

ESSAY 1 PHASE 1

Student 2 • Prof. Mani • Fall 2020

R/campingandhiking is a subreddit based on outdoor activities, the goal of which is to spread knowledge and experiences in the community. The average posts are usually scenic pictures taken by users, but can be as diverse as text posts, gear lists, and Q&As. Members of the subreddit communicate with distinct colloquialisms and jargon, either based on mainstream words or created entirely on r/campingandhiking. Shortened words and acronyms help users communicate with more ease, while other slang words are more distinct to users “in the know”. The function of these words and phrases is to determine experience levels and make discourse easier for community members.

Some of the language used in the subreddit can be applied in other communities. These acronyms and shortened words develop naturally in the community to promote ease of communication. An example of one of these acronyms is “AFAIK” which is an acronym for “as far as I know”. This can be used in any other discourse community and makes its appearances in r/campingandhiking. Another acronym, MRE, stands for “Meal, ready to eat”. These are packaged meals given to military personnel and used by members of the r/campingandhiking community for their easy portability. The full name is never used in the discourse, MRE has developed into almost a word all its own in the subreddit. The final example, SAR stands for “search and rescue” teams that go find lost people who may be in danger in the wilderness. To an outsider this word couldn’t be deciphered without context. A 14er is a shortened version of “fourteener”, which is a slang term to describe a mountain, the summit of which is fourteen thousand feet above sea level or higher. Besides terminology created entirely within the subreddit, users also make use of seldom used, niche English words. The following term is a proper English word, but is not well known to people who aren’t part of this specific community. The name for travelling to a remote location over land, usually in a vehicle rather than on foot, is overlanding. Some of these terms can be used in other subreddits and in mainstream language, however others are fairly unique to r/campingandhiking. The users who know these terms meanings tend to be experienced in the discourse lingo, and these individuals stand out as higher up.

Experience, on the subreddit and in real life, is the major determinant of hierarchy in this community. There is a special respect for people considered “old timers”. These are typically older people, as the name suggests, who are seasoned

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hikers and campers. The term can be applied to older people in many other communities as well as real life. Old timers know things that can only be learned through experience, and many years of learning. There are few old timers active on the subreddit but they are idolized and referred to often by the users. A “gatekeeper” is someone who decides which individuals have rights or don’t in a community. In r/campingandhiking these people are typically more seasoned, and judge newcomers who may not be prepared, or are ill-equipped for an outing. These individuals are only looking to steer others in the right direction and are the majority of users who would identify as “gatekeepers”. These people are more benevolent than judgemental. There are however “gatekeepers” who create toxicity by shaming newcomers for their lack of experience, or in some cases expensive name brand gear. This goes both ways, and other “gatekeepers” will judge individuals simply because they do in fact have brand new gear. Another source of judgement comes from an activity called “glamping”. This is the word used in the community to describe being in the wilderness, but having luxuries like technology, and comfort items. These people typically use expensive equipment, have artificial heat in cold places, and have the best foods. This is typically said in a derogatory sense and insinuates that users who “glamp” are not truly hiking and camping and therefore should not be members of the community. Glamping is looked down upon by many members of the community, even the benevolent ones.

Some of the terms used in r/campingandhiking are the names of singular products but applied as a blanket term over all the similar products. This comes about because those products are prominent in the culture of the community. For example, Garmin is a company that makes portable GPS, and is well known in the community. Many members use Garmin as their word for all GPS because it is so well known, and reputable. This practice can be looked at in two ways. Purists may detest referring to their equipment by a generic term like so and look down on this language. The people who do in fact use the blanket terms however come off as experienced and knowledgeable on proper gear, to most users.

https://www.reddit.com/r/CampingandHiking/comments/impu9s/is_it_appropriate_to_tell_somebody_to_go_home/

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https://www.reddit.com/r/CampingandHiking/comments/in35la/whats_good_to_keep_in_your_vehicle_at_the/

https://www.reddit.com/r/CampingandHiking/comments/in5dht/solo_female_pnw_camping_ideas/

https://www.reddit.com/r/CampingandHiking/comments/ilzcx4/how_to_cook_when_stoves_are_banned/