

# Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) - The Mountaineers

## INTRODUCTION

The Mountaineers is a nonprofit outdoor community of 15,000 active members in the Pacific Northwest. Founded in 1906, we've been getting people of all ages outside safely and responsibly for over 110 years. We host hundreds of monthly courses and activities to offer ways to get outside and connect with people passionate about the outdoors. We think it's important to introduce people to the outdoors early and often, and we work to protect the outdoor experience for future generations.

Participant safety and health are the top priority on all Mountaineers activities. To minimize the risk associated with participating in a Mountaineers program, each individual must take responsibility for themselves, must participate within their own limits, and must contribute positively to the health and well-being of other participants and to the group as a whole.

The Mountaineers values diversity – including persons with diverse abilities – in its programs. While we do not specialize in integrating persons with disabilities into our programs, we encourage people of all abilities to consider participating in Mountaineers programming. **The Mountaineers Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) provides a guideline of the physical and cognitive skills needed for participation in programs sponsored by The Mountaineers.** The Mountaineers EEC are intended to be a resource for anyone considering participating in a Mountaineers program, and are not intended to be exclusionary.

With approximately 4,000 activities and events offered annually, individual program requirements at The Mountaineers can vary greatly. Activity descriptions may contain additional or more specific guidelines, including skill prerequisites. Please also refer to our [Clubwide Activity Standards](#) for additional information about the activity-specific skill prerequisites, and to our [Member Code of Ethics](#) for information about our community expectations.

## YOUTH PROGRAMS

The Mountaineers offers a wide variety of programs for youth of all ages. When applied to Youth Programs, all criteria in The Mountaineers EEC should be met with consideration for the participant's age and associated level of development.

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## **HOW DO I REQUEST ASSISTANCE OR ACCOMMODATION?**

If you need assistance or accommodation to meet the essential eligibility criteria for an activity, please contact the trip leader. If you have general questions about The Mountaineers EEC, or if you have concerns about the implementation of the EEC, please contact [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org).

## **WHAT IF I PLAN TO PARTICIPATE WITH A SERVICE ANIMAL OR TRAINED AID?**

If you plan to participate with a service animal or trained aid, please contact the trip leader to ensure the course or activity is an appropriate fit.

## **ASSISTANCE OF TRAINED AIDES**

In some circumstances outlined in the EEC, participants may be eligible to participate on a Mountaineers activity if they can meet an essential eligibility criterion with the assistance of a trained aide. Examples of trained aides include service animals, ASL interpreters, and individuals trained to assist a participant with physical or communication requirements. Under the Washington Law Against Discrimination, a service animal is defined as any dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Please refer to [The Mountaineers Service Animal Policy](#) for additional information about including a service animal in a Mountaineers activity.

If a participant requires a trained aide to meet any of the EEC, the participant or aide should notify the trip leader beforehand, including cases when an adult is accompanying a minor. The trained aide should also consult the Mountaineers EEC to make sure they meet the physical and cognitive requirements, as well as any additional prerequisites for the activity. If the trained aide has concerns about meeting any of the EEC, they should contact the activity leader or The Mountaineers at [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org) as soon as possible prior to the activity. Trained aides do not need to be paying members of The Mountaineers, but they must fill out and complete a Liability Release and Indemnity Agreement and read and acknowledge all applicable rules and safety information **before** participating in any activity. This typically involves registering for a Guest Membership.

If a trained aide will be present at an activity, they should be added to the activity roster in advance of the activity. In the case of a service animal, it is highly recommended the participant

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give the activity leader ample advanced notice of the service animal's participation. Because trained aides are present to support an individual with disability, they are not required to pay for participation. However, trained aides (including service animals) must be considered in the overall party size for each activity. At the time of registration, participants must ensure that there is sufficient space for both themselves and their trained aide on the activity roster.

If a participant would like to request that The Mountaineers provide a trained aide to support their participation in an activity, they should contact the leader with as much advance notice as possible, preferably at least one month in advance of the activity start date.

