

# Pre Hike/Climb Briefing

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The following is a recommended pre trip briefing suggestion. Making sure everyone is on the same page and understands exactly what is expected of them during any trip will go a long way towards preventing problems, will contribute towards safety, and generally make the leader's job much easier. It also contributes largely to the legal protection of the leader in terms of their Duty of Care.

- A thorough briefing of the group can prevent many problems during the trip
- Everyone knows what is expected
- Everyone knows what to do when it goes wrong
- You know more about each others strengths and weaknesses
- It prevents miss-understandings

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- **Introduce each other. Who is leading? Assistant leader?**

*You are going to spend quite a bit of time together, so it's nice to know who you are with. Who knows you may be with someone famous. If everyone knows who the leaders are, there will be less of a chance of a power struggle occurring.*

- **What special skills / qualifications does each person have? First aid, Navigation, Qualified Guide, etc**

*Should a need arise for specialist skills; it will be good to know who has what skill in the group. It gives peace of mind knowing you have certain skills available to call on as needed.*

- **Discuss the general daily schedule, Route conditions, Weather forecast, Possible points of interest**

*The group will function much better if they all know what the plan is. Knowledge of what is to be expected will assist group members to pace themselves and mentally prepare for the conditions to be encountered. It also provides 'targets' for people to aim for. (I know we will be stopping at 4pm...)*

- **Discuss waste disposal, drinking water etc**

*So no one likes to talk about squits, squats and squirts, but we all do it. Making sure everyone does it correctly will preserve the environment as well as everyone else's sanity. Also discuss water availability and purification so no one is in doubt. You don't want a bunch of sick people because they drank dirty water, this put the whole group and trip at risk.*

- **Where are people's car keys and cell phones? Disable pin codes, Enter emergency numbers.**

*You may need the keys of the person injured, so it's good to know where they are in an emergency. Cell phones are useless unless you have the pin code, so either disable them on all phones or write it on a sticker on the phone you can remove after the trip. If you are unconscious you cannot provide this info to assist in a rescue. Also make sure all the local emergency numbers are pre programmed in to all phones. Different phones work to differing levels of efficiency so you never know which phone you will have to use.*

- **Any medical allergies / problems. Where is emergency medication? i.e... Adrenaline, Insulin etc.**  
*If you have an allergy of other medical problem, the group needs to know about it. This is no time for hiding things. Your lives rely on each other and vital facts known to the group can save your life. Also make sure everyone knows where you keep your emergency medications. We do not want to have to search your whole bag looking for it whilst you lie there desperately ill in need of it.*
- **Any particular fears. i.e... Height, water etc**  
*If you have any particular fears, let us know. We may be able to avoid problems if we know what to avoid. Remember this is a team effort and to be effective we need to know each others strengths and weaknesses.*
- **Buddy up**  
*Formally pair up so that the group can easily know if someone is missing. In an emergency (say a veldt fire) how are we to know you have gone to the loo or if you are stuck in a burning tent unless you buddy tells us. Simply put make sure someone is looking out for you at all times.*
- **What to do if you find yourself alone**  
*You finish taking that picture and look around and no one is there. The group did not see you stop. What should I do? Make sure the whole group knows what to do if they find themselves alone. Generally speaking: Stay where you are; Shout whistle or make a loud noise to attract attention, Be as visible as you can, Wait it out. Eventually some one (your buddy) will miss you and come looking where they last saw you. Do not stumble about, you are getting more lost, especially in thick mist where you are also in danger of falling off something.*
- **What to do if leader is incapacitated**  
*You do not want to be the leader of a group and you are the one lying unconscious and no one else knows how to get help. How should they behave and what should they do if you are injured? Make sure they have an action plan in case you need help.*
- **General layout of area & Escape routes**  
*Make sure everyone knows the general layout of the area and knows the emergency routes home. Having a mind map of the general area will at least assist group members to find their way out. Show everyone on the map the route you intend taking and possibly mark on the map the route as well as emergency escape routes.*
- **Staying together and reasons why**  
*This is a group effort, no one wins for getting home first. We all rely on each other for our safety so the group must stay together at all times. Stress this to the group so there can be no misunderstanding. Tell everyone right at the start that anyone not willing to comply with this rule is not welcome to join the group. Be strict regarding this.*
- **General safety precautions. Locals, animals, height, rivers, weather etc.**  
*Provide details to the group regarding potential threats. Hiding threats can put you in a liability situation. Remember your duty of care. Make sure everyone is fully understanding of what is to be expected. It's their choice after all whether to come along or not. Let them make an informed decision.*

- **Check gear is actually in your bag**  
*So you packed your rain gear last night. Is it still there? Oops I forgot I took it out to take the dog for a walk. Get everyone to actually physically check that they have all the essentials needed for the trip. If someone does not have the essentials they stay behind. Taking ill prepared people along puts the whole group at risk. If dealing with minors, you should physically check yourself that they have the right gear.*
- **Discuss group effort if people are struggling**  
*Stress the group effort issue. We are only successful if we all come home safe and having enjoyed the trip. Make sure right at the beginning that we all understand that we may have to help carry someone else's gear if they are struggling. Again get everyone's commitment to this.*
- **Let's have fun**  
*It's everyone's responsibility to work together to make this trip successful. Only with everyone's input can we be successful. If one person is not having fun it will drag the whole group down, so we all have to help each other at all times.*

## Pre Trip Briefing Checklist

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- What special skills / qualifications does each person have? First aid, Navigation, Qualified Guide, etc
- Discuss the general daily schedule, Route conditions, Weather forecast, Possible points of interest
- Discuss waste disposal, drinking water etc
- Where are people's car keys and cell phones? Disable pin codes, Enter emergency numbers.
- Any medical allergies / problems. Where is emergency medication? i.e. Adrenaline, Insulin etc.
- Any particular fears. i.e. Height, water etc
- Buddy up
- What to do if you find yourself alone
- What to do if leader is incapacitated
- General layout of area & Escape routes
- Staying together and reasons why
- General safety precautions. Locals, animals, height, rivers, weather etc.
- Check gear is actually in your bag
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- Let's have fun