



AMC Western MA Chapter Leadership Requirements for Hike Leaders

Why Be a Western MA Hike Leader?

Being a Hike Leader with the Western MA Chapter is very fulfilling. You can pick where you want to lead hikes, when you want to lead hikes and number of hikers you want to take on your trip! Being a Hike Leader is very satisfying and gives you a sense of belonging to a larger community. There is no friendlier group of people than Western MA Leaders! Being a Hike Leader opens doors to greater leadership roles within the chapter, such as becoming a member of the Executive Committee or other committees within the AMC's Chapter wide structure. It is also a way you can give back to our chapter. It is only through getting folks outdoors and perpetuating our organization that we can preserve our outdoor experiences. The quiet stillness that one can experience by being 100 miles from the nearest person or from the depths of an urban park, means that the Outdoors is open to all if we work together to preserve it.

How Do I Become a Western MA Hike Leader?

The process to become a leader is easy and how far you go in the skill process depends on the difficulty of the hikes you wish to lead.

Regardless of whether you want to lead two-mile hikes in your local conservation area or a 100-mile hike through the 100 Mile Wilderness section of the AT, the first requirement is to love and respect the outdoors. Knowing that you enjoy the outdoors is important because that is what the AMC is all about...getting people outdoors. Having this knowledge about yourself or having spent time outdoors, will assure that you do not take on something that you will not enjoy.

The second requirement for anyone wanting to lead hikes is to go through the Western MA or another approved Leadership Training Program. This is a sixteen-hour course that teaches basic leadership skills and trip planning skills. It is generally taught in the Western MA Chapter in the spring. Other chapters also teach the course, so you may take it at another chapter. We do require though you take at least the 16-hour course as some chapters have 4, 8 or even 27-hour training. There is an upfront charge for the in-person course, usually around \$50.00, which is reimbursed once you become a Leader and lead at least two hikes within a year. You can choose to take the course after you co-lead a hike with an AMC Hike Leader or even before you do so.

The next step in the Leadership process is you are mentored by an AMC qualified leader. Your mentor works with you to guide you through the Leadership process and to assist you in your two co-lead hikes. Your co-lead role in the first hike is limited, but for your second co-lead, you will plan, screen and lead the entire hike. Your mentor will be with you each step of the way! Generally, you will co-lead your first hike with someone other than your mentor, so you can experience difference leadership styles. On the other hand, you can choose to do the entire process with your mentor. Or you can do your co-leads with other leaders and use your mentor as a mentor only. We like to get you through the process within a year, but each candidate is treated individually. The Outings Chair will work with you to set up your mentorship.



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There are also a few AMC organization wide requirements: You must be over 18 years old to be a leader; Must have demonstrated experience and skill in the activity they would like to lead; Must be a current and active member of the AMC and you must lead in accordance with the [AMC Leadership Requirements and Guidelines](#) (LRG).

Can I Choose What Level of Leader I Want to Be?

There are several leadership levels for you to choose from. They each require you to complete the Leader Training and mentoring process and meet the AMC organization wide requirements.

The first level of leading is the **Local Hike Leader**. These Leader hikes are first level hikes. Local hikes have little or no elevation gain, easy to moderate terrain, and are completed in one day. Generally, these hikes occur within 30 minutes or less of medical help. Mileage varies on these hikes but is generally 3 to 5 miles or less. A local hike leader should know CPR and basic first aid, and the chapter will sponsor a course yearly. Health professionals such as nurses, EMTs or others who work in the field, are not required to take the first aid course. A local hike leader can lead hikes any season of the year, including snowshoeing in winter. Examples of these hikes are Museum Hiking Series, Introductory Hiking series or hikes on Bike Trails.

The next level of Leading is the **Day Hike Leader**. This level of Leader is a step-up from the Local Hike Leader. Day hikes will have elevation gains, moderate to strenuous terrain and are completed in one day. Generally, these hikes occur within an hour of medical help. Mileage varies on these hikes but is generally 5 to 10 miles. A local hike leader should know CPR and basic first aid, and the chapter will sponsor a course yearly. Health professionals such as nurses, EMT or others who work in the field are not required to take the first aid course. Active Day Hike Leaders are eligible to be reimbursed for taking the Wilderness First Aid Course and are encouraged to do so. A Day Hike Leader can lead hikes any season of the year. Examples of these Leaders are Tuesday Hike Leaders, AT Series Hike Leaders, NET Hike Series leaders, or Mt. Greylock hike leaders.

The third level of leading is the **Day Hike 2 Leader**. This leader leads Local and Day Hikes but additionally leads all season hikes at greater elevations or with greater elevation changes, such as the White Mountains in New Hampshire. (**Day Hike 2 Leaders** leading in winter in the Whites or above tree line, require additional training.) The hikes are generally strenuous to very strenuous, medical help may be some distance away, and the hikes require a greater level of hiking skill. These leaders are required to have successfully completed a Wilderness First Aid Course and may be reimbursed for doing so.

To lead winter hikes the **Day Hike 2 Leader** must have good basic winter mountaineering skills (crampon/ice axe use, self-arrest, etc.). These leaders are required to have successfully completed a Wilderness First Aid Course and may be reimbursed for doing so.



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The Western MA Chapter will assist the **Day Hike 2 Leader** with the additional training necessary to lead at this level. It may be through a mentor at the Western MA Chapter or it may be done in cooperation with a mentor from another chapter such as Boston or New Hampshire. It might also be through trainings sponsored by other chapters. Another option might be Mountain Leadership School through AMC.

The final level of leading in the Western MA Chapter is **Backpacking Leader**. These leaders lead trips within 500 miles of Western MA and the trips are less than 10 days in duration. They consist of one or more nights at a backcountry tent site, cabin or hut. Backpacking Leaders can lead Local Hikes, Day Hikes and Day Hike 2 Hikes in addition to the multi-day backpacks. These leaders are required to have successfully completed a Wilderness First Aid Course and may be reimbursed for doing so.

They are required to have had training and experience in backpacking skills for the season in which they are leading. These leaders are required to take the Backpacking Courses offered by several of the AMC chapters, for example the Introductory Backpacking Courses and Seasonal Backpacking courses and the hard skill hiking courses offered by AMC Chapters. Mountain Leadership School is also encouraged.

How Can I Be a Leader if I Don't Know Anything About Hiking?

This is the wonderful thing about our tiered Leader system and the AMC mentoring model, you start at your level and move your way up. The AMC teaches you as you go! You will have your mentor as well as the Chapter sponsored workshops and trainings. Want to be a Local Hike Leader only? That is great. You can lead those hikes forever. Want to lead Backpacking trips? If you have no skills, then you can work your way up to that Leader status. If you are an accomplished outdoorsperson, then you can start there. The AMC provides what is called soft skills training through its two-day leadership training course. Hard skills, such as packing your backpack, are also taught through mentors, other hikers and AMC courses.

For More Information, Contact Outings Chair Kathy Martin at Hiking@amc-wma.org.