



Trail Life

# PARENT AND LEADER GUIDE



# **Trail Life USA Parent and Leader Guide**

Sample

FIRST EDITION



**Trail Life**

**Belton, South Carolina**



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A dirt trail winds through a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. The path is bordered by a rustic wooden fence on the left and leads towards a calm lake in the distance. The scene is bathed in soft, natural light, creating a peaceful and inviting atmosphere.

Chapter I

# **WELCOME TO THE TRAIL**

**T**rail Life USA is an exciting outdoor youth development organization steeped in the values of the Christian faith. It is dedicated to a mission "... to guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, TRUTH 1c serve others, and experience outdoor adventure."



The influencing concepts behind Trail Life USA are not new ideas.

In the opening decade of the 20th Century, British General Robert Baden-Powell pondered how to use his fame as the Hero of Mafeking to inspire English boys to be prepared to face life with a can-do attitude of self-reliance, courage, and honor. Lord Baden-Powell consulted with two great leaders in youth development: Ernest Thompson Seton of the Woodcraft Indians and Daniel Carter Beard of the Sons of Daniel Boone.

The most important result of this collaboration was the idea of utilizing certain classical aims and methods to help boys forge through adventures, fun, and inspiration into manhood.

The problem was, Baden-Powell's approach relied heavily on society to help supply the single most important attribute of maturity—spiritual development.

In failing to found the movement on the solid rock of God's revealed word, TRUTH 1b it was left resting solely on the shifting sands of popular culture.



In the opening decade of the 21st Century, Baden-Powell's movement was influenced by growing opposition to its conservative course and, without the Solid Rock of Christ, the movement succumbed to cultural winds and tides and drifted off course.

The need to specifically include Christ rather than rely on a "define your own faith" model had



been talked about for years. It was an idea waiting for a defining moment, a catalyst, a spark. In the spring of 2013, a spark ignited tinder that had been accumulating for some time.

Trail Life USA is now beginning its first century. Like the movements that inspired it, there will be changes through the years in its outward appearance, and new editions of its materials.




One thing will not change, and that is the revealed Word of God **TRUTH** to Whose glory we humbly dedicate this program.

It will always be the standard of those who would “Walk Worthy.”

From your role as a parent of a Trailman, a Trail Guide leading an activity, the Troop Treasurer managing finances, or an Area Team member planning multi-Troop events, there are many different ways in which you can serve generations of young men. Some roles in which you serve will be high profile.

**The revealed Word of God... will always be the standard of those who would “Walk Worthy.”**





Others may largely go unnoticed or have little notoriety. One thing that makes any role important is your perspective about the role.

**Take, for example, the mud mixer.**

In the years following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, construction began at ground zero in New York City on the new One World Trade Center building. Construction workers had removed tons of earth to prepare for the foundation of this new skyscraper. It's been reported that soon after construction began, a news agency sent a reporter down to the construction site to interview the workers. The reporter approached a construction worker who had been mixing concrete for the foundation footings. The reporter asked him, "What sort of job are you doing?" The construction worker, visibly cross, responded by saying, "I mix mud. All day long I mix the concrete. I mixed mud yesterday. And tomorrow, I'll mix more mud." After this conversation, the reporter moved to another construction worker who was also mixing concrete and asked the same question. "What sort of job are you doing?" The second construction worker paused, looked up, wiped some sweat off of his forehead, and said, "I'm building a skyscraper!"


You may feel like you're "mixing mud" as you work with your son and other Trailmen. However, your perspective on your role as a parent or leader will help you serve with humility and consistency. As each one of us serves in our various roles faithfully, the "skyscraper" will rise. **PROVIDENCE 6b**

From the beginning, Trail Life USA parents and leaders have known that they are participating in something much bigger than they could ever do themselves. You are invited to join the thousands

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**Your perspective on your role as a parent or leader will help you serve with humility and consistency.**





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**Trail Life is not just an outdoor organization having a Christian experience.**

of other “skyscraper-builders” as we work together to guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others, and experience outdoor adventure.

Trail Life is not just an outdoor organization having a Christian experience. We are, at our core, a Christ-centered, boy-focused adventure, character, and leadership organization that uses the experiences of male-centric outdoor activity to grow boys into godly men.

