

TRIPS FOR KIDS - GROUP GUIDEBOOK



TRAIL RIDES





About this Guidebook

Since trail rides are a core program of our organization, it is imperative that we provide safe, high quality programming nationwide. This guidebook will serve to standardize our best practices to ensure that we meet those standards at every chapter/club and on every ride.

This guidebook sets a standard of our top safety priority items. Not every situation can be covered in this guidebook, so use your best judgment in creating safe, fun and transformative experiences for our participants.

Please take the time to read through and understand this guidebook thoroughly. The intention is to establish a common framework between all chapter and clubs that allows you to add greater depth to your specific program.

Additionally, there are several trainings available that can help individuals to become more advanced group ride leaders:

- Professional Mountain Bike Instructor 'Ride Guide' one-day course (for adult mountain bike ride groups): <http://www.pmbia.org/courses/ride-guide/>
- Bicycle Instructors Certification Program 'Ride Leaders Certification' one-day course (for adult mountain bike ride groups): <https://icp.bike/ride-leader>
- League of American Bicyclists 'League Cycling Instructor' certification 24-hour course (road-specific and includes teaching youth how to ride safely): <http://www.bikeleague.org/content/become-instructor>
- [International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) – IMBA no longer provides ride training classes]

Again, thank you for all you do! You make a big impact on the young people we serve.

Happy Trails!

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION



Bikes: A Tool for Positive Change

Across the nation, under served youth, those who live in the inner-city or who come from low-income families, are faced with more challenges than ever before, and don't have regular opportunities to get out of the house, be active outdoors and explore natural places. Kids and bikes are a natural combination, and many of us remember riding around the neighborhood as a kid and the sense of freedom and independence that two wheels gave us.

Group bicycle rides allow us to share the great outdoors while teaching a number of valuable life lessons to youth, especially the under served. The rides provide physical challenges and the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and become involved in a lifelong healthy activity. In our closing circle at the end of a ride, we reflect on lessons learned and encourage the kids to apply these lessons to other aspects of life.

According to numerous studies, among other benefits, bicycling has been shown to: positively alter brain activity, reduce stress, anxiety and depression, improve mood, improve academic performance, and improve general health and fitness.

In a sedentary world with ever-growing addiction to screens, mountain biking is a powerful tool for positive youth development. Contact the Trips for Kids national office for a list of research references if you would like to learn more about the benefits of bicycling.

Giving kids the gift of the outdoors

Whether a long-standing or new Trips for Kids chapter or club, we would first like to thank you for your desire and dedication to improving the lives of young people through the power of riding a bike in nature. Biking can be a transformative experience, especially for youth who may not have the opportunity to experience nature, let alone in a fun and exhilarating way.

Our Trail Rides Program is the oldest and core program of Trips for Kids and the reason many of us are attracted to this line of work in the first place; we want to make a positive impact and get more kids on bikes!

As a Trips for Kids Ride Leader, you have a great responsibility and opportunity. You have the responsibility

to provide safe experiences for our kids and the opportunity to make a positive impact in their lives. There are few jobs that hold such weight and you get to do this from the seat of a mountain bike.

Never underestimate the work you do nor take it for granted. You are very lucky and the work you do matters. The greatest thing you can do is pass that positive energy forward to our kids. Going on a ride with us may be the one bright spot in their week, so give it your best every time you arrive at the trail head.

A wise person once said: "There are many paths that lead to the mountaintop."

Let's show them how to get there by bike!



Our Mission

To provide transformative cycling experiences through a network of chapter/clubs that promote healthy, recreational lifestyles, environmental awareness, and personal empowerment for young people of all communities, especially those most in need.



Our Vision

We envision a world where kids from all walks of life have the opportunity to know the joy of riding a bike and the freedom to explore the natural world on two wheels.

The story of TRIPS FOR KIDS

Kids and nature. Kids and bikes. What is more natural than getting a kid on a bike? Bicycling can be a horizon-expanding experience for a young person, giving them a sense of wonder, independence, achievement and fun!

Trips for Kids is the nation's oldest and largest youth development bicycling organization. We have enriched the lives of over 230,000 young people across North America using a simple yet powerful tool – the bicycle.

Our first small chapter was started by CNN Hero Marilyn Price in 1988; we have since organically grown to a vast network of chapters offering free bicycling programs for over 10,000 youth annually in the US and Canada. Young people aged 10-17, mostly under served, come to us from neighborhoods, schools, agencies and community organizations.

Our Discovery Trail Rides, Adventure Clubs, Earn-a-Bike Workshops, Mobile Clinics, ReCyclery Bike Shops and other youth development programs are helping to combat the physical inactivity crisis, promote equitable access to safe places to play and exercise, provide opportunities for physical activity in and out of school, and build self-esteem, personal skills and learn environmental stewardship, thus mentoring youth to achieve better life outcomes.

The Trips for Kids Discovery Trail Rides and Adventure Club programs offer profound new experiences and challenges that can transform attitudes, bolster self-confidence and introduce lifelong values.

For some, these rides present pivotal moments of self-discovery that can tip the balance toward healthy lifestyle choices.

SINCE 1988...

Funded in San Rafael, California (Marin County) in 1988, social activist and cycling legend Marilyn Price pioneered the practice of bicycle trail riding to deliver lessons in personal responsibility, achievement and environmental awareness through the simple act of having fun.

The organization expanded dramatically in 1994 with the establishment of the Recyclery Community Bike Shop and Earn-a-Bike program. In addition to providing bikes, parts, clothing, accessories and affordable transportation for Bay Area residents, the Recyclery shop funds much of the Trips for Kids-Marine program costs.

Meanwhile, the Earn-a-Bike program teaches youngsters valuable mechanical, bike riding and life skills in a safe and supportive environment, and our Mobile Bike Clinics program brings transformative cycling experiences such as safety lessons, maintenance instruction and trail rides to where the kids are.

By the late 1990's new Trips for Kids chapters began emerging around the country and Canada, inspired by the success of the flagship Trips for Kids-Marine program.

On August 1, 2017, we launched a national umbrella organization to focus on supporting the growth and refinement of the organization's existing and future network of independent chapters, improve program quality and grow the movement to get more kids on bikes and into nature.

SECTION 2: ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL TRAIL RIDE

Requirements for guiding group trail rides

SAFETY

Safety is the most important factor in considering the success of a ride. The goal is no injuries. No injuries beyond a Band-Aid should be normal on the majority of your rides, if proper attention is paid to the Ride Safety Policies and Procedures set forth in this manual.

A safe ride is one that considers not only the physical but also the emotional safety of the participants, creating a safe space for them to learn and explore. This means that creating a positive atmosphere based on support and positive language is crucial. No participant should ever feel unwelcome, intimidated or alienated. We do not tolerate offensive or divisive language by anyone in the group. If you hear something, say something.

FUN!

The second pillar of a successful ride can be summarized by one major concept: flow theory.

Flow theory states that participants will experience a state of flow when they are at the appropriate level of challenge vs. skill. Too much challenge and not enough skill produces anxiety while too little challenge and too much skill produces boredom.

As a Ride Leader, it is your duty to ensure that you lead in such a way that it keeps participants in the sweet spot, balanced between challenge and skill. This is where the fun happens.

Since most of our rides are beginner oriented, remember that even though a trail may seem easy to you, it could be a big challenge or possibly even a little scary to a beginner. It's always better to err on the side of a lower challenge to build confidence and avoid unsafe or inappropriate terrain.



LEARNING

The final pillar of a successful ride can be captured with the idea of teaching for transfer. This idea means that through a facilitated educational/recreational experience, participants will learn something applicable to their lives beyond that specific activity.

In our case, mountain biking is the tool we use to create positive youth development outcomes such as increased appreciation for nature and exercise, increased self-esteem and confidence, and a (hopefully lifelong) appreciation for mountain biking and/or other outdoor adventure activities.

The most important way to create transformative experiences, in other words, teaching for transfer, is to frame the program with strong introduction and debrief activities. Our goal is to have kids walk away with the ability to relate their experience back to the real world.

SECTION 3: RIDE LEADER/ASSISTANTS/VOLUNTEERS



Requirements

In order to distinguish and differentiate roles and responsibilities, we have created three different levels of Trail Rides Program leader: Ride Leader, Assistant Ride Leader, and Ride Volunteer.

Chapter/clubs should maintain a file on each Ride Leader/Assistant/Volunteer documenting their information and qualifications.

Specific forms for all adults assisting with Group Rides are listed on the next page.

