



A1 (b) THE VENTURE LEADER'S ROLE – PRE-DEPARTURE

Peter Drake, Scout Association (2002 - reviewed 2007)

The logistics of an adult expedition also apply to expeditions on which members are predominantly young people. However, the leadership team of youth expeditions must take extra care in some areas. The following are a few matters which must be considered more than in the case of adult expeditions.

N.B. More detailed information on many of these topics is given in later sections of this webguide.

SELECTION

The selection of young people for an expedition will probably be through a Venture Provider: a school, youth organisation or club in the first place, but the Venture Leader and/or Venture Provider must have very clearly in their minds the criteria for selection. There are three possibilities:

- i) Selecting members who can achieve an already decided-upon task (climbing a mountain, crossing a desert or carrying out a fieldwork programme). Here the selectors will be looking for specific skills and experience; so many applicants may have to be excluded.
- ii) Selecting members where the prime objective is the personal development of the expedition members, so the expedition's tasks will be chosen to fit the members. Here the selectors may take all-comers so long as they are fit enough to cope with the climate and natural hazards they will encounter.
- iii) Selecting members where the expedition programme has a number of different groups operating in the field carrying out different levels of tasks and different programmes. Here the selectors will have to do a secondary selection to put the right person in the right group. It is important in this kind of expedition that no one team is seen as an elite, but that all work to achieve the objectives of their own team. It is also important that the members feel they are in the right group, and this may involve some counselling by the leadership team.

BRIEFING

Before, during and after the expedition, any information that is essential to pass on to the leadership team and members should be given in written handout form as well as verbally. This is especially true before departure with regard to kit lists, home contact addresses, and the like. A meeting for parents before the expedition leaves, which allows them to ask questions, to meet the leadership team, and to be briefed fully on what their offspring will be doing and the sort of country he/she will be seeing should be arranged.



HOME AGENT AND CONTACT

Although all youth expeditions will have a contact person for each member, an expedition Home Agent who is well informed by the expedition in the field as to what is happening, especially if the expedition is meeting with problems, will be found to be most useful. This is an essential appointment for any youth expedition seeking Approval from the Young Explorers' Trust.

This person must have a copy of all the relevant transport details and personal details of the members and leadership team and must have an address where the next of kin can be contacted during the entirety of the expedition period (*see Exempla Form 1*). Many expedition members simply put their home address for next of kin, but if parents are also going to be away on holiday during the expedition period this can lead to vital and damaging delays in contacting them in an emergency.

APPLICATION FORMS

All members and leaders should complete a detailed application form giving such information as next of kin with home address and telephone number / fax number / email address, passport number with place of issue and date, any medical or optical prescription the person requires, any allergies, relevant interests and qualifications, and the like (*see Exempla Form 2*). If the expedition is a large one, each application form should also have a passport size photo attached to the application form, since these can be used as an aide memoire to expedition leaders in the field.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL CHECKS

If the expedition has a medical team it will be found very useful to have the team undertake pre-expedition medicals, and each person should produce a letter from their doctor outlining any medical history.

If no medical team is accompanying the expedition, or if the medical team is not undertaking pre-expedition medical checks, then each member should produce a letter from their G.P. stating they are fit to join the expedition. A letter of explanation to the doctor explaining the sort of programme the young person will be involved in will be found useful and can be issued at the initial meeting to all members. A medical questionnaire can be prepared by the expedition medical team (*see Exempla Form 2*).

Every member should also give proof of a detailed dental check up within a month of the expedition departure.

If any member is on special medication it can be useful for them to bring two lots, one to be kept by themselves and one to be kept by the medical officer.

A medical card (or a set of all the application forms with special medical notes) with relevant details including blood group (*see Exempla Form 2*) will be found very useful to the expedition medical team or any local doctor you may have to visit; but they should be kept confidential by the Venture Leader or, if there is one, the expedition medical team.