We know that Jesus is the answer—not only as our Savior, teacher, example, or even healer— but also as the only begotten Son of God, vested with the authority to reveal the eternal truth about life and our place in it. **CREATION 2b,c**



Additionally, we know that God has created boys and girls to be different, and we embrace the uniqueness of boyhood. **FAMILY 4a** Boys, in general, learn skills and internalize concepts better in an active and community environment. Trail Life is structured in a way to provide boys with a community of friends that actively experience God in the world He created.



As you join or observe your son in his patrol or step into a leadership role, you will begin to notice there are a number of key elements that are foundational in Trail Life USA. Some are unique in raising a standard to carry the movement forward, ensuring our purpose for being, and establishing the tenets that preserve our rights to exist and carry out ministry in this particular way.

As we review in detail in books like *Let Boys Be Boys* and *Raising Godly Boys*, and through our Proven Process documents, we have a thorough understanding of the world boys are growing up in

today—and we are keenly aware of a society that leaves boys largely unguided, ungrounded, unappreciated, and uninspired.

Thus our work, with you, is to guide, ground, appreciate, and inspire boys. This is the Proven Process we aim to integrate into all we do in Trail Life, along with the biblical truths that inform the Process, through the tens of thousands of volunteers who embrace the challenge to make a generational difference in the lives of boys and the families they will someday lead.

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**We embrace  
the uniqueness  
of boyhood.**



Chapter 2

# THE BASICS



# Foundational Elements



## OUR MISSION

To guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others, and experience outdoor adventure.

## OUR VISION

To be the premier national character development organization for young men which produces godly and responsible husbands, fathers, and citizens.

## THE TRAIL LIFE OATH

On my honor, I will do my best  
to serve God and my country;  
to respect authority;  
to be a good steward of creation;  
and to treat others as I want to be treated.

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*The Trail Life Oath should be recited during the opening ceremony of a Troop meeting or Trail Life activity. Reciting the oath helps Trailmen to orient their thinking and attitude before beginning any Trail Life activity. Youth members are not required to accept Christianity, but they are expected to adhere to Christian standards of behavior.*

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**WHEN TO  
RECITE THE  
TRAIL LIFE  
OATH**

## THE TRAIL LIFE MOTTO

**Walk Worthy!**

From Colossians 1:10 "... that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;..."  
NKJV

## THE TRAILMAN SIGN

### How to do a Proper Trail-

**man Sign:** The Trailman Sign is made by raising the right elbow out to the right side of your body so that the upper arm (elbow to shoulder) is parallel to the ground and 90 degrees from your body. Then the forearm should be raised vertically so that the forearm is parallel to the body. The hand should be open with the palm facing forward and all five fingers together.



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### WHEN TO USE THE TRAILMAN SIGN

*The Trailman Sign is raised when reciting the Trailman Oath, and also used as a sign to bring Trailmen to silence.*

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## THE TRAILMAN SALUTE

### How to do a Proper Trail-

**man Salute:** The Trailman Salute is the same as the United States military salute. The Trailman Salute is made by raising the right upper arm similar to the Trailman's Sign. Then the forearm should be folded back toward the Trailman's head, and his fingers should be straight, together, and touch the outside edge of his right eyebrow or the right side of his cap, if one is worn.



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### WHEN TO USE THE TRAILMAN SALUTE

*The Trailman Salute is used by Trailmen in uniform to honor the United States flag at raising, lowering, and retiring. Trailmen additionally can use the salute during the recitation of the Pledge*

*of Allegiance or during the playing of the National Anthem.*

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## **THE TRAILMAN HANDSHAKE**

**How to do a Proper Trailman Handshake:** The Trailmen extend their right arms toward each other. They reach forward past each other's right hand and grasp the other Trailman's forearm just above their wrist.



*The Trailman Handshake is to be used when meeting, greeting, or introducing any other Trail Life member from the youngest Fox Trailman to the oldest adult leader.*

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**WHEN TO  
USE THE  
TRAILMAN  
HANDSHAKE**



## TREAD LIGHTLY!® PRINCIPLES

Trail Life USA is a proud partner of *Tread Lightly!*® a non-profit organization founded by the National Forest Service. *Tread Lightly!*® promotes “responsible outdoor recreation through education.”