Ride Leader

Every Trips for Kids ride program must be led by at least one qualified staff or volunteer Ride Leader who meets the requirements defined below. Since the Ride Leader has ultimate responsibility for all aspects the outing, Trips for Kids must ensure that they have the appropriate skills and experience to conduct a safe and high-quality program.

To become a Ride Leader requires that a person must read and thoroughly understand this manual and be competent in all skills needed for program activities including:

Mountain biking

(or urban biking if your chapter/club rides in this setting)

- must be able to ride intermediate level trails or the most difficult sections of any trail being ridden
- capable of demonstrating bike safety and skills for the trail and/or street
- should have a personal interest and experience in biking

Ride Facilitation

- be competent in group management and dynamics
- be an outspoken leader capable of orchestrating the program and controlling various types of situations

Risk management

- be aware of, mitigate and manage all risks associated with the program including physical and emotional safety

Working with youth

- understand and adapt to differing needs of different age and socio-economic groups (cultural competency)
- show cultural sensitivity (no racial or sexist jokes, for example)
- appropriate interactions with all youth
- serve as a positive role model

Bike mechanics

- able to perform trail side repairs such as flat tire, broken chain, minor derailleur and brake adjustments, etc.

Trip planning

- understand and plan skill appropriate routes to avoid unsafe situations for the group

Other Ride Leader requirements

- Have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of: Assistant Ride Leader, Ride Volunteers, agency staff and participants.
- Be willing and able to orchestrate and follow your Emergency Action Plan (see Section 6)
- Ride under the guidance of a qualified Ride Leader until they determine the competency of the trainee.
- New chapter/clubs are exempt from this requirement until their first Ride Leader(s) have been established.



Other requirements and forms

All adults assisting a ride

- Complete a Trips for Kids Ride Volunteer Application (Appendix A)

Ride Leader and

Assistant Ride Leader

- Have current CPR/ First Aid certification. Wilderness First Aid (or) Responder certification is not required but highly encouraged
- Complete a criminal history background check instigated by your chapter/club; We recommend conducting both local and national background checks.

Volunteers

- Complete an Activity Release Form

Assistant Ride Leader

The Assistant Ride Leader has similar but slightly less responsibility than the Ride Leader, who bears ultimate responsibility for the ride. This person should serve as the sweep rider of the group in most situations and will aid the Ride Leader in delivering a high quality and safe experience for our participants. In order to be an Assistant Ride Leader one should Read thoroughly understand this manual and be competent in most skills needed for ride activities.

Mountain biking

(or urban biking if your chapter/club rides in this setting)

- should be able to ride advanced beginner level trail
- capable of demonstrating bike safety and skills

Ride facilitation

- able to aid in group management and dynamics
- assist the Ride Leader in orchestrating the program and controlling various types of situations

Risk management

- be aware of, mitigate and manage risks associated with the program

Working with youth

- understand and adapt to differing needs of different age and socioeconomic groups
- show cultural sensitivity (no racial jokes, for example)
- appropriate interactions with all youth
- serve as a positive role model

Basic bike mechanics

- able to help perform trail side repairs such as flat tire, broken chain, minor derailleur and brake adjustments, etc,

Ride Volunteer

While many chapters/clubs may rely on non-paid “volunteers” to run their programs, for the sake of establishing a common language and understanding, a Ride Volunteer is defined as a person interested in assisting with a ride, but who has little actual responsibility for the success of the program. For example, your chapter/club’s Ride Leader may indeed be a volunteer but in order to assume that title and level of responsibility they must meet all of the above criteria while a Ride Volunteer must only meet the criteria listed below:

- Complete an Activity Release Form
- Have experience biking
- Must be able to ride a bike confidently and not become an additional liability to the group through lack of basic riding skill
- Ride facilitation
- Be able to aid in group management of youth
- Risk management
- Help keep youth safe by being an additional adult voice to stop any unsafe behavior
- Interacting with youth
- show cultural sensitivity (no racial jokes, for example)
- appropriate interactions with all youth
- serve as a positive role model

Additional Expectations

It is vital that the Ride Leader and Assistant Ride Leader use their best judgment and monitor all interactions with youth and any outside adults and immediately stop any unsafe or inappropriate interactions. In the unlikely event of such an interaction, this person must be asked to leave the ride immediately and never participate in any future Trips for Kids programs. This person should be documented and reported to your chapter/club director and Trips for Kids national if the interaction rose to such a level that it necessitated such action to be taken. Additionally, the appropriate authorities should be notified if the situation rose to a higher level of concern.

Examples of unacceptable behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Taking pictures of youth– Only Trips for Kids personnel or agency staff may be authorized to do so. Make sure all youth waivers permit photography and please ask all Ride Volunteers to refrain from taking pictures during the program (other than a closing group picture if deemed acceptable by the agency staff.) Use your best judgment in this situation.
- Inappropriate language/jokes/stories – offensive, demeaning, racial or sexual language is prohibited on any Trips for Kids program.
- Inappropriate physical interactions – high fives or a shoulder pat should be, in general, the only form of physical interaction any adult from Trips for Kids has with any youth. A hug, only if initiated by the youth, may be acceptable but should be the exception, not the rule. Use your best judgment and be extremely conservative in this arena.
- Lastly, no youth should ever be alone with any adult during our programs. This goes for all Trips for Kids personnel. (The only exception being in the case of an urgent medical emergency requiring such action for the ultimate wellbeing of the youth.)

Volunteers are protected under federal law and you should be familiar with the Volunteer Protection Act to understand what is covered and what is not. Visit the websites below for more information on the act:

- This two-page primer on the federal Volunteer Protection Act provides a clear, succinct analysis of the act and your protections as a volunteer: https://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Volunteers_Liability_Fact_Sheet_FINAL_%28CLS-20120530%29_20100727.pdf
- The Federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 aims to promote volunteerism by limiting, and in many cases completely eliminating, a volunteer's risk of tort liability when acting for nonprofit organizations or government entities. Here is the original legislation: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-105publ19/pdf/PLAW-105publ19.pdf>



SECTION 4: RIDE SAFETY PROCEDURES

Success Factors

All Ride Safety Policies must be adhered to during any and all Trips for Kids programs

Adult to Participant Ratio

The recommended ratio of adult to youth participants is 1:4 to ensure adequate supervision and safety of the riders. Two adults should be present on all rides at a minimum. Both Trips for Kids staff/volunteer Ride Leaders and agency staff count toward total adults.

Ride Leader Ratios

Each ride must have at least one staff/volunteer Ride Leader who is responsible for planning, facilitation and safety of the ride. We recommend that one qualified Ride Leader lead up to eight youth riders (plus an Assistant Ride Leader or Volunteer) and a second Ride Leader is recommended with the ninth through the sixteenth participant. Each ride will require additional adult support as outlined below.

In order to maintain the safety of all trail users, trail rides should not exceed 16 youth riding in the same group. Including adult ride leaders, that will give you a train of 20 people on the trail, which is the recommended maximum number of riders. You may



consider splitting that group into a faster and slower group and doing two rides at the same time to give each Ride Leader a smaller group of eight for example.

If an agency brings more than 16 youth to a single ride, another option is to split the group into two equal halves and conduct two rides with the smaller groups. A third option is for one group to ride for half the time, and the other group may go on a hike with their agency leaders, or participate in a bike safety and skills class, or play games in a park, and then they switch. For example, in the Trips for Kids Marin chapter this is called a Hike and Bike Program.

Adults Alone with Kids

There must always be two adults present with a single youth as a general rule during a ride. An exception might be when a youth can no longer

participate in the ride or has an emergency and may then be accompanied back to the trail head by a single adult from the agency. It is likely that the agency has similar rules however so act accordingly. A Trips for Kids staffer/volunteer should never be alone with a single youth if at all possible.

Child Unable to Continue Ride

If a youth cannot complete the ride for any reason and needs to return to the ride start, remember:

- no youth can be alone with one adult unless the adult is from the agency;
- the youth should walk, not ride the bike, unless he/she is returning with a Ride Leader/ Volunteer AND agency staff to avoid unsafe riding conditions.

Activity Release Form (Appendix B)

If a parent or guardian has not signed, or if the agency failed to bring, activity release for one or more youth, the youth cannot go on the bike trip* If no one is available to stay with the unsigned youth, the Ride Leader must cancel the ride. Agency leaders and Ride Volunteers must also fill out a waiver form. All release forms must be carried on the ride.

*Written consent must always be provided in order for a youth to participate in a Trips for Kids activity. This means that verbal consent over the phone with an agency leader signing for the parent/guardian is not an admissible way to sign a waiver.