FOOD AND DRINK

Every effort must be taken to point out the dangers of eating and drinking untreated food and water, and an explanation of the possible results if these rules are broken. The Leadership Team will have to make sure in hot countries that members are drinking enough fluid and, with this in mind, the expedition should take plenty of powdered fruit juice just to help make purified water more palatable.

Young people can be fussy about what they eat, so before the expedition, try to find out what likes and dislikes are and, if possible, take these into account when working out the menus.

You will also have to find out if anybody in the party has any medical or religious reasons for not being able to eat particular foods [see *Exempla Form 3*].

CONTROL

If the expedition has more than ten to a dozen people in the team, split the expedition into smaller groups or teams with their own unit leaders. This group should travel, live, eat and work as a team and relate to the expedition Venture Leader through its own team leader.

A special effort should be made to maintain a high standard of behaviour on public transport or in public places such as railway stations and airports, where long waits can become boring and lead to trouble.

PRE-EXPEDITION TRAINING

Every member of the expedition must accept that the expedition objectives will only be achieved if everybody works as a team. Where possible a team should be selected and have worked together before the expedition leaves for the field. Allow members to choose their sleeping and cooking companion but the Venture Leader will have to make sure nobody is left out. Training must be given in any safety techniques the expedition will require in the field until it becomes second nature.

Everybody on the expedition must be used to using all the equipment they will come across on the expedition and during training they should have a chance to live on the ration packs they will be using in the field. Sometimes, of course, such training will have to take place in the field at the beginning of the expedition (e.g. snow and ice training), since it may be impossible to give that training before departure.

During the pre-expedition training period members should be given as much information about the area, the people, the customs, and general way of life as possible. Films, videos and slides from someone who has been to the expedition area will all help in what can be a traumatic experience for a young person, coming from a city or town to the wide open space of the Arctic or Africa. The point must be made that the expedition members will be the visitors in the country and they must fit into the local ways of life, not the other way



around. Many Embassies, High Commissions and National Tourist Offices are very helpful in providing material to prepare parties going to a chosen country.

GENERAL HYGIENE

Hazards such as insects, disease, sunburn or snow blindness, reptiles and animals should be discussed and put into perspective. Methods of prevention and treatment should be discussed in detail during the training phase of the expedition; if possible, let members see any harmful insects or reptiles on film or live before they go.

Sanitation arrangements must be given fuller consideration where younger children or mixed parties are concerned.

If females are included in the party then a full briefing must be given to them by a female member of the Leadership Team or member of the medical team about personal hygiene, and the complications that can happen if advice is not followed.

MONEY

The payment of the expedition fee may be found easier to collect if an instalment plan is arranged, but all money should be paid at least one month before the expedition leaves. Depending upon the ages of the young people, the Venture Leader may wish to put a minimum and / or maximum limit on the amount of spending money taken by each person. An expedition bank where members can pay in their spending money and can draw it out, as and when they wish, may cut down on the possibility of it being lost, having money stolen or just spending all their money in the first few days. If you do use the expedition bank method, a reliable adult should be in charge throughout the expedition. Each time someone withdraws money, they should sign for it in the cash book.

KIT LIST

A comprehensive kit list describing each item should be issued to the members at the earliest opportunity, and a kit check should be carried out around six weeks before departure.

DOCUMENT CHECK

At least a month before departure the leader or a deputy should see all the required personal documents for each person on the expedition to check that passports are of the right kind and up to date (that they do not expire during the expedition or for 6 months afterwards), and that any visas or vaccination certificates are in order. If this is done at least a month beforehand, it will allow time to correct any errors or renew out of date paperwork. Remember group passports and visas, or yearly passports are not acceptable in many countries outside Europe.



Make sure you have a photocopy of the information pages of everybody's passport and two spare passport photographs in your files. These will help to speed up the acquisition of a temporary passport if someone does lose their passport or have it stolen.

It is also a good idea to have photocopies of any travel tickets and other important documents kept separately from the actual tickets in case they are lost or stolen. It will speed up the issue of a replacement, or it might even be possible to use the copy when the actual ticket is lost.

