

## “I” LEADER FAQ (11/8/2008 version)

- [The basics](#)
- [Planning your provisional trips](#)
- [Overcoming obstacles](#)
- [Paperwork](#)
- [Links](#)

### **The basics**

#### **What is the “I” rating?**

The “I” rating allows you to lead cross-country trips. The “O” rating confines you to trails and the simplest off-trail travel that involves no navigational skills (like a beach walk). O-level outings mean that vast stretches of the Sierra and desert are off-limits. So earning an “I” rating is a big deal; it gives you the freedom to explore places that most Californians never see. If you’re thinking of getting an “M” rating, earning an “I” will automatically fulfill several “M” requirements.

#### **What must I do before I can lead an I provisional trip?**

##### *If O-rated*

- Be current in (take) wilderness first aid\* and CPR
- Complete two days (at least 14 hours) of environmental awareness training
- Pass the I/M-level navigation check-off.
- Participate on 3 Sierra Club trips at the I level (one must be an overnight backpack).

##### *If non-rated:*

- Take LTC seminar in addition to above

\* The Wilderness First Aid Course fills quickly. The sooner you sign up, the better!

#### **If I cannot attend an LTC seminar, is there an online course such as OLT-101 that will satisfy this requirement?**

No. You must take the LTC seminar. It’s offered twice a year in April and October, generally on the first or second Saturday of the month.

#### **What classes will satisfy the environmental awareness training requirement?**

The chapter’s Natural Science Section leads several trips every year that satisfy the requirement. Other possibilities: Guided tours of Nature Conservancy reserves, Leave No Trace training, community college classes and wildlife tracking classes.

### **Planning your provisional trips**

#### **How many and what kind of provisional outings must I do for this rating?**

You must lead two provisional outings, one of which must be a backpack. The trips should offer a navigation challenge. The whole point of the “I” rating is to lead participants to destinations that many could not find on their own.

### **Who approves my provisional outings?**

Your outings chair or entity management committee approves outings for publication. However, the Safety Committee is the final judge of whether a provisional outing is suitable. In general, an “I” provisional outing must include extensive cross-country navigation. For that reason, some very popular I-rated trips where the peak is clearly visible from the trail (such as Cirque Peak) are not suitable for provisional outings. If in doubt, consult with the LTC Chair, LTC Administrative Chair, your outings chair, or with an experienced I-or-higher-rated leader.

### **What publications must I use to publish my outings?**

You must publish in the newsletter or on the web site of the sponsoring group, section or committee or in *The Southern Sierran* or *the Schedule of Activities*. We encourage publication in the chapter *Schedule of Activities*; however, because of the *Schedule's* lengthy deadline, you may have to submit your trip up to six months before the trip date. Consult your outings chair for details.

### **How much cross-country travel, navigation and route-finding must I do on my provisional trips?**

There is no hard and fast rule. Some short desert hikes require the leader to navigate a maze of canyons. Some big peaks have clear, simple routes that are visible from the nearest trail.

For lack of a rule, here's a suggestion: Look for peaks or other destinations such as lakes that are toward the more difficult end of the rating in regard to navigation . A flexible suggestion is whether the group will be off trail and in terrain requiring navigation for several hours or more.

### **Is there a list of typical “I” trips that I can consult?**

No. That's by design. We want you to research your own trips.

But there are plenty of sources you can mine for great trip ideas. Start with the newsletters and websites of the Angeles Chapter's climbing sections—Sierra Peaks Section, Desert Peaks Section, Hundred Peaks Section, Wilderness Training Committee, and Wilderness Adventures Section. Regional groups and other sections also may offer I-level outings, so check their newsletters and web sites. Also check out [Climber.org](http://Climber.org) and [SummitPost.org](http://SummitPost.org) and other climbing-oriented web sites. These web sites contain detailed descriptions for hundreds of peaks plus stories about successful trips.

And talk with other leaders. Angeles Chapter boasts hundreds of I-rated leaders; they have personal experience with literally thousands of peaks and backpacks.

### **How unique should my trip be?**

This is really up to you. The vast majority of provisional leaders choose destinations that are on the HPS, DPS or SPS lists. Unfortunately, some of these peaks get way too much use. Consider something off the beaten track, such as the many unnamed peaks and spot elevations that surround popular peaks or out-of-the-way lakes. Few people visit these sites, making them true wilderness experiences.

### **Is it okay to copy someone else's trip for my provisional?**

In order to make a decision about what trip you will do, read past trip write-ups and post-trip stories in newsletters or other sources. It will help you choose a destination. But once you pick a destination, make it yours. If you try to do a trip the same way another leader did, you'll be creating a lot of frustration for yourself. The big benefit of a provisional outing is that it helps you develop your own style as a leader: You figure out the right pace, the right kind of terrain, the right group management technique that works for you—not another leader. **Even if you're going to a destination that has been visited before, don't just copy-and-paste someone else's description; write the description the way you like it with your own personal style.**

### **How many participants must I have?**

Take as many as are reasonable for your outing. Your outings chair and the LTC Administrative Chair can advise you. Remember that one of the goals of a provisional outing is to test your group management skills. Your best friend and significant other are usually not management challenges. A bunch of strangers are. Think big, but keep in mind limiting factors such as difficulty of terrain and length of outing.