If the parent/guardian can sign the waiver at home or work, take a clear picture of it and text or attach it to an email stating their agreement to terms of participation, this is considered permissible as a last resort but should be the exception, not the rule. Make sure to print a copy of the waiver and keep it in your records and ask for the original signed copy from the agency after the ride.

To avoid this situation, make sure to confirm with agencies prior to the trip to ensure waivers have been completed and bring extra with you for adults on the ride as well.

Trip Log/ Data Recording (Appendix C)

Ride Leaders should complete a Trip Log with all pertinent information for each day's ride such as the number of participants and demographic breakdowns. This data is crucial to the success of our organization and will be reported annually to Trips for Kids national.



First Aid/Incident Reports (Appendix D)

Trips for Kids Ride Leaders are required to have basic First Aid/CPR training through a nationally recognized body like the American Red Cross or American Heart Association. Ride Leaders must recertify this training based on time intervals set by the certifying organization in order to remain active, and you should keep this information on file with your chapter/club.

As a Ride Leader, you are authorized to act within your level of training to care for a participant, but not exceed it. The person on the trip with the highest level of medical training should always act as the lead responder in the event of an incident or emergency. Those persons administering first aid MUST wear latex gloves and use appropriate body fluid isolation protection.

Upon completion of the ride, the Ride Leader must immediately fill out an accident/incident report and

file it with a copy of the participant's waiver. These reports must be kept on file for as long as seven years depending on your state's statute of limitations.

Additional medical certifications like Wilderness First Responder or Wilderness First Aid are highly encouraged and quickly becoming industry-wide best practice for professionals in the outdoor recreation field.

Auto and Liability Insurance

Anyone who transports youth or adults in a personal vehicle must have his/her own auto insurance and should assume liability for transporting those participants. You should also have a current ride liability insurance policy through your Trips for Kids chapter (listing Trips for Kids national as an "additional insured") or fiscal sponsor, or through the participants' host organization, before hosting group rides.

SECTION 5: TRAIL RIDES PROGRAM STANDARD MODEL

How to make it work



The Trail Rides Program offers comprehensive youth mountain bike programs based on three guiding principles: safety, fun and learning. The difference between taking a group of youth on a bike ride and offering a recreation program lies in delivering these core elements based on our safety framework. Our goal is to deliver the same high-quality experience for all participants, on every ride.

Ride Leaders have leeway based on group size, experience and age as how to implement the program based on their best judgment, but these elements should be present on all first and one-time rides. Recurring Ride Series rides may omit the Cone Zone Practice after the first ride if the majority of youth are returning riders, but should still do a skills assessment for any new riders joining the group.

The core elements are outlined at right.

Trail Rides Program Standard Model

- 1. Opening circle introduction**
 - a. Names, experience, goals
 - b. Plan for the day
- 2. Safety Orientation**
 - a. Personal and Bike Safety
 - b. Cone Zone Practice
 - c. Trail Safety
- 3. Trail Ride**
 - a. Regrouping Check-in
 - b. Group management
 - c. Risk management and coaching
- 4. Closing circle debrief**
 - a. Wrap up questions
 - b. Fun send-off

Before the Ride: Pre-Ride Agency Reminders

Ride Coordinator or Ride Leader should contact agency the week of the ride to:

Go over the ride details and relevant information: contact numbers, weather, etc.

Request completed permission forms, including medical info

Request rider heights for bike selection

Remind the agency that only youth who know how to ride a bike with hand brakes can participate

Be sure the agency reviewed the ride safety information sent in the email

Remind the agency that they are responsible for the youth having appropriate clothing for the weather conditions.

Ask to have all youth with hairstyles that may impede proper helmet fit tie their hair down before arrival.

Pre-Ride Checks

Prior to beginning each ride, Ride Leader(s) should ensure the following safety and bike checks are performed for participants on the ride including: volunteers, kids and agency staff. They can assign other competent volunteers to assist with these pre-ride checks. All equipment should be inspected and ready to go prior to participant arrival. Equipment fit and usage will be covered in the group Safety Orientation.

Bike Check

- ABC Quick Hand check – Air, Brakes, Chain, Quick releases, Handlebars
- Tires inflated to 25-35 lbs. No cuts in the tread or sidewall with adequate tread.
- The brakes function well and have adequate brake pads.
- The crank, hubs and headset are tight.
- Bikes are clean and presentable. (Some dirt ok, no neglected-looking bikes.)

Bike Fit and Sizing

(bringing the correctly sized bikes for your riders)

- Making sure you have the appropriate size bike for your riders is a crucial aspect of ensuring the safety and success of your ride. Giving a participant an improperly fitting bike could be dangerous and lead to a crash.
- To avoid this situation, make sure you ask for the heights of the youth and adult participants before the day of the ride and bring bikes appropriately sized for each rider, based on their height.
- Use the manufacturer's recommended sizing chart to ensure the correct bike fit. If that isn't available, reference the chart below as a starting point to determine the relative frame size for each rider's height. (This chart refers to standard hardtail mountain bikes with 26-inch wheels and therefore does not reflect specific bike sizing relative to particular bike brands.)
- With both feet flat on the ground, riders should have around 2 inches of stand-over clearance between the top tube of the bike frame and their body, as a general rule for an appropriately sized bike.

Frame Sizing Chart

Bike Frame Size (26 " wheels)	Rider Height
XS child's bike (24" wheels)	4'6" – 4'11"
X-Small – 13 inch	4'11" – 5' 3"
Small – 15 inch	5'3" – 5'6"
Medium – 17 inch	5'6" – 5'9"
Large – 19 inch	5'9" – 6'1"

Equipment Checklist

- **Bikes** – sized and counted correctly.
Bring one or two extra bikes if possible
- **Helmets** – cleaned between uses
- **Gloves** – clean, sorted and paired
- **Water bottles** – clean and full of water
- **Snacks** *Be careful and aware of allergies!*
- **Radios** – charged
- **Tire pumps** – floor pump for pre-ride checks and portable mini pump to take on ride
- **Extra tubes** – tubes sized to match all wheel sizes on the ride
- **Bike tools** – multi-tool, tire irons, patch kit, chain breaker, quick links
- **Paperwork** – signed participant waivers, blank accident reports and trip logs
- **First aid kit** – stocked
- **If you ride in harsh weather climates**, bring extra clothing that could keep participants comfortable they if show up improperly dressed i.e: ponchos, windbreakers, dry socks, etc.

1. Greeting Procedures and Opening Circle Introductions

The very first thing you should do is collect and check their activity releases, to ensure all are signed correctly by their guardians, and so that you are aware of any rider's medical conditions.

If you have an assistant ride leader, they can oversee this process while you begin the opening circle. Make sure to bring the signed activity releases with you on the ride in case you need emergency contact information.

Once waivers are collected, kids are fitted with helmets and gloves, and bikes are passed out, have everyone circle up. Note: Do not let kids ride the bikes before the personal and bike safety orientation is complete.

As soon as everyone is standing in a circle with their bikes, it is the time to get to know your participants and have them introduce themselves to the group. (If time is limited, ask fewer questions) This will start to break down barriers and begin the group forming process.

Typically, two to four questions are asked at this time, including:

- Name?
- When was the last time you rode a bike?
- Did you have breakfast and/or lunch today?
- What are you excited about today i.e., goals for the day?

These questions will give insight into the experience, enthusiasm and preparedness of your riders for the day. Choose at least two of the questions to ask. This is also the time to introduce yourself and tell them about Trips for Kids and our mission.



Opening Circle Introduction

One of the most important things you will do as a Ride Leader is to start each program with a strong introduction. Front-loading, as it is known in experiential education terms, is essential to a safe, memorable and impactful trip.

According to www.jumpfoundation.org:

“Front-loading means punctuating the key learning points before an activity or experience takes place, rather than or in combination with, debriefing it afterward.

What are the benefits of front-loading?

- It helps participants use the upcoming activity to build on prior knowledge and experience
- It helps participants set purpose and intention for the activity
- It distributes expertise to the participants before the activity begins, as opposed to the facilitator or instructor acting as the only expert.”

Example:

“Good morning everyone! My name is Susan and I’m going to be your Ride Leader. I am a volunteer with Trips for Kids. Trips for Kids is an organization that has been taking young people just like you on trail riding adventures all over the country since 1988. We’re so glad you’re riding with us today!

Welcome to Anywhere State Park. Today we’re going on an adventure to have fun, explore nature and learn about some of the history of this park. You’ll first learn how to use your equipment safely, then run through some basic riding skills, then we’ll ride on the trail!

First, let’s get our equipment setup. Can I have everyone line up from shortest to tallest right next to our helmets? Thanks!”

