

Buddy Bison's Adventures



It's 10 am and you just arrived at the park for a group hike with your students. Everyone gets off the bus and turns to you for guidance. Let's face it, leading a hike can be a daunting experience, especially in an unfamiliar area with restless students. Here's Buddy Bison to the rescue!

Leading a Hike

Hiking Essentials

Research the park online.

Hydration and food are key. Bring healthy snacks and plenty of water.

Wear appropriate footwear and clothing. Wear layers, hats, and sunscreen.

Check the weather and plan accordingly.

1. Preparation

Location/Duration/Date

Where and when do you plan on hiking?

How long will your trip last?

How will you get to your hike?

Students/Teachers/Chaperones

How many students will be on the hike?

Do you need to break them into groups?

How many teachers/chaperones are needed?

What is everyone's fitness level?

Goals

How does a hike fit in with what you are teaching?

What is the objective of the hike?

How can you gauge students' experience?

Safety

Are there students who have medical needs or special accommodations going on the hike?

Is there a first aid kit that can be brought on the hike?

Equipment

Consider the type of hike that would be comfortable for students based on what clothing and shoes they have.

Is it an overnight hike? What accommodations do you need? Sleeping bags, tents, etc.

Will you be cooking? Is there a way to store the food?

Food

What is the length of the trip?

How much food is necessary?

Are there students with dietary restrictions?

Can each person carry their own food?

Some easy-to-carry foods:

- trail mix.

- nuts seeds, nut butter packs.

- dried or freeze-dried fruits and veggies.

- granola bars.

- water, water, water - it's essential to stay hydrated!

2. Day of the Hike

Arrival

Get the group excited for the upcoming adventure!

What is the length of the trip?

Double-check the weather conditions.

Preparing to Start

Check in with the park staff, or posted signs (often found by the trailheads), to see if there are any trail closing or warning.

Remind everyone to stay on the trail, and to follow the right path.

Make sure everyone knows to stay together.

Younger kids must stay together as a large group.

Older kids may be given the option to spread out, but they must stay within the set parameters.

Set a meeting point in case you get separated.

Check gear and make sure everyone has water.



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3. During the Hike

Engage all your senses.

- Slow down and take in the scenery.
- Listen for bird calls and animal noises.
- Notice which portions of the trail are warmer, is there a breeze?

Vary your pace.

- A slower pace lets kids look around and explore.
- A moderately fast pace helps you exercise.
- Whatever your pace, keep everyone together!

Allow for breaks.

- Stop for water regularly.
- Free time to explore safely encourages a connection with the outdoors.

4. Post Hike

Focus on celebrating the day, but don't forget to reflect on how to improve your next hike!

Evaluate the hike

- Did it take as long as you thought?
- Was the trail too hard or too easy for you skill level?

Reaction from participants

- What did they love?
- What was challenging?

Goals for improvement

- Want to hike at a quicker pace?
- Try a new path next time?
- Try bringing guidebooks to help ID wildlife and plants.

Make future plans

- Want to come back again?
- What other hiking spots are near you?

Top Ten Hiking Activities

1. Sing songs

There are tons of "camp songs" online to sing with your class. Ask the group if they know any other songs they could lead.

2. Scavenger Hunt

Before you hike prepare a list of items to keep an eye out for. You can "hunt" for things as simple as a tree or a rock for younger learners, or pick a theme for older students, like challenging them to ID tree types.

3. The Alphabet Game

As you hike, the groups must look for something that starts with every letter of the alphabet. When you see something call out the letter and point to what you see. But remember only one item per letter.

4. "Tick" Check

Bring a clothespin from home to be the "tick". As you walk try and safely pin the "tick" onto someone's backpack or clothes without them noticing. After it is secretly secured, yell "Tick check!" and everyone stops to see where the "tick" is. The person wearing the clothespin is now "it" and tries to sneakily clip it onto someone later on in the hike.

5. Geocaching

This activity is better suited for older kids. Using a GPS or a smartphone, download a geocaching app and let the treasure hunt begin.

6. 10 Questions

An old favorite. One person thinks of something (you can define a category as a group beforehand) and everyone else gets to ask 10 "yes or no" questions to try and figure it out.



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7. Tree Hugger

This is a little like moving musical chairs. Before the hike starts, teach the group how to ID one or two different types of tree. Later, as you are hiking, select a student to be the "Tree Master". When they see the right tree along the trail, they call it out, and everyone must run and hug the correct tree species. Last one there, or anyone hugging the wrong tree species, is out. Play until no one is left, and select a new Tree Master.

8. Eagle Eyes

This is a great tool to avoid having kids yell out when they see something cool, and possibly scare away the wildlife. When you or a student sees something exciting, have them freeze and make "Eagle Eyes"- hold up your hands to your eyes like you are wearing binoculars. When someone puts on "Eagle Eyes" everyone else should race to freeze and hold up their hands like binoculars too.

9. Sit Spots

When you reach a good spot for a break, have the kids spread out and sit quietly. They can simply take in their surrounds and reflect, or older students can journal.

10. Moving Meditation

Have the kids walk in silence for a given portion of the trail. This allows them to really take in their environment and reflect. For younger kids, you can ask them to quietly look for something, i.e.: how many birds can we see, how many flowers can you count, etc.

Hopefully these tips have you feeling ready to hit the trails. With good planning, a positive attitude, and a sense of adventure you too can make every hiking trip a success!

---Buddy Bison

Love these hiking activities? Then check out our "Bordum Busters" and other outdoor activities at buddybison.org.

