

## Trip Initiation

We have reached the day of our TRR event/trip. You did your homework and completed a [Float Plan](#) before leaving home. We are all gathered at the pre-arranged meeting location ready to begin the shuttle. Let's discuss what we should be thinking about to help ensure a safe and fun trip.

### Review the Float Plan

Weather, river levels, etc. can change pretty rapidly in remote locations like the mountains and coastal areas. Cell phones are an incredible trip leader tool and I use mine to double check/update:

- Local Weather
- Gauge readings
- Newly discovered hazards like strainers on mountains streams

### Head Count

Participant/volunteer plans change, take some time to review who has shown up. Are we missing anyone, check:

- Phone text messages & missed calls/voice mail
- Facebook Messenger
- Email

You should have some sort of action plan to deal with late stragglers.

### Gear Check

I start with group gear – sadly this is often overlooked. Each venue/trip has unique requirements. Coastal or large open estuaries may have large boat traffic which may need some sort of load sound device like an air horn. Another valuable piece of gear for extended coastal trips is a tow system. One piece of group gear I always ensure we have is a decent First Aid Kit (preferably two). I like to store a cell phone in a Pelican Box or at least ensure one is in a take-out vehicle. On river trips, I always like to have at least two full size throw ropes (70/75' x 3/8") in case hauling or portage assistance is needed. A breakdown paddle is a wise precaution for river trips. For smaller streams, I generally like having a pin kit (keep one in my PFD pocket at all times). My pin kit consists of pre-tied Prusiks, carabineers, and micro-pulleys in my PFD pocket. I also wear a guide belt (webbing and a quick self-locking carabineer. A small repair kit containing:

- Duct Tape (better yet, Gorilla Tape)
- Thin cord
- Wine cork
- Waterproof matches
- Small multi-use tool

A repair kit is optional but very handy. I also carry a small folding saw which has been my most used piece of group gear. Don't carry the group gear by yourself, which creates a single point of failure. Distribute to others you trust.

Check your participants, chances are you may have a wide variety of skill levels. Pay extra attention to children and thin persons (male or female). Both of these demographics may often experience hypothermia on colder weather trips. I pack extra thermal gear in my car just for this possibility.

## Trip Initiation

Discuss and offer items like a storm hood, insulated gloves, or thermal tops before you begin the shuttle. Look at other gear, especially helmets and PFDs – are they adequate and fit right? Corrections are easy at this stage.

### Shuttle

Time to consolidate vehicles, determine which end of the shuttle has the best parking situation. Ideally, it's best to place as many cars at the takeout as possible. This is even more critical for cold weather trips. If you are a participant with your own gear, ensure each item is marked with your name and phone number. Vans have an incredible appetite for gathering gear after a trip. Check all tie downs and I strongly recommend bow and stern lines as backups in case the lateral lines/straps wiggle loose (or break).

### Put In

I highly recommend a safety talk prior to put in. This practice reinforces the [TRR Liability waiver](#) system and ensures two forms of communication: written and verbal. Identify the key individuals/roles:

- Scout
- Sweep
- Medic (has the First Aid Kit)
- Safety
- Mentors

I also recommend reminding everyone about a key safety protocol. If the scout observes a key safety hazard like a strainer, weir, undercut, etc. no one will proceed until we talk this over. Judgment calls are far more effective with more than one viewpoint. Sadly, more experienced paddlers often charge ahead and less experienced paddlers follow closely with thinking for themselves. A good scout will warn anyone that follows them too closely as an extra measure of protection.

### Summary

All trips have a lifecycle:

1. Pre-Trip Planning
2. Trip Initiation & Shuttle
3. Underway
4. Takeout & Shuttle
5. Reuniting Lost Gear

This article discussed Step 2: Trip Initiation and Shuttle. Mistakes are often made at this stage of the trip due to excitement and lack of planning. The consequences generally arise during the trip and can be quite serious. TRR has invested heavily in critical pieces of group gear for most of our chapters like First Aid Kits and Throw Bags. The above procedures above have developed over many years and help ensure smooth running trips.

# Trip Initiation

Sample First Aid Kit



Air Horn



Gerber Folding Saw



SMC CR-X 1" Pulley



Repair Kit



Sea Kayak Tow Line



Guide Belt



Break Down Paddle



Throw Bag



Pin Kit



Skull Cap



PPE Kit