2. Safety Orientation

Once finished with opening circle introductions, maintain the circle and roll straight into the Safety Orientation. The four areas of safety that must be covered are personal safety, bike safety, Cone Zone Practice and trail safety.

Covering the key points outlined below is essential to establishing a basic common knowledge and checking to ensure all participants and equipment are set and ready to ride.

Teaching tips

There are three primary ways people absorb information, also known as learning styles. They are: Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic or VAK. It is important to cover all three styles during your intro so all people can absorb information equally. Show, explain and let them try a new concept to facilitate understanding and retention.

When explaining something, remember the acronym: KISS (Keep It Simple Smarty). You should deliver essential information as simply and concisely as possible. Avoid rambling and techno babble about bike parts they don't need to know as beginners. Your safety orientation should take anywhere from 5-7 minutes.

And the Golden Rule for delivering effective instructional demonstrations:

**SPEAK SLOWLY,
PAUSE...
AND CHECK FOR
UNDERSTANDING**



Safety Orientation Outline (Head to Toe equipment check)

Personal Safety	Bike Safety	Cone Zone Practice	Trail Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helmet fit • No gum • Gloves on correctly • Pant's legs rolled up • Shoes tied • Sunscreen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Quick Check • Seat Height Adjustment • Braking and Shifting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyes, Fingers and Feet • Mounting and dismounting a bike • Power Pedal Position • Braking • Shifting • Ready Position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between the Ride Leaders • Single File • Spacing – Two bike lengths • Slow and Say Hello!



Safety Orientation Explained

Personal Safety

Check personal equipment from head to toe while the group is still in a circle formation.

1. Helmets

- A. All participants **MUST** wear a helmet. Leaders must fit the youth with helmets carefully. A poorly fitted helmet may be as bad as no helmet at all. When fitting a helmet, you should ensure:
 - I. Fitting pads inside touch all the way around;
 - II. The straps form a "V" just beneath the earlobe;
 - III. The chin strap is comfortably snug with the buckle flush against the skin.
 - IV. The rim of the helmet is one or to two finger-widths above eyebrows.
 - V. The helmet is sitting level on the head.
 - VI. The helmet stays in place when the person shakes his/her head.

2. No gum

- A. Choking hazard

3. Gloves

- A. Make sure all participants are wearing gloves correctly. Often, they are backward

4. Pant's legs rolled up.

- A. Right leg to avoid chain suck

5. Shoes Tied

6. Sunscreen

- A. Should be available and passed out on each trip.
 - I. Look for hypo allergenic options containing the physical blocks, Titanium Dioxide and Zinc Oxide, rather than questionable chemicals like Oxybenzone. The John Wayne Foundation is a Trips for Kids sponsor and makes excellent sunscreen.

7. Hydration

- A. Every youth should have a clean, full water bottle. We recommend giving each rider a bottle or ensuring they bring their own.
 - I. Encourage pre-hydration by having them drink at the beginning and refilling before they ride if possible.
 - II. Water is the best option. Energy drinks, sodas and juices contain sugars and salts and aren't a healthy option unless riders have perspired a great deal and are in need of electrolyte replacement.

Bike Safety

Cover the key elements of bike safety: ensuring the bike is mechanically sound, adjusted correctly and how to use it properly.

ABC Quick Check

Walk the kids through each step.

1. A = Air

- A. "Tires should be firm like a tennis ball, not flat like a beach ball."
- B. Have kids squeeze the front and back tire to ensure proper inflation.

2. B = Brakes

- A. Squeeze the front and back brakes and rock the bike back and forth to ensure the brakes are attached and working correctly.

3. C = Chain

- A. "The chain should sound like a rattlesnake not like a loud machine."
- B. Rotate the cranks backward and listen to make sure the chain is lubricated and freely moving as it should be.

4. Quick = Quick Release

- A. Check the front and back quick releases to ensure tightness. Make sure they can't rotate.
- B. *Handlebar and Stem should already be checked by you and ensured of their tightness so may be excluded from the youth*

5. Adjusting seat height

- A. Have riders stand next to their seat.
- B. Open the seat post quick release.
- C. Raise the seat to their hip bone.
- D. Straighten the seat and close the quick release.

6. To check for correct height:

- A. Riders should be on their tiptoes on the ground while sitting on the saddle.
- B. With their heel on the pedal and the pedal at the lowest position, their leg should be almost fully extended.
- C. Make sure seat tube does not exceed minimum insertion point
- D. Switch participant to a larger bike if this is the case
- E. *NOTE* - There are multiple ways to adjust seat height correctly.
- F. An alternate method is to use the riders arm length. Have the rider reach down over the seat and raise the seat till their arm is fully extended with middle fingertip centered on the pedal crank.

Using the Bike

1. Braking

- A. Ask "What are our brakes for?"
 - I. Brakes are for controlling speed, not just stopping.
 - II. Emphasize this point as it is not always apparent and very important.
- B. Bunny Ears
 - I. Hold up two fingers.
 - II. Have them squeeze the brake levers using two fingers or "bunny ears."
 - a. Smooth and even pressure is the goal. Never slam on the brakes, especially the front brake!
 - i. You can demo what it looks like to lock the front brake by tipping the bike forward with a locked front wheel.
 - b. Although fun, avoid skidding the rear wheel. Explain that you can lose control and it destroys the tires. It also destroys the trail and hurts the environment!
- C. Left is front, Right is rear
 - I. Have them raise their right hands and take the oath: **Right is rear!**
 - a. Walk the bike forward and ask them to apply the rear brake and notice what happens. (The tire skids but does not stop the bike.)
 - b. Now ask them to walk forward and apply both brakes smoothly and evenly. (The bike stops!)
 - i. They should notice how much more effectively both brakes stop the bike.
 - c. We use both brakes applying smooth and even pressure to control your speed and stop.
 - II. This is also known as "modulation"

2. Shifting and Pedaling

- A. Never shift without pedaling!
 - I. Mention this right away to avoid damaging the drivetrain.
- B. Focus shifting on the right hand, rear derailleur.
 - I. Have all bikes set in the front middle ring prior to the ride and tell them not to worry about shifting the front derailleur. If there is a steep section of trail requiring a shift to the granny gear, stop and explain on the trail before the climb. Have everyone shift together if necessary.
 - II. Try the shifting mechanism for one click.
 - III. Index finger for upshifts, thumb for downshifts on trigger style shifters. Rotating the grip forward and backward on grip shifters.
- C. Shifting Theory
 - I. There are multiple ways to coach shifting. Focus on the right thumb and index finger first and then explain more if understanding is not reached.
 - a. Thumb makes it easy.
 - b. Finger makes it harder.
 - II. Many entry-level bikes have number indicators on the shifters showing the selected gear. If so, explain that smaller numbers make it easier to pedal for going uphill. Big numbers make it harder to pedal for going faster. This is very helpful for visual learners.
 - III. Demonstrate with your hands what proper pedaling cadence looks like. Show what too fast and too slow looks like and how to remedy the situation by shifting to the correct gear.
 - IV. On the trail, you can verbally cue the group as to when and how to shift as you ride along the trail.
 - a. "Press your right thumb to make it easier to pedal!" (right thumb)
 - b. "Pull your index finger to make it harder!" (right finger)
- D. No skidding or wheelies and keep hands on the bars at all times.



Cone Zone Practice

The Cone Zone Practice is a crucial element that transforms the experience from a bike ride into a trail ride program.

It is during this portion that we coach our youth riders on fundamental mountain biking skills necessary for a successful ride. It also serves the vital function of allowing Ride Leaders to observe and assess the skill level of our riders giving important information on which riders need extra coaching and attention and how to plan the ride accordingly.

The Cone Zone Practice should be set up using cones configured with a starting line, slalom, and stop box (for practicing braking and stopping) at a minimum. It may be configured according to your available terrain and relative skill level to include more challenging features like small bumps, inclines and declines as well. If space is limited, figure out some way to practice basic skills and observe skill level before hitting the trail.

The Cone Zone Practice should take anywhere from 15-30 minutes, or more if necessary.

Fundamental skills covered in the Cone Zone Practice

- **Eyes, Fingers and Feet**
“Eyes up looking ahead, fingers always on the brakes, feet level when coasting”
- **Mounting and dismounting the bike**
- **Power Pedal Position**
- **Braking**
- **Shifting**

*The Ready Position (athletic standing position on the bike - eyes up, elbows out, butt off the saddle, hinge at the waist, knees bent and balanced feet with pedals level) is also very important but can be taught on the trail after you begin the ride. Always feel free to teach this during the Cone Zone Practice if you see fit!

