

Hiking for Newbies

Source: [Canadian Wildlife Federation](#)

Never Hiked Before? Here's What You Need to Know before You Hit the Trails.

If hiking conjures up images of you tirelessly trudging through rough terrain all day or having to direct yourself by the North Star, well it's no wonder you haven't ventured out on the trails yet! Rest assured, hiking can be enjoyable and pretty easy too! You just need to get a plan in place.

Dress the Part

You never know if it's going to start raining or if it gets chilly as the day goes on, so think in layers. Make sure that any of your clothing that'll lay against your skin is made of wool or polyester or another fast drying material. If it's chilly out there, don't shy away from bringing along a hat and gloves and even a lightweight warm jacket. Above all, don't forget your raincoat. There may not be a cloud in the sky, but that can quickly change. You don't want to be drenched on your first hike. That'd put a damper on all of your plans!

Before we dive into footwear, you'll want to ensure you've got a pair of comfortable socks (or two!). When you're buying socks, make sure they fit like a glove so you can rule out the possibility of painful blisters. You'll also want to pick socks that will wick away moisture – polyester or nylon are good bets, as is merino wool. Finally, choose a pair that give you some extra cushion and are high enough that your ankle won't rub up against your hiking shoes or boots.

Hiking boots are really all about personal preference. If you're going on an easy trail, you might just want a lightweight trail running shoe. But many people opt for over-the-ankle boots instead because they're a little more secure when you're hiking on trails with bumpy ground (think rocks and roots).

Protect Yourself

Don't forget to slather yourself in sunscreen before you get dressed in your hiking attire. Yes, you might be hiking under tree canopy, but the sun's rays can still poke through. Moreover, don't skimp out on the power behind your SPF. You're going to need SPF 30 or above. By coating yourself with sun protection before you even get dressed, you'll ensure that your SPF sinks into your skin (it needs a good 20 minutes to soak in). It also doesn't hurt to bring sunglasses or a sunhat!

Gear Up

You'll want to pack some emergency items just for safe measure. A map and a compass, flashlight, a first aid kit, a lighter and candles should do the trick for your first hike. If you want to splurge, you can also purchase a compact portable tent that's not too heavy. Make sure you fit all of this gear in a really sturdy backpack that'll withstand the elements.

Pick an Easy Path

If you've got a friend that enjoys hiking, ask them to join you on your first kick at the can. They'll probably have plenty of paths that will be easy for a newbie. If you're going it with other novices, reach for a guidebook or find a website that'll point you in the right direction. Bottom line: pick an easy path that'll only take a couple of hours to complete. There's plenty of time to master black diamond trails that'll take a full day to complete. So work your way up slowly.

Chow Down, Drink Up

Grrroooooowwwwwwwl. It's not a bear. It's your stomach talking. Don't forget to carry a snack along with you. You'll want to reach for energy bars that have plenty of carbs in them to give you that extra push you need to finish the hike. You also need to carry water. Above all else – hydrate yourself. A couple of hours before you hit the trails, drink a glass of water. But also remember to hydrate while you're hiking too as all your hard work is causing you to lose water. You'll know it's time to chug-a-lug when your mouth starts to feel dry or your pace starts to lag. Please listen to your body – cramps, an upset tummy, headaches or strongly coloured urine are all signs of more serious dehydration. When you replenish your water reserves, you'll have a better hiking experience. Bottoms up!

Pick Up After Yourself

We know you already know this, but the forest is not yours and yours alone. It's habitat to hundreds of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects. So pick up after yourself. When you finish your energy bar, toss it in your backpack instead of on the forest floor. Leaving no trace of your hike is truly one of the best ways you can respect nature and all it has provided you on your hike.

Measures put in place to help contain the spread of COVID-19 are gradually changing. Please remember to follow public health directives for gathering and social distancing in your region.