**STEWARDSHIP 5b** All Trail Life activities will follow the *Tread Lightly!*® principles:

- T** - Travel Responsibly
- R** - Respect the Rights of Others
- E** - Educate Yourself
- A** - Avoid Sensitive Areas
- D** - Do Your Part



More information about Tread Lightly® and these principles can be found in

**TOOLS  
OF THE  
TRAIL**

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### **Troop Level Youth Leaders**

**First Officer**—Leads the Officers' Conference and mentors Patrol Leaders

**Second Officer**—Assists and fills in for the First Officer

**Quartermaster**—Oversees and maintains all Troop and patrol gear

**Others**—Troop-created leadership positions for various needs

### **Adventurer Youth Leaders**

**Patrol Leader**—Leads an Adventurers patrol, mentors Junior Patrol Leaders, and serves on the Officers' Conference

### **Navigator Youth Leaders**

**Junior Patrol Leader**—Leads a Navigators patrol and serves on the Officers' Conference

Volunteers at every level serve each other by using the **Levels of Troop Support** to assist each other with questions or issues they have.

## **EVERY TRAILMAN HAS MANY RESOURCES**

Along the Trail, Trailmen will need specific resources to help them navigate to their destination. In Trail Life, there are a number of specific resources that are available to every Trailman whether a youth or an adult leader: Trail Life leadership, Trail Life Connect, The Trailman's Handbook, Trail Life Field Guides, and Trail Life University.

The Officers' Conference is a gathering of Troop youth leadership together with adult leaders to set the patrol agendas.

There is more explanation about youth leaders on page 70.

More details can be found for our Levels of Troop Support in

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OF THE  
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### **In person: Trail Life Leadership**

Whether it is a peer Patrol Leader, the Troop Chaplain, or the Area Point Man, Trailmen of every age have many different Trail Life leaders who are available to assist, mentor, and guide them. The Trail Guides are the adult leaders that most interact and support the Trailmen.



### **Online: Trail Life Connect**

Trail Life Connect is a wealth of resources and information. Trailmen can find Trail Badge requirements, Troop activity and calendar tools, advancement tracking information (including the Freedom Trail), the Health and Safety Guide, communication tools, and much more in the various menu options.

Trail Life Connect is constantly being updated and expanded. Check back often to see what new resources and features are available.



### **In Print: The Trailman's Handbooks**

There are two separate Trailman's Handbooks. One handbook is for Woodlands Trailmen and their parents. The second handbook is for Navigator and Adventurer Trailmen. These handbooks contain specific information regarding the Trailman's advancement. Additionally, the Woodlands Trail Handbook contains Woodlands Pals stories, and the Navigators and Adventurers Handbook contains additional leadership principles and information.

### **In Print: Trail Life Field Guides**

While Trail Life leaders have program flexibility to teach outdoor skills the way that works best for their Troop or patrol, Trail Life has produced several Field Guides, designed for the Trailman, that give practical information, instruction, or best practices for some of the most commonly used skills. The Field Guides were produced using durable materials that are outdoor adventure ready. They are lightweight, foldable, and made to be used on the Trail.

Training content is structured as either full training courses, grouped training modules, or individual training articles. New training materials for Trailmen, parents, and leaders are being added constantly. Return often to Trail Life University to discover new training content available to you.

### TRAILMEN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

For Trailmen who have either mental or physical challenges **HUMAN DIGNITY 3a,b** that seem to prevent them from accomplishing written Trail Life requirements, Troop leaders can submit a “Special Needs” accommodation request on their behalf. This request will be reviewed by the Special Needs Committee, staffed with qualified volunteers, who will work with Troop leaders on a case-by-case basis to create specific programmatic accommodations, if deemed necessary. To submit a Special Needs request, scan the QR code.



Scan to submit a  
Special Needs  
request.





Chapter 4

# THE WOODLANDS TRAIL PROGRAM

## For Woodlands Trail Parents

As a parent of a Woodlands Trailman, you are the most important leader for your son. It goes without saying that you are the primary influence for him. Your love, encouragement, and interest shape the man that he is becoming as well as shape his view of God. The most important things you can do for your son are to love him, model a humble, repentant life, and point him to Jesus as the only fulfillment of his deepest need, reconciliation with God.

Some of the best ways you can help your son in Trail Life is by encouraging him as he demonstrates or explains the new skills he has acquired and by showing interest in what he is learning. The best way to encourage and show your interest is to participate with him during his regular Troop meetings, activities, and outings.

Woodlands Trailmen, specifically Foxes and Hawks, are of the age where they enjoy doing things with their friends, but they also still love to do things with their parents. Trail Life encourages parents to come to Troop meetings and activities and participate with their sons. Your presence, assistance, and words of encouragement will benefit him and also other





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Having parents engaged and involved in the Troop is key to the success of any Troop and the mentorship of young men.



