

Mountain Leader Skills Checklist

Introduction

This skills checklist is designed to enable you, as a Mountain leader candidate, to both record what you have covered as your training progresses e.g. as a technical diary and, at the close of your course, reflect on the syllabus topics covered during your Mountain Leader training allowing you to rate yourself using the 'Learning stage' described below.

It is hoped that this process will then assist you in completing your Action Plan (which you can share and discuss with your course director at your end of course debrief) which will guide you in consolidating and developing your experience and skills post training and pre-assessment.

When reflecting you might find it useful to refer back to the Mountain Leader Candidate Handbook. In addition our publication [Hill Walking](#) details many of the techniques that might be used by a Mountain Leaders and will be useful for refreshing your memory of specific techniques or skills covered at training.

How to appraise yourself

The syllabus is broken down into headings. Against each competency you can give yourself a 'learning stage' number – each number 1-3 corresponds with a description as detailed below. Learning stage 3 would very broadly equate with the degree of competency you'd expect from a qualified and experienced Mountain Leader.

Learning stage descriptions

Cognitive or understanding phase (Learning stage 1)

In the first stage of learning performances are inconsistent and success is not guaranteed. Performing the skill requires all of the candidate's attention and so they rely on the trainer for cues. This is a process of trial and error. Correct performances must be reinforced through external feedback.

Associative or verbal motor phase (Learning stage 2)

Performances are becoming more consistent as knowledge and skills are being formed. While the simpler parts of the performance now look fluent and are well learned, the more complex elements require most of the candidate's spare attention. The candidate is starting to get a sense of internal 'kinaesthetic' and 'cognitive' feedback when they perform or apply a skill well. They are starting to detect and correct their own errors.

Autonomous or motor phase (Learning stage 3)

In the final stage of learning, performances have become consistent, fluid and 'unconsciously competent'. The knowledge and skills involved are well learned and stored in the long-term memory. There is now spare attention which can be focused on group members and adapting appropriate leadership approaches and

techniques as applied to situations. To retain the new skill at this level, it must be regularly practiced to reinforce the motor and cognitive programmes.

Management and decision making – Mountain Leaders have responsibilities as a group leader with regards to the care and safety of the group. This includes safety management, their own leadership behaviours and ethos as well as dealing with hazards and emergencies. They will be able to:

	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
1 Leader Responsibilities		
1.1 Explain their general responsibilities to the group and, where appropriate, to parents/guardians, the organising authority, committee or manager of the activity, the outdoor user and the general public.		
1.2 Explain their specific responsibilities to choose appropriate objectives, to complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed for the activity.		
1.3 Demonstrate an understanding of current legislation & the legal responsibilities that relate to the care of groups under their charge, including safeguarding issues specific to supervising young people & vulnerable adults.		
1.4 Demonstrate an awareness of the variety of barriers to participation, including mental and physical disability, ethnicity, fitness/health and be aware of the impact of various medical conditions.		
1.5 Be able to evaluate the experience and signpost towards further participation.		
2. Leadership and decision making		
2.1 The Leader demonstrates adaptable leadership behaviours and decision-making.		
2.1.1 Monitor the group, environmental conditions and activity, and can adapt their behaviours and decisions to meet ongoing safety, group and task requirements.		
2.1.2 Be consistent and confident in their decision making to achieve positive outcomes and communicate these clearly to the group.		
Vision – The leader is a positive role model and aims to inspire others.		
2.3 Articulate clear and agreed values for their group; lead by example; and behave how they want the group to behave.		
Support – The leader creates a positive and supportive environment for the group.		

2.4 Recognise, respect and adapt to individual needs, differences, strengths and abilities.		
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2.5 Encourage independent learning; establish an environment where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities and provide clear and positive feedback to support this		
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Challenge – The leader provides relevant and appropriately challenging experiences.

2.6 Agree group goals and calibrate the level of challenge to individual abilities and motivations.		
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2.7 Encourage and support the group and individuals to be part of the decision-making process and encourage them to solve their own problems.		
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The leader understands the Mountain Training ethos of leadership and has developed their own. They should be able to:

2.8 Articulate their own leadership ethos and beliefs along with those of Mountain Training.		
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2.9 Acknowledge and describe a range of leadership approaches, models and associated ethos.		
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3. Planning and weather

