

Physical Preparation for a Philmont Trek

To enjoy the Philmont experience, participants must be physically prepared to carry a 35- to 50-pound pack over steep, rocky trails at elevations ranging from 6,500 to 12,500 feet. A regular program of physical conditioning for at least three to six months prior to taking a trek is essential. A longer period is required for those unaccustomed to physical exercise.

The first step is to get a physical examination from your physician using forms provided by Philmont that will be mailed in December. Complete the health history on page 3 of the form and schedule a physical exam. Bring the entire form (all ix pages) to your physical exam.

Staff physicians at Philmont reserve the right to deny access to the trails to any adult or youth on the basis of the physical recheck at Philmont. All medical evaluation forms will be checked by Philmont medical staff.

Areas of concern include but are not limited to heart disease, seizure disorder, sickle cell anemia, and hemophilia. Blood pressure without medication must be less than 150/95 for any participant to be permitted to hike at Philmont. If there are any doubts after the individual has had a physical examination, contact Philmont.

A program of regular aerobic exercise is highly recommended to become physically conditioned for Philmont. Plan to exercise 30 to 60 minutes three to five times a week.

Jogging, running uphill, climbing long flights of stairs, walking along abandoned railroad tracks, and hiking with a full pack are all excellent preparation. How fast you run or how far you go is not nearly so important as regular exercise. Other aerobic exercises such as swimming, bicycling, stationary cycling, and aerobic exercise classes can supplement your training. Start slowly and gradually increase the duration and intensity of your exercises. Start a journal to record your progress. If anyone has questions, have them contact their family physician or exercise physiologist.

Backpacking is the best way to prepare for a Philmont trek. It is highly recommended that everyone in a Philmont crew fulfill the requirements of the Backpacking merit badge. These include three 15-mile treks with two overnights each, and one five-day trek covering at least 30 miles. Fulfilling these

requirements will enable you to enjoy a Philmont trek. The Venture Backpacking pamphlet also has excellent tips for preparing for a Philmont trek. Be prepared!

Select a hilly area for your training. Start with a short hike and a light pack. Increase the mileage and your pack weight as your training progresses. It is important to hike often enough while carrying a pack and wearing the boots you will use at Philmont to toughen your feet and to break in your boots.

Up to 90% of crews indicate on their evaluation forms that additional physical training by all members of their crew would have been helpful.

Suggested Conditioning Program

December/January

Complete health history on individual medical form and get parental approval (signature).

Be examined by a physician or osteopath. Call attention of the physician to the note on the medical form that describes the rigors of a Philmont trek and to the box that indicates areas of medical concern. Ask the physician about any special medical needs or areas of concern. If overweight, get the physician's recommendation on how to lose weight through dieting and exercise.

Walk, jog in place, swim, or pedal an exercise bike indoors for 20 minutes or more at least three to five times a week. Gradually increase the length and the intensity of exercises.

Buy a pair of quality hiking boots. A pair of boots 6 to 8 inches high with sturdy soles is recommended. Lightweight hiking/running footwear is excellent for the dry, rocky trails prevalent at Philmont. Lightweight footwear is not recommended for people with weak ankles, who need heavier leather boots. Wear your boots to school or work and when walking anywhere to break them in and to condition yourself.

February/March

When weather permits, jog, run, or walk outdoors. Start with 20-minute sessions and gradually increase the length and the incline or speed.

April

Continue exercising. Schedule a couple of five- to 10-mile day hikes. Carry a full backpack on the second hike.

May

Continue exercising. Schedule at least two overnight backpacking treks of 10 to 20 miles. Plan the second trek to cover more rugged terrain or increase the mileage. Consider meeting the requirements for the Backpacking merit badge, which include three three-day backpacking treks of at least 15 miles each, and one five-day trek covering at least 30 miles.

June/July

Continue exercising right up to the day you depart for Philmont. Come to Philmont in top physical and mental condition, ready for carrying a 35- to 50-pound pack over steep, rugged trails at high elevations (6,500 to 12,500 feet).

Tips for Physical Conditioning

To ensure that physical training is not neglected, each member of your crew should schedule regular periods of time to exercise and prepare and follow this schedule faithfully, from beginning to end.

Although it is possible to exercise individually, it would be more productive to make preparations as a crew. In addition to being more enjoyable, working together as a group will encourage participation and will help develop a spirit of teamwork.

It is highly recommended that everyone in a Philmont crew fulfill the requirements for the Backpacking merit badge, which requires three three-day backpacking treks of at least 15 miles and one five-day trek covering at least 30 miles.