



KNOW Before You Go!

Cave Safety

Cave exploration can be fun and exciting, but it can also be quite dangerous. Caves are inherently dangerous environments, with many hazards we may not be used to dealing with from our above ground experience.

Imagine you are deep in a cave. You are looking at a beautiful stalactite, you take a step back... you step on a loose rock..... you stumble..... you drop your flashlight..... it hits a rock..... it breaks.... TOTAL DARKNESS! It would be impossible to crawl out to safety. It's cold.... it's dark.... your foot hurts.... you are beginning to get hungry. What are you going to do?

The best way to get out of this situation is not to get into it in the first place. The following safety rules will keep you safe. They are the ones followed by the National Speleological Society, a group of professional cave explorers.

Checklist

- Kids should never explore caves without an adult.
- Each person should have at least four reliable lights.
- Never, ever, go in a cave alone.** The minimum is four people. If someone gets hurt, one person can stay with the hurt person while two go for help. One person should wait at the entrance to the cave while the fourth person notifies the Sheriff or Park Rangers. This makes it easier to find the cave again when the rescuers arrive.
- ALWAYS tell a responsible adult exactly where you are going and when you'll be back.** Just because you don't come home for dinner doesn't mean anybody will think to look in a cave. They may think you've run away and joined the circus!
- Don't run or jump in a cave.** Even a sprained ankle can be deadly in a cave.
- Don't go in a cave when there is rain** predicted for the area. Caves often flood suddenly.
- Never touch or damage stalactites or other cave formations.** These take thousands of years to grow. Even a light touch of a finger is enough to mar one!
- The best way to explore caves is to go on an organized tour** or tag along with a caving club. Caving clubs, also called "grottoes," are located all over. Call the Geology Department of your nearest college. Someone there will know how to contact your local caving group. They welcome interested young people.