## **HOW TO NAVIGATE THE MOUNTAINEERS EEC**

**Trips:** A standalone trip where we explore by foot or on water. There is no direct educational component. Trip prerequisites are largely dictated by our [Clubwide Activity Standards](#).

- Participants must meet:
  - Basic Field-Based EEC (Section 2)
  - Relevant Activity-Based EEC (Section 3)

**Clinics:** A one-day (or consecutive multi-day) skill-based educational activity. Clinics often take place outdoors and/or have some physical component.

- Participants must meet:
  - Basic Field-Based EEC (Section 2)
  - Relevant Activity-Based EEC (Section 3)

**Seminars:** A one-day (or consecutive multi-day) indoor educational activity.

- Participants must meet:
  - Basic EEC (Section 1)

**Field Trips:** A one-day (or consecutive multi-day) skill-based educational activity. Field trips often take place outdoors and/or have some physical component, and they are always **associated with a course**.

- Participants must meet:
  - Basic Field-Based EEC (Section 2)
  - Relevant Activity-Based EEC (Section 3)

**Lectures:** A one-day (or consecutive multi-day) indoor educational activity that is **associated with a course**.

- Participants must meet:
  - Basic EEC (Section 1)

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**Events:** A one-day indoor meeting or gathering to discuss content or watch a presentation.

- Participants must meet:
  - Basic EEC (Section 1)

## **1. BASIC ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

All participants in Mountaineers programs must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 1.1. Perceive, understand, and follow instructions.
- 1.2. Effectively notify leaders or other participants of personal distress, injury, illness, or the need for assistance.
- 1.3. Perceive and understand the inherent risks of the activity, including, but not limited to, the ones previously identified by the leaders.
- 1.4. Work cooperatively as a member of a group and support a team approach, despite potentially challenging circumstances. This may require flexibility and the ability to compromise on an interpersonal or group level.
- 1.5. Perform necessary self-care, including maintaining adequate nutrition and hydration, dressing appropriately for environmental conditions, maintaining personal hygiene, and managing known medical conditions.

## **2. BASIC FIELD-BASED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

All participants in all Mountaineers field-based activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

- 2.1. Remain alert and focused for several hours at a time while traveling through open water, wilderness, and other remote terrain.
- 2.2. Withstand periods of inclement weather and the environmental factors associated with the activity for several hours at a time. For example, temperatures below freezing during winter or snow-based activities, temperatures above 80°F or hotter during summer activities, or variable water temperatures during paddling activities.

All participants in all Mountaineer field-based activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 2.3. Move safely across the terrain involved in the activity at the pace that the leader has specified in the activity listing.

- 2.4. Recognize and avoid, and effectively warn others of potential or impending hazards such as falling rocks, slippery terrain, snow or rock slide, aggressive animals or insects, fast water, falling person, or other environmental hazards.
- 2.5. Effectively notify leaders or other participants of personal distress, injury, illness, or the need for assistance.
- 2.6. Complete the preceding warnings and notifications up to a distance of 50 meters and in conditions with limited visibility and audibility, such as darkness, inclement weather, loud background noise due to high winds or fast-moving water, or terrain where a line of sight to other group members or leaders is not available.
- 2.7. Perceive, understand, and follow basic instructions, such as a direction to move, stand still, grasp something, or other action required to avoid a major threat. Such basic instructions may be delivered in a hazardous or stressful environment.
- 2.8. Perceive, understand, and follow detailed instructions on wilderness travel, risk management, personal care, hazard avoidance, and other topics.
- 2.9. Learn and perform necessary non-verbal communication systems for a given activity, such as hand signals, rope tugs, body movements, etc.
- 2.10. Perform necessary self-care in a remote and outdoor environment, including maintaining adequate nutrition and hydration, dressing appropriately for environmental conditions, maintaining personal hygiene, toileting and managing personal human waste, and managing personal (and, in some cases, group) safety gear.
- 2.11. Work cooperatively as a member of a group and support a team approach, despite potentially challenging circumstances. This may require flexibility and the ability to compromise on an interpersonal or group level.
- 2.12. Act in a manner consistent with The Mountaineers Low-Impact Recreation Skills. Participants must be able to follow the leader's directions regarding minimum impact guidelines. For more information, go to <https://www.mountaineers.org/conservation/low-impact-recreation-skills>.
- 2.13. Manage any known medical conditions in a remote environment for as long as two times the scheduled length of the trip.