These are the most basic skills needed to be able to complete a beginner mountain bike ride and should be taught during the session. Emphasize keeping their fingers on the brakes at all times and keeping their eyes up as this greatly increases safety.

If a youth rider cannot demonstrate basic competency and skill in these areas, more time and attention should be focused on coaching them until they can confidently navigate the skills course. They do not have to be perfect in the above skills, but

they must be able to control their bikes by using effective braking, steering and pedaling movements. Above all, they must be able to bring the bike to a safe and controlled stop by demonstrating proper braking technique before heading out on your ride.

Trail Safety

After finishing the Cone Zone Practice the Trail Safety talk should be the last thing they hear before beginning the ride. The key points are: staying between the ride leaders, single file, spacing and “Slow and Say Hello!”

1. Between the Leaders

- Riders should never be in front of the Ride Leader or behind the sweep rider.
- Place additional adults or volunteers in the middle to help

2. Single File

- We ride single file on the right side of the trail.
- Passing is generally discouraged unless on a wide trail where kids can call out: “passing on the left!”
- Generally, the faster riders will find their way to the front but remember to set the pace to the slower riders in the group.
- Immediately stop any unsafe passing behaviors you see.

3. Spacing

- Two bike lengths.
 - Demonstrate what two bike lengths look like and explain why it's important: “To maintain a safe distance from the person in front of you.”

4. Slow and Say Hello!

- Just as the name implies, when approaching oncoming traffic on the trail, we slow down and say hi.
 - This campaign was created by Trail Partners, a collaboration between the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, Marin Horse Council, and the Marin Conservation League as a way to promote trail safety. You can learn more at www.safetrailsmarin.org



On-trail Group Management

Regrouping Check-in

Once you have started your ride, always stop and regroup after the first couple of minutes riding.

This is an important time to make sure everyone is with you and comfortable. Check:

1. **Head count**
2. **Make sure everyone is comfortable**
 - A. Seats adjusted correctly
3. **Encourage them to drink water**
4. **Remind them of Trail Safety Rules**

Continue to check these things at every stop and remember to always stop at all trail junctions or intersections.

Speed and Distance

Most of our rides are beginner-oriented so remember to ride to their level. As the Ride Leader, you must set a pace that keeps the groups together and doesn't leave anyone behind.

Pacing is the best way to keep everyone safe and happy once out on the trail. Keep it cool. They have the rest of their lives to tear it up, but only if they have a good first experience!

Riders should leave at least two bike lengths between themselves and the person ahead of them. If approaching a downhill section, stop, coach them on using their brakes and remind them to maintain their space with the person in front of them.

Lead and sweep rider

Unless some extenuating circumstance requires it, the Ride Leader should always be the lead rider in the group:

1. Lead Rider

- A. All youth should stay behind the lead rider
- B. Maintains safe and reasonable pace
- C. Slows down or stops and waits for the sweep to catch up if the group gets too spread out
- D. Stops at the TOP of hills and wait for the sweep to catch up.
- E. Stops at all intersections

2. Sweep Rider

- A. Ensures ALL participants are ahead of them
- B. Alerts the lead rider if there is a problem

*** Important Notes on Descents***

Never Assume Your Kids Will Use Their Brakes!

If you've done a thorough safety orientation, your group should know how, when and why to use their brakes. However, inevitably, there will be one or two kids who might panic, forget everything and let go of the brakes and focus on steering. Then, they try to ride it out to the next flat part where they feel they can stop safely.

Or, they just think it's fun to ride down with no brakes... **YIKES!**

Two common occurrences to be aware of are "Flintstoning" and "slingshotting". "Flintstoning" is when a child drags their feet on the ground instead of using the hand brakes, and "slingshotting" is when a child waits on a downhill for space to build between them and the person in front of them.

Once they've got enough open space in front of them, they ride as fast as they can until they catch up to the person in front. This must be monitored and stopped.

Remember, once the youth loses braking control on even a minor descent, speed quickly builds, and can lead to severe injuries. This is one of the most dangerous (and common) situations you will be faced with as a Ride Leader.

So how can we mitigate and manage risk on descents? Here are some ideas:

Descent Safety Ideas

1. Make sure your safety talk includes a special focus on maintaining two fingers on the brakes, **AT ALL TIMES**. Check for understanding and coach during the Cone Zone Practice and on the ride.
2. You should always make sure every youth can operate the brakes correctly before heading out on the trail. If still in doubt, do a downhill test as described below. Identify any kids having trouble operating the brakes, give them extra practice until they can come to a stop safely with their feet on the pedals
3. Teach proper descending body position, aka "Ready Position" or "Attack Chicken Position".
 - A. Head up, elbows out, bend at the waist, butt off the saddle, pedals level and weight back
 - B. Give a demo for the group.
4. Identify any kids still shaky on braking and give them extra attention and coaching on the trail. That individual may need to walk their bike if they are causing concern.
5. **STOP BEFORE EVERY DESCENT** and remind the whole group how to use their brakes. Again, **CHECK FOR ATTENTION AND UNDERSTANDING**.
6. If the downhill section is so steep that failure to use the brakes could result in serious injury, **EVERYONE WALKS DOWN THE DESCENT WITH BIKES**.
7. Pay attention to spacing. It is preferable to lead the group down together so you can control the pace as opposed to sending them down one by one in most cases.
8. Keep speeds below 15 mph.
9. Use your adult resources. Have adults stand to the side of the trail and remind kids to slow down as they ride past if necessary.
10. Don't stop the group at the immediate bottom of the descent. Leave space for run out.
11. Lastly; trust your gut. If you have any hesitation, **ALWAYS ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION**. Walking the bike is always preferred to a risky ride.

Downhill Test

During your Cone Zone Practice, you should be able to coach and ascertain your rider's ability to use their brakes to control speed and come to a complete stop. Coaching them to always maintain two fingers on the brakes will go a long way towards this goal. If you have any doubt about their abilities, however, you may want to perform a downhill test before tackling any descents on your route. This could happen on the first downhill of your ride or in conjunction with the Cone Zone Practice at the trail head.

Create a controlled situation where you can determine that each participant can effectively control their speed using their brakes. If any youth is shaky or doesn't seem to be able to use the proper braking technique, his/her volunteer buddy should be cautioned to walk down steep hills with him/her.

A poorly controlled and managed descent is a time when the likelihood of injury increases. Take the extra steps and time necessary to avoid an unsafe descent.

Debrief and Wrap-up

Now that the ride is over, it's time to debrief the experience with your kids. This is also the time to hand out trip evaluations to the agency leader to get feedback from the ride. Providing you have left a little extra time at the end of the ride, this is a very important step in bringing the experience full circle.

It is during the debrief that we give our kids a chance to reflect and make connections between the ride and their own lives. This is the moment where we can create a transformative experience for our riders and make it, more than just a bike ride.

Closing Circle

The closing circle is a standard Trips for Kids practice that should happen on every ride. Once the bikes and equipment have been set aside and removed, make a group circle and have them reflect on their trip.

Ask them to take a minute to think about what they've just accomplished. They just went on a mountain bike adventure! Show your enthusiasm and select one to three debrief questions to ask the group. Choose someone who is ready to answer and have them pick a direction after their response. Strong facilitation skills are key here once again, so make sure the one kid who is speaking has everyone's attention. "One Mic, One Voice" is a great concept to use. You can use an object to pass around as a microphone or pass around a closing snack, like Fig Newtons, for example. Have them take one after they've shared, then pass the container along to the next speaker. The person holding the container should be the only one talking.

Some popular debrief questions to ask your group are:

- What was your moment of the ride?
- What was something you learned?
- What will you take away from this experience?
- What was a challenge you overcame today?
- Who had a great time mountain biking today? Woop, Woop!



Appreciation Circle

An Appreciation Circle is another great way to close your ride, especially for the final ride with a recurring group. Explain to the group that they will choose someone to appreciate by saying something nice about them. For example, they could choose something about their riding or something they really like or admire about the person.

Once that person has spoken, the recipient of the appreciation picks someone else who hasn't been spoken about, appreciates them and the cycle continues until everyone has been appreciated and has a big smile on their face.

Rider of the Day

If you have a recurring series ride, choosing one or two kids to commend for their improvement, good attitude, helping another rider, etc. is a wonderful way to end the day. Try to make sure everyone gets commended in the group at some point. This should also aid you if there are any behavioral issues in the group as youth will begin to act better in the hopes of being the "Rider of the Day."

Mountain biking can be a meaningful tool for change by relating challenges faced on the trail to real life. Use your skill as an outdoor educator to draw a connection between attempting to ride up the challenging hill, for example, and overcoming personal challenges they may face in their own lives.

