**Guidelines for Pre-trip communication (“Hello Hiker” email)**

**Email participants in advance (a few days to two weeks depending on the lead-time complexity of planning needed) with details that participants will need to prepare successfully for the trip.**

**Sample checklist:** (*The leader has the final say about what information is needed.)*

* Meeting time(s) and place(s), detailed directions to meeting place(s) and trailhead (google map link); carpooling plans if any; the $$ amount that riders should bring for their driver; any other cash needs (for shuttles, food, etc.)
	+ *Directions to car pool location and to trailhead should be detailed and specific. Include things like forest service road numbers. Say exactly what PART of the parking lot that people should meet at, to include cardinal directions. Could be good to tell them how to recognize you.*
	+ *Tell the group how long you will wait for them if they are late, before you will mark them no-show and leave on the trip.*
* Any parking or other permits that they will need for the trip
* Reminder of daily elevation gain and mileage, the pace, route conditions and challenges (terrain, route-finding, stream or snow crossings, lightning, wet conditions, extreme temperatures etc.); special treats they can expect (great flowers, berries, views etc.)
* Clear statement of your objectives for the trip. Is it a conditioner (and if so what pace do you want to maintain and what is the plan for breaks and lunch)? Is it paced slower for photography, flower identification, mushroom hunting or just go be more social and relaxed?
	+ If it’s a backpacking trip, what’s your trip style: Lots of time for socializing at camp? Rise early for sunrise or stay up late for sunsets? Like to spend most of the day walking and go as far as you can?
* Any specific experience, skills or fitness that you will require of participants. Explain that this is important because you want your group to have fun and be successful so you need to know that skills and pace are compatible.
* Specific clothing and gear required and recommended, based on an up to date weather forecast (temp, precip) - <http://forecast.weather.gov/>), how much water and food they should carry. *Note here if there are specific items you’ll require them to have or be turned back at the meeting place*.
* Recommended map(s), expectations for everyone to bring map and compass and be prepared to use them; links to digital maps that they can upload (Gaiagps routes or gpx files), or printable online maps (such as www.caltopo.com) pointed and zoomed to the area of the trip
* Can be helpful to let the group know in advance how you plan to manage the pace – let the group split up and wait at intersections? Need to stay close enough to see and assist each other? Lack of alignment on this can result in disappointment or at least unnecessary difficulties for you.
* Download and distribute cell phone numbers and emergency contact information for everyone in the group as well as the Mountaineers emergency number and your itinerary. Remind people to bring a copy and give one to a contact person at home.
* Let the group know if certain conditions could cause you to cancel or reschedule the trip.
* Remind the group to let you know at least a day ahead of time if they have to cancel (more if you have a waitlist), and that no-shows or cancellations on the day of the trip are really discourteous and could result in consequences for them being approved on future Mountaineers trips.

**Special Note on Carpool Planning**

* Due to liability risks, the club has posted a policy that leaders CANNOT *assign* carpools or *mandate* a reimbursement rate to drivers. However leaders CAN *encourage* carpooling and *facilitate* carpool planning.
	+ *Start in your first pre-trip email by gathering info about who is willing to drive, how many people they can carry*
	+ *For backpack trips where overnight parking is needed, ask participants how many cars can park at their house.*
	+ Share the info about willing drivers and riders as well as the emails and carpool neighborhoods of participants and encourage people to contact each other to arrange carpools. Track the progress of the planning and make sure that everyone is accounted for.
	+ However, make sure everyone knows that the decision to drive or ride and who they travel with is entirely their decision.
* Willing drivers are a ***precious*** resource. Remind people that it’s an important courtesy to reimburse their driver for gas and wear-tear on their car.
	+ *Tell hikers the round-trip mileage to trailhead and do the math to suggest an amount to give their driver based on a common reimbursement rate (we’ve used 15c/mi in Foothills). Let them know that they are certainly welcome to give more.*
* Encourage everyone to bring the appropriate passes for the trailhead in case their driver forgets or doesn’t have one.

**SPECIAL NOTE ON COVID-19 (see** [**Mountaineers Covid-19 Response Page**](https://www.mountaineers.org/membership/the-mountaineers-covid-19-response)**)**

* Remind them of the requirement to wear a face covering and carry plenty of hand sanitizer.
* Remind them that they are expected to maintain at last 6 feet of distance between fellow group members and people they pass on the trail, and should pull up their face covering if they have to come closer than 6 feet.
* Remind them that the Mountaineers discourage carpooling except with members of their own household or pod.
* Remind them that they are expected to cancel if they are exhibiting any symptoms of Covid-19 or have been exposed to anyone who has been exhibiting such symptoms in the previous days.
* Remind them to let you or Mountaineers staff know after the trip if they test positive for Covid-19.