

Guidelines for Drafting Outing descriptions

1. Submit your description to the Outings Coordinator a day or two BEFORE the advertised deadline, in case revisions are needed.
2. Trip TITLES are your publicity. They should be descriptive (where and what) and/or enticing. Titles usually include the type of activity and location (e.g. Mount Marcy Hike or Ski Whiteface Mountain). OK to get creative or punny E.g Flatlander Bike Trip or Wild Goose Chase in Malone [snow goose bird watch].
3. Names of places should use the official name, e.g. “Higley Flow State Park”, not “Higley Flow” or “Paul Smith’s VIC”, not “Paul Smith’s.” If your destination shares a name with another destination, e.g. Catamount, Owl’s Head, Haystack Mountains, expand your description to make it clearer (e.g. Owl’s Head Mountain near Long Lake). Proper names should be capitalized.
4. Miles should be recorded as round trip (RT) not one-way.
5. Any trip with a difficulty level 2-5 should include elevation gain.
6. All trips should include difficulty ratings and descriptions:

Difficulty	Ascent (ft.)	Miles
5 - Very Strenuous	Over 1500	10+
4 - Strenuous	1000 - 1500	8-10
3 - Moderate	500 - 1000	5-8
2 - Fairly Easy	to 499	3-5
1 - Easy	Mostly Level	1-3

7. Descriptions should include more than just the facts. What is interesting about your outing? What will people see or do? Will you have time for animal tracking, bird watching, flower identification? Are there views or rock formations? A sentence or two is helpful to participants who have never been to your destination before. It is especially important to include information about difficulties that might be encountered, such as bushwhacking, open ledges and cliffs, ladders up steep inclines, brook crossings, bogs or marshy areas, etc. Participants may self-eliminate themselves if they can see that your itinerary is outside their comfort zone.
8. What should participants bring? If you are planning lunch on the summit, let them know they should bring lunch. Are you planning a poetry reading? Ask them to bring something to read to the group. Is there a swimming hole along the way? Swimsuits will be needed. Bird watching? Binoculars are in order.

9. Omit trip meeting places in the descriptions. This prevents unanticipated and unprepared participants from just showing up. It also avoids having too many participants.
10. OK to set limits on the number of participants if the strenuous level and trail conditions warrant it. Some areas in the Adirondacks have legal limits for day use and overnight camping that need to be observed. Generally 8-10 participants is a good limit unless you have co-leaders.
11. Give an indication of your intended pace. If you are a slow hiker indicate a relaxed or leisurely pace. If you are planning on bagging several peaks in one day you may want to say "fast paced." Somewhere in between? Your hike might be "moderate." Pace is dependent on age and fitness of your participants, so screening is important.
12. Plan for uncertain weather conditions especially in Fall and Spring. Temperatures can and do vary greatly so that your hike might become a snowshoe at the last minute, or your ski outing might become a hike. Better to advertise a March/April snowshoe as a hike/snowshoe since you might not know the trail conditions until a few days before.
13. Consider trailhead access during off-peak seasons. NY State Parks are generally closed Sept/Oct through April/May and many back roads are only seasonal. Having to park outside a park entrance can add extra miles to your outing.
14. Contact information should include a phone number and email address. Depending on your participant population, not everyone has access to email or may prefer to speak personally to a leader to explain special needs. Participants may need your cell phone number in case of last minute cancellations or travel emergencies.
15. Trip descriptions should be short but sweet. Generally, 75-125 words are sufficient to get the message across. Space is limited in printed newsletters and flyers, but web page descriptions can be more extensive if space allows. Keep in mind that readers are unlikely to read lengthy texts, so keeping it short and to the point is advised.
16. Details matter. Trip descriptions should be "publication ready." Don't expect the Outings Coordinator to edit your description for you. Double-check your copy for grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and typos.

Here are a few examples:

Sun, Mar 1: Snowshoe in Five Ponds Wilderness on Leary Trail Abandoned after the 1995 wind storm, this trail is again navigable. If conditions allow, if we make it as far as the truck trail, we can decide whether to press deeper toward the Five Ponds, or go for High Falls. About 10 miles RT to truck trail over mostly gentle terrain. This area is on the northern fringe of the "lake effect" zone, and elevation is 1,500'+, so it may have good snow when our towns don't. Level 5, very strenuous. Contact Mark Lowell, (315) 386-3945 or markl@stlawu.edu.

Sat, Jan 3: Cross Country Skiing for Beginners Also experienced skiers who'd like a short easy ski. At Higley Flow State Park. Short and gentle, on roads that become ski trails in winter. Level 1. Warm new Lodge for putting on ski boots. Optional late lunch at South of the Rock Inn. Contact John Barron at 613-828-2296 or johnbarron@sympatico.ca.

Sat, Mar 21: Snowshoe or hike around Massawepie Lake Approximately 6 miles with a few short climbs and descents but no significant elevation gain. We will traverse dramatic eskers, visit the source of the Grass River, and have lunch on one of the peninsulas. Level 3, moderate. Contact Marianne Hebert at (315) 265-0756 or hebertm@potdam.edu.