

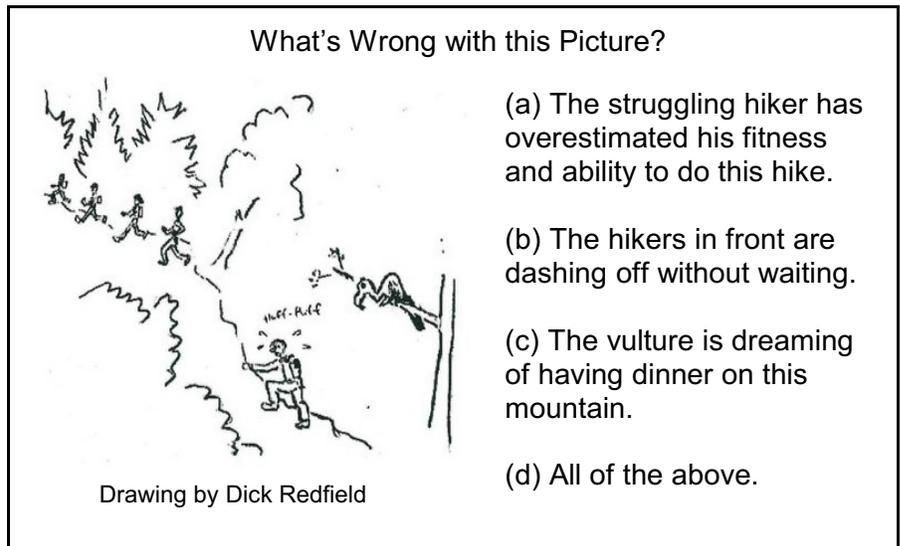
Group Hiking Etiquette

Registration. As a general rule, and especially during this time of Covid where there are limits on group size, please do not register for a hike unless you know you will be attending. If you find out after you register that you cannot attend or may have to leave the hike early, notify the leader as soon as possible so that someone else who wants to fully participate can do so. If you are registering for yourself and others, tell the leader who you are bringing so it's clear how many people are coming and the hiking ability of each.

Timing. The start time designated by the leader is the time the hike begins - please arrive earlier so the group doesn't have to wait for you. And temper your expectations about when a hike will end. The time it takes to do a "power walk" in your neighborhood is not the same as the time it takes to hike in the woods. People stop for lunch, for water, for separations, and to take off or add layers. Hiking trails are rougher than sidewalks and gravel roads - even easy hikes may have rocks, roots, mud and wet leaves. The terrain may be more challenging than expected; the weather may not cooperate; and unforeseen events can happen. If you're worried about having to get back at a specific time, forego the hike and wait for another day. If for whatever reason you decide to leave the group before the hike ends, be sure to tell the leader that you're going; and please know that once you leave, you're on your own!

Is this hike for me? In fairness to yourself and to the rest of the group, please be honest about your hiking experience and abilities and choose an outing within your abilities. The leader can answer any questions you may have about pace, terrain or any other aspect of the hike.

Follow the leader, keep the person ahead of you in sight, and wait for those behind you at summits, trail intersections, and after navigating obstacles such as large downed trees or difficult stream crossings.



While on the hike, turn your phone off, keep it on airplane mode or set it to "vibrate;" and limit phone conversations to emergency situations. But using your phone to take a picture of that great view, waterfall or flower in bloom is always encouraged!

If you have to "go," ask the leader to call for a "separation" (men and women go to different locations to give each other privacy). Please be conscious of the environment, and considerate of hikers who will be in the woods after you leave - carry out all tissue and other debris.

Sorry - dogs are not allowed on WTA hikes unless the writeup specifically says otherwise.

Always observe "leave no trace" ethics - take only pictures, leave nothing but footprints.

And there you have it. The woods are for everyone to enjoy, which is why we have these guidelines. Once you're out there, in the fresh air and in good company, you're sure to discover the joys of group hiking.