"Remember when we faced that hill? You made it when you didn't know you could. Life can be like that. When you face something you don't think you can overcome or come to a difficult spot, you keep trying, keep pedaling and eventually you'll make it to the mountaintop."

Once finished with the closing circle thank everyone for coming, encourage them to come back with us and close with a group high-five or something inspirational. This is your chance to make a big impact on your kids and encourage them to keep mountain biking and get outside to enjoy nature. This is your time to make your ride, more than just a ride, to make it a transformative experience for the youth we serve.

That's our ultimate goal after all...

What participants said

Trips for Kids changes kids- I've seen it over and over again every trip I take with my students. For instance, one girl was failing most of her classes; I didn't know what to do with her. I took her on a bike trip and she was a natural...the other kids saw her cruising up the hills and fearlessly descending and they saw her in a new light- she saw herself in a new light...she gained confidence that stayed with her when we returned to class. It sounds like an after-school special, but this girl turned around- It was amazing! And it happens every trip...I love Trips for Kids.

Today was AWESOME! Some of the most challenging kids in the whole school" (our principal's words!) did a phenomenal job all the way around. I am so grateful for your deep and lasting enrichment of our students' lives. Three of the kids on the trip today live in public housing on Treasure Island and have been through quite a lot of struggle in their mere 14 years of life. What a joy to see them laughing and smiling all the way home and up and down the trails. They will never forget this day.

I began teaching in Oakland in 1994, and shortly after discovered Trips for Kids. Although the time I spend riding bikes with my kids is only a sliver of the overall hours I work, the connections that are forged on these trips enrich our work beyond measure. Conversations are still referenced weeks later, and the relationships and trust that are made can last a lifetime. My first batch of high school students is now in their 30s, and when we run across each other, it is not uncommon for a memory from a Trips for Kids' excursion to be recalled.

Bike Fleets: Post Trip and Equipment Maintenance



Once the trip is finished, it's time to pack up your equipment and ensure it's ready to go for the next ride. A little extra time spent here will save you time (and money down the road) so take the time to put things away clean and correctly.

Aside from the aesthetic factor of having clean, professional looking equipment, it is vital that all our equipment is in proper operating condition. Poorly maintained or malfunctioning equipment could lead to participant injury and possible legal repercussions including lawsuits invoking negligence.

All Trips for Kids equipment must be clean and in proper working order before being issued to participants, no exceptions. Here's a list that can help you get things done as efficiently as possible after your ride is done.

1. At the trail head

- A. Collect trip evaluations from agency leader before they leave!
You should already have waivers with you from the beginning of the program.
- B. Gather and clean helmets with disinfecting spray, such as Lysol, after every ride
- C. Pair gloves together
- D. Load bikes, front to back if
- E. Gather and load any additional equipment

2. At the shop

- A. Clean water bottles
- B. Clean gloves on an as needed or twice monthly basis
- C. Unload bikes and any remaining equipment
- D. Charge radios
- E. File paperwork: waivers, trip evaluations, trip log
- F. Restock First Aid Kit if necessary
- G. Make sure everything is ready to go for the next trip!
 - I. Nothing is worse than coming in to find things put away incorrectly or missing altogether.

Bikes – Post Ride

After each ride, your bikes should be checked to see if any damage was incurred during the ride. Derailleurs, brakes, and wheels can all get out of tune, especially the way our kids' ride. If you find any bike with mechanical issues, take the time to fix it immediately or do something to mark it as out of commission.

Turning the seat around backward is a good way to mark it as needing repair. Make sure the bike is not returned to the fleet until the problem has been fixed. We cannot send kids out on bikes that are not well maintained and in proper working order.

Yours vs. Theirs?

An important consideration is whether you will allow kids to use their personal bikes on a Trips for Kids ride. The best plan to ensure working and safe bikes is to bring your own fleet to the ride for kids to ride on.

If you choose to let kids bring their own bikes, you must carefully check each individual bike to ensure its functionality, quality and maintenance. This is best done a day or two before the ride, so that there is time to make adjustments and plans for which bike the youth will ride. Plan multiple days in advance, if possible, to avoid kids showing up with a broken bike at the trail head. Perform a thorough 'ABC Quick Check' on each bike before you let any participant ride. If there is any doubt about the bike's safety and functionality, have them use a Trips for Kids bike, if available.

Building a Fleet

Larger and more well-established programs may already have a fleet of bikes, but how do you build one if you're just getting started? You will be surprised how quickly you can build a fleet of bikes with a little creativity and promotion. People like to support a good cause by donating their used bikes to kids!

Just make sure all of your bikes are high enough quality for trail duty. Letting a kid ride an unsafe bike is, of course, something we cannot do. Trips for Kids national created a Tips Sheet on building and maintaining a bike fleet for youth ride programs; contact the national office for access to this free document.



SECTION 6: RISK MANAGEMENT AND EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

Responsibilities for those helping **TRIPS FOR KIDS**

As a Ride Leader, your greatest responsibility is the safety of our participants. Risk management is the tool you use to evaluate and mitigate hazards that exist on and off the trail. A keen sense of risk awareness is a crucial skill you must possess and develop.

You should always err on the side of caution when faced with a situation that gives you cause for concern. Mountain or street biking is an inherently risky activity,

however, with strong risk management skills, accidents should be few and far between. In the event of an accident, you must have a sound Emergency Action Plan in place to know how to respond accordingly.

In this section, we will cover some risk management basics, legal terms and lay out the necessary information needed in an Emergency Action Plan.



Risk Management: What does it mean?

“Risk management is the exercise of reasonable care and judgment as a precaution to reduce or eliminate risks. The goal of risk management is to identify and evaluate risks in order to reduce or eliminate an agency's financial losses (and to reduce or eliminate the probability/possibility of harm to its participants.)

Financial losses can occur whenever a risk is left uncorrected. Possible causes of financial loss include deterioration or destruction of property or equipment, staff negligence or dishonesty, injury or loss of life to customers, and catastrophic events, such as natural disasters.”

– Dr. Stephanie West, Appalachian State University Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

Risk Management Tips for the Trail

MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS SIGNED THE ACTIVITY RELEASE FORM!

- Be familiar with the trail. All trails used for a Trips for Kids ride should be thoroughly scouted beforehand ensuring: legality, appropriateness for ability level, length, and potential hazards.
- Give a thorough safety talk prior to the ride.
- If a youth is not riding competently, give them extra time at the parking lot/open space to practice before heading out on the trail.
- Ride to the lowest common denominator, not the fastest kids in the group.
- Don't ride too fast. Avoid letting your group get strung out.
- Don't ride down stairs or over big obstacles. Even small obstacles deserve coaching.
- No wheelies, skidding or jumping in general.
- If riding a section of trail where there is a fall potential, get off and spot them. Be ready to catch them should they fall.
- Stop and give coaching for challenging sections of trail.
- Walk descents that are so steep there is a serious potential for injury.
- **The Golden Rule:** Trust your gut. If you feel uneasy about a situation, stop and assess before proceeding. Always better to walk the bike than have an accident!



Contingency Plans

There are a few common issues that may arise on the trail that can easily ruin a ride if you don't have a backup plan. A little forethought on how to deal with the possible issue will go a long way and in all cases, don't let your enthusiasm outweigh your judgment! Here are a few situations to prepare for:

1. Kids not knowing how to ride a bike

- A. Be patient and see if another adult, preferably a Trips for Kids person, can work one on one with that youth while you continue the program. Make sure they stay near you under your supervision and offer help and tips as you can. Sometimes you can have a lot of success quickly, sometimes you can't. If the youth can't safely ride a bike to the minimum safety standards needed for the ride, they will have to stay with an agency adult. This may force the cancellation of the ride which is why it's so important to confirm with the agency beforehand that all kids know how to ride a bike before they arrive.

2. Mechanical issues on the trail

- A. It will happen, so be ready for it. Use a mechanical like a flat tire to offer a "teachable moment" by demonstrating how to change the tube. You can even enlist the help of kids to make it more engaging.

3. Behavioral issues

- A. This situation can end a ride easily if things get out of hand. Your first go to is the agency staff responsible for the youth. Make sure to tell them that it is their responsibility to deal with any issues beyond the scope of leading a ride program. That is their job and why they are required to be on the ride. Don't be afraid to end a ride early and walk for a while if the whole group is misbehaving. Be kind but firm with your tone and language and know you are the ultimate decision maker when it comes to decision making regarding whether to continue or not.

4. Weather

- A. Always know the forecast before you go. Needless to say, if weather poses any danger to the group (lightning, heavy rain, snow, or even muddy trails) cancel the ride. Always best to give a great first experience than have a dangerous situation arise because of over-enthusiasm.

