

CONSULTATION DRAFT



Leading group walks

The Ramblers' Approach

Leading Group Walks

The Ramblers' Approach

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introduction

Welcome

As someone who is leading walks, you might choose to organise a relaxed garden stroll, a wild-weather wander, a hardcore hike or a simple urban leg-stretch. After all, there's no one way to ramble! Whatever type of walk you decide on, you'll want to make sure every walk is safe, enjoyable and welcoming.

In this guide, the Ramblers shares its approach to leading safe, enjoyable walks to help you make the right decisions before, during and after you've set out.

When you lead a walk, you'll bring your own strengths and experiences. Your group of walkers will have its own reasons to get-up-and-go. Each route will throw up its own surprises and delights. Add the British weather into the mix and you can be sure no two walks will be the same.

As walk leaders, we all have a responsibility to plan and adapt for those different and constantly changing variables so we can share our love of walking, while making informed decisions to reduce any risks to the safety of the group.

We want to share our approach so you can head out with confidence. And we hope this guide will help you make decisions that are proportionate, relevant and right for your walk.

Let's work together to open up the outdoors for everyone!

We all have responsibility

In this guide, we share our national approach, helping you make sure every one of your walks is safe, enjoyable and welcoming.

Although accidents are extremely rare, we all have a responsibility to work together and do everything we can to keep our walks safe and enjoyable.

We all have a role to play:

- **The Ramblers** providing a clear national approach, along with training opportunities, resources and templates for walking groups and leaders to adopt and adapt.
- **Walking Groups** taking time to bring the framework to life in a way that works best locally, building on local knowledge and creating a collective 'bank' of best practice.
- **Walk Leaders** working responsibly with their group to be responsive, dynamic, and flexible on the day.

Whether we are volunteers or paid professionals, we all have the same duty to reduce risk as much as possible.

How risky is walking?

All outdoor activities carry an element of risk. But the good news is that walking is much less risky than other things we love to do in the outdoors.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (2013) estimates that walking is 3 times less dangerous than fishing, 7 times less dangerous than cycling, 40 times less dangerous than cricket and safer than driving to the start of the walk!

But this does not mean we can be complacent. When accidents do happen, they are usually avoidable.

The guide can be used to:

- Review your group's local approach to planning and leading walks by adapting and/or adopting our generic risk planning templates to reflect local practice and regular local walks you enjoy together.
- Assess yourself as a walk leader and develop your understanding of how to lead safely.
- Act as a reference point when you offer peer-to-peer support to help new walk leaders develop their skills.
- Identify your training needs.
- Understand where your skill level sits, so you lead within your capabilities.
- Highlight important risks, so you can plan with confidence and be responsive, dynamic and flexible on the day.

Ramblers' code of good practice

We know every walk is different. But whether you're leading a gentle ramble or a hardcore hike, there are some essential, non-negotiable things that you must do to be a responsible walk leader.

As a responsible walk leader, you must:

- Ensure you and the group have the right knowledge, skills, and kit for your walk.
- Only lead within your capabilities.
- Expect the unexpected. Know who is on your walk and who to contact in case of an emergency.
- Have a good understanding of the physical environment and know:
 - the opportunities it presents.
 - any risks and - if possible - how to reduce or avoid them.
- Check the weather in advance, know what to expect, and respond to changes throughout the day.
- Put the group at the heart of the experience and help them to manage in the conditions.
- Assess what's needed both in advance of a walk, and throughout a walk.
- Remain flexible, adaptable, and responsive to minimise risk and promote the pleasures of walking.



The Ramblers Approach helps you understand how you can meet these requirements in a dynamic and flexible way.

Exactly how you bring these requirements to life will change with the unique nature of each walk. But they are relevant for all kinds of walks.

Groups will know what works locally and you will have your preferred style too, bringing your own magic to every walk you lead.

Overview

Every walk and every walk leader are unique. So how you meet the **code of good practice** needs to be flexible. You will need to make decisions that are proportionate and relevant for your walks, based on your assessment of what's needed to remain safe and share the simple pleasures of walking.