Trailmen who may or may not have a parent present. For families where fathers or other male role models are not present, male Troop leaders, following all Child Safety and Youth Protection protocols, can serve as program role models and mentors for Trailmen as they grow into young men. Having parents engaged and involved in the Troop is key to the success of any Troop and the mentorship of young men.

Additionally, your presence will help to create a more controlled environment in your son's patrol where all of the Trailmen can better interact. Your presence, regardless if you are a father or mother, in the Troop meeting or activity will also help your son's Trail Guides. The Trail Guides work to provide hands-on engaging outdoor activities for your son each meeting, and your willingness to help can provide your son and other Trailmen with more opportunities to directly work with an adult on the topic of the Step activity. In short, come to the Troop meetings and activities with your son and participate with him! Some parents may not be ready to take the step to become a Registered Adult

and sign the Statements of Faith and Values, but they can still attend meetings or events with their sons. If they intend to regularly attend meetings or take an active



role in the camping program, they will need to, at a minimum, read and sign Trail Life USA's Child Safety and Youth Protection Policy to ensure their compliance with appropriate youth interactions. The Charter Organization may also decide to have them submit to a background check. However, only duly Registered Adult leaders may hold leadership positions, provide two-deep leadership, and deliver the program as a recognized Christian mentor to the youth.

During the time in between Troop meetings you can help your son by working on Family Home Activities. These specific activities are outlined in your son's Woodlands Trail Handbook and online at Trail Life Connect and will help him engage more with the themes of his Step activities and can be used to help your son "make up" for Troop meetings or activities that he may have missed on a limited basis. Like their name, Family Home Activities are themed activities that Trailmen can do with their family members at home on their own time.

Each Woodlands Trail patrol is led by at least two Registered Adult leaders called Trail Guides. The Trail Guides lead the Steps and the 'Hit the Trail!' Activities. The entire Woodlands Trail program is overseen by an adult Troop volunteer leader called the Ranger.

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The time in between Troop meetings you can help your son by working on Family Home Activities.

You can read more information about each of these adult leadership roles in



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Chapter 4

# THE NAVIGATOR & ADVENTURER PROGRAMS



## For Navigators and Adventurers Parents

As a Navigator, your son is becoming more independent and stepping into leadership roles outside of his home. Asking clarifying, open-ended questions will help him to better understand the topics that he is learning and practicing in Trail Life. Additionally, encouraging him as he takes on new roles and responsibilities will go a long way to deepening his trust in you, especially when he fails in those new roles and responsibilities.

Navigator Trailmen are at the age where they are wanting to become more independent, but aren't sure if they "have what it takes." Your son will be surrounded by men, who will help him to gain confidence in his current abilities, grow those abilities, and also humbly understand his limitations. Fathers are encouraged to join Trail Life with their sons in order to come alongside this community of men for their own son's benefit as well as for those Trailmen who may not have a father figure in their lives.

Adventurers are beginning to wrestle with decisions that will shape the rest of their lives. Your wisdom shared with your son during these years will guide him and





be the wisdom upon which he looks back later in life. However, the most important thing you can do for your son is to lovingly point him to Jesus as the best example of what it means to be a man and the source of his ability to grow into a godly man himself. *Navigators and Adventurers need mentors and coaches who will consistently and lovingly push them to grow as godly men.*

Fathers or father figures **FAMILY4a** are extremely important during the Adventurer years. Adventurers will emulate the actions of their fathers and/or the older men in their lives. Fathers and older men are setting the pattern that their sons and the young men they are mentoring will follow. Take these years to connect with your son

and other young men that may not have a father present.

Model for them how to take worries, fears, and decisions, to the Lord for guidance. As 2 Timothy 3:16 instructs, impart to him the importance of searching and knowing God's word as what he needs "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of

God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Because one of Trail Life's Core Values is Male-Centered Leadership, mothers may

not serve as a Trail Guide in their son's Navigators or Adventurers patrols. However, mothers have a unique role for their Navigator and Adventurer Trailmen. It is a mom's time to pray as she allows other godly men to speak into her son's life, as Samuel's mother did. It is also time to support the Troop overall by assisting in ways such as working with the Woodlands Trail, managing Trail Life Connect records, assisting with attendance, gathering supplies, and encouraging other adult leaders ... allowing her son to gain other godly influences who will speak into his life as he grows into a godly man.

More information on the characteristics of Navigator and Adventurer Trailmen can be found in the

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OF THE  
TRAIL**

Pgs 60-69