INSURANCE

Every member of your expedition must have adequate medical, equipment and rescue insurance (if not done by the expedition itself) and it must be the Venture Leader's responsibility to make sure every member has the correct type and amount. It is important for all members to realise that if an activity is not covered by insurance, then it must not happen (this issue often arises at the end of an expedition when members have some free time).

ACCLIMATISATION

When the party first arrives in a strange country, possibly after a long air flight, they will be both physically and mentally tired, apprehensive, and very excited. Make sure you build in at least one day and preferably two days of rest and acclimatisation, maybe with some gentle sightseeing. This may be seen as wasting valuable time in the field but it will pay dividends in the long run.

In conclusion the Venture Leader(s) of a youth party expedition must check and double check everything. He or she must be aware of the environmental or physical problems of the members. He or she must think well ahead and give too much information rather than too little. Do not think taking this kind of expedition is a holiday, for it is not. You will return tired and feeling emotionally, physically and mentally drained but well satisfied that a group of young people have experienced their first expedition safely and are keen to do it again next year!

All the articles which form this Expedition Webguide are written by able and experienced leaders of youth expeditions, but represent their own personal views and not necessarily those of the Board of Trustees of The Young Explorers' Trust. The points made represent suggestions for consideration rather than direct advice, and the responsibility for how these suggestions are used rests entirely with the users. No liability is accepted by the authors or by the Young Explorers' Trust for any loss or damage arising from the contents of these papers.

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EXEMPLA FORM 1

Kenya 2007

Contact Address of Next of Kin

Dear Parent/Guardian

While we are away in Kenya we need to be sure that we can contact you at all times, so can you please list the addresses and telephone numbers for the whole time we will be away i.e. ***From the 24th July to the 28th August***

Member's Name

During the expedition we can be reached at the following address(es) and on the following telephone numbers between these dates:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Name of Parent / Guardian
Next of Kin



EXEMPLA FORM 2

Preliminary Medical Screening for Expedition Members

This is a confidential report is to be filled in by your General Practitioner and sent to the Venture Leader before the training weekend. This form is confidential between the Venture Leader, expedition doctors and yourself.

1. Has he/she had any serious illnesses of childhood?

2. Has he/she had any surgical operations? If yes please give details, if none write none.

3. Do you know what his/her blood group is? If you don't can you help him/her find it out?

4. Is he/she allergic to any drugs, e.g. Penicillin?

5. Does he/she regularly take tablets prescribed by you or other doctors?

6. Is there any tendency to any allergies, including hay fever, eczema or asthma?

7. Does he/she suffer or have suffered from there any illnesses referable to the gastrointestinal tract, including vomiting, abdominal pain, jaundice or an irregular bowel habit?



8. Does he/she have any symptoms referable to the urinary tract system, including increased frequency, renal pain or haematuris?

9. Does he/she have any symptoms referable to the respiratory tract, including cough, shortness of breath or chest pains?

10. Is there any history of heart disease?

11. Has he/she ever suffered from fits, paralysis or loss of consciousness?

12. Is he/she subject to recurring headaches, e.g. migraine?

13. Is he/she a diabetic? Yes / No.

14. Has he/she ever suffer from or been treated for anxiety or depression?

15. (FOR FEMALES) - Does she suffer from irregular vaginal bleeding and if she uses some form of contraception, what is it e.g. does she take the contraceptive pill?



16. Does he/she suffer from any form of joint disease and has he/she had any orthopaedic problems or history of problems?

18. Is he/she subject to any recurring skin problems or diseases?

19. Does he/she have any special dietary requirements?

If you find you do not have sufficient space in any one section please continual on a separate piece of paper.

Expedition member's name.....

Doctor Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Tel. No.



EXEMPLA FORM 3

FOOD PREFERENCE FORM

Would you please record any food you are unable to eat on medical or religious grounds. You may also add any food you find totally unpalatable.

Note: We will do our best to make sure that you will not get the food you cannot or should not eat on medical or religious grounds but please be sensible about any dislikes you put on the list.

Name.....Expedition No.....

Please return this form to: