
PROVISIONAL LEAD POINTERS

I. General Reminders

- A. The evaluating assistant leader shall not be someone with a close relationship with the provisional leader, i. e., a spouse, partner, or close relative.
- B. The evaluating leader shall have been a leader at the level of the outing for two or more years or have significant experience leading at that level and have been granted a waiver by the LTC Chair.
- C. For I-, M-, and E-level provisional outings, the outing should be solidly within that level, not at the lower end of it.

II. Scheduling Provisional Leads

In anticipation of fulfilling all requirements to advance to provisional leader status, candidates may schedule their provisional outing(s) prior to completing all the requirements. The sponsoring outings chair, nevertheless, must know that a candidate has a reasonable plan to complete the prerequisites prior to the outing date. The outings chair should actively monitor the candidate's progress prior to the trip.

A problem arises, however, when a candidate has not been able to meet all the requirements by the date of the provisional lead. In this case, a candidate has several options:

- A. The outing may be postponed until after the requirements are met; the candidate should have a firm date in mind to communicate to would-be participants of the originally scheduled outing;
- B. Another appropriately-rated leader may take over for the candidate, and the candidate may schedule another outing; the leader candidate may not participate in any leader capacity on the original outing now to be led by current leaders of the appropriate rating;
- C. The outing may be canceled.

III. Meeting Navigation Requirements for I-, M-, and E-level Provisional Outings

If M- and E-level provisional leaders are already I-rated or M-rated, their provisional outings need not be planned with a view to demonstrating navigational skill. These provisional leaders will be expected to navigate well and show good route-finding skills, of course, but the outings do not have to be planned with significant navigation as one of the factors. M- or E-level provisional leaders who are not already I- or M-rated need to demonstrate navigational skill on two of their provisionals as would be expected of an I-level provisional leader. Passing the E-level navigation checkout is a sufficient demonstration of that skill level.

- A. I-level provisional outings (and M- and E-level for provisional leaders who are not already I- or M-rated) need to allow the provisional leader to demonstrate navigation and not only route-finding skills. The following are some clarifications and amplifications.
 - 1. The route must involve cross-country travel, i.e., routes that are not on roads, maintained trails, or use trails and ducked routes that are known to be reliable. Occasional encounters with use trails or ducked routes will not prevent a route from being considered cross-country.
 - 2. The objective and/or significant portions of the route to it should not be visible from the point of departure from the trail, i.e., simply leaving the trail to take an obvious route to a nearby visible objective does not demonstrate navigation skill. A summit visible from the trail would be acceptable only if the route involved a navigational challenge (i.e., the summit is visible from the trail but not for most of the route).

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3. Cross-country routes should be significantly different from available trails. Simply staying off a trail while walking essentially the same route does not demonstrate navigation skill.
 4. The route will require the leader to make important decisions that require navigation skill and correct judgment such as traveling on a bearing in a forest or desert; choosing the appropriate gully, drainage, ridge, etc. to follow or cross while ascending and/or descending; etc. The following are unacceptable for demonstrating navigational skill:
 - a. Going up or down a long ridge that has no forks or where there is no choice between ridges
 - b. Going up or down a long gully that does not have major tributaries and changes in direction or where there is no choice between one or more gullies
 - c. Gentle, open, featureless, or low-relief terrain on the topo and to the eye that is simple and easy to follow
 - d. Destinations in the Sierra Nevada or elsewhere where normal routes clearly do not involve sufficient navigation for a provisional lead, such as Mt. Agassiz, Cirque Peak, Mt. Goode, Mt. Lamarck, Mt. Tom, Vogelsang Peak.Generally acceptable demonstrations of navigational skill include
 - e. cross-country in broken terrain with visibility limited to nearby features because of the terrain (may include finding passes or gullies in the mountains and key up or down turnoffs to achieve a planned route)
 - f. cross-country navigation in a heavy forest with broken terrain
 - g. cross-country navigation in broken terrain on snow where there are no trail markers or pre-existing trail
 - h. cross-country to normally easy objectives using alternate routes of much greater navigation difficulty. Be sure it is a feasible, likely route, however, and not one contorted to demonstrate navigation.
 5. Off-trail navigation is “significant” when it provides a meaningful demonstration that the candidate can make practical use in a real trip situation of the types of skills that are tested in the exercises of the I/M navigation checkout. Neither the navigational problems nor the travel needs to be more difficult than the checkout. This is not a test of climbing skill or the ability to conduct arduous travel over rough terrain.
 6. The only navigation aids permitted for provisional leaders are map, compass, and altimeter. If the altimeter used is integral to a GPS receiver, the leader may not use the GPS “pages” on the instrument. A GPS may not be used to navigate or to mark waypoints to be followed later. The provisional leader may also not rely on the navigational advice or directions from others in the group.
 7. Here are some suggestions:
 - a. Lead an outing to one of the many desert peaks that are not visible from the trail (if any) or cars;
 - b. Lead an outing to an HPS peak by a different route in which the peak is not visible from the point of departure from the trail; this should be a route without a known, clear use trail and with some sort of navigational challenge
 - c. Lead an outing that requires navigation through forest;
 - d. Lead an outing other than a peak climb that involves cross-country navigation, such as a cross-country trip through western Sierra forest to visit a lake or some other feature not visible from or easily deduced from the take-off point from the trail; there is no requirement that an I-level provisional outing include a peak climb, and candidates would be well-advised to consider interesting non-peak objectives that require significant off-trail navigation.

