



Walk Leader Guidance

Planning and Suitability Of The Walk

Walking Grades – Most One Step Walkers walks are Moderate or Strenuous with the occasional Leisurely or Technical walk. Use of the Easy grade is very unlikely in One Step Walkers. It is very important not to grade a walk too low or people may turn up that are not prepared for the level of difficulty. The following are the official Rambler grades we use:

Easy – walks for anyone who does not have a mobility difficulty, a specific health problem or is seriously unfit. Suitable for pushchairs if they can be lifted over occasional obstructions. Comfortable shoes or trainers can be worn.

Leisurely – walks for reasonably fit people with at least a little country walking experience. May include unsurfaced rural paths. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are recommended.

Moderate – walks for people with country walking experience and a good level of fitness. May include some steep paths and open country, and may be at a brisk pace. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are essential.

Strenuous – walks for experienced country walkers with an above average fitness level. May include hills and rough country, and may be at a brisk pace. Walking boots and warm, waterproof clothing are essential. People in doubt about their fitness should contact the organiser or leader in advance.

Technical – walks for experienced and very fit walkers with additional technical skills. May require scrambling and use of ice axes or crampons. You must contact the organiser or leader in advance for further details.

Refreshments & Facilities – Consider facilities for refreshment, toilets and a suitable place for lunch, drink and snack breaks.

Check transport and parking options – Consider availability of parking at the start of a walk. Note – If using pub or other business car parks, permission must be obtained from proprietor. If large numbers are anticipated, make sure the car park will accommodate all their cars.

Dogs on walks – Consider if the walk is suitable for dogs. Dogs cannot be excluded from walks without good reason and we are legally not allowed to exclude registered assistance dogs. We can however state a walk is not suitable for dogs for valid reasons. In Spring time there will be lambs, calves and nesting birds around. Make it clear in the walk description any issues with animals, styles or terrain that may affect whether the walk is suitable for dogs. Dog owners have a responsibility to ensure their dogs are not a nuisance to animals or people and must be kept on a lead where required, (see additional information under Dogs and on the One Step Walkers Website).

Recce the route – This is essential to ensure safety, suitability, contingencies for inclement weather and if something was to go wrong. Produce a route map or mark up an OS map that can be used if electronic guidance fails. A copy of the route should also be available for the back marker (or back markers)

Publicising the walk – The walk must be submitted to the Walk Programme Coordinator with the walk leader identified and all the information required to enter it on the Onestep Walkers Web site including a contact number. Look at examples on the web site to see what information is required by the walk coordinator.

Safety – A first aid kit, foil blanket, and extra water should be carried in case of an emergency. A suitable first aid kit is the “Life Systems Pocket First Aid Kit”, see link. Always carry a mobile phone. <https://www.lifesystems.co.uk/products/first-aid-kits/pocket>
It is also recommended to download the British Red Cross first aid application on your mobile phone. This is very useful and includes videos of what action to take in common emergencies. It is also advisable to have some basic first aid training as a walk leader.

Other useful items to carry are:

- Waterproof map case
- Spare battery pack for electronic navigation and mobile phone.
- Insect Repellent
- Sun tan cream
- Whistle
- Spare compass
- Torch
- Notebook and pen
- Hi-vis yellow waistcoat (for evening walks or emergencies)

Prepare a briefing – Plan what you want to say. A Walk Leaders Check List and Script summary sheet is provided at the end of this note and on the One Step Walkers website. It is recommended the Check List and Script are printed off and taken on walks for reference.

Weather – Check the weather forecast the day before the walk and on the morning of the walk. This is to ensure you are well prepared for whatever weather occurs on the day and any route changes you may wish to make.

On the day

Arrive with time in hand! Recommend a minimum of 30 minutes before scheduled walk time.

Walk Leader Script

Introduction – Introduce yourself as the volunteer walk leader for One Step Walkers

New Walkers – Ask new walkers to make themselves known and say their names so regular members can make them welcome. Hand out Ramblers and One Step Walkers leaflets to people who wish to become new members. Give out ICE (In Case of Emergency) cards to anyone who wants one.