Prior planning

3.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the scope of the Mountain Leader qualification and plan walks that lie within this terrain.		
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3.2 Know where to find information to assist with the planning of walks.		
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3.3 Choose objectives appropriate to the experience, skills and motivation level of the group, the prevailing conditions and the leader's own experience and ability.		
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3.4 Complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed.		
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3.5 Build in flexibility when planning routes; respond to changing circumstances.		
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Weather		
3.6 Interpret and use reliable sources of weather information.		
3.7 Demonstrate an elementary understanding of weather maps and resulting weather conditions on the hill.		
3.8 Recognise weather developments associated with different air masses, major cloud forms, changes in wind direction and in atmospheric pressure.		
3.9 Recognise and continuously evaluate the effect of weather on route selection, equipment choice and activity.		
4 Hazards and emergency procedures		
Hazards		
4.1 Demonstrate the ability to manage a group and individuals and ensure safe travel on steep ground.		
4.2 In an emergency or unplanned event, provide confidence or assistance using a rope. This includes the ability to:		
4.2.1 Explain the suitability of different types, sizes and lengths of rope.		
4.2.2 Demonstrate safe and efficient rope management.		
4.2.3 Demonstrate safe and appropriate knots.		
4.2.4 Demonstrate appropriate methods of belaying, including choice of safe anchors.		
4.2.5 Demonstrate the use, and explain the limitations, of the rope alone: i. to protect the whole party in descent or ascent on a short section of steep ground. ii. to safeguard a single party member. iii. to safeguard themselves in descent on steep ground.		
4.3 Identify and appropriately manage environmental mountain hazards including loose rock, flooding and lightning. They should be able to deal with an unplanned or emergency situation where these hazards are encountered.		
4.4 Recognise and manage water hazards (such as marshes, streams and rivers), including the ability to:		
4.4.1 Prepare and brief the group appropriately		

4.4.2 Understand and explain the dangers and methods of avoidance.		
4.4.3 Select suitable crossing points.		
4.4.4 Select appropriate un-roped techniques to assist in crossing.		
Emergency procedures		
4.5 Be able to select an appropriate first aid kit and additional group equipment suited to the environment and prevailing conditions.		
4.6 Manage self and group in a variety of different weather conditions including heat, cold, rain and high wind.		
4.7 Describe how to deal with common injuries and medical problems in the mountains.		
4.8 Explain the causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment of sunburn, dehydration, hypothermia, cold injuries and heat disorders.		
4.9 Take appropriate action to ensure the group and the casualty's well-being in the event of an incident or accident including knowing how to get appropriate assistance.		
4.10 Have a basic understanding of Mountain Rescue and how it is organised.		
4.11 Ensure the casualties safety until help arrives.		
4.12 Demonstrate emergency bivouac skills.		
4.13 Plan and follow 'escape routes', using appropriate navigational techniques, to nearby assistance.		
4.14 Manage a group to perform a small-scale search for a missing person.		
4.15 Demonstrate improvised rescue techniques and their limitations.		

Technical competence - Mountain Leaders will be personally competent walkers who are able to provide safe walking experiences for novice groups and individuals. To fulfil this role effectively they will be able to:

5 Equipment		
5.1 Demonstrate knowledge of personal and group equipment required for day walks considering the environment and prevailing weather conditions.		
5.2 Choose appropriate food and drink for day walks.		
5.3 Demonstrate an understanding of additional equipment required by a leader.		
5.4 Be able to pack equipment effectively for personal and group use.		
5.5 Demonstrate an understanding of the design and construction of equipment, including its material characteristics, care and maintenance.		
6 Walking styles		
6.1 Demonstrate good practice with regard to individual walking skills: pace, rhythm, foot placement, conservation of energy, balance, and coordination.		
7. Navigation - Mountain Leaders should have the ability to choose from a range of techniques and select those that are appropriate to the terrain and conditions. They should be able to:		
7.1 Navigate using a variety of commonly used maps and understand the use of scales and symbols.		
7.2 Demonstrate an understanding how contours and other cartographic methods are used to represent relief and use them to effectively to navigate in the terrain. Be able to recognise topographical features in the landscape.		
7.3 Relate the map to the ground and vice versa. Recognise key features in the landscape and identify them on a map.		
7.4 Accurately navigate across country with map alone.		
7.5 Be able to relocate efficiently in a range of situations. Provide six figure grid reference on doing so.		

7.6 Measure distance accurately on a variety of maps and calculate how long it will take to get from one location to another.		
7.7 Effectively measure distance travelled on the ground using appropriate techniques, in complex terrain inc. accurate pacing and timing.		
7.8 Use a compass effectively to navigate in complex terrain.		
7.9 Navigate competently in poor visibility due to weather conditions or darkness.		
7.10 Explain and use the information given on maps with regard to rights of way and access to land.		
7.11 Describe the benefits and limitations of using handheld GPS devices.		
8. Expedition Skills - Mountain Leaders will be able to supervise a mountain camping group and teach campcraft activities. They will be personally competent in a range of campcraft techniques and be able to provide clear demonstration and effective tuition in these to novice campers. They will be able to:		
Equipment		
8.1 Select and appropriately use a variety of tents, sleeping bags, sleeping mats and other camping equipment.		
8.2 Select, pack and carry other personal and group equipment for an overnight camp.		
Camping food and cooking		
8.3 Select food and drink and plan menus with consideration to nutritional values.		
8.4 Demonstrate an understanding of food hygiene considerations for food storage, preparation and cooking.		
8.5 Select and safely use stoves and fuel.		
8.6 Manage fire risk when cooking with a group.		
Planning and supervision		

8.7 Select and organise a camp area and individual tents within it (both valley bases and remote locations).		
8.8 Identify and manage any camp area hazards.		
8.9 Manage camp hygiene.		
8.10 Manage a group when using different forms of accommodation – bunkhouses, bothies, public and wild campsites.		
8.11 Demonstrate an understanding of planned bivouacking.		
8.12 Incorporate a minimum impact approach to camping.		
9. Teaching and learning skills - Mountain Leaders should be able to teach others and promote learning to ensure the safe enjoyment of mountain walking. They should be able to;		
9.1 Demonstrate an ability to adapt the teaching style to meet group needs.		
9.2 Identify and use appropriate tasks to develop safe group activity.		
9.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for evaluating a journey and success of the outcome.		

The walking environment - Mountain Leaders introduce and support people to participate in mountain walking, encouraging sustainable and sympathetic use of the outdoors by all users. They will be able to:

10. Access, conservation and the environment		
10.1 Inspire and enthuse their groups in mountainous terrain in the United Kingdom and Ireland and expand their personal knowledge*, appreciation, and understanding of mountain environments.		
10.2 Demonstrate knowledge of permissive access agreements, rights of way and access legislation such as CRoW Act 2000 and Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the importance of being aware of, and adhering to, access restrictions where relevant.		
10.3 Explain how to obtain information about access to mountainous terrain and know how, and to whom, access issues are reported.		

10.4 Explain relevant campaigns and codes of good practice such as Countryside Code, Scottish Outdoor Access Code and Leave No Trace, and acknowledge one's responsibility to minimise impact and promote sustainable use of the outdoors.		
10.5 Demonstrate knowledge of land management in mountainous terrain and the long-term effects of the human pressures created by its multiple uses.		
10.6 Demonstrate knowledge of relevant conservation legislation as well as the nature of specially designated areas and limitations on their use. Leaders should also show an appreciation for the challenge and complexity of conservation in mountainous terrain.		

*examples of relevant personal knowledge include flora, fauna, geology, landform processes (geomorphology), local history, heritage and language, place names, folklore, the evolution of our landscape and future challenges.

11. Background knowledge		
11.1 Explain the role & ethos of Mountain Training and its schemes, the mountaineering councils & walking clubs. Demonstrate an awareness of the history, traditions & ethics of recreational mountain walking in the UK and Ireland.		

Mountain Leader ACTION PLAN – <i>Expand as required</i>	
What is the timescale for doing your assessment?	
How many Quality Mountain Days that meet the criteria (see below) have you logged?	
Have you completed the pre assessment criteria of 8 nights camping? If not, do you have the skills to gain this experience or do you think you need additional training to accomplish this part of the assessment criteria?	
List three syllabus areas that you feel/think you're particularly confident or practised in.	
List three syllabus areas that you feel/think you require further practice.	
What opportunities can you foresee for gaining experience to develop your Mountain Leader skillset?	

Given your answers to the above briefly outline your way forward for becoming a Mountain Leader.	
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Appendix

Assessment requirements

- You must have attended a Mountain Leader training course (or have been granted exemption)
- You must be familiar with the syllabus
- You must have an up to date logbook (preferably DLOG) with evidence of;
 - 40 varied Quality Mountain Days in three different regions of the UK and Ireland (see below for definition). This is a minimum requirement. Other personal walking and leadership experience is useful but not essential.
 - 8 nights camping, including at least 4 nights wild camping
 - You must have physically attended and completed (i.e. not online) a first aid course which involved at least two full days or sixteen hours of instruction and included an element of assessment.

Terrain definition for Mountain Leader

A qualified Mountain Leader can lead others in mountain, hill and moorland environments. Qualification holders are able to manage groups safely during this activity.

TERRAIN

Mountains, hills and moorlands in the UK and Ireland. For the purpose of the Mountain Leader scheme, 'mountainous country' may be defined as wild country which may contain unavoidable steep and rocky ground where walkers are dependent upon themselves for immediate help. In the United Kingdom and Ireland this includes;

Snowdonia, Brecon Beacons, Lake District, Mountains of Mourne, Scottish Highlands, Galloway Hills, Cork & Kerry Mountains, Galway & Mayo Mountains, Donegal Mountains, and the Dublin & Wicklow Mountains.

The Mountain Leader scheme integrates experience, training and assessment in what could be challenging and testing conditions in mountainous country.

EXCLUSIONS

The scheme does not cover;

- Rock climbing, nor does it cover the skills required for the planned use of the rope.
- Walks undertaken in winter conditions. This scheme does not provide training or assessment of the skills required to cope with the hazards of winter conditions, particularly lying snow and ice. 'Summer conditions' are defined by the conditions prevailing and not by the calendar

Quality Mountain Days

In terms of experience, the quality of a mountain day lies in such things as the conditions experience both overhead and underfoot, the exploration of new areas, the terrain covered and the physical and mental challenge. Such days make a positive contribution towards a person's development and maturity as an all-round mountaineer.

Usually some or all of the following criteria would be fulfilled:

- the individual takes part in the planning and leadership.
- navigation skills are required away from marked paths.
- experience must be in terrain and weather comparable to that found in UK and Irish hills.
- knowledge is increased and skills practised.
- attention is paid to safety.
- the journey is five hours or more.
- adverse conditions may be encountered.
- ascent of a substantial peak would normally be included in the day.