- B. The LTP checkout process previously certified the provisional leader’s basic navigation competence, whether I/M or E. The provisional leader simply needs to demonstrate appropriate use of the navigation skills during a real-life group-led situation, not on any contorted provisional navigation route.
- C. The LTP has always encouraged scouting the provisional trip (and other outings), which is a good strategy for experience and safety reasons. In scouting the provisional trip route, however, the provisional leader has then already navigated the route. This is entirely acceptable. In analogous provisional rock and snow situations (M and

E), the provisional leader, having scouted, would simply perform all the technical moves correctly again. Same for navigation. The candidate is required to demonstrate the navigation skills and decision-making steps to the checkout leader regardless of having scouted the outing.

- D. The provisional leader is encouraged to consult with the assistant/evaluating leader, his or her leader mentor, and/or the outings chair of the sponsoring group, section, or committee in planning the provisional outing. The provisional leader may also wish to consult the LTC Navigation Chair and/or the LTC Chair about the acceptability of the proposed outing as a provisional lead.
- E. Finally, the assistant leader is responsible to determine the adequacy of the provisional leader's performance, not only for navigation but all other aspects of the outing. The assistant leader may ask questions or take actions similar to those of a navigation examiner during an LTP checkout and may pose challenges or problems for the provisional leader to solve along the way.

IV. Meeting Route-finding Requirements for I, M, and E Provisional Outings

- A. Route finding is a different skill than navigation, but demonstrations of both are required for cross-country travel.
- B. Route finding involves the small-scale decisions of the leader in determining the route through terrain that is not obvious. This is a learned skill developed by experience on various types of terrain.
- C. On many peak climbs the "listed" routes follow a relatively easy route up the peak with more difficult ground on either side. The listed route may be second class or I rated, but to either side it may be third class or full of dense brush. How well the leader does in discerning the route will keep the group on the easiest ground and within the rating classification of the outing.
- D. The assistant leader should evaluate the leader candidate on route-finding decisions and the leader's awareness and handling of the group dynamics and abilities on the different types of terrain.
- E. A provisional leader may need to consider such route-finding options as
 1. Making a side-hill traverse vs. a descent and regain of altitude
 2. Ascending or descending scree and/or talus
 3. Traveling across large talus or small talus blocks
 4. Going around a difficult patch of terrain or across it
 5. Selecting stream-crossing points where no bridge is available
 6. Choosing between travel on snow or on adjacent rocks
 7. Going through the brush or over other terrain
 8. Deciding to go around fallen logs or over them.
- F. Route finding may also require management of the group whenever there is a possibility of rock fall or loose terrain.
- G. Such route-finding decisions not only indicate skills in reading terrain but also in estimating overall time required for a group, considering energy requirements for various options, and relating the time and energy aspects to the trip participants and the trip plan.
- H. Screening of participants comes into play as well as the adequacy of the trip plan for the time required to negotiate the terrain.