

Included in this message:

- *Top Tip! - how to hike as a team*
- *Bonus hiking tips*

Hiking is a Team Sport

Hiking is a Team Sport has consistently been rated the "Top Tip" by contingent advisors, year after year. Most who have religiously followed these suggestions claim they made the biggest and most positive impact on crew performance.

Hiking is a team sport - if you and your crew get that, you will have a great trek.

Is anyone NOT ready for the hiking quiz at the Watchu Mountain Adventure?

Watching crews hike at Philmont is a wonderful educational experience. Here comes a crew spread out all over the mountain. Two or three Scouts a half-mile up the trail. Two advisors far back down the trail. And everyone else is somewhere in between. The end of the crew has no contact with the front or even the mid point. The crew members are expressing various degrees of unhappiness.

Then we have a crew hiking smartly. Each member spaced at about five or six paces. Everyone is in contact, but not so close that they only see the boots in front of them. Everyone is chanting and singing together. All are having a great time and enjoying the spectacular scenery and each others' fellowship.

Which crew will you be? Well, if you would like to be the second, here are a few points that will help make it happen.

- 1. Hiking is a team sport:** Everyone must be trained to know that *Hiking is a team sport*. Everyone must be trained to be committed to the success of the entire crew. Everyone must be trained to ask at all times, "What can I do to make this hike a success for my crew mates?" And everyone must be trained to know that the conduct of the hike is the responsibility of the Crew Chief. If the crew develops this hiking mentality, the crew, Crew Chief, and advisors will reap many surprising benefits along the trail. But this does not just happen. It requires training.
- 2. The slowest hiker sets the pace:** It is amazing how much more territory a crew can cover if the slowest hiker sets the pace. It prevents the crew from breaking up and causing the fast to wait for the slow. Then when the slow catch up, they need a rest. Yet the fast want to get going again. It turns into a vicious debilitating cycle that causes crew attitudes to go sour. Putting the slowest person in front guarantees he will set the pace, but as long as those in front of the slowest match his pace, the slowest can be in another position near the front. *The slowest sets the pace* is a vital principle in the

military for moving men across terrain - it might be counter-intuitive, but it absolutely is true.

3. **The slowest hiker is not always the same person:** Everyone is subject to problems along the trail that may slow them down from time to time. The slowest person in the morning might be quick in the afternoon. The slowest uphill may be fairly quick downhill. Look for gaps to develop in the hiking file. *The person on the tail end of the developing gap is the slowest.* That hiker goes to the front immediately after a gap opens in front of them. If the same person is usually the slowest, or if that person hikes better with someone in front of them to "pull them along," try putting the slowest second or third, as long as those in front match the pace of the slowest and don't run away from the group.
4. **The advisors never lead the crew and usually hike in the rear:** If an advisor is very slow, that advisor must move forward. Maybe even up to second or third. *But an advisor never leads the crew.* Also, it is advisable to keep at least one advisor at the dead last position. This is the best position for keeping an eye out for safety. And a good spot for finding and picking up dropped essentials.
5. **The Crew Chief and the navigator usually hike close to the front:** This helps keep the crew on target and the Chief in control. Now and then the Chief may want to observe the crew from near the rear. Also, all members of the crew should be trained to keep an eye out for the navigational checkpoints. *The navigator is accountable for the days hiking plan, but every member of the crew is responsible for picking up the important landmarks.* If landmarks are missed, all members of the crew are responsible, not just the navigator.
6. **Always hike single file:** Walk softly on the land. Stay on the trail's narrow pathway. When crews meet, the one climbing uphill has the right of way. If passing crews can't pass, the downhill crew should get off the trail. When meeting a crew on horseback, the un-mounted crew gets off the trail, usually to the down hill side, to avoid spooking the horses.
7. **Maintain a ten-foot spacing:** The spacing between crewmembers is very important. *Everyone should be separated by about four or five paces (about 10 feet).* This gives each hiker a good view of the environment, which is much better than "boot and backpack" watching. In addition, a ten-foot spacing helps assure the Crew Chief always has contact with ALL crew members.
8. **The Rule of Four:** In case of emergency, the *Rule of Four* applies. That is, if it is decided to send a team for help, the team must be composed of four members including an adult. Best case is to have a CPR/First Aid person and adult with each party. Note that the Rule of Four always applies - for example, when going for water at a source removed from your trail camp.
9. **Mastering the breaks is an absolute:** *There are three types of breaks - two minutes to catch your breath, five minutes to replenish your energy, and twenty minutes if the crew*

