



Team Leader Tips.

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On top of the actual mission trip logistics, there are several additional pieces involved in planning your mission trip that EM does not coordinate our end. *But that doesn't mean you have to figure out everything on your own!*

To help, we've compiled our best tips for navigating the planning, recruiting, and training part of your mission trip. This may be especially helpful if this is your first time leading a trip (with EM or ever). If you're a veteran team leader, we trust you'll find something helpful, too.

Regardless of your starting point, questions, or past experience, we hope these tips can alleviate some stress and ultimately pave the way for an incredible mission trip experience with your team!





Recruiting Your Team

So, you're ready to bring a team on a mission trip, but your missing one crucial element—a **team!** Here are a few tips for recruiting team members and getting people excited about the opportunity to serve on a mission trip this year.

1. Spread the word

If you're attempting to recruit from among a youth group, a church, your co-workers, or any other group of people, you need to find a way to spread the word about this opportunity! We recommend hanging printed posters or flyers, handing out small info sheets when people are gathered, and even setting up a Facebook Group or Event for those interested in going.

2. Get in front of potential team members

Most likely, you're going to need to speak in front of a large group to get people excited about this opportunity, whether that's during a church service, at a special "preview night" you organize, or even in your own living room. Share your heart for this particular trip, and use all the media tools at your disposal. Show an **EM community slideshow** or video, share a few important details like trip dates, overall cost, and structure, and then share why you think everyone gathered should give it a shot!

The next page of this guide has links to all of EM's media resources, including Community Slideshows for most communities, usable photos, videos, and more!

3. Create a sign-up (with a deadline!)

Lastly, you need a way for people to say, "I'm in!" Create a printed or online sign-up form that collects necessary info and be sure to set a deadline for when people need to decide. This allows you to promote the trip with a clear "call to action" and a sense of urgency. You may also want to collect a trip deposit to make sure people are really serious about going.

*You can almost always bring more people than the number you initially register for on our website. Just check with your **EM Support** contact to make sure!*

Trip Promotion Resources



Mission Trip Promo Templates

Choose from one of 5 different pre-designed, editable templates to promote your mission trip through printable flyers, handouts, and video screen slides. This Dropbox folder also includes several ready-to-use t-shirt designs!

Community Slideshows & Photos

Share about the community you'll be serving in on your mission trip by showing the community slideshow for your trip! We also have folders available from full of photos mission trips to your specific community, which you can use for slides, flyers, posters, Facebook events, and more. Links to community-specific slideshows and photo folders can be found on the **Trip** page of your online [MyMission account](#).

EM Videos

Show one of our videos at an event or during your church service! You can find and download them on our [YouTube channel](#) (youtube.com/experiencemission) or [Vimeo page](#) (vimeo.com/experiencemission).



Fundraising Tips

Providing well-planned, creative fundraising opportunities for your team helps make it possible for everyone to go on a mission trip and have a life changing experience. We encourage you to follow this basic advice:

1. Don't be intimidated

Talking about money isn't always easy and asking for help can be even harder. **But fundraising can help your team learn to work hard and trust God in new ways.** Encourage your team to be bold as they approach church members, friends, family and local businesses. By asking people to get involved, you're inviting them to be part of the story of what God is doing in your team members' lives as well as in underdeveloped communities.

2. Know your numbers

Before you launch into "full fundraising mode," make sure you **know exactly how much the trip will cost each participant—**including plane tickets or rental vehicles, travel day meals, extra tours or activities, country entry and exit fees, and the amount sent to Experience Mission per person.

Don't forget to review the [EM Registration & Payment Policy](#) for amounts and due dates for trip payments.

3. Get creative

Fundraising can offer great pre-trip bonding experiences as you all work together! Brainstorm ideas with your team to find out what gets them excited. Think about the things everyone already loves to do and the places your church or community is already connected. Maybe you happen to have an athletic group who can organize a church-wide kickball game or a 5K run at a local park. Or, maybe they would eagerly put on an apron and serve at a spaghetti dinner or chili cook-off. Everything is fair game!

Need a kick start? Check out [EM's Fundraising Guide for Mission Trips](#) filled with more creative ideas to get you started!