There are three elements that work together to shape your choices, influence your group's enjoyment, and inform the decisions you make each time you are out walking. They are:



The leader

You will have your own style and experiences and the kind of walks you lead will inform what knowledge, skills, and kit you need. As a responsible leader, you'll lead well within your capabilities. You may lead on your own or together with other leaders.

Over time you may choose to develop your abilities to lead different kinds of walks.

Your plan

Leaders need to assess what's needed to make each walk as safe as possible. There are many ways to do this. Take some time to plan a week or so before and, because circumstances can change, check-in on these plans just before the walk. On each walk, leaders will remain alert to what's happening and adjust plans if needed.

Plans will be flexible, and responsible leaders are always ready to adapt.

Your walk

Each walk will be unique, and you'll know how to prepare for the people you're leading and have a good understanding of the environment and the weather.

These factors can change across the seasons, from one day to the next, and throughout each day.

We've structured our guide around these three key elements. In each section, you'll get a detailed overview of the element. In the appendix we provide a short self-assessment and links to further resources. Go to

www.ramblers.org.uk for more information and inspiration wherever you see this icon.





the leader

The leader



As a leader, you'll bring your own style to a walk. Never lose that!

We recommend being 'Adventure Smart'. This means asking yourself three key questions:

- 1) Am I confident I have the knowledge and skills for the day?
- 2) Do I know what the weather will be like?
- 3) Do I have the right kit?

Knowledge and skills

Your knowledge is an important part of leading a great walk. It will allow you to create a great plan and help you lead with confidence. But that doesn't mean you have to do everything by yourself. You may delegate some responsibilities to trusted people in the group. What's important is that *between you*, you have everything you need to walk safely and have fun. And what you need will depend on where you are walking – are you enjoying a relaxed stroll in a local park or heading for the hills in the depths of winter?

Being able to translate your knowledge into practice is the mark of a great leader. Our website explains more about some of these important areas of knowledge and skills for leaders to consider:

- Route knowledge
- Preventing and managing incidents
- Emergency access
- Natural history
- First aid
- Access rights
- Local facilities
- Group management
- Navigation skills



We all have our comfort zones, so make sure you understand your limitations. Organise walks that are right for your current level of experience. Over time you may want to develop your abilities to lead different kinds of walks, cope with a wider range of conditions, or get better at the walks you already enjoy leading. You can build your skills and knowledge through training and shadowing other walk leaders. We all benefit from support, experience, and reflection.

Always lead within your capabilities and never feel you can't turn back or change your plans.

Kit

One of the best things about walking is its accessibility – you don't need much to start. However, your walkers might need some kit for certain types of walks. It's part of your role to make sure your group is prepared.

As a walk leader, having the right kit can make a big difference to delivering a safe, enjoyable and welcoming walk.

What you need will vary according to the location, weather conditions, duration of the walk, and the needs of the group. Make sure you regularly check and maintain what you need for your walks. You can ask the group to share the load and carry some items.

Go to the Ramblers website to learn more about the categories of kit to consider for the type of walks you lead:

- Clothing
- Food and drink
- First aid kit
- Navigation tools
- Communication tools
- Safety equipment



As a responsible walk leader, you must:

- Ensure you and the group have the right knowledge, skills, and kit for a walk.
- Only lead within your capabilities.

How groups can help:

- Share skills and knowledge with each other.
- Check out local training courses and online events.
- Offer some peer-to-peer support for new leaders.
- Think about group kit that can be pooled and shared.
- Pass on old kit to someone else.

Use our quick [self-assessment guide](#) to identify your readiness to lead.



your plan

Your plan



Leaders plan so they know what's needed to make each walk as safe and enjoyable as possible. There are many ways to do this. Take some time to do your planning in advance. Then, check-in the night before, or on the morning of the walk, in case anything has changed. Plans should be flexible, and you should be ready to adapt at any time. Having a 'Plan B' is always helpful.

Use local knowledge

To start you off, your walking group might have information about the walk you're planning to do, which someone else has previously prepared. For example, they should have a generic, pre-prepared [Risk Assessment](#) for the grade of walk you are leading, or notes for this exact route. This sort of information is a good starting point, but you should consider how *your specific* walk might be different. Things such as the physical environment or the weather conditions may have changed, there might be obstructions on the route, and you might need to do some things differently this time.

