

LET'S TAKE A HIKE!

ACTIVITY:

Students learn how to prepare for a hike in the desert and discuss sensible measures to take as they act out potential dangers they might encounter during a short walk along a trail.

LOCATION:

CESC staff will inform you of the location of this activity.

EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE:

Backpack containing:

tweezers	compass
2 water containers	bandages
topographical map	scarf
plastic trashbag	comb
thermometer	sunscreen
set of situation cards	
cholla picture	
gopher snake picture	



EQUIPMENT BROUGHT FROM SCHOOL:

Optional: Students may bring their own canteens and bags of gorp (trail mix).

ASSIGNMENT FOR GROUP LEADERS A FEW WEEKS PRIOR TO TRIP:

The leader reads all the material about the center. These books are good for background information: Desert Survival by Dick and Sharon Nelson, and Take a Hike, The Sierra Club Kid's Guide to Hiking and Backpacking, by Lynne Foster. These are available in local bookstores and perhaps in the school library.

DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP LEADERS ON TRIP DAY:

Check the contents of the backpack to be sure all equipment is there. If you have time, walk the trail to familiarize yourself with the area.

THE LESSON:

Introduce the lesson by explaining to the group:

You and your friends have planned an exciting day. You are going on a long hike. You will

leave after breakfast, hike all morning, eat lunch on the trail, continue your hike and return home in the afternoon.

Let's see what kind of day you are going to have. Will everyone arrive home safe and happy? Or will there be injuries and disappointments? How well did you prepare for your hiking adventure?

First of all, what preparations should you make before you leave home in the morning?

1) Inform others

Did you let your family know you were going on a hike? What did you tell them?

Elicit the following responses:

- ...where I am going
- ...when I plan on returning
- ...who the other people are who will be with me
- ...what I am wearing
- ...what I am taking with me

2) Breakfast

What would be a good breakfast to start you off full of energy?
Briefly discuss the kinds of breakfast food that would be energizers.

3) Clothing

What kind of clothing should you wear for your hike?

Discuss the practicality of:

- sturdy, comfortable shoes—"broken in", not new and stiff
- socks, avoid 100% cotton—they get soggy, wrinkled and can cause blisters; 50% cotton blends are good
- long pants—protect legs from: scratchy plants, cuts if one falls, sunburn, and sitting down is more comfortable
- long-sleeved shirt—same reasons as long pants
- hat and scarf
- sunglasses
- sun block (SPF 15 or more) and remember to cover the back of the neck, tips of ears, and lips—use the stick kind for lips

4) Be sure you are physically prepared for the hike. Do you know how many miles you will walk? Does the trail involve a lot of climbing? If you haven't been doing much walking lately, it is a wise idea to prepare for the hike by taking practice walks around the neighborhood—at first short walks, then longer and longer walks until your legs and lungs are ready for the trail.

We are now going on our hike. Of course, we will not be taking an all day hike now, but we will make believe it is. You have prepared a backpack of equipment, and have a lunch and water.

Let's look at the things we have packed and think about how they may be used. Is there anything we could use right now?

Bring out each item in the backpack so the students know what is available. Not all items may be used on the walk. The students may decide that they should put the sunscreen on right now.

Begin the walk

Using the Situation Cards

As you walk along the trail, pull out a situation card and hand it to a student. Ask the student to act out the directions on the card. After the student has acted out the situation, hold a short discussion about the situation—how did the person get into trouble? What can be done to get out of it?

You may hand out situation cards at any point along the trail and use any cards you wish. You may not have time for all of the situation cards. Watch the time so that you return to the starting point a few minutes before you need to change groups. This will give you a chance for a brief summary of the activity.

Situation Card #1

You are full of energy and excited about the hike.
Run back and forth along the trail.
Jump up on every rock you see.

Discussion:

What will happen to this person this afternoon?

What is a better way to begin a hike?

(Kids often begin a hike this way, but then by afternoon they are exhausted.)

Most experienced hikers walk with a steady pace, which is less tiring than speeding up, then slowing down. Hiking is **never** a race to see who gets to be in front of the line or who gets to the end of the trail first.

Situation Card #2

There is a bird's nest in a cholla. Walk off the trail to get a closer look. Whoops! You got too close. There's a piece of cholla stuck on your arm!