Adult Leaders & Chaperones

Experience Mission doesn't have specific requirements for ratios regarding adult leaders and chaperones, as we know each group is different and you're the one who knows your team best. However, we typically advise a 5:1 ratio for middle school teams and a 7:1 ratio for high school teams. We've also found it's helpful when at least one male and one female leader are present.

As you prepare for the trip, we encourage you to utilize our [Pre-Trip Meetings Guide](#) as a way to help everyone stay informed (adult leaders included). By keeping your leaders engaged and excited about the trip, you'll have a team of people who can help manage some of the details.

Things your adult leaders can do:

Pre-trip...

- Plan fundraisers & events
- Design & order t-shirts
- Organize tools or Kids Club supplies
- Help collect paperwork
- Research a fun activity to do together at the end of your trip

During the trip...

- Take photos or post on social media with trip highlights
- Lead small group sessions
- Lead morning devotionals
- Spend relational time with students and help them engage with the community
- Drive students to worksites and supervise projects or ministries
- Pick up local children for Kids Club (when applicable)

Experience Mission staff also play a major role in leading your team.

Before you arrive, our staff procure all the food and any necessary materials for work projects. Once you arrive, we introduce you to local partners and help your team learn your way around the community as well as organize all meals, the daily schedule, work projects and outreach opportunities.

At the end of each ministry day, we also help your team process their experience during "Evening Gathering"—a meaningful time of worship and reflection. We want you to have the time to invest in your team members' personal lives while also keeping them motivated and helping them embrace all ministry opportunities during the trip.



Pre-Trip Training & Meetings

After you recruit your team, you will want to meet together multiple times before the start of your trip in order to talk through details, collect paperwork, plan logistics, and—most importantly—prepare your hearts to serve on a mission trip.

We've created a separate guide just for Pre-Trip Meetings which includes our best recommendation for what you should include in each of your team meetings, including 30-minute cross-cultural training sessions on important missions-related topics that we've developed specifically for pre-trip training.

[View the Pre-Trip Meetings Guide](#)



Paperwork & Staying Organized

We know sometimes the most tedious part of planning a mission trip can be collecting and submitting the paperwork—so we want to help you stay organized!

To get started, log into your [MyMission account](#) to see what paperwork is required for your particular location in the **Things We Need From You** section. In some communities, local partners may have their own organizational waiver, background check, or other forms required before your trip, which will also be included in this list.

Often the biggest challenge is simply getting students (or parents!) to return paperwork to you, so here are a few simple tips to help you stay ahead of deadlines:

- **Print out forms** for students and parents—organizing them into one simple packet. Consider including an introductory page explaining any special instructions and giving a clear deadline.
- **Double check** to make sure you've included EM documents and any additional forms from local partner organizations.
- **Consider setting deadlines** 2-3 weeks ahead of when you actually need the paperwork! Chances are you'll have a few stragglers.
- **Make several announcements** and consider sending a text or email reminder to parents and students about the deadline. You probably already know what form of communication works best for your group—but the more reminders, the better!



Travel Plans

Ultimately, all travel details are up to you to coordinate*, but we do have some helpful advice to get you started.

Begin by logging into your [MyMission](#) account and clicking the **Travel Details** link for information about arrival and departure windows as well as the correct airport for your arrival. It is important to follow the guidelines listed on the Trip page of your MyMission account very closely as our staff often travel long distances to meet you at the airport or coordinate multiple groups at the same time.

** In international locations (and Puerto Rico), EM will meet your team at the assigned airport and handle your in-country transportation for the week. In domestic (U.S.) locations, you will be responsible for getting your team to the community and also having reliable transportation during the entire week.*

Book your flights

If you plan to fly to your mission trip location, booking flights should be one of your first priorities as soon as EM has received your deposit and a support staff member has confirmed your trip will run on your preferred week. Not sure what airport to use or what time you should arrive in your community? Check the **Travel Details** link on the Trip page of your **MyMission** account for all of the information you need to book your flights. It's ideal to book your group tickets 3-5 months in advance. All of your travel details must be recorded on your MyMission Trip page at least 30 days before the start of your trip.

