

# Best Practices for Leaders to set clear expectations on Mountaineers Climbs

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The best practices shared below are presented to provide transparency to the participants. We are hopeful that this combined with [best practices for participants](#) will improve the process.

The participants appreciate the following, in the activity details:

- (1) defined fitness needs,
- (2) team expectations,
- (3) clear leader permission process with detailed instructions,
- (4) explaining selection criteria upfront,
- (5) optional priority registration periods, and
- (6) knowing when the general registration period is open, which is also important to ensure inclusivity and compliance with land-use regulations.

See below for detailed best practices and examples on these topics.

## 1. Defining Fitness Requirements

- **Best Practices:**
  - **Be Specific & Objective:** Use measurable benchmarks where possible.
  - **Relate to Trip Demands:** Connect requirements directly to the activity (e.g., pack weight, elevation gain per day, distance, terrain type, expected pace).
  - **Encourage Honest Self-Assessment:** Prompt potential participants to realistically evaluate their capabilities against the stated requirements.
- **Examples:**
  - "Participants must be able to comfortably hike 10-12 miles per day for 3 consecutive days with a 40-45 lb pack, including sustained uphill travel of 3,500-5,000 feet elevation gain per day over mixed terrain (trail, snow, rock)."
  - "Fitness benchmark: Ability to ascend 1,500 vertical feet per hour on a trail for at least two hours with a 25lb pack."
  - "Expect long days (8-10 hours) of continuous movement over snowfields and glaciers. Recent experience with similar multi-day efforts is highly recommended."

## 2. Setting Team Expectations

- **Best Practices:**
  - **Define the Trip Style:** Is it fast-paced, relaxed, training-focused, exploratory?
  - **Specify Group Contributions:** Mention expectations around shared tasks (e.g., melting snow, cooking, setting up camp).
  - **Be Positive but Firm:** Frame expectations constructively, but be clear about non-negotiables (e.g., adherence to safety decisions).
- **Examples:**

- "Team Expectations: This trip emphasizes a safety-first culture, open communication (please voice concerns promptly), and mutual support. Punctuality for morning starts is essential. All members are expected to contribute equally to camp chores (cooking, water)."
- "We aim for efficient movement but prioritize safety and group well-being. Expect early starts. Participants should be comfortable communicating within the rope team and assisting others as needed."

### 3. Clarifying the Permission Process

- **Best Practices:**

Making use of the "requires leader permission" mechanism is optional, the Leader may choose to do so, or not. If the leader-permission mechanism is used for a trip, then:

- **Specify the Method:** How should they apply? (e.g., "Email the leader directly," "Fill out the linked Google Form," "Message via the club website"). Avoid ambiguity.
- **Detail Required Information:** What *must* they include? (e.g., "Climbing resume detailing relevant experience with dates/routes," "Confirmation of fitness level," "Statement on specific skills" ). Be exhaustive.
- **State the Period to request permission clearly:** Provide the dates when the leader permission requests may first be submitted and, if necessary, time (including time zone).
- **Provide Contact Info (for process questions):** Reiterate the correct contact email/method for application submission or clarifying questions about the process.
- **Use Numbered Steps:** Makes the process easy to follow.

- **Examples:**

- **"Permission Process:**
  1. Share a brief climbing resume focusing on glacier climbs (include dates, routes, leader/partners, and conditions encountered).
  2. Submit your application using the link on the activity page by **Friday, May 9th, 2025, at 5:00 PM PDT.**
  3. In the email body, include your climbing resume (attached or in body).
  4. Incomplete applications may not be considered."

### 4. Explaining Selection Criteria

- **Best Practices:**

- **Be Upfront:** State clearly how decisions will be made.
- **Link to Requirements:** Explicitly state that selection will be based *primarily* on meeting the stated skill, experience, and fitness requirements.
- **Mention Other Factors (if applicable):** Be transparent if things like team compatibility, previous experience with the leader (use cautiously), or application clarity/completeness will be considered.
- **Avoid Guarantees:** Don't imply that meeting minimums guarantees a spot, especially for popular trips.
- **State Notification Timeline:** Reiterate when applicants can expect to hear back about the decision.

