



New Parents FAQs

WHAT IS THE TRAIL LIFE PROGRAM?

Trail Life USA partners with churches and parents across America as the premier national character development organization for young men, which produces generations of godly and responsible husbands, fathers, and citizens. We are, at our core, a ministry that recognizes opportunities that exist in the outdoors that will help turn boys into godly men. Experiencing challenges through Trail Life USA means boys step outside their comfort zones, test their limits, and develop skills like resilience, problem-solving, and teamwork. These are all traits that help boys grow into strong, independent, and dependable men. Outdoor adventures are a breeding ground for character development. Whether it's learning to respect nature, showing kindness to others in the Troop, or practicing gratitude for the beauty around them, boys learn important virtues that are essential for living a godly life. When boys are given the opportunity to lead and take responsibility, they grow in confidence, communication, and compassion—all qualities that are crucial for a godly man.

Trail Life's Vision

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

Trail Life's Mission

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

Trail Life's Motto

"Walk Worthy", which comes 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;..."

WHAT ARE THE AGE RANGES FOR THE VARIOUS PROGRAMS?

Trail Life USA has three main programs for boys: Woodlands Trail (ages 5-10), Navigators (ages 11-13), and Adventurers (ages 14-17). Members of any age are known as "Trailmen". Additionally, Woodlands Trail is broken down into three groups: Foxes (ages 5-6), Hawks (ages 7-8), and Mountain lions (ages 9-10).

Boys on the Woodlands Trail gain knowledge about outdoor skills, citizenship, character, friendship, and faith through fun activities, awards, and skill instruction.

As Navigators, boys gain understanding of their values and beliefs under the guidance of godly male role models through being responsible in outdoor adventures and in their home and school life. They explore areas of interest and earn Trail Badges for advancement.

As Adventurers, young men mature in wisdom and faith through more difficult challenges and leadership activities, with Christian men walking alongside. They plan and lead outdoor events and large projects while exercising leadership positions in the Troop, even mentoring the younger Trailmen.

WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN WE EXPECT DURING THE PROGRAM YEAR?

Each Troop creates an annual schedule that best fits the needs of their charter organization and Trailmen. Troops will schedule a program year that contains regular Troop meetings, "Hit the Trail" outings, campouts, Area-wide events, service projects, and a week-long Summer Adventure. Some Troop's regular meetings run from the Fall through the Spring while others run all year long. These Troop meetings are where Trailmen are introduced to, and practice, new skills and activities. Throughout the year, Trailmen will perfect these skills at their various campouts and outings. During the Summer months, Trailmen can participate in a Summer Adventurer, which may be hosted by their Troop, or a Trail Life Area/Regional Team. Ask your Troop for a copy of their Annual Calendar.

HOW DOES ADVANCEMENT AND AWARDS WORK IN TRAIL LIFE USA?

Trail Life activities and program advancement take place within seven particular categories. In the Woodlands Trail program, these categories are called Branches. In the Navigators and Adventurers programs, they are referred to as Frontiers. These categories include Heritage, Life Skills, Science and Technology, Hobbies, Values, Sports and Fitness, and Outdoor Skills.

- **Woodlands Trail:** The Woodlands Trail program is a participation-based program split into three 2-year patrols (Fox, Hawk, and Mountain Lion) where Trailmen earn patches and pins as they participate in a defined number of activities for each Branch. Each patrol begins with a joining patch, the Branch Patch. Throughout their first year in each patrol, Trailman will earn Branch Pins to affix to their Branch Patch. Once a Trailman has earned all 7 Branch Pins, he will have earned the Forest Award patch and will begin earning Sylvan Star pins to affix to his Forest Award Patch. The activities are repeated at least three times throughout the six years of the Woodlands Trail, giving each Trailman the opportunity to experience each activity at a different level as they grow.

Mountain Lion Trailmen are eligible to earn the Woodlands Trail capstone award, the Timberline Award, as they finish out their Woodlands Trail program and prepare to move to the Navigators program.

- **Navigators and Adventurers:** The Navigator and Adventurer programs are achievement-based. Trailmen advance by earning ranks that span both program levels. Ranks are earned by completing Trail Badges that demonstrate their knowledge and experience with certain skills and topics, participating in various Troop and patrol activities, volunteering in their community, and holding various leadership roles within their patrol or Troop.

The Ranks are Recruit Trailman, Able Trailman, Ready Trailman, Journey, Ascent, and Horizon. Navigator Trailman can only progress through the first three ranks. The last three ranks of Journey, Ascent, and Horizon are reserved only for Adventurers to earn.

Each program level has its own capstone Award that Trailman can earn. Navigators have the opportunity to earn the Ridgeline Award, and Adventurers have the opportunity to earn the Freedom Award. Each capstone Award has its own set of additional requirements beyond the Rank requirements.

- **Worthy Life Award:** The Worthy Life Award is Trail Life's faith-building award. A Trailman can complete the Worthy Life Award up to five separate times: once as a Fox Trailman, once as a Hawk Trailman, once as a Mountain Lion Trailman, once as a Navigator, and once as an Adventurer.