### **3. ACTIVITY-BASED ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

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There are many activities - dictated by terrain, trip location, group size, and/or trip objectives - that would require the participant to be able to complete all activity-specific EEC without assistance. This section is intended to provide a general overview of what to expect on a typical Mountaineers activity, for each of our most common activity types. Please refer to our activity listings or course descriptions, or speak with the trip leader, if you have questions or if you would like more detailed information. The Mountaineers is frequently adding new activities to our offerings. If you don't find your activity in this list, please contact [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org) for additional information.

### 3.1. FOR DAY HIKING, URBAN WALKING, AND/OR NATURALIST ACTIVITIES

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants on day hiking activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.1.1. Travel over uneven, variable terrain, including flat, uphill and downhill.
- 3.1.2. If conditions become adverse, travel without stopping for breaks for one hour.
- 3.1.3. Carry personal and group gear required for the specific activity in a backpack or lumbar pack.
- 3.1.4. Carry the minimum pack weight for at least two hours beyond the intended duration of the activity.

### 3.2. FOR TRIPS OR FIELD TRIPS WITH A CAMPING COMPONENT

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in activities with a camping component must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

- 3.2.1. Meet all of the unassisted EEC for the base activity. For example, backpacking participants must meet the EEC for day hiking plus the EEC for activities with a camping component.

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in activities with a camping component must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.2.2. Meet all of the assisted or unassisted EEC for the base activity. For example, backpacking participants must meet the EEC for day hiking plus the EEC for activities with a camping component.
- 3.2.3. Travel over and negotiate varied terrain for duration of activity while carrying all personal equipment (i.e., pack, gear, shelter).

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- 3.2.4. Learn and safely perform the fundamental camping skills of finding a campsite, setting up a shelter, and cooking with a camp stove.
- 3.2.5. Travel about the campsite in order to participate in instructional sessions, attend to toileting needs, and contribute to individual and group related tasks as necessary.

### 3.3. FOR SEA KAYAKING

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in sea kayaking activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

- 3.3.1. Hold their breath while under water and, while in the water wearing a properly fitted lifejacket, be able to independently turn from a face down to a face up position keeping their head above water.
- 3.3.2. Control a paddle and pull it through the water in order to steer and propel the boat forward.
- 3.3.3. Wear all required safety gear, such as approved personal flotation device, spray skirt, Neoprene gloves, approved helmet, etc.

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in sea kayaking activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.3.4. Exit from the watercraft in the event of a capsize and perform an appropriate self-rescue or cooperate with an assisted rescue.

### 3.4. FOR SAILING

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in sailing activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

- 3.4.1. Hold their breath while under water and, while in the water wearing a properly fitted lifejacket, be able to independently turn from a face down to a face up position keeping their head above water.
- 3.4.2. Maneuver around the dock, deck, and cabin to maintain safety and support the crew.
- 3.4.3. Push, pull or otherwise manipulate ropes and manual equipment (such as winches, tillers, steering wheels, throttles, as well as various other small devices such as shackles, buckles, snaps, electrical equipment buttons/screens).

- 3.4.4. Wear all required safety gear, such as approved personal flotation device, etc.

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in sailing activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.4.5. Exit from the watercraft in the event of a capsize and perform an appropriate self-rescue or cooperate with an assisted rescue.