Legal Speak

It is important to realize that your job comes with certain and very important legal obligations. You are responsible for the wellbeing of a group of human beings, and not just any human beings, but children. This is an important point to note as it mandates that you act with additional attention to risk management and are under additional legal obligation to protect them from harm.

Below are five key legal terms you should be aware while acting as the adults charged with the safety of minors. The definitions are taken from the Judicial Council of California and uslegal.com, but are likely somewhat similar in your state. If in doubt, please look into your state's respective definitions of the following terms:

- **Duty of Care:** In tort law, a duty of care is a legal obligation which is imposed on an individual requiring adherence to a standard of reasonable care while performing acts that could foreseeably harm others. It is the first element that must be established to proceed with an act of negligence.
- **Duty of Care Owed Children:** An adult must anticipate the ordinary behavior of children. An adult must be more careful when dealing with children than with other adults.
- **Negligence:** the failure to use reasonable care to prevent harm to oneself or to others. A person can be negligent by acting or failing to act. A person is negligent if he or she does something that a reasonably careful person would not do in the same situation or fails to do something that a reasonably careful person would do in the same situation.
- **Gross Negligence:** the lack of any care or an extreme departure from what a reasonably careful person would do in the same situation to prevent harm to oneself or to others. A person can be grossly negligent by acting or failing to act.
- **Activity Release/Waiver:** A waiver or release gives up a right, such as releasing one from his/her liability for harm or damage that may occur from performing under a contract or participating in an activity. Some activities are considered inherently dangerous, and those who participate in such activities may be required to sign a release form, acknowledging that they are assuming the responsibility for their voluntary participation in such activities. The release acts as an assurance to the person requesting the release that they will not be subjected to litigation resulting from the signing party's informed and consensual acts.

These terms are extremely important to understand and keep in mind whenever you are leading a ride and responsible for any group of youth or adults. It is also important to understand how these concepts relate to the court of law if a participant were to file a suit against you or the organization.

Your first line of defense against litigation is your Activity Release/Waiver. This is why it is paramount that all participants have signed before they may be allowed to participate in any Trips for Kids activity. In general, (and from a layman's perspective) an activity release/waiver should protect you and the organization from financial losses from a suit filed against you/the organization including in cases of ordinary negligence. Ordinary negligence is the same as negligence as described above.

What an activity release/waiver will not protect you from is gross negligence. This is why the plaintiffs in the case (suing party) will most likely try to prove gross negligence during the trial. Please note that without an activity release/waiver, ordinary negligence, or even an injury/damage not caused by negligence, will likely result in the awarding of the financial claim to the plaintiffs.

As stated previously, this is a very basic description of how a trial could play out in the court of law and is not intended as legal advice. We encourage you to seek further understanding of any legal terms and/or proceedings through outside reading and research.

The bottom line is no one wants to go to court, so always act as a reasonable adult would act to prevent harm to your participants keeping in mind that children are owed a greater duty of care than other adults.

Finally:

ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOUR ACTIVITY RELEASE/WAIVERS ARE SIGNED!

Volunteer Protection Act

You may worry that you or your chapter could be at risk of liability if an injury occurs during a trail ride, but fortunately, a federal law—the Volunteer Protection Act—provides volunteers with significant protections from liability associated with volunteer activity. See Appendix F or [click here](#) for a two-page primer from the nonprofit legal organization Changelab Solutions: Volunteers and Liability – the Federal Volunteer Protection Act.

Emergency Action Plan

An Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is designed to give step by step information to the Ride Leader in the case of a serious injury on the trail (such as a broken bone for example.) The document should be miniaturized and laminated and be carried by the Ride Leader. It does not have to be complicated but will serve to assure that the Ride Leader takes every step necessary to respond accordingly to the situation.

Every Trips for Kids chapter/club/club should have a functional Emergency Action Plan to be carried by the Ride Leader on every ride.

Accident & Illness Reports

The Trips for Kids Accident/Illness Report (Appendix E) must be filled out if an incident occurs during a Trips for Kids activity or on a Trips for Kids premises. As a minimum standard it must be completed if the incident:

- Requires more medical attention than a band-aid.
- Results in a participant having to be evacuated.
- Requires the attention of a medical expert.
- Results in the participant not being able to continue engaging in the activity fully (e.g. cannot ride a bike anymore).
- There is any possibility that complications could arise later.
- You should document for your own records any other minor injury or illness in case complications do happen to arise later.
- All Trips for Kids Accident and Illness Reports should be kept on file at your chapter/club/club's office.
- Any serious accidents that require a rescue and evacuation must be reported as soon as possible by email to team@tripsforkids.org.

Sample Emergency Action Plan



If you use this plan, be sure to update all information with local data

1. Emergency Response Numbers

- A. 911
- B. Local EMS Services
- C. Local Police

2. Trips for Kids' Contact Information

- A. Main Office
- B. Executive Director
- C. Program Manager/Supervisor

3. Medical Emergency Plan

- A. Assess scene for participant and personal safety
- B. Use Co-Leaders and Ride Volunteers to manage the group. Move the group away from the victim and unsafe situations.
- C. If a medical emergency is observed, dial 9-1-1 and request an ambulance. *If cell phone service is not available, send an adult to an area of the trail where it can be found to call. Provide the following information:
 - I. • Number and location of victim(s)
 - II. • Nature of injury or illness
 - III. • Hazards involved
 - IV. • Nearest entrance (emergency access point)
- D. Put on Latex gloves

E. NEVER EXCEED YOUR LEVEL OF MEDICAL TRAINING.

F. **DO NOT MOVE VICTIM** if a spinal injury is possible or suspected.

G. Assess injury and patient and act within your level of training.

H. Once EMS services have arrived release care to trained responders.

- I. If youth requires evacuation in an ambulance, all Trips for Kids personnel must stay with the group. Visiting agency staff may decide whether to go with the youth or stay based on their agency guidelines.

4. Post EMS Arrival

- A. Call Parents, Trips for Kids Chapter Director and Agency Contact Person
- B. If a serious injury has occurred, the ride is over.
- C. Return the group safely to the beginning of the trail.

5. Post Ride

- A. Follow up with Trips for Kids Chapter Director and Visiting Agency
- B. Fill out Accident and Illness Report

SECTION 7: LEARNING ON THE TRAIL – EDUCATIONAL TOPICS & ACTIVITIES

Discovering the many joys of exploring the world by bike

There are many benefits of riding a bicycle: improved health, a sense of freedom, social interaction, low cost transportation, fun, on and on. Trips for Kids trail rides also provides young people with other potential benefits, such as environmental, cultural, historical and STEAM learning opportunities. In this section, we discuss how a fun group bike ride can also become a moving classroom.

A group bike ride is a lot of fun for kids, they get to explore natural places and be outdoors, interacting with each other and their environment, and even overcoming challenges and reaching goals, like climbing up a hill, or riding over an obstacle.

All of the places that the group travels through can be sources of new information for kids

Experiential learning is a fantastic way to get kids to

willingly absorb new information. Sitting in classrooms for hours can be boring, or even frustrating, and we know that kids (and adults) shouldn't be sitting for long periods of time every day.

Also, people learn better when oxygen is flowing through their brains – exercise increases oxygen flow and can improve memory, concentration and retention.



How to Teach During the Ride

As you are planning and test riding your Discovery and/or Adventure Club trail ride routes, think about all of the interesting elements that the group will discover along the way, and plan to stop and discuss some of them.

You will need to consider how many times to stop, since kids will mostly want to ride and have fun, but there are times in all group rides when the group needs to stop - to take a rest, or wait for slower kids to catch up and regroup, plus water, restroom and lunch stops, and on 'out-and-back' rides you can incorporate the destination/turnaround.

Tips

- Make the lesson short. No more than five minutes of description, then allow a few more minutes for questions. The whole stop shouldn't be more than 10-15 minutes; kids may get bored, cold or hot while standing around, and legs can start getting stiff when not pedaling.
- Know your subject. Research the topic before the ride. Consider bringing or meeting an expert volunteer or docent to talk about the subject.
- Combine the teachable moment with another task: Do an ABC quick check on kids bikes; take a water and food or rest break; teach the lead group while waiting for slower kids to regroup; have one leader teach an environmental lesson to advanced riders while another shows beginning riders how to navigate an obstacle, etc.

