

## ROCKHOUNDING 101

- **The Basics.**
  - **Know what you are going out to collect. Pictures in books can help, but often they are cleaned and great specimens. If you can see something in a more natural state it will help you to find it in the field.**
  - **Know where you are going. Ask others who have been there about the conditions (road type and availability of services), terrain and elevation.**
  - **Check the weather where you are going. Colorado has many micro-climates. Colorado Springs has different weather than Leadville.**
  - **Let others know where you are going and when you will be back. Keep to that schedule or let them know about changes.**
  - **Make sure you have maps for the area and/or a GPS.**
  - **Make sure your cell phone is charged and working.**
  - **Make sure the vehicle you intend to use is ready and right for the anticipated conditions. A full tank of gas, extra water for the radiator, good tires (a spare), and 4WD when recommended.**
  - **If you are going to a CSMS Claim or other club claim, make sure that you have your club membership card.**
  - **If you are going on private land, make sure that you have permission from the owner or their representative to collect.**
- **Safety First.**
  - **Bring a basic first aid kit. Don't forget the Advil or similar product.**
  - **Make sure you have adequate water and some food.**
  - **You should have and wear sunscreen, a hat (preferably one that covers your ears), a warm coat (weather changes), gloves, and safety glasses. Make sure that you have good solid shoes (flip-flops and sandals are not a good idea). A flashlight with fresh batteries is a good idea.**
  - **Knee pads and some sort of a thick ground cover make sitting and kneeling safer and more comfortable.**
  - **Know your limits – altitude, balance and strength.**
  - **Collect with a buddy. Two vehicles are better than one.**

- **Wear orange during “hunting season”. Be careful with a white handkerchief.**
  - **If you are collecting on a highway, wear a safety vest.**
  - **If you are collecting at an operating mining claim, check the requirements. They may include a hard hat, safety vest, steel toed construction boots and safety glasses.**
  - **Never take risks or push your limits.**
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- **The BIG COLLECTING TOOLS. For those big jobs.**
    - **Get a good “safe” pick. Make sure the handle is not one that the head of the pick will slip on or is full of splinters.**
    - **A short handle or long handled spade (or both).**
    - **A sledge hammer (8 lbs. plus).**
    - **A crow bar or pry bar.**
    - **Safety glasses and heavy gloves are worth mentioning again.**
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- **The Collecting Tools. This is a list of what I usually bring with me on a general trip. I usually include a smaller size pick and a short handled spade (see above) for the gross digging.**
    - **A rock hammer (you can have more than one). There are several types, so pick the one you like and the weight that feels most comfortable.**
    - **A small shovel such as an army trenching shovel.**
    - **A small pick.**
    - **A 3 or 4 lb. crack hammer.**
    - **Quarry chisels in various sizes (safety caps are a good idea).**
    - **A whisk broom or brush.**
    - **A trowel and small scraper.**
    - **For those smaller items to be collected you may want small chisels, dental tools, chopsticks, tweezers, and small wooden or plastic tools (won’t scratch specimens).**
    - **On occasion you may want a long handled scratching tool.**

- Water or a spray bottle to better see what you are collecting. A flashlight (or mirror) will help you see in the hole.
  - Don't forget the safety equipment. In particular safety glasses, gloves, and knee pads. Also, hat and sunscreen are a must.
  - A collecting container. A gold pan helps next to where you are digging.
- **Special collecting. Sometimes you need the right tool for the job.**
    - I use small sieves for small crystals such as we have at the CSMS Peridot Claim. They have worked well on other occasions when collecting small topaz and sunstones in Utah. Larger sieves may be a good idea when going through mine tailings.
    - Paleontological collecting requires special tools and materials. I strongly suggest you go with someone with experience. In general you will need some smaller tools and possibly materials to stabilize the items that you are collecting.
- **Containers for collecting and protecting your finds.**
    - The basic 5 gallon bucket works fairly well. Just don't fill it to the top.
    - As mentioned above, I like to bring along a gold pan for laying aside my finds while I'm digging. It also makes a good pan for field washing your finds.
    - Think about weight when selecting a collecting container. A smaller bucket may be a good idea. Square buckets work better than round buckets on hills. Cloth bags such as the ones sold by grocery stores are light weight and don't roll down the hill when weighted.
    - Boxes or plastic containers work well once you get back to your vehicle. Try to leave time for proper wrapping and packing of your finds and for packing your vehicle.
    - Don't forget the wrapping material. Newspaper or old towels work well. Paper towel can be used for smaller specimens. For small delicate specimens, use toilet paper and a medicine container.
    - Don't forget the basic labeling of the material. During the collecting season we all go out as often as possible. We put our finds into storage and may forget about them for a while. A simple label of what, where and when will help in the future.

- **What to do before you leave the collecting area.**
  - **Collect all trash including any that was there before you arrived.**
  - **Make sure that you leave the area safe. That means filling in holes that you made and possibly some made by others.**
  - **If you went on private property, let the owner know you are no longer there.**
  - **If you visit a CSMS Claim let the person responsible for the claim know who was there and when.**
  - **Remember gates should be closed if you found them closed and left open if you found them open.**
- **Responsibility**
  - **Do not pollute or clog a stream with debris or waste. A portable toilet is a good investment and will help keep our collecting areas clean and pleasant.**
  - **Be careful with smoking materials (not smoking is a good idea) and small fires. Remember sparks from metal hitting rock can cause a fire.**
  - **Don't dig close to trees where you might weaken them or their root structure.**
  - **Report problems, when you see them, with CSMS claims to the Claim Manager.**
  - **Help when needed to work on CSMS Claims. We need to keep holes filled and markers in good order.**
  - **ALWAYS watch out for the safety of others.**