking
- Outdoors movie nights
- Workshops
- Stargazing
- Nature watching/ID (birding)
- Hammocking
- Foraging

Not so Outdoorsy

- Kings Dominion/Busch Gardens
- Hunting
- Parties as trips
- Indoor yoga
- Baking cookies



Beginner Trips

We love to see beginner trips! We also use "beginner" in a broad sense. We define a **beginner trip** as a trip that is either an introduction to a sport that those without experience can participate in, or is considered accessible to any member regardless of physical ability. Examples include:

- An easy hike (less than 5 miles)
- A slow-paced birdwatching walk
- Foraging or outdoor cooking
- Natural crafts or doing art outside
- Service/community-oriented trips such as trail building, community building, sustainability collaboration, etc.

Extreme sports

Certain activities, such as climbing, whitewater sports, mountain biking, 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 and respective sport advisor knowing that your skillset will keep all attendees safe. 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.

Our current sport advisers can be found on the bottom of the [resources](#) page on the website and the weekly gear room emails.

A comprehensive outline of skill definitions for sports can be found [here](#).

If you are unsure of your ability to lead a type of adventure, especially one within the "extreme sports" category (climbing, whitewater sports, mountain biking, and caving) email [the officers](#) and the appropriate sport advisor. To lead a trip within these "extreme sports" you must be approved by the respective sport advisor.

Affinity Trips

Affinity trips are trips specifically for a group that is marginalized in the outdoors, or outdoors club (ex. women, the LGBTQ+ community, BIPOC, people with disabilities, etc). This can be any type of trip that you would post as a regular outdoors club trip, such as hiking, camping, mountain biking, paddling, nature-watching, etc. Each affinity trip, like service trips, counts as 2 trips—which means if you lead two affinity trips, or one affinity trip and two regular trips, you can get your dues reimbursed.

Guidelines for posting affinity trips:

1. You must identify with the group that you are creating the affinity trip for.
2. Language explaining the purpose of the trip should be both descriptive and inclusive. Additionally, the group the trip is targeted towards should be made clear in the title.



- a. "This trip is meant to create a comfortable and welcoming space for queer members of the outdoors club. Please only sign up if you identify as queer" is more inclusive than "Do not sign up for this trip if you are cishet."
 - b. Less common acronyms should be spelled out so it is clear who the trip is targeted towards (ex. "WTF" stands for Women/Trans/Femme, and is meant to center less historically represented identities in the outdoors, specifically women and gender-expansive presentation).
3. Trips targeted towards identities that are less visible, such as the LGBTQ+ community, MUST have a note that one can contact the trip leader directly to sign up. This is to ensure that club members can join the trip without their name being publicly displayed on the website in the case that they are uncomfortable with other club members seeing that information.
- a. Example: "Signing up for this trip through the website means that other club members can see that you are on this trip/trip waitlist. If you want to sign up but are uncomfortable with this, please send me a text instead!"

If you have any questions regarding posting an affinity trip, please don't hesitate to reach out to the DEI Chair. We understand that it can be difficult or confusing to navigate the best wording. Come to DEI Committee meetings and/or email the officers if you're interested in getting more involved with these kinds of trips and/or want support to make them happen.

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, if applicable and relevant under [Leave No Trace \(LNT\)](#) standards.
2. The total expense of a trip (esp. expense to the club). See the [reimbursement policy](#).

We want to be mindful of our impact on our lands. If the officers notice trips occurring at a specific location in quantities exceeding the guidelines set by LNT, we will reach out to you (the trip leader) to find a better time for your trip. Officers reserve the right to deny pending trips that would violate LNT principles via overcrowding.

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 (the corner of Echols Dormitory is a common central meeting spot). 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 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 potential attendees all the logistics you know. 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 adventure descriptions, and see which one makes you want to go on that adventure. That's 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.

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. Don't assume your attendees have the same knowledge you do!

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 [hikingupward](#), 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, a student day pass is \$18. 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 the number blank or write in "money for a meal".

For ski trips, add the cost of a lift ticket or pass to the fee section. Additionally, 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 for the number of attendees. Put your best guess for what the shared expenses will be, and note in your description that 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 you to do this 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 a misuse of club resources.

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 limits:

- Wildlife Management areas: 12 (apply for Special Use Permit above this size)
- Wilderness Areas: 10

Waitlists

All trip signups will automatically join a waitlist. It is your responsibility to let people off the waitlist as you have room on your trip (car space, gear, max. trip size). Attendees should generally be added to the trip **in the order they signed up**, with a few exceptions of priorities for members who:

- Are drivers
- Have skills needed for the trip (ex. people who can lead climb or belay)
- Ease gear restrictions either with their own gear, or fit the gear sizes we have (bikes, climbing shoes)
- Have expressed interest in becoming a future trip leader for the sport being led

Trip leaders can also avoid letting on members who have a history of dropping trips at the last minute, being absent, or have shown to be unreliable or unprepared on past trips (this is especially important for caving).

