#1 - Go somewhere familiar first
- Your first solo should not be a full-on expedition
- Try a longer day hike or one night trip somewhere familiar and near home to start off

#2 - Pack wisely
- Decide what extras to bring - like a sleeping bag or shelter - by considering what you might need vs. the added strain of carrying it
- Always carry a signaling or communication device (mirror, beacon, cell phone)

#3 - Pack emergency supplies
- For day or overnight solos, make space for the following potentially life-saving essentials
  - Survival/space blanket
  - Extra firestarters
  - Cell phone or communication device
  - Knife
  - Gloves

#4 - Always have first aid
- Always carry at least a basic first aid kit
- Pre-built kits can be found online at Cabela’s, REI, or from the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)

#5 - Consider pepper spray/mace
- Just as effective for troublesome wildlife as troublesome people

#6 - Do thorough research
- Prevent surprises by meticulously researching your destination
- Know your route, mileage, potential challenges, escape routes, and local hunting seasons/ regulations

#7 - Keep it realistic
- Know your own abilities and limitations
- Stay within comfortable limits for mileage, navigation challenges, and technical skills
- Choose a familiar trail/river for your first solo

#8 - Recreate conservatively
- Always consider the potential consequences of recreating alone
- Make conservative decisions even when taking routine risks (ex. Water crossings)
- Never rule out simply calling it a day, always err on the side of safety

#9 - Navigate responsibly
- If you become lost, stay put or backtrack
- If you don’t know how to get to your goal, don’t try
- Better to backtrack to a familiar intersection or head home than to need assistance
- Avoid this situation entirely by doing your research

#10 - Always leave word
- Leave your planned itinerary with a friend or family member

Most of these recommendations are for long (6+ mile) day trips or overnight trips. For small local trips that only take a few hours, use common sense and apply these tips where applicable.
Are You Ready?
Use this chart to determine your solo-trip strategy.

START
Why do you want to go solo?
- I crave peace and quiet.
- I want to test my mettle.

Because?
- I've been practicing new skills.
- I'm ready for a new challenge.

What do you love about the backcountry?
- Summit viewpoints
- Wildlife spotting

Are you a navigation wizard?
- no
- yes

Have you been on a solo dayhike?
- no
- yes

Taken a wilderness first-aid course?
- no
- yes

SKIP IT
Don’t plan high-risk pursuits like peak-bagging, scrambling, and off-trail hiking for your first solo trip. Still building your hiking and camping skills? Practice with others.

START SMALL
Plan your first solo overnight in a familiar place, with short mileage and moderate conditions. Consider a place with cell reception, which will put you and your family at ease.

GO FOR IT
You’re probably ready for a multiday solo, but be realistic about your skills and comfort level. Avoid risky routes, and stick to well-traveled areas the first time on your own.
Works Cited:


