

Fact Sheet: Recce a Walk

The term “Risk Assessment” has become more frequently used in recent years and some members are concerned that it will add a layer of bureaucracy to their walks. However, Ramblers Groups have been carrying these out for years - in the form of a “recce”. Recceing a walk involves the leader checking the route before a walk takes place.

A “recce” will enable you to identify any possible risks along the route, and familiarise you with any points where there is a choice of path or a turning point, particularly if it is not easy to recognise. It is much easier, and less embarrassing, to sort out difficulties beforehand on your own, rather than with a party breathing down your neck! A ‘recce’ lets you:

- Check that the paths you intend to use are clear of obstructions and identify alternative routes in case of need.
- Check whether any paths have been officially closed or diverted since your copy of the map was published.
- Learn the route to ensure effortless navigation on the day. This can include noting things to look out for that indicate an approaching turn, or act as a guideline to an out-of-sight target.
- Spot ways of improving the route that may not be apparent on the map, for example, a new path which cuts out a stretch of road-walking.
- Investigate possibilities for refreshment and toilet stops.
- Investigate places of interest, and anticipate questions about them from party members.
- Check your anticipated timings at suitable points along the route.
- Consider escape routes in case of bad weather or unforeseen circumstances.

You should report obstructions or difficulties found during the ‘recce’. You may even be able to have them removed before the day of the walk.

If your ‘recce’ took place some time ago, and at a different season, you may wish to check it again a short period before the day of your walk, as circumstances may have changed in the meantime.

If possible, the ‘recce’ should be undertaken together with your backmarker. This will:

- Provide some company during your ‘recce’ and two pairs of eyes are better than one.
- Make it easier for him or her to take over as leader if you are unable to attend for any reason, or if the party should become split.
- Help the backmarker to take a turn in leading some parts of the walk on the day, which is a way of training new leaders.