4-H Hiking Project

Hiking provides opportunities to be active while spending time in interesting, inspiring, and/or beautiful landscapes. Youth partner with adult leaders to explore natural landscapes, human impacts on the environment, outdoor safety, and eating healthy in the outdoors. Youth may learn:

- differences in plant and animal habitats, as well as geological formations
- ways humans can impact and protect the environment, including “leave no trace” practices
- skills and strategies for minimizing risks to human health and safety while outdoors

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- Learn about local landscapes, including identification of plants, animals, and rocks.
- Learn to assess the difficulty and accessibility of hiking trails.
- Introduce key concepts of “leave no trace” practices, including “pack it in, pack it out” and take only memories.
- Practice planning basics for weather, food, and first aid.

- Investigate differences in plant and wildlife habitats, as well as geological formations.
- Plan long (e.g., 10-mile) hikes, including meals on the trail.
- Learn how to dispose of human waste in the wilderness.
- Practice reading maps and using a compass.
- Practice overnight camping.

- Plan a backpacking trip, including learning about equipment, healthy and safe meal planning, and how to select a campsite.
- Participate in a lost hiker exercise with a law enforcement agency.
- Learn wilderness first aid skills and emergency response in the outdoors.
- Explore topographic maps and outdoor navigation.
- Practice fire skills, including building, eliminating, and cooking.

The activities above are ideas to inspire further project development. This is not a complete list.

4-H THRIVE

Help Youth:

- **Light Their Spark**
  A spark is something youth are passionate about; it really fires them up and gives them joy and energy. Help youth find how this project excites them.

- **Flex Their Brain**
  The brain grows stronger when we try new things and master new skills. Encourage youth effort and persistence to help them reach higher levels of success.

- **Reach Their Goals**
  Help youth use the GPS system to achieve their goals.

  - **Goal Selection**: Choose one meaningful, realistic, and demanding goal.
  - **Pursue Strategies**: Create a step-by-step plan to make daily choices that support your goal.
  - **Shift Gears**: Change strategies if you’re having difficulties reaching your goal. Seek help from others. What are youth going to do when things get in their way?

- **Reflect**
  Ask project members how they can use their passion for this project to be more confident, competent, and caring. Discuss ways they can use their skills to make a contribution in the community, improve their character, or establish connections.
Expand Your Experiences!

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- Design your own map, using natural landmarks, topography, and compass skills.
- Develop a local guide for plants and animals in your community.
- Participate in a citizen-science project to identify and count bird species.

Healthy Living
- Learn how to safely pack and prepare food outdoors to prevent illness.
- Spend time being physically active on hiking trails.
- Plan healthy meals for overnight backpacking trips, incorporating all food groups.

Civic Engagement
- Plan a trail cleanup to collect and remove trash left in the environments.
- Work with community groups to help build and maintain hiking trails.
- Create signage to teach others about “leave no trace” practices.

Leadership
- Start a 4-H Hiking or Backpacking Club in your community.
- Present about the plants and animals found in natural environments in your community.
- Plan and coordinate a group hike for National Take a Hike Day on November 17.

College and Career Readiness
- Get certified as a Wilderness First Responder.
- Sign up for an internship with a park ranger through the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Visit a college campus to learn more about their Parks, Recreation, and Tourism major.

Connections & Events
- Presentation Days – Share what you’ve learned with others through a presentation.
- Field Days – 4-H members may participate in a variety of contests related to their project area.
- Contact your UC Cooperative Extension office to determine additional opportunities available, such as a field day.

Curriculum
- Camp Activities with a Science Twist [link]
- Outdoor Adventures Curriculum: Hiking Trails, Camping Adventures, Backpacking Experiences, and Helper’s Guide [link]
- Keep Foods Safe When Hiking and Camping [link]

4-H Record Books
- 4-H Record Books give members an opportunity to record events and reflect on their experiences. For each project, members document their experiences, learning, and development.
- 4-H Record Books also teach members record management skills and encourage them to set goals and develop a plan to meet those goals.

To access the 4-H Record Book online, visit [link].

Resources
- Hiking With Kids, American Hiking Society [link]
- Kid Friendly Trails, All Trails [link]
- Hiking Safety, California Department of Parks and Recreation [link]

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University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources

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