Another exception includes times when the trip leader and/or someone who signed up for the trip feels that a member's participation in the trip would create an uncomfortable or unwelcoming atmosphere. One of the roles of a trip leader is to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for trips. This **does not** justify excluding people that you do not like or aren't your friends. These issues are maintained by the DEI Chair. Reach out to the DEI Chair directly if you have any questions or concerns about a request from a club member that would affect the admittance order.

Trips which explicitly state that they are "waitlist relief" in their description function to prioritize members who haven't gotten off of other waitlists. These are encouraged.



If you expect any of these exceptions to the first-come-first-serve waitlist admittance, please note it in your trip description to maintain transparency.

Questions

The questions are your chance to collect information necessary to organize the logistics of your trip, such as who can drive and how many people can fit in their car.

Even if there is no minimum requirement for a trip, it is sometimes best practice to have questions about a member's experience. For example, if you are leading a trip that involves swimming, you should check to make sure everyone can swim and feels comfortable doing so outside.

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

Activating

All trips must be approved by an officer, we will be notified of trips pending approval as they are created. Be sure to check the "send for approval" button when creating the adventure and anytime you make an edit. If you need the trip approved quickly, send [the officers](#) an email.

Expenses

Most trips will have some expense(s) associated with them. However, not all expenses are reimbursed. It is your responsibility to know what will be reimbursed and what will have to be paid on your own or shared by the group. If in doubt, email the officers.

Examples of expenses that are reimbursable (See the reimbursements section below for more details)

- Gas: Up to \$150 per car + 50% tip (capped at \$20)
- Lodging: \$5 per person per night for indoor lodging, \$10 per person per night for outdoor lodging
- Food (service trips only): \$7 per person per day

Expenses that are not reimbursed by the club are labeled as "participation fees" and discussed in the section below.

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).

Best Practices

When there are extra fees for a trip, it is best to handle these fees directly between participants and attendees. It is often easiest to ask attendees to Venmo the agreed upon amount to the tripleader responsible for the participation fee, food, etc. Tripleaders should remind attendees of fees before or at the start of the trip. It is permissible to deny attendance to any attendee who has not paid their fee at the time of departure.

A common issue is if the reservation has a cancellation fee/deadline and an attendee withdraws from the trip after that time. If a tripleader does not explicitly state that attendees will be responsible for fees past the sign-up deadline, even if they do not attend the trip, that attendee is not fiscally responsible. The rest of the attendees are responsible for splitting the debt.

Resolving Disputes

We don't typically get complaints of attendees not paying a trip fee. If the fee 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 fees; 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.

If an attendee cannot pay the trip fee, encourage them to email [the officers](#) and we will explore means of supporting everyone involved.

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

Reimbursement

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.

Reimbursement forms

We prefer that you request gas reimbursements via [this online form](#). You will need to have filled out this [reimbursement form](#) with trip name, driver signatures, and trip leader signature (not needed if one form per driver and drivers pay for gas). Additionally, you need an image of your Google Maps directions and receipts. If **ANY** of these are absent, then you will not be reimbursed.

If you are seeking food and lodging reimbursement you can also fill out the online form, or meet an officer at a scheduled gear room. Make sure you keep receipts for all (reimbursable) expenses and fill out the reimbursement form linked above!

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 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.

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.

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 the printed reimbursement form. You should bring receipts and have signatures on the reimbursement 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 is that each vehicle is reimbursable up to \$150! We also allow a 50% tip, which is capped at \$20 (per car). In addition to the above requirements, a car is eligible for reimbursement **only if it has at least three club members in it**, 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.

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 may 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)

Alternate Forms of Transportation

If you are interested in using alternative forms of transportation for your trip (i.e. train, bus), and you would like to get the tickets reimbursed, reach out to the officers to arrange something. (These reimbursements are funded differently than gas reimbursements, so we have to be able to plan the budget accordingly).

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.

Indoor Lodging

Although we have not fully vetted a definition for "indoor" lodging, if the space in which you sleep has utilities (e.g. electricity, heating, or plumbing), you should take that to be an indoor lodging option. To be clear, any hotel or motel will qualify as indoor lodging.

The rate 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.

The rate 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 \$7 per person per day**. This is intended to allow volunteers (attendees) to have a snack or lunch, and to help promote service trips. DEI-centered trips that collaborate with other organizations can also be reimbursed for food and other expenses. For more information, reach out to the DEI Chair about what can be funded by the club.

Reimbursements During Breaks

Generally, our reimbursement policies outside of the fall and spring semesters are reduced from our in-semester policies. Typically, we reimburse gas up to \$100 per car with no driver tip. We also typically do not reimburse food or lodging. However, please check with the officers prior to planning a trip over break if you are planning to seek reimbursement, since these policies change occasionally.

Other reimbursements

Pre-approved expenses

Although these are not reimbursed by Student Council, we still require your receipt if you want to be reimbursed. The following expenses can be reimbursed AFTER you meet the associated requirements:

- Shenandoah National Park passes (\$55), on the grounds that you have **attended** 4 trips to the park (SNP) **where the pass is required** during the one year valid period of the pass.
- America the Beautiful passes, which cost \$100, will be reimbursed at the **same** rate as Shenandoah National Park passes (\$55) only after you have **led** 4 trips to any National park **where the pass is required** during the one year valid period of the pass.
- [Wilderness First Aid](#) training, up to \$245 and on the grounds that you have **led** 6 trips within a year **after** training completion, where you are beyond the golden hour. We ask that if you are planning to complete a WFA course, notify the officers in advance so that we can plan accordingly for potential reimbursements. Note that officers have the right to use discretion when it comes to deciding whether or not a trip qualifies as one of the six for WFA reimbursement. WFA certifications can also be partially reimbursed if you lead less than six trips beyond the golden hour.



- Membership dues, on the grounds that you have **led** 4 trips within the membership period to be reimbursed. Both service trips and affinity trips can count as 2 trips in this instance.

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. Here, we provide a brief overview of checking out gear as it pertains to leading trips. **For more in-depth information about gear checkouts and sport-specific gear, please refer to our [gear handbook](#).**

Requesting Gear

In order to effectively give trips preference (especially for large trips), 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 times 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 trip description and in emails to attendees how gear will be checked out.

For small to medium-sized trips / gear requests, it is sometimes 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)



If leading some extreme sports trips, you may be explicitly required to check out gear for the group as attendees will not have the privileges to check out the necessary technical equipment (eg. climbing gear)

Watersports, Mountain and Commuter Bikes, and Accessories

All of our watersport (boating) and biking gear is also stored elsewhere. Email [the officers](#) if you would like to check out watersports gear or bikes for your trip.

Gear Maintenance and Cleaning

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, please note the offender and notify the officers. 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. The club will be responsible for repairing or replacing gear that has lived a full life (eg. was going to break soon anyways).

All articles of gear must be clean and dry before returning 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). **Please see the [gear handbook](#) for more information and item-specific maintenance instructions.**

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, watersports and bike gear are not stored in the gear room! Be sure to email the officers to return this gear to the appropriate location.

While You're Out

Before you meet

Make sure all attendees know the final plan. If logistics have changed, that must be communicated with trip attendees. It is best practice to send out a reminder email/text to attendees to confirm details even if there have been no updates to the original trip. You can find attendees' emails/phone numbers on their profile on the Outdoors Club website.

Unexpected Events

An extra person

If an extra attendee shows up to the trip, the trip leader has no obligation to take that person on their trip. In fact, we actively discourage letting them attend.



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 of your surroundings (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 off \$245) of the course cost if you lead 6 trips that take you outside of the golden hour. See the [reimbursements section](#) 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, you should:

1. Confront the driver: tell the driver they are making the attendees uncomfortable, and ask the driver to change how they are driving (e.g. slow down).
2. [Report](#) the incident.

On our end, if we are made aware of someone whose driving is reckless or consistently makes passengers uncomfortable, we will ask them 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 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. If you take pictures that you would like to share with the club, email them to the officers -



we love to see pictures of your trip and share them with the rest of the club! **Just make sure that you have the consent of your trip attendees before taking pictures!**

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 or that they fill out their own reimbursement forms.

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). If you feel an accident was caused by a specific person's behavior, you can report it [here](#).

Attendance

For every trip that goes out, the website allows you to mark members as having attended or been absent. In general, we are not worried about attendance because most people do attend. However, absences are 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.

Submitting Reimbursement

Recall all [reimbursement policies](#). You must submit the reimbursement form within 30 days of the trip departure.

Send pictures to the officers

We love seeing pictures from your trips! Send them to [the officers](#) and/or the club's PBR chair. We will post pictures to the ODC Instagram account (@UVAoutdoors) and use them in trip leader updates.