Plan in advance

Doing a recce gives you a great chance to plan a new walk. It probably won't be needed for walks you lead regularly but will help you get to know a new route, find out how long it takes and spot opportunities for rest stops. It allows you to explore an area at your leisure while building your confidence.

If a recce isn't possible, you can plan using maps, guidebooks, existing routes, and blogs. It's also useful to speak to people who know the area you'll be walking in and use their knowledge to plan and foresee challenges.

Things to consider include:

- Route choice
- Physical conditions
- Timing
- Points of interest
- Rest stops
- Contingency plans



Share your plan

Share your plan in advance so everyone knows what to expect and to reduce the chance of people attending a walk that is beyond their capabilities or not going to stretch them enough. Remember not to overestimate your, or your group's, abilities.

By giving an overview of the walk before you set off people will understand what you have in mind and appreciate that you might change plans through the day. Our [Route Card](#) can be useful for more remote walks.

Keep it flexible on the walk

Stay alert throughout the walk so you can adapt to changing circumstances. By dynamically assessing risk in this way, you'll be continuously evaluating and adapting to changing opportunities and conditions. It's an ongoing process that helps keep you and your group safe as circumstances evolve.

Because you'll have already assessed and identified some of the key risks and hazards during the planning phase, it will be easier to spot when something has changed.

Stay attentive to the environment and your group to make well-informed decisions. Your group's safety is paramount, so it's better to be cautious when facing uncertain or changing conditions.

Key components of a dynamic risk assessment include:

- Continuous monitoring
- Physical environment
- The weather
- The group
- Decision-making
- Contingency plans



As you plan and lead, always follow the Countryside Code (England & Wales) and Outdoor Access Code (Scotland).

A responsible walk leader must:

- Assess what's needed in advance of a walk, and throughout a walk.
- Remain flexible, adaptable, and responsive to minimise risk and promote the pleasures of walking.

How groups can help:

- Get familiar with the Ramblers' Approach and discuss how you bring it to life with your group.
- Develop generic Risk Assessments for different grades of walk in your area. Use these to capture your good practice that you want all leaders in your group to adopt. Take pride in them, keeping them updated as things change and as your group experience evolves - this means you don't need to do them afresh for each and every walk.
- Help leaders plan by sharing great routes and nuggets of local knowledge.
- Go out and recce routes with leaders.
- Share you plans to help new walk leaders learn how you do things in your group.

Use our [self-assessment guide](#) to identify your readiness to lead.



your walk

Your walk



Every walk is different. Responsible leadership involves preparing for the group, having a good understanding of the physical environment, and knowing what weather to expect.

These factors can change through the seasons, and throughout the day, and even the same walk can feel totally different with a new group.

People

When leading a group walk, it's important to put people at the heart of the experience, consider the needs of the group and make sure everyone is safe, comfortable, and enjoying the walk. Effective communication and flexibility will help you meet the diverse needs and dynamics of the group. And as different walkers will take in information differently, you may need to reinforce information you share before the walk, repeat yourself throughout the walk, and chat to walkers individually.

Things to consider include:

- Walkers' information
- Group size
- Experience
- Fitness
- Health conditions
- Motivation
- Group dynamics
- Roles
- Language and cultural diversity
- Comfort



Know the size of your group

These ratios describe the minimum number of leaders usually needed to manage your group safely and have an enjoyable experience leading. It will be difficult to manage a ratio more demanding than these norms:

Walking grade	Minimum ratio of leader(s) to walkers
Ramblers Wellbeing Walks	1:10
Easy Access and Easy walks	1:10
Leisurely and Moderate	1:8
Strenuous	1:6
Technical	1:4

When deciding on how many people you can safely lead, consider the group's ability, the weather, the physical environment, and your experience, and be ready to adapt the number of people helping you lead.

With a larger group, you may ask another person to help with some of the leadership tasks.

For example, if you are leading a Leisurely Graded walk and 12 people attend on the day, you could appoint a trusted member of the group to assist you. (Some people may call them a back-marker, a middle-marker, or a co-leader).

