

## **Training guidelines (updated March 31, 2015)**

Our series of training hikes is aimed to improve members' hiking abilities in pace, hill-climbing and endurance. Hence hikers of such are expected to be more 'serious' with preparation, equipment and attitude. The following are some basics to guide you. They will be refined as feedbacks are available from everyone involved. These guidelines are also above and beyond those in our FAQ regarding before, during and after a hike.

### **EQUIPMENT**

- 1.1 Shoes - Proper hiking shoes for the type of training you undertake are important for beginner hikers. Your shoes must have good grip on most surfaces, with even deeper 'studs' or treads to provide strong traction when descending sandy or wet & muddy surfaces in hilly terrains.
- 1.2 If you are prone to spraining your ankles, shoes with rigid sides that cover your ankles are recommended for uneven, rocky ground surfaces.
- 2.1 Clothing – quick-dry, synthetic blends rather than pure cotton is best to promote evaporation for cooling in summer. Keep warm by layers rather than one thick, down jacket in winter. The layers allow you to strip gradually as you warm up during a hike.
- 2.2 Do not wear jeans to hike anytime of the year.
- 3.1 Hiking poles –Whether or not to use them is a personal choice. There are pros and cons about them. If you have never used one, don't. Your training over time will enable you to do without them unless you are weak in your lower limbs or using them for climbing extremely steep hills. However remote the chances, poles do break, specially the cheap ones; or when you tumble down a hillside without letting go of them.
- 4.1 Headlamps/torch for night hikes – LED with rechargeable batteries recommended. A headlamp frees your hands but in foggy conditions they do not illuminate as well as a torch unless it is held below your waist to brighten the trail surface. You may want to carry a small torch in your backpack at all times.
- 5.1 Compass – this is optional but does not cost anything if you download one from SmartCompass into your smart phone; otherwise a simple, inexpensive one costing less than \$20 could be kept in your hiking backpack at all times.
- 6.1 Whistle – also optional. This is now almost standard equipment in the chest-strap snap of backpacks. You use this to send distress signals.
- 7.1 Backpack – the thicker and wider the main straps, the lighter the pressure on your shoulders. Adjust the straps so the pack is reasonably high towards the top of your shoulder, not slipping to under your buttocks. If your pack comes with a wide waist trap, adjust your back-straps so some of the pack's weight is transferred to the top of your pelvis.

### **WATER AND FOOD**

- 1.1 Water - Learn from experience how much water you'd need based on your rate of exertion, distance, weather and available replenishment to carry enough for your entire hike. Heed your training host's suggestions if you are unsure. Whether or not to carry less and drink from streams is a personal choice and may not be suitable for everyone.
- 1.2 Drink regularly, not when you feel thirsty. This is particularly important in the summer.
- 2.1 Food – You should have a full meal two hours or so before a hike. Then carry enough food to eat every two hours to replenish your blood sugar to prevent premature fatigue or dizziness, loss of limb control, etc. The more vigorous your exertion, the more often you eat food that supply carbohydrates and or sugar.
- 2.1 Learn from experience what type of food is suitable for you at what weather and exertion conditions.

## TECHNIQUES

- 1.1 While everyone is physiologically different, there are some basic hiking techniques you can adapt to suit your hiking form. Listen to your body to become sensitive to what works for you. Do not go for a training hike if you do not at least 6 hours of sound sleep prior.
- 1.2 Generally, you should avoid striking the ground with locked knees under all conditions. Keep your knees slightly bent to remain flexible as you take each step forward. You can do so by lowering your hips a little as you walk.
- 1.3 The above is more critical as you are walking down steps or slopes, which may require you to lower your hips even more.
- 1.4 When going uphill or up steps, propel forward from your hips/buttocks, where your musculature is more massive, rather than pulling from your knees, where there is very little muscle. Do not over-stride. Do not straighten your knees after landing on each step. Rather, keep your knees bent and sway the hind leg from the hips to go up one step before the knee of the fore leg is straightened.
- 1.5 When going downhill or steps, drop your hips even more than normal, bend your knees to land on your fore sole without locking them or striking the ground with your heels. Do not over-stride. Do not straighten your knees to land to avoid excessive impact to your knees. Rather, keep your knees bent and sway the hind leg from the hips to propel forward as you land on your fore sole.
- 1.6 Swing your arms slightly along your sides fore and aft, not across your trunk, when you are going fast.
- 1.7 Use race-walkers hip rotation technique to extend your stride when walking fast on flats or uphill, i.e., rotate your hip to follow your forward foot as you walk.
- 1.8 When going uphill, steps or tired, sometimes you tend to lean forward. This may cause undue stress to your back. Your upper body should be kept as upright as possible so your CG is directed vertically through your crotch, not ahead or behind it.
- 1.9 To increase stability spread your legs wide apart both fore and aft as well as from side to side.
- 1.10 To prevent sliding when going down slippery surfaces, plant your legs shoulder-width apart and point your toes outward slightly. Do not lean forward, which may drag you down faster than you want to go or can control.
- 1.11 When training on long stretches of uphill slope or steps that may last for more than 30 minutes, note the following:
  - a. Breathe deep and long, forcing out all stale air from the lungs to get as much oxygen in as possible.
  - b. Keep a pace that neither makes you out of breath nor feel lactic acid pain in your knees. If either happens, slow down.
  - c. It is better to maintain a slow pace without being forced to stop than to go fast and stop every now and then. Problems usually happen at sudden stops after hard exertion.