- **Examples:**

- "Selection Criteria: Priority will be given to applicants who demonstrably meet or exceed the listed fitness, skill, and experience requirements. Team compatibility, as assessed from the application or prior experience, and application clarity/completeness may also be considered. Meeting minimum

requirements does not guarantee acceptance. The final team roster aims for a balance of skills and experience appropriate for the objective."

- "Selection Process: My primary focus is building a safe, cohesive, and capable team that meets the demands of this specific climb. All applicants will be notified of their status (accepted, waitlisted, or not accepted for this trip) via email by [Notification Date]."

## 5. Implementing Priority Registration Period

- **Best Practices:**

Making use of a priority registration time period for a specific group is optional, the Leader may choose to do so, or not. If a priority registration time period is used, then:

- **Clearly Define the Priority Group:** Leave no ambiguity about who qualifies for the initial registration window.
  - *Example:* "Priority registration is open to members currently enrolled in the 2025 Intensive Basic Alpine Program from date X to date Y." or "Members who identify with [Affinity Group Name] are eligible for priority registration."
- **Specify Exact Priority Dates & Times:** State precisely when the priority window opens and closes.
- **Explain the Priority Application Process:** Detail how the priority group should register or request permission *during their window*.
- **Specify Exact General Registration Date & Time:** State precisely when registration or permission requests open to *all other qualified members*.
- **Clarify the General Application Process:** Explain how non-priority members apply *after* the general date. Usually, this follows the standard permission process outlined elsewhere in the notes.
- **Manage Expectations About Availability:** Be transparent if the trip might fill during the priority period.
- **Maintain Consistent Qualification Standards:** Emphasize that the *skill, fitness, and experience requirements* remain the *same* for both priority and general applicants. The priority is about application timing, not qualification standards.

- **Examples:**

- **Permission & Registration Process:**
  - **Priority Registration (Current [Course/Program Name] Participants Only):**
    1. Priority registration is open from **Monday, May 5th, 7:00 AM to Friday, May 9th, 5:00 PM**.
    2. Eligible participants should apply during this window by following the steps below.
  - **General Registration (All Other Qualified Members):**
    1. General registration for any remaining spots opens on **Saturday, May 10th, 7:00 AM**.
  - **Application Steps (For both Priority and General):**
    1. Request leader permission via link on the activity page **during your respective registration window** (Priority: May 5-9; General: Starting May 10).
  - **Please Note:** This trip is expected to be popular. Spots filled during the priority period may limit availability for general registration.

## 6. Always Have General Registration in some capacity

- **Best Practices:**
  - **Timeframe:** Whether a 'priority registration period' was used or not, it is important that all trips are open to general registration for at least some time (e.g. a minimum of two weeks of general registration time is recommended.)
  - **What is meant by "General Registration"? Anyone** who meets the skill and fitness requirements has an opportunity to register, even if that's just joining the waitlist. If there's desire to keep a climb to a certain non-course affinity group (e.g. "a women's-only climb", or a "climbers of color only climb",) it's fine to maintain that requirement, as long as that requirement (like all requirements) is described in the trip's website listing. The point of general registration is to decouple a trip's registration from any one specific paid course, and at least provide a good-faith opportunity for non-course-member to join the roster or at least waitlist.
  - **Why this matters: This fosters inclusivity. We value the social-mixing that can result. It is also required to** keep us in accordance with many land-use rules The Mountaineers organization has to abide by. If a trip is specifically *only for paying-students of a specific course, then that trip is considered a paid activity by the land-managers, and the Leader of that trip would need to get a special permit per-trip. Versus, trips that at least make a good-faith effort to be available for general registration are categorized differently, and only have to deal with normal recreational-trip permitting the same way a non-Mountaineers trip would.*

## 7. Additional Resources

- [What is Leader Permission](#)
- [How To: Screening Participants for Safety](#)