



# How to...

## DID YOU KNOW?

The American Discovery Trail is the longest trail in the US—about 6,800 miles across 15 states.



# Go for a hike outdoors

Enjoy the sights and sounds of nature while taking a long walk.

Now is a great time of year to take a hike—which is really a long walk in nature. The weather is cooler, the days are still fairly long, and trees may be just beginning to change color. Choose a weekend morning or afternoon, and ask family and friends to head out for a hike with you. Here's how.

### Pick a path

The first step is to choose where you're going. You can keep it simple and walk around a local park. Or you could make the walk more of a hike and head to a trail at a local nature preserve or state park. To find family-friendly trails near you, go to [alltrails.com](http://alltrails.com). You can search for trails by different criteria, such as how close they are to home, length, or level of difficulty.

### Get prepared

You'll want to wear sturdy sneakers or hiking boots. Add an extra layer of clothing, such as a light jacket, that you can put on and take off as needed. Grab a backpack that you can use to carry a hat, water, and nutritious snacks, like trail mix or apples. You could also pack extras, such as binoculars for viewing animals from a distance and a pencil and notebook for sketching.

### Add excitement

To get your group to take notice of nature on your walk, you could create a scavenger hunt. Make a list of items to look for. At the start of the hike, distribute copies of the list with pencils. As hikers find the items, they cross them off their list. The goal is to be the person who finds the most items. Your list could include flowers or leaves of different colors, spider webs, and mushrooms.

### Seek out signs of animals

If you see flattened plants, it may be a sign that an animal was recently resting there. Animal tracks, feathers, nests, and animal droppings are also signs that animals live in the area. If your hike takes you near a stream or lake, you may be more likely to see animals, since many like to be near a water source.



Look for fall colors.

### Tread lightly

One of the main rules of spending time in nature is to "leave no trace." This means you want to leave the trail as it was when you found it. Carry out all your trash, and don't take any leaves, flowers, or branches from trees or bushes. You want to keep them there for the wildlife and other hikers to enjoy.

## Types of trail markers



Many trails have markers to help guide you on the path. Here are a few kinds and what they mean.

**Blazes** Trails may use a system of "blazes" (marks) painted on trees or rocks. Colors have different meanings depending on the trail. For example, white rectangles may mark a trail's path. Find out what the blazes on your trail mean before you start your hike.

**Affixed markers** Some trails use markers made of metal, plastic, or wood. They are often nailed to trees at eye level.

**Flags** Some trails are marked with flagging tape or ribbon tied around trees and are meant to be easily spotted from the trail.