can't get going in five. Heavy breathing is the clue when oxygen is the problem. Usually this kicks in at high altitudes. When out of oxygen, a short two-minute break lets you catch your breath and get going. If the crew is tired and needs an energy break, take five. If the crew can't get going in five minutes you should continue the break for another fifteen, a total of twenty minutes. In the past, the reason cited was acid builds up in the muscles after five minutes or so, and you need additional down time to avoid complications (cramping) resulting from the acid build up. This anecdotal reason may or may not be true, but getting going in five rather than waiting the extra 15 minutes is a time-proven technique to motivate stragglers. So think OXYGEN - 2 minutes, ENERGY - 5 minutes, FULL REST - 20 minutes.

10. **Religiously time your breaks:** All crew members stick together during breaks (except of course those using "the facilities," which are well off the trail and away from the others.) The Crew Chief should designate a Break Master who times the breaks with a watch. Timing prevents two minutes from turning into a half hour, which is a real moral killer.
11. **Caterpillar hiking:** *When going up difficult hills use the "caterpillar" method of hiking.* It is an outstanding way to keep the crew moving and at the same time everyone gets a short break. The caterpillar method of hiking will be covered during the Watchu Mountain Adventure.
12. **"I need a break":** *Anyone in the crew can call for a two, five, or "caterpillar" break whenever they need it.* They simply call out "I need two!" or "I need the caterpillar". The Crew Chief decides if a five-minute break should be extended to twenty. Of course, the Chief does this in consultation with the crew members, usually an "I'm not" answer to the question "Is anyone not ready?" at the end of a five-minute break.
13. **Do not hike on roads:** *Never hike on a road when a footpath or hiking trail is available.* Hiking on roads is dangerous, often longer, often much more difficult, always hotter, and never as much fun. Resist the urge of the Scouts to take to the road.

Check out the [Hiking](#) and [Caterpillar Hiking](#) videos in the [On the Trail](#) section of the [Training Videos](#) page of the [Watchu Experience](#) Web site for additional information and demonstration of several of the above points.

The Watchu Mountain Adventure includes an 8-mile hike that will allow you to practice the above points. One key difference between hiking in New Jersey and at Philmont is that the Watchu hike is in on a network of trails with various blazes to identify which is which, while at Philmont all trails are unblazed. Trail junctions there "should" have either a new style post with UTM coordinates routed into the sides, or an old style post with arrows pointed in each direction with the name of the camp or feature. Either will allow you to identify where you are on your navigation map.

News Flash: To help train your crew for the New Mexico mountain rains, a hard rain has been arranged during the Watchu Mountain Adventure. Be prepared!

Bonus Tips: Always kick the heel of your foot back into the heel of your boot before tying your bootlaces. Next, as you lace up your boots, stop at the ankle and wind your laces together twice like a double overhand knot. Now cinch the winding down tight so your foot is locked in to the back of your boot then finish the laces as normal. What's the benefit?? It helps keep your toes from being squashed into the toe box of your boot which will cause your toes to hurt on downhill hikes and there is lots of downhill at Philmont. This helps keep your feet healthy and free from blisters on your sensitive toes. Remember—your feet are your only means of transportation on a hike so take very good care of them!

And remember to trim your toenails just prior to departure from home.

Phil Fact: From the April 2009 edition of the Philmont Staff Association's *High Country* magazine, the Philmont livestock count at the end of 2008 was:



Cattle: 378 head
(13 bulls, 170 cows, 101 heifers,
89 steer calves, 5 steers 1-year or older)

Horses: 264

Buffalo: 139

Burros: ??? - apparently the State of New Mexico doesn't care enough about the humble burros to require that their count be reported...

Philmont uses two brands for its livestock - the "Bar P Crazy S" for cattle and the "Slash Crazy S" for horses.

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Lawrence "Boss" Sanchez

Hawkeye and Philmont Ranches
Cowboy with 40 years of service