

HOW TO PICK A PEAK

On Target can be as strenuous or relaxing as you want to make it. When your team sits down to plan for this activity ask yourselves some questions to help in your peak selection. **Be Prepared!**

- How challenging do we want this activity?
- Do we want to drive to or hike to our mountain?
- How high a peak do we want to signal from?
- What kind of shape are we in?
- How will we get to our mountaintop?
- What is the view like from the summit?
- What time will we have to start to reach the summit in time?
- What kind of communication support do we have?

POINTS TO PONDER

How challenging do we want this activity?

On Target is a multi-faceted activity; it can be many different things to different teams. For some it is about climbing a mountain. For others it is about communication and meeting other scouts. Ultimately On Target can be all of this and much more. When selecting your peak keep in mind that this is not *just* a mountain climb or a morning hike. When you add the signaling challenge and relative time constraints you want to make sure your peak will lend itself to a positive experience and not be a point of frustration. Backpacking to a remote peak or taking the challenge of a technical climb to reach your summit will add more adventure and take more time. Be sure to plan accordingly.

Do we want to drive or hike to our mountain?

Most of the peaks or other locations that we routinely use in Arizona can be driven to, so there is no hiking involved. This can be important in recruiting your radio operators. Many of those who are willing to assist are older folks who don't want to have to hike. However, for the adventurous and physically fit there are plenty of places that can present a real challenge, if you want to hike.

How high a peak do we want to signal from?

Elevation plays a big role in how far you can signal, but more important is what can you see from your summit. Elevation also typically equates to greater travel time from the valley and often greater physical difficulty to reach the peak. Many teams will

choose to signal from a relatively short peak because the view is good and the access to the summit is easy. This gives the team more time to concentrate on contacting the teams on other peaks.

What kind of shape are we in?

Arizona has many tall mountains that are excellent to signal from. Working and playing at high elevations can be very taxing. Be sure your team (and your coach and radio operator) are in good enough physical condition to reach your summit. Preparation for On Target starts long before the activity day in July or September.

Don't let physical limitations stop you from participating. There are many peaks or other suitable locations that can be reached by car. You can have a great time signaling teams from the valley if you can't get into the mountains.

How will we get to our mountaintop?

Find out ahead of time what it will take to get to the top of your mountain. Do we need to get permission for access?

If it is a forest service lookout, you will need to call the local district ranger office to arrange for gates and the tower to be opened. Do this well ahead of time.

If it is private property, you will need to contact the owners to get permission. Don't wait till the last minute.

If you are driving:

- How is the road?
- Do you need a high clearance vehicle?
- How long will it take to get there?

If you are hiking:

- Where is the trailhead?
- Is there a trail?
- How many miles to the summit?
- Will we need to camp overnight?
- Is there water along the trail?
- Does the route have technical obstacles?

What is the view like from the summit?

On Target is about point-to-point communication. A good peak for Operation On Target has an uninterrupted view in as many directions as possible. This typically equates to a tall summit, but that is not necessarily the case. As you pick your peak get a topographical map and look at the surrounding peaks. How many of them are taller than your proposed site? If any are closer than about 3 miles consider that a visual obstruction. You may be able to signal 50-100 miles with your mirror. Try to figure out which peaks you can reach from your summit and make plans for contacting them. Check the Peak Registry sheet to see who some of those teams are.

What time will we have to start to reach the summit?

Signaling times are from 9:00 AM - Noon. You will want to be set up and ready to go when 9:00 AM arrives. Ask yourself how long will it take to get you to the summit and get set up? Here are some helpful hints to plan hiking times.

- Along smooth moderate trails most people can walk 2 - 3 miles in an hour. If you are backpacking plan for closer to 2 mph.
- On steep trails (gaining 1000'+ elevation per mile) your travel speed will be slower. Somewhere around .5 - 1 mile an hour depending on the load you are carrying and your physical condition.
- In technical terrain (talus, steep snow fields, scrambling, technical climbing, etc) travel times will be substantially slower. 1000' vertical can take several hours to climb when conditions require ropes and extra safety gear.
- Plan about 10 minutes per hour to rest while you are traveling. You don't want to be so tired that you can't signal when you reach the summit of your mountain.

What kind of communication support do we have?

Will you have communication support from a Ham Radio operator or will you be confirming your contacts with a cell phone? Work those details out ahead of time. Signaling is fun but confirming your contact makes the process complete. Take a notebook to log

your contacts. After your "peak experience" report your contacts so we can see how far we sent the signal.

Don't forget to take extra batteries!! It is also a good idea to take along a couple of extra mirror panels in case you break some. Be sure and anchor your tripods to keep wind from blowing them over. You don't want to suffer through what has been called a "shatroglastic" experience.

Still a little confused?

Try out our list of [key peaks](#) for Arizona and also check the Peak registry to see who else will be out there. If all else fails call Bob Church at 480-649-2044 or email at rhchurch@cox.net for assistance.

"Do it! Do it *now!* Do it *With a plan!* Make no *small plans*, they *have no magic* to stir the souls of men."

-Spencer W. Kimball