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!](#)

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 reconsider your leadership privileges.

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

If you edit your trip, be sure to check the "send for review" box at the bottom of the adventure edit page so that we can re-approve it. Editing the trip will cause it to disappear from the website until an officer reapproves it. However, the list of people on the waitlist & attendees will remain the same once it is published again.

Changing Leaders

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.

Any change of trip leaders MUST be officers approved. In general, we discourage the change of leaders. However, if the trip would be canceled 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, watersports, caving, and mountain biking trips). If we feel the change of leaders is not acceptable, then the trip should be canceled.

Canceling a trip

In general, we discourage the cancellation of a trip. However, we understand circumstances may favor canceling a trip. The acceptability of canceling 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 canceling 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 canceling).



2. Edit the trip description with the first line clearly stating, in caps, that the trip has been canceled.

Before you cancel (trying to save the trip)

Not enough attendees

You can send a message out to the club [GroupMe](#) seeking more attendees (or perhaps more drivers). If this 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 go there instead. Just be sure to communicate with your trip attendees about these changes.

Changing adventure details (online)

If you choose to change any of the other adventure details before the signup deadline, we encourage you to notify the attendees. Significant changes to a trip (e.g. change of destination) without notifying those on it may be seen as exclusionary. Similarly, advancing the signup deadline or reducing the number of attendees can be seen as exclusionary. To be clear, these changes do not require explicit officer approval, but be careful so as to not come into officer disapproval nor undermine the expectations of the people who signed up for your trip.

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 - as trip leaders, you have the responsibility of following through with your plans barring extenuating circumstances. Unnecessary and unreasonable changes (such as ones that will make your trip significantly longer and result in attendees being late for something scheduled afterwards) will warrant a discussion with the officers and 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)

Miscellaneous

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. The officer application form can be found under the resources tab of the website. Applications are reviewed twice a year, once



following the Moab trip in the Spring and once following the New River Gorge trip in the Fall. If you have any questions about being an officer, feel free to email [the officers!](#)

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, so unless there are need-based, inclusivity-oriented, or other unique circumstances, we don't consider it necessary to let non-members use our resources while circumventing membership fees. However, if there are specific service-oriented or DEI collaborations you want to initiate, reach out to the officers and/or come to committee meetings for resources.

That said, in-town events that incur no 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. 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.

Sustainable Trip Leading

This section is a more specific expansion of trip logistics, with the intention of highlighting sustainable practices. As trip leaders you will (intentionally or not) teach members how to interact with nature. Avoiding, or at least minimizing, negative impacts on the environment should be prioritized when planning & executing trips, especially since most of us are in this club because we love this big, beautiful world. While this section might be a bit repetitive from what has already been outlined, it serves as a holistic summary of what you should be mindful of while planning.

Transportation

Condense car pools as much as possible. When leaders determine participant numbers, they should fill every carseat with either gear or a club member. Include a question about the gas efficiency of driver's cars.

Some ideas for alternative transportation include taking the train to overnight trips, or biking to nearby adventures. Train tickets are mostly reimbursable through ODC (see reimbursement policy), and are often cheaper than gas for long trips when purchased in advance.

Leave No Trace! (LNT)

All trip leaders should practice the seven LNT Principles whenever they interact with nature. Read more about LNT Principles at www.nps.gov/articles/leave-no-trace-seven-principles.htm.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare



2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly (if you pack it in, pack it out!)
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Be aware of your impact on the environment. Stay on trail and limit group sizes to around eight to be respectful of wildlife and other hikers.

Local Trip Ideas

Ragged mountain reservoir is a great location for hiking, trail running, paddle boarding, and bouldering. Ragged is only ten minutes away from grounds and accessible via bike.

The O'Hill trails are even closer to grounds and a great way to lead a quick trip and promote the trails to members who may not know there is such a great resource nearby.

Check out this [document](#) of nearby trip ideas for more comprehensive guidance.

Service & Community Building

We are connected to every other human, animal, plant, and mineral in this Central Virginia land. Through service trips, we can ideally engage with our local environments thoughtfully and intentionally to open our ears to existing movements, join hands with those who would like to partner with us, and better care for our local geography. This can mean building trails, engaging in environmental activism, fighting for food justice, facilitating outdoor workshops at local schools, and more. Come to Service & Sustainability Committee meetings and/or email the officers to talk more about leading one of these trips!

Some past organizations with whom we've worked include: Morven Kitchen Gardens, Cultivate Charlottesville, UVA Student Garden Workdays, Rivanna Conservation Alliance, and CAMBC (Charlottesville-Albemarle Mountain Biking Club).