### 3.5. FOR ROCK CLIMBING

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in rock climbing activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

- 3.5.1. Wear all required safety gear such as an approved harness and approved helmet.
- 3.5.2. Grip a rope firmly, grasp the rock face, and negotiate upwards and downwards on a climb.

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in rock climbing activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.5.3. Meet all of the assisted or unassisted day hiking EEC (Section 3.1.1).

### 3.6. FOR ALPINE CLIMBING AND/OR SCRAMBLING

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in alpine climbing and/or scrambling activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

- 3.6.1. Wear all required safety gear such as an approved harness, approved helmet, mountaineering boots, crampons ice axe/tool, etc.
- 3.6.2. Grip a rope firmly, grasp the rock face, and negotiate upwards and downwards on a climb.
- 3.6.3. Travel over snow or loose, unstable terrain in a way that minimizes risk to self and others.
- 3.6.4. Independently perform essential tasks without the direct supervision of an instructor. These tasks may include tying into a rope, clipping into an anchor, performing a self-arrest with an ice axe, and putting on proper safety equipment.

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in alpine climbing and/or scrambling activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.6.5. Meet all of the assisted or unassisted day hiking EEC (Section 3.1.1).
- 3.6.6. Provide a reliable belay to another climber during roped climbs. To do so, a participant must be able to reliably manipulate a climbing rope through a belay device.

### 3.7. FOR CANYONING

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in canyoning activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

- 3.7.1. Wear all required safety gear such as an approved harness and approved helmet.
- 3.7.2. Grip a rope firmly and manage a rope in a descender. Manage body position while hanging in a harness to negotiate slippery vertical terrain.
- 3.7.3. Remain upright while sitting in a harness, free-hanging mid-rappel (without any adjacent surface to place hands or feet).
- 3.7.4. Travel in a creek with moving water on loose, slippery terrain in a way that minimizes risk to self and others.
- 3.7.5. Hold their breath while under water and independently maintain an airway while swimming in light current by keeping their head above the water.
- 3.7.6. Independently perform essential tasks without the direct supervision of an instructor. These tasks may include tying into a rope, clipping into an anchor, and putting on proper safety equipment.

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in canyoning activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.7.7. Meet all of the assisted or unassisted day hiking EEC (Section 3.1.1).
- 3.7.8. Communicate to teammates using hand and whistle signals.

### 3.8. FOR CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING, BACKCOUNTRY SKIING, AND/OR SNOWSHOEING

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in crossing-country skiing, backcountry skiing, and/or snowshoeing activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

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- 3.8.1. Travel over and negotiate varied or exposed terrain for the duration of the activity.
- 3.8.2. Wear all required snow travel and safety equipment.

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in crossing-country skiing, backcountry skiing, and/or snowshoeing activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.8.3. Move safely on skis or snowshoes over managed or groomed terrain, including flat, uphill, and downhill.
- 3.8.4. After falling down, be able to get up and into position necessary to continue participating in the activity.

### 3.9. FOR TRAIL RUNNING

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants on trail running activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.9.1. Travel over uneven, variable terrain, including flat, uphill and downhill.
- 3.9.2. If conditions become adverse, travel without stopping for breaks for one hour.
- 3.9.3. Carry personal and group gear required for the specific activity.
- 3.9.4. Carry the required gear for at least two hours beyond the intended duration of the activity.

### 3.10. FOR STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in stewardship activities must be able to complete the following requirements **without assistance**:

- 3.10.1. Wear all required safety gear such as an approved helmet, safety glasses, work gloves, boots, etc.

In addition to the Field-Based EEC (listed in Section 2), participants in stewardship activities must be able to complete the following requirements **with or without assistance** from a trained aide:

- 3.10.2. Meet all of the assisted or unassisted day hiking EEC (Section 3.1.1).
- 3.10.3. Perform manual labor tasks.