

Leading group walks

Your checklist



Introduction

At the Ramblers, we all love walking and there's something special about sharing it with others. That's why group walks are so important.

If you're leading a group walk, use this checklist to help you plan. It's been updated to reflect the changes as we move into a phase of living with Covid-19.

You'll have your own style and approach to leading a group walk, so once you've got the basics in this checklist covered, it's all about making it your own – you're one of the reasons people love to join your walks.

Stay safe and have a great time.



ramblers
at the heart of walking

What to do before, during and after
your group walk.

Updated August 2021

Before the walk

Record your volunteer role

- If you lead walks for the Ramblers or Ramblers Wellbeing Walks, you must be centrally recorded as a volunteer walk leader.

Choose a route

- Consider the location, length, timing and whether it will be a linear or circular route.
- Consider the season, terrain and points of interest.
- Ask yourself, do I have the knowledge, skills and ability to lead this walk safely?
- Check if any Covid-19 restrictions are in place that could disrupt travel, transport or other facilities.

Recce the walk

- Recce your route close to the day of the walk, if possible.
- Check timings, rest and toilet points, escape or alternative routes, access restrictions and mobile phone coverage.

Complete a risk assessment

- Ramblers volunteers must complete our risk assessment template before leading a walk to record hazards and plan steps to stay safe.
- We recommend doing this as part of the recce. If a that's not possible, use maps, guidebooks, local knowledge and online tools to plan your walk and complete a risk assessment.
- Keep risk assessments for three years.

Decide whether to limit walker numbers

- How big a group do you feel comfortable leading? If you decide to limit numbers, use a booking system and include how to sign up in the walk listing.
- If possible, consider additional walk leaders and a middle-marker for larger walks.

Publicly advertise the walk

- Ramblers walks must be advertised publicly. Make sure the listing reflects the great walk you've planned!
- Use the Group Walks and Events Manager (GWEM) so your walk appears on the Ramblers website and app.

Come prepared

- Pack everything you need for the walk – first aid kit, fully charged mobile phone, food, drink and an online or paper map are all recommended.
- Consider taking extra layers and waterproofs in case others need them.
- You may also want hand sanitiser and a face covering for busy or enclosed sections.

Check the weather

- Take a look at the forecast before the walk. If you think the weather could make your walk unsafe, postpone it.
- Bear in mind conditions at low levels can be very different to the conditions on a high peak.

Stay connected

- Let someone at home know your route and when they should expect you back. They can raise the alarm if you don't return safely.

During the walk

Give a warm welcome!

- Say hello, introduce new walkers and provide an overview of the route.
- Highlight potential hazards on the route so walkers can keep themselves and others safe.

Register your walkers

- We recommend taking a register to help keep walkers safe. Explain details might be shared to support NHS contact tracing.
- If you're leading a Ramblers walk, consider using the Ramblers app to keep walkers' data safe and build up a picture of your most popular walks in the Insight Hub.
- If taking a paper register, use our template.
- Keep local records securely and delete/destroy them after 21 days. Each walk leader can keep hold of their own registers, or groups can choose someone to look after them.

Set the right pace

- Set a pace to suit your group.
- Stay in sight or communication with your back marker at all times.
- Take regular headcounts, be alert to any problems and be prepared to put your risk planning into action.



Be ready for emergencies

- Encourage everyone to fill in an ICE (In Case of Emergency) Card.
- If there is an emergency, dial 999 or 112. Depending on where you are, an ambulance or Mountain Rescue will be able to help.

Look out for other walkers

- Be considerate towards other walkers and path users.
- Respect everyone's space – even if physical distancing is not a legal requirement at the time of your walk.
- Always follow the Countryside Code when in England and Wales, and the Outdoor Access Code when in Scotland.

Have fun

- Most of all, have a great time with your group while out on the walk!

After the walk

Say thanks

- Let new walkers know when the next walk is, and the steps to join the group or stay in touch.
- If you're going to a post-walk social, make sure everyone feels welcome to join.

Remember Covid-19

- Remind walkers that if they develop Covid-19 symptoms after taking part, they should get a test and support NHS contact tracing if requested.

Report incidents or near misses

- If you're leading a walk for the Ramblers or Ramblers Wellbeing Walks, you must complete and return an Incident Report Form to incidents@ramblers.org.uk within 10 days.

Thank you

- Thanks to people like you, walkers across Great Britain get to enjoy more than 150,000 group walks every year. Thank you for taking the time to share your favourite routes with others.
- If you need any support, please contact volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.com or visit Assemble for more resources and stories.