Take the cholla picture from the pack for the student to stick on his/her clothing.

Discussion:

Why did the person get into this situation?

What is a good way to remove the cholla? (Flick it off with a comb, making sure no one is standing in the path of the flying cholla.)

Situation Card #3

Tell your group, "Wow, it's really hot today, I hope we brought enough water. Oh well, if we didn't we can open up a barrel cactus and drink from it. Or maybe we can find a spring or a puddle of water."

Discussion:

Drink periodically along the way. Don't wait until you are really thirsty. That means you are already dehydrated.

The story about being able to survive by drinking from a barrel cactus is not true. You would lose more moisture in perspiration trying to cut into a barrel cactus than you would ever get from it. There is a sticky pulp inside which would give you a few drops of water, but it is bitter and because of the acid it contains, it could make you ill.

You can never rely on a spring or other water source along the way. Drinking from a puddle is always dangerous. There are many parasites, bacteria, etc. in any river, lake, or puddle. These can make one very ill.

Also, never eat berries or any other plants unless you are absolutely sure they are safe to eat. Talk about the benefit of having two containers of water in the backpack. (It balances the load. If one developed a leak, there would still be a second container.)

Situation Card #4

You decide to go off the trail and walk around among the bushes. You reach down to pick up a stick. You don't see the snake under the bush. You have frightened it and it bites you on the hand.

Lay the picture of the gopher snake on the ground near the student.

Discussion: What is the first thing you should do? (Get a good look at the snake so you can determine the kind of snake that bit you so that you can describe it to someone.) If it is a non-venomous snake, wash the wound with water from your canteen, put on a band-aid and have the wound treated when you get home. If it is a venomous snake, the best advice is to stay as calm and still as possible and have someone take you to the nearest hospital. (Snake bite kits do more harm than good.)

How could the person have prevented the accident?

Let's pretend that this was a gopher snake. You have received a small bite and you have treated it. Now we can go on our way, but have someone look at your injury when you get home.

Situation Card #5, #6, #7, #8 (Give one card each to groups of two or three students.)

It's lunchtime! I brought hard candy, a doughnut, gum and a coke.	It's lunchtime! I brought a chocolate bar, a twinkie and a soda pop.
It's lunchtime! I brought nuts, a granola bar, cheese, crackers, and juice.	It's lunchtime! I brought a peanut butter sandwich, fruit, M & M's, and juice.

Discussion: Which foods will give you energy for the hike? Which will give only short-term energy? (The first two cards, #5 & #6, contain foods that are not wise choices. Sugar-filled foods will give you only short-term energy. The second two cards, #7 & #8, contain foods that will give your body the energy to take you through the rest of the day.

All foods (except the chocolate bar in hot weather) are easy to carry and won't spoil. Look for trail snacks that are sweetened with honey, fruits, or fruit juices. These sugars are used by the body more slowly than regular refined white and brown sugar, and will give you more energy for a longer time.

Situation Card #9 (Use this along the trail west of the hill.)

Oh, oh! I think we took the wrong trail! Who can read the map to see if we are going the right way?

Discussion: Ask the group to look at the topographical map and compass. Are they able to locate the hill to the east of the trail? Can they find the trail on the map? Can they use the compass to see if they are heading in the right direction?

Situation Card #10 (Use this along the wash before you turn east toward camp.)

Let's rest awhile and have a drink of water.
Where would we find the coolest place to sit?

Discussion: Bring out the thermometer. Test the temperature in the shade of the wash bank, under a tree, in the sunlight. Which is the coolest place?

Completion of the Lesson

Continue around the trail, and return to the ramada.

With the time remaining:

...review the safety tips we have learned.

...additional topics for discussion:

Lightening...

If a storm comes up and you see lightening, where is the best place to seek shelter?

Take shelter near the lowest dry object around. Never go under high trees, or high rock formations. If you are on a hill, climb down to a lower spot.

Smart sayings to remember: "Pack it in and pack it out."
"Take only pictures, leave only footprints."

What do these sayings mean? Why are they good rules to follow?

CLEANUP:

At the end of each rotation, return all items to the backpack so they are ready for the next group. Replace all materials in the backpack and place it on the table in Biznaga cabin.