Ramblers Membership & Insurance – Explain that if not a Ramblers member people are only insured for three walks. Current annual membership cost £35:85. Ramblers is a charity and spends money on maintaining legal rights of way to keep our paths open. You also get 10% discount from Cotswolds, Go Outdoors, Millets etc.

Walk Description – Give a brief description of the walk, length, styles, gates, mud, animals in fields etc. lunch stops and pub or cafe stops.

Toilet facilities – If toilet facilities are available, explain where they are on route. If anyone stays back for a call of nature ask them to inform the backmarker or walk leader so allowances can be made.

Backmarker – There should be a minimum of one back marker. If two people are willing to back mark, then they can change over at half way. The back marker(s) and walk leader should have each other's mobile contact numbers and the back Marker(s) should be given a route map, unless they know the route well. The back marker as well as the walk leader has a duty of care responsibility for the safety of people on the walk. This means they need to be diligent and aware of what is happening with the group. If the group is too spread out, someone is very slow or stops, they should contact the walk leader.

Emergency Contact – The walk register form has been difficult to use successfully where there are high attendance numbers. A compromise is to remind walkers that the walk leaders mobile number is on the One Step Walkers website, accessible on their mobile phone and to use that number if they get lost or any incident occurs. Also, the walk leader should check that they have communication with the back marker before starting the walk. Keep your mobiles switched on.

Route Safety – Point out any hazards on route that may pose a danger such as busy roads to cross, locked gates to climb, cows in fields.

Dogs – If dogs are present remind the group that well behaved dogs are allowed on walks provided they are kept under close control at all times and must be on a lead through livestock areas, on roads and at any other time the walk leader requests. On narrow paths, for safety reasons, dogs should not be allowed to run up and down under walkers feet. If a walker has concerns about the behaviour of a dog, it should be reported to the walk leader at the time.

Group Activities – Ask if any committee member present would like to publicise any other immediate group activities such as social events or walks.

Leaving the walk – If anyone leaves the walk, they must inform the walk leader or back marker.

Lateness – Normally it is reasonable to wait 5 minutes for stragglers. If members have contacted you due to being late & request a delay to the start it is reasonable to wait for 10 minutes maximum. Beyond this is unfair to wait for those members who made arrangement to arrive on time.

Children – Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult and agreed with the walk leader.

Numbers – Count the number of people at the start of the walk and make a note of the number (write it down). Inform the backmarker(s) of the number of people on the walk.

On the Walk

Animals & dogs – Avoid fields with cows and calves or bulls if possible. Cows with calves and horses with foals can get very aggressive when they see a dog. Where avoidance is not possible, walk away from animals around the perimeter of the field. If walkers have dogs, consider asking them to walk away from the main group & remind them to let go of their dog if chased, for their own safety.

Keep the group together – Set a pace to suit the fitness and capabilities of the party and advertised grade of the walk. Be aware of slower people in the group and adjust the pace accordingly. Make sure the back marker is always in sight. Gather up & re-group regularly, particularly where there are a lot of stiles and gates. Always stop where there is a junction, road, or adjoining path to make sure everyone goes the right way. Regularly count the number in the group. Manage the party over stiles, through gates and forests, in poor weather and across roads. Be alert to any problems with individuals, weather, road walking or crossings.

Road safety – When crossing major roads, gather the group together and all cross at once when there is a gap in the traffic. On roads in general, walk in single file and face the oncoming traffic. Take particular care where it is not possible to face the oncoming traffic and when walking around bends in the road.

Breaks – Be aware of the fitness of members on the walk and allow short breaks as necessary if members are struggling. Especially take note of first time walkers who may have underestimated their ability for the grade and distance.

Backmarker – Always keep the walk leader in sight. If the walk is getting strung out and difficult to manage, inform the walk leader on your mobile. Be aware of any issues with walkers and inform the

walk leader if someone stops and may not catch up quickly enough. Check walker numbers.

Feedback – Ask for feedback on the walk among the group. There is a feedback mail address to the committee on the walks programme page if anyone wishes to use it.

New Members – Make a point of chatting to any newcomers. Explain some background to the group. Enquire how they became aware of the group and make them aware of the webpage if they have not seen it.