*TIP: Start researching the best fares at www.google.com/flights. These fares are usually based on single tickets or less than 6 passengers, so for larger teams you'll need to contact the airline's **group travel department** to work on securing tickets for your entire team. Ask about options for holding your tickets with a deposit and become familiar with baggage policies or restrictions as each airline is a little different.*

or...

Use a travel agent

Some of your work can be alleviated by simply using a travel agent! You'll have to pay a fee for their services, but sometimes they have access to deals which can save you hundreds of dollars. An extra perk? With enough advanced notice, travel agents can sometimes put a hold on tickets with a small deposit until your team is finalized instead of requiring full payment up-front.

*TIP: Find a travel agent who specializes in **group reservations** and ask them about flexible deposits on tickets or when they'll need a final list of names. In the past, EM teams have had positive experiences with HighPoint Travel: www.highpointtravel.com*

or... Take a road trip

Can you drive to your domestic mission trip location? Good news! You'll need to coordinate fewer logistics! If your church doesn't have vehicles or you aren't able to borrow personal vehicles from adult leaders, renting is your next best option. Most rental agencies require a **credit card** (not a debit card) in the name of the driver, so you'll need to find people who feel comfortable driving and getting reimbursed later. Not sure how much fuel to budget for your trip? Try using an online gas calculator to get a rough estimate. It's surprisingly accurate!

*TIP: Sometimes **local dealerships** rent vehicles (including large passenger vans) for cheaper than the big-name rental agencies. If you tell them you are a church or can show proof of tax exemption, they may even cut you a better deal or give unlimited miles for no extra charge.*

PLEASE NOTE: *The info and tips listed above are the extent of our ability to help you when it comes to planning your travel! We hope they're helpful, but we will not be able to provide you with any more help regarding travel plans than is outlined here. Thanks for understanding!*



Parent Communication

If you're leading a group of youth or school-aged students, good parent communication will be important for the trip to go smoothly. Most likely, your youth are eager to sign up for a mission trip and then jump on the bus or plane—no questions asked! Parents, on the other hand, probably have a long list of questions about safety, pricing, communication, and the weekly schedule.

A mission trip can be a transformational event in the life of a teenager or young adult, so by providing parents with good information, planning well, and removing as many obstacles as possible, you're paving the way for a really important experience.

NOTE: As you plan each of your [Pre-Trip Team Meetings](#), we suggest providing parent handouts or sending a recap email to help them stay informed about about deadlines, fundraisers, and important details. Although parents may not necessarily attend the meetings, do your best to make sure they're hearing all the highlights.

Parent communication during the trip

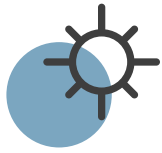
1 WEEK OUT: Remind parents about the drop-off time and make sure they have any relevant emergency contact numbers.

FIRST DAY OF TRIP: Notify parents when you have safely arrived at your mission trip location. Now is a good time to reassure parents (who may be missing their kids already!) about all the good things ahead and thank them for their support and prayers. Let them know you'll be sending an update mid-week or instruct them to follow more regular updates through relevant social media pages.

MID-WEEK OF THE TRIP: Send a message or post updates on social media thanking parents for their prayers and involvement. Consider posting a photo of students working on projects or doing ministry with a quote about their experience so far. Parents will love seeing their kids in action and hearing more about what they are learning.

FINAL DAY OF THE TRIP: Remind parents about the scheduled pickup time. You'll also want the ability to send updates if you run into any travel delays so parents can adjust their schedules or don't worry needlessly.

You probably already know the best way to communicate with your team members' parents! Does your church or organization have a mass email system? Do parents prefer to follow a group Facebook page? For more immediate communication, consider using a mass text messaging service like [EZtexting.com](#). You can set up a free account and easily send a message to everyone at once without everyone feeling like they are caught in a group thread. This is a great free resource to use while you're on the trip.



Morning Devotions & Evening Debrief

Morning Devotions

Over and over again we've seen the benefit of making daily devotions a part of your mission trip experience. We've built time into the morning schedule to give your team members the space to process their experiences through devotionals and journaling.

Evening Debrief

Experience Mission staff will lead your team through "Evening Gathering" each night, which is a time to reflect on the day, grow in faith, and explore new ideas together. This is typically made up for four elements: Debrief, Worship, Learning & Reflection.