Two tips: First, advertise your trip in at least two newsletters (or one newsletter and the Chapter Schedule) to attract more participants. Second, keep a waiting list so you can fill vacancies at the last minute. And don't take last-minute cancellations personally; they happen to every leader.

### **Can my participants be friends?**

Yes. But try to recruit others. It sounds counter-intuitive, but your friends can be much harder on you than strangers. A few years back, a near-mutiny occurred on an I-level provisional; the top mutineer was the candidate's fiancé. Strangers are more likely than friends to follow your lead without question. A good trip write-up and advertising in multiple newsletters will help you get these friendly strangers.

### **How do I find an evaluator?**

Start with leaders from your experience trips. They already know you; if you did well on their trips they might be interested in helping you. Also consult with your outings chair; he or she probably knows several I-rated leaders.

Two cautions: Your evaluator must have held the "I" rating for at least two years or have a significant body of experience leading at the I level or higher. And don't choose your significant other. He or she can't really give you a fair evaluation; if it's at all critical, the evaluation could ruin your relationship.

### **Overcoming obstacles**

#### **Is there a time limit on when I must do my outings from when I took LTC or passed nav?**

No. However, if several years pass without any activity on your part, LTC or Safety Committee may tell you to retake the navigation checkoff. Of course, on the day of your trip you must be current on all requirements. (See the Paperwork section of this FAQ.)

#### **What if I have to cancel a trip after it's been published? Do I have to wait and submit another trip for publication?**

You usually don't have to cancel a trip. You can postpone a trip for a number of reasons. The most common reasons are bad weather and schedule conflicts for the leader or assistant, but occasionally illness and lack of participants interfere. Simply set a new date for the same trip, being sure to inform your outings chair and any potential participants.

### **Will my trip count if we have to modify the plan once we are on the outing?**

It depends. Remember that an "I" provisional must involve extensive cross-country travel with significant navigation. Your evaluator will decide whether those objectives were met.

Examples:

1. After several miles of cross-country travel a storm hits, forcing the group to turn back a short distance below the peak. The evaluator will probably rule that the objective was satisfied.
2. Same scenario, but just an hour after departing the trail. The evaluator most likely will rule that the trip does not count because the candidate did little navigating.

### **Paperwork**

#### **May I plan a provisional and submit it prior to passing the navigation checkoff or taking LTC?**

Yes. Every year a few extremely well-organized individuals manage to do this. The requirements, of course, must be completed before the trip starts.

#### **What do I do with my and my evaluator's evaluation forms?**

Send them to the LTC administrative chair. Contact information for the administrative chair is on the LTC website. (See the Links section of this FAQ.)

#### **What do I do if I do not agree with my evaluator's evaluation?**

Forward the evaluator's evaluation along with your own to the LTC administrative chair. You may tell the administrative chair that you disagree with the evaluation. You also can discuss the evaluation with the evaluator. But you cannot change or alter the evaluation.

#### **Once I earn my rating, what do I have to do to keep it?**

Keep current with the requirements. You must be a Sierra Club member, and you must renew your leadership training, and first aid training every four years. Recertification in wilderness first aid is strongly suggested, but basic first aid fulfills the recertification requirement.

Leadership: You can renew your leadership training online (OLT-101) or re-take the LTC seminar.

Wilderness first aid: These courses fill quickly, so don't let your renewal date sneak up on you. Again, the LTC site has a schedule. You may need to renew CPR in order to enroll in wilderness first aid. Despite what your CPR card may say, the Angeles Chapter considers CPR good for four years.

## **Links**

### Training:

Leadership Training Committee (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/ltc>) Includes schedule of training activities, evaluation forms and e-mails for the administration chair and other LTC members.

Natural Science Section (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/nss>) Includes schedule of outings, many of which fulfill the environmental awareness requirement.

### Climbing and cross-country trips:

Sierra Peaks Section (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/sps>)

Desert Peaks Section (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/dps>)

Hundred Peaks Section (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/hps>)

Wilderness Adventures Section (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/wildadv/>)

Wilderness Training Committee (<http://angeles.sierraclub.org/wtc>)

Climber.org (<http://www.climber.org>)

SummitPost.org (<http://www.summitpost.org>)

For regional groups and other activities sections, click on "Sections and Groups" at the Angeles chapter web site, then click on the entity that you are interested in

(<http://angeles.sierraclub.org> or go straight to

<http://www.angeles.sierraclub.org/sectionsgroups/SectionsGroups.asp>)