Importantly – enjoy the walk!

Backmarker Duties

For safety reasons the walk leader will appoint a walk backmarker whom has a duty of care to walk members. As backmarker:

- Ensure you have exchanged mobile phone numbers with the walk leader and tested communication
- Ask the walk leader for a copy of the route if you are not familiar with it
- Be aware of the number of walkers on the walk & routinely check count where possible
- Monitor the last walkers of the group to prevent any walkers being un-intentionally dropped from the back & left behind
- Ensure gates are closed
- Pass any details of anyone leaving the walk to the walk leader
- Keep the walk leader in sight where possible, contact the leader to group up walkers if necessary; especially if visibility is limited & the route is not clear due to no path or multiple turnings off route

At the end of the walk

Check the numbers and that everyone has returned safely and can get home. Thank them for coming & give location instructions if you are going for a social drink. Coffee or social drink is often welcome.

Encourage non-members to join the Ramblers

After the walk – If a walk register is used, destroy it after the walk as it breaks General Data Protection Regulations to record or use contact details after the end of the walk. Let the committee walks organiser how the walk went reporting numbers attending & any problems to be aware of.

In the event of an accident or incident involving damage to property or other parties – Where appropriate, administer basic first aid (See First Aid notes or use British Red Cross mobile app.) & call for emergency assistance if required (Dial 999 or 112 for general emergency, 101 for Police or 111 for NHS advice).

Help any injured party to the end of route if necessary or if unable to continue, help them arrange safe transport back to start point & home. This may involve taxi or someone waiting & collecting them after returning to the start. Abandon the walk if necessary. The safety of everyone is the first priority. You must report the incident to your walks organiser or a committee member. As a Ramblers group we have a responsibility to report all injuries & incidents to head office via a standard reporting form

for monitoring and insurance reasons. Your walks organiser will need your help to complete an incident form to be sent to head office.

Lost Person or Group – Stop the walk & enquire if anyone has contact details for the lost person(s). If you are unable to contact them, establish the last time & place the lost person(s) was seen. Re trace steps to the last contact point & search for a small distance any alternative routes or places they may have gone. If they are untraceable complete the walk and if their car is still present when the walk is complete, notify local police.

Bad Weather – If weather is extreme at the start of a walk or becomes extreme (e.g. heavy snow or high winds) consider a safer alternative route if possible or abandon the walk & take the safest route back to the start. Be aware of member's safety and possible effects of exposure, e.g. hypothermia.

Member Disputes – If a conflict or confrontation occurs between members, ask them to remain calm and take time out for a moment. Remind them to be respectful of other walk members and the walk leader. If necessary, briefly mediate the points of view, away from the group, so the walk can continue. If an agreement cannot be reached then ask them to agree to differ but be civil & sensible. Ask them to walk apart to minimise conflict. Report details of the incident to your walk organiser and the Group Chair.

Path Problems – We encourage leaders to report path problems such as closures, blockages, bad stiles, un-authorized re-routing to local council websites or Ramblers Head Office who will follow up with local representatives.

Useful Links:-

- <https://reportit.ramblers.org.uk/report-it>
- <https://apps.derbyshire.gov.uk/applications/do-it-now/fault-on-pavement-or-path.asp>
- <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/RightsofWay/home.aspx>

For Further Guidance

Ramblers Guide for walkers and walk leaders

- <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/group-finder/areas/devon/groups/totnes/guide-for-walkers-and-walk-leaders.aspx>

Walk Leader Toolkit - Role, Checklist, FAQ, Remote Walks, Incident Form

- <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer-zone/support-and-development/volunteer-toolkits-alphabetically-sorted/walk-leader-toolkit.aspx>

First Aid Tips for Walkers

- <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer-zone/support-and-development/first-aid/first-aid-advice.aspx>

Ramblers Incident Reporting Form

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/~//media/Resources/Volunteer%20resources/Insurance%20tookit/Final%20Incident%20Report%20Form.docx>

Dog Walking Code

- <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/~//media/Files/Advice/thedogwalkingcode.pdf?la=en>