Lesson Topics

Below are some of the topics that group ride leaders and volunteers can discover and teach about during a trail ride. Look for periodic stopping points that can include interesting lessons such as:

Flora and Fauna

- Ancient tree or grove – discuss age and species of the trees, why they group together, etc. Tree rings are a good lesson in how trees age – one ring per year of the trees' life can be a fascinating discovery for kids. Have kids count rings of a downed tree.
- Deer, frogs, turkeys, birds... – this will most often not be a plannable lesson, but if a hawk or deer crosses your path, stop the group to admire and discuss. A pre-planned stop to a stream or pond could be focused on searching for frogs, fish, bugs, crawdads, etc. and lessons on how mammals will visit water holes each day.
- Plants and Mushrooms – in spring there will be flowers, and in summer berries will be ripening and could be a fun addition to a snack break. Mushrooms are a good topic, discussing how some can be edible and some can be deadly – please do not touch or eat mushrooms! Mushrooms can be a good personal safety lesson: teach kids to never attempt to touch or eat mushrooms.

Geography and Geology

- Scenic overlook – all kids love to view their surroundings from a high vantage point. If your ride route has hills, mountains or ravines, find a good spot to stop and have lunch or a snack break at an overlook, and teach kids about what they see during the stop. This can be a lesson in geology and discussion about how the force of water over millions of years creates hills, mountains and ravines, etc.
- Interesting rock formation – Find a rock formation along the route. If it is safe, kids could

climb it. If not, then discuss how the formation may have been created, what kind of rock it is, even how animals may use the formation to their advantage.

- Waterways – Kids love water! Find a waterway along the route and plan a stop at a good vantage point for a break or lunch and teach about water and all the lives that may depend on it. Talk about how the water flows, about flooding and seasonal weather, etc. Waterfalls, creeks, rivers, lakes, ponds and the ocean are all sources of interest (and fun). Just make sure to be very safe when taking kids to a waterway – not all kids can swim, and their parents are not prepared for their kids to enter water unless this is a part of your parental waiver forms. In general, stay out of water, except to dip toes in slow, shallow water!

History and Culture

- Historic Sites – If you are riding in an urban area such as a city park, there may be a historic significance to the site that can be discussed. These sites often have the potential for lessons in culture and how people have interacted in the past and present, and there could be art installations, plaques, sculptures, etc.
- If you are in a rural area, there may be locations along your route that have a historic significance that can be interesting, even if it doesn't contain a plaque or other formal marker. Perhaps there is a former Native American village site, archaeological dig, or a civil war battle site to visit. In some areas, there are places where floodwaters, landslides, fires, drought changed the way people live or

altered communities. Discuss how people lived in that location, what major historic events took place that may have changed local society, etc.

- Abandoned or active mine or quarry – there may be locations where people actively or previously mined for minerals or ore. Stay out of them, of course, unless there is a government-sponsored tour available. Discuss what the commercial and social significance is or was, and what the minerals or ore is used for.

STEAM

- Science, technology, engineering, art and math are all important areas of knowledge, especially for under served kids. There may be opportunities along your ride for kids to learn about these elements in a fun way.
- For instance, in an urban park there may be an art installation that can be visited. Discuss what the art means to the kids, if anything, and what the artist may be trying to convey to visitors.
- You may be able to incorporate lessons on the functions of the bicycle, how it works, the physics of momentum and motion of the wheels, the forces at work in the drivetrain, etc. Distance, gravity, friction, density – these are all examples of the forces involved in riding a bicycle. You can discuss how gravity works against you when climbing hills, and how the bicycle wants to go faster downhill due to the efficient round shape of the wheels combined with gravitational pull. You can discuss the centrifugal force that makes your bicycle want to go straight instead of around a turn or berm and how leaning and braking can change that trajectory.

SECTION 8: ROUTE SELECTION

Considerations when planning your group ride

Distance and Elevation Change

The selection of a good group ride route is critical to ensure the safety and fun of your participants. Our Discovery Rides can sometimes be the first bike ride, first group ride, first dirt ride, or all of the above for youth in our programs. There are important factors to consider in planning a successful group ride.

Distance

The distance of your ride route may vary depending on the age and fitness levels of participants, along with the weather, equipment and trail conditions. For the purposes of this guide, we assume that the kids you will be riding with are not experienced cyclists, and most will not be at a high level of fitness for their age.

We recommend choosing a scenic route that is between 5-12 miles long. The average adult commuting cyclist rides at 12 miles per hour on a flat, paved surface, such as a city street. Kids between 10-13 years of age will ride somewhat slower than that, on average, perhaps around 9-10 miles per hour. On a flat dirt surface, their speed may be even 1-2 miles per hour slower. For kids between 14-17 years old, add another 2-3 miles per hour. This all depends on the particular group of kids you have for that particular ride-- you will have to make a judgement call for each ride group.

Rides in natural areas also require consideration for mechanical issues, weather changes and injuries. Always give yourself extra time to account for delays such as these. For instance, if you are doing an after-school, or weekend afternoon ride, make sure there is at least 1-1.5 hours of daylight time left over after your estimated finish time (and still bring some bike lights for ride leaders, just in case).



Trail Conditions

Depending on the topography of your region, you will need to consider your ride route trail conditions carefully. In the Southwest US, trails will often feature sandy sections, cactus and other hazards to consider. In the Northwest and Northeast, rain, wet tree roots and rocks and mud are common considerations. In the Midwest and South, insects and humidity are common considerations. Plan your ride dates to optimize good weather conditions and plan your ride routes to optimize good trail conditions.

Unless you are in the central Plains or other very flat areas, hills are a consideration. We feel that one or two moderate hill climbs per ride are beneficial for youth to develop a sense of adventure and accomplishment, skill-building, problem solving and overcoming the fear of meeting challenges. Believe it or not, these experiences could be the most meaningful for kids, even (or especially) if it was a struggle to complete the climb. Pick a route that has one or two hills that can be ridden in five minutes by an average rider, with up to a 8-10% maximum grade. Make sure that there is at least one volunteer at the back to assist youth who are challenged by the climb and may need encouragement to finish the climb. Give positive feedback even if they choose to walk the climb or not complete it! It is the courage to take on the challenge that matters most, not the outcome.

Dirt Trails

Dirt trail conditions are also very important to consider. For this guide we assume that your riders will be on medium-quality mountain bikes with 'V' or disc brakes and knobby tires at least 1.5" wide. Check out your route well ahead of the group ride, and consider these elements:

- Choose trails with only minor obstacles such as small rocks and roots to ride over, no big jumps or other high-risk obstacles such as gap jumps
- Do not attempt stream crossings that require riding through water more than a few inches deep; only ride through a streambed if it is not too sandy or rocky
- Avoid deep or long mud patches, especially in rainy seasons – mud can be annoying and difficult to ride and very hard on equipment. Riding through deep mud will also do a lot of damage to trails.
- Steep gravel roads should be avoided, both uphill and downhill; they can be the source of crashes and injuries, especially 'road rash'. High speeds are too easy to achieve on loose downhill gravel roads, and novice cyclists can easily ride too fast to maintain control. If a steep gravel road is unavoidable for a short distance, then you may consider letting kids dismount and walk their bikes. However, sometimes even walking on steep, loose gravel is too challenging to be safe or fun.
- Know the plant and insect and animal species in your area, especially if you are riding in a remote area. Don't plan a lunch spot near standing water in summer, for instance, or your riders may become lunch for mosquitos. Poison sumac, oak and ivy are common in different areas of the US. They can grow into trails, especially during spring, especially on poorly maintained trails. Watch out for blackberry and rose bushes and others that have thorns, and cactus in desert areas. If necessary, stage a volunteer trail clearing party in the days before the ride to rid the trail side of these types of hazards. Volunteers should wear protective gear to avoid becoming victims of the plants they are pruning.
- In hilly or mountainous areas, avoid trails that have extreme 'exposure' – cliff edges, bridges without safety rails, narrow trails on steep hill sides, etc. Kids can often be risk takers and may attempt (or not understand) risky behaviors, especially to 'show off' their skills or bravery to other kids. Parents and other caregivers, and even your insurance broker, are not expecting you to expose kids to high risks, so avoid them.



Viewpoints, Breaks and Destinations

The most popular outcome of Discovery and Adventure Club rides is kids having fun. When planning your ride route, try to find interesting places to visit and roll by. Plan to take the time to stop at the most compelling destinations during the ride and incorporate a fun activity or lesson to maximize the experience.

If you are in an urban area in a city park, perhaps a stop into an ice cream or bike shop is the final destination. If you are riding in a remote area, look for viewpoints and other unique features to visit along the way.

Plan to take regular break stops, and bring lots of water, even when it is cool outside. Every rider should have their own filled water bottle when the ride starts. Plan for breaks to take place at least every 30 minutes of strenuous activity.

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