WHAT ARE THE MEMBERSHIP JOINING FEES?

Trail Life USA charges an annual membership fee. This fee is paid directly to Trail Life USA by each individual youth and adult member when they submit their initial membership application to Trail Life USA, and annually thereafter on the anniversary of their membership.

The Youth fee is \$37.97 annually and the Adult fee is \$43.19 annually (varies slightly year-to-year). Annual membership fees provide for operations of the Home Office, Trail Life Connect, insurance, and background checks and youth protection training for adult members.

WHAT ARE THE FEES CHARGED BY MY LOCAL TROOP?

Trail Life USA has no official policy or regulations regarding Troop dues. Troops are free to assess membership dues as deemed appropriate by the Troop Committee based on the Troop budget. These fees may cover activities, clothing, equipment, food and program supplies for campouts, awards, and other operational costs as decided by your local Troop. Inquire with your local Troop to find out more about their program costs. Most Troops provide fundraisers to cover most of parents' out-of-pocket costs for the year.

WHAT IS THE REQUIRED UNIFORM?

Trail Life offers three different types of uniforms that serve different purposes. The Troop Uniform (Formal), the Travel Uniform (Polo shirt), and the Trail Uniform (T-shirt). It is preferred that youth and adult Trailmen wear the formal Troop Uniform to all meetings, activities, and ceremonies. However, each Trail Life Troop can determine which type of uniform they will require at their Troop events. In addition to the clothing, all Registered Adults who have successfully passed the background check and the Child Safety and Youth Protection Training are required to wear an official Trail Life Lanyard and ID card as part of all three uniforms. This is to help better identify screened and trained Trail Life leaders.

The Troop Uniform is the formal uniform for youth and adult male Trailmen. The full Troop Uniform consists of the following: The logoed button-up shirt, the pants, the Trail Life belt, the hat, the logoed socks, the appropriate program level or position shoulder loops, the Troop Number Patch and any closed-toed outdoor shoes of your choosing (typically hiking boots). The Troop Committee may choose to loosen the preferred Troop Uniform standards in order to allow non-Trail Life pants, belt, and socks. The minimum standard for the Troop Uniform is the Troop shirt, shoulder loops, and Troop Number Patch.

WILL WE TAKE PART IN FUNDRAISING?

Annual Troop planning is an essential part of fulfilling the mission of Trail Life USA, and funding it is a vital part of the process. Some Troops are blessed with a Charter Organization that helps them fund their year, but most will need to do some level of fundraising. Fundraising keeps the Troop's promise to families who expect fun, adventure, and character-building experiences. Trailmen learn responsibility by participating in the planning of their program and then assisting in paying for it through fundraising. Setting a goal and reaching it builds perseverance, teamwork, and a sense of accomplishment. Fundraising promotes your Troop and Charter Organization's activities in the community. It teaches Trailmen communication and customer service skills as well as self-confidence. Check with your local Troop to learn about their fundraising plan.

WHAT IS THE EXPECTED LEVEL OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT?

Trail Life encourages parents to take an active role in their son's program, by attending meetings, completing in-home activities, and providing encouragement. You may be asked to do more in the Troop at some point, even taking on a leadership role. Your presence, assistance, and words of encouragement will benefit your son and also other 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.

Foxes (the youngest members of the Woodlands Trail Unit) are required to have at least one parent in attendance at all meetings and outings.

HOW DOES TRAIL LIFE USA HANDLE CHILD SAFETY?

The safety of the young Trailmen in our care is of utmost importance. To help protect boys, Trail Life has put into place extensive policies and guidelines that our members must follow. The most prominent of these policies is that every registered adult in Trail Life must successfully complete a Child Safety and Youth Protection training and Criminal Background Check. Additionally, each Troop's Troop Ministry Liaison must personally approve every Registered Adult who joins the Troop. Registered Adults are required to wear a Member ID.

Trail Life has also developed the 1-2-3 Youth Protection Essentials that are easy to learn, teach, and practice by all Trailmen, both youth and adult:

- No 1-on-One: The "no one-on-one" rule is in place for youth protection so no boy is ever alone with an adult. This is for both the protection of the boy and the adult. This extends to electronic communications such as email, texting, and online communications, as well as transportation to and from Trail Life activities.
- 2-Deep Leadership: The "two-deep" rule is in place for safety so there is always a minimum of two Registered Adults in proximity to provide backup and oversight. Although parents' participation is welcome, a parent who is not a Registered Adult member (thereby trained and screened) is not considered part of this two-deep leadership requirement.
- Buddy System of 3: The "buddy system of three" is suggested to keep youth safe when out of sight of adult leadership. Buddies must be of the same program level. The buddy system also applies to tenting. Three or more boys of the same program level should share a tent, rather than only two (unless they are siblings, with parental knowledge).

For more frequently asked questions, check out TrailLifeUSA.com/FAQ