We believe intentional time for reflection is a major part of making your mission trip impactful. Without the chance to come together each night and explore deeper topics, mission trips have the potential to turn into "work vacations," with little to no spiritual value. We hope your team members have the chance to broaden their faith and worldview and are inspired to continue serving after the trip ends because of the meaningful conversations during Evening Gathering.

EM field staff are available to help you make this time meaningful, but ultimately it is your responsibility to decide what you want the morning devotional time to look like each day. Plan to have approximately 30 minutes between breakfast and leaving for the work or outreach site.

*If your team would like to participate in leading worship during this time, please notify us through the **Trip page** of your **MyMission** account. Please note we do NOT have access to mics, amps, etc. so it is best to come prepared to lead an "unplugged" time of worship. It's also good to keep in mind your team may be joining with additional teams, in which case we will split the evenings between them and **song sheets** are recommended so all can sing along.*

Pre-Trip Checklist



International

Travel & Important Documents

- ☐ Ensure all team members have their original passport with an expiration date no sooner than 6 months after the mission trip ends.
- ☐ Book flights and ensure all tickets match the passport name exactly.
- ☐ Remind minors who are traveling without parents they will need a “permission to travel abroad” letter to get through Customs & Immigration. We’ve provided an example to give to parents on your MyMission Trip page on the EM website.
- ☐ Make 2 copies of all passports; one copy to leave in the U.S. and one copy to carry with you. If someone loses a passport or there is an emergency, it’s nice to have a copy readily available.
- ☐ Update your arrival time and flight information on your MyMission Trip page so the EM field staff know when to expect you.
- ☐ Know the baggage policy of your airline and communicate any guidelines to your team (i.e. weight restrictions, size limits)
- ☐ When applicable, apply to purchase visas for your group. This information will be available in the “Travel Details” section on the Trip page of your MyMission account if needed for your location.

Parent Communication

- ☐ Remind parents of drop-off and pick-up times.
- ☐ Give parents any relevant emergency contact numbers.
- ☐ Print a list of parent / guardian contact details to save for your own use, if needed.

Medical

- ☐ Reference the CDC (Center for Disease Control) website for immunization recommendations & requirements for your location.
- ☐ Have a list of all major allergies or medical conditions on your team. (You must notify EM of these concerns via MyMission at least 30 days before your trip begins.)
- ☐ Consider purchasing traveler’s insurance for your group. It can cost as little as \$1/day and we’ve recommended one provider (IMG) in the Trip section of your MyMission account.
- ☐ Remind team members to bring any personal prescription medications and consider stocking up on basic over-the-counter items to share (i.e. Tylenol, ibuprofen, allergy relief). EM will have basic medkits and a large trauma kit available in all international locations, but we are unable to distribute medications to minors.

Finances & Communication

- ☐ Get a temporary international phone plan through your cell provider so you have an easy way to get in touch with the U.S. (Many international locations do not have reliable Wifi.)
- ☐ Notify your bank about your international travel plans and ensure any credit or debit cards will remain active. This is also a good time to ask about any fees or special charges.
- ☐ Plan to exchange money or access an ATM in-country once you arrive. Local EM staff can help you know the best place and time to do the exchange.

Pre-Trip Checklist



Domestic

Travel & Important Documents

- ☐ Find the address for the housing location in your MyMission account and don't forget the charger for your phone or GPS. Note: In rural locations, you may also want to print directions as cellular data can be unreliable on back roads.
- ☐ Update your arrival time on your MyMission account so the EM field staff will know when to expect you.
- ☐ Set a luggage limit for team members so you will have enough space for everyone.

Parent Communication

- ☐ Remind parents of drop-off and pick-up times.
- ☐ Give parents any relevant emergency contact numbers.
- ☐ Print a list of parent / guardian contact details to save for your own use, if needed.

Medical

- ☐ Have a list of any allergies or medical conditions on your team. Note: Please also make sure you have notified EM of these concerns through your MyMission account at least 30 days before your trip begins.
- ☐ Consider bringing a team medkit and over-the-counter medications (i.e. Tylenol, ibuprofen, allergy relief). EM will provide a basic medkit for each vehicle or worksite but cannot distribute medication to minors.