What's important is that they know what you need from them and can do the things you delegate to them. This will help you stay with the normal ratio of 1:8.

They may not be a formal leader, but their presence on the day can make all the difference to being able to manage larger groups.

You should also decide the minimum number of people you are comfortable walking with. When the weather is poor, the group inexperienced, the route novel or you are building your confidence, you may want to limit numbers to lower than these ratios so you can reduce risk and prioritise enjoyment.

Who's walking with you?

Knowing who is on your walk will help you manage numbers and help in case of emergency. You can ask people to book in advance or take a register before you set off. It will be for your group to decide.

Pace

Knowing what the group want to get out of the walk will help you set a pace that suits everyone. Never leave anyone behind by going too fast or by not taking enough rest stops to allow people to catch their breath. Because you will be walking well within your capabilities, you will probably find the walk easier than most, so be careful not to overestimate other people's abilities.

Don't be afraid to ask for backup

Never feel under pressure to walk alone with strangers and always feel able to ask a trusted friend to walk with you.

Enabling people to book in advance will help you be prepared.

Top Tip

A dynamic leader will benefit from walking **within** the group, chatting with people and keeping in touch with how the group are doing. When you are at the front it can be hard to know what's happening behind you, to gauge the team spirit and if you need to adapt your plans. Small groups are likely to be easier and more enjoyable to lead.

Expect the unexpected

Sometimes things don't go to plan, and you will need to know who to contact in case there is an emergency with anyone in your group. There are various ways to make sure you can do this:

- Collect personal details at the time of booking.
- Collect details at the start of the walk.
- Ensure all walkers carry an *In Case of Emergency* (ICE) card, key fob or medical bracelet with their emergency contact details on.



It is also good practice to have a note of any relevant medical conditions, although some walkers may choose not to share this information with you. Create a safe space when you welcome everyone at the start of the walk, allowing walkers to share any relevant injuries or medical conditions they may have, either with the group or with you privately.

Conditions

Physical conditions can have a big impact on a group walk, affecting the level of difficulty and the overall experience. Different physical conditions include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Urban paths | • Bogs and marshy areas |
| • Flat conditions | • Rivers, streams, and canals |
| • Hills and rolling countryside | • Coastal areas |
| • Demanding hills and mountains | • Snow and ice |
| • Rocky areas | • Fields with livestock |
| • Woodland and forest | |



Weather

The weather will play an important role in your walk. It can affect safety, the comfort of your group, and your overall enjoyment. It will also affect the kit and skills you need. It's essential to check the weather forecast before you lead a walk. Be prepared for the weather to change and plan for the unexpected.

The British weather is famously unpredictable - so you should be prepared for:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| • Rain | • Thunder and lightning | • Flood |
| • Snow and ice | • Mist, fog, and clouds | • Fading daylight |
| • Heat and humidity | • Wind | • Avalanche |



As a responsible walk leader, you must:

- Expect the unexpected. Know who is on your walk and who to contact in case of an emergency.
- Have a good understanding of the physical environment and know:
 - the opportunities it presents.
 - any risks and - if possible - how to reduce them.
- Check the weather in advance, know what to expect, and respond to changes throughout the day.
- Put the group at the heart of the experience and help them manage in the conditions.

How groups can help:

- Go the extra mile to welcome new people – make them feel at home from the moment they arrive.
- Consider ways to help people book on your walks in advance.
- Create great adverts for your walks so people know what to expect and come ready to enjoy themselves.
- Have standard ways to know who is there on the day and their contact details– share your preferred approach with all leaders.
- Remember, it's good practice to know any relevant medical conditions of people in your group (although they may choose to opt out of sharing information.)
- Foster a culture of helping out – encourage trusted and able people in your group to help leaders with larger groups and to provide a reassuring presence in very small groups.

Use our [self-assessment guide](#) to identify your readiness to lead.



developing your skills

Developing your skills

Developing competence takes time and effort.

Levels of ability develop and change over time, depending on our experiences, the learning we do and how often we use our skills. Practice helps us to develop, and we are likely to get rusty if we don't keep using our skills.

This simple model can help us understand how we develop competence. What stage are you at?

Stage	What does it look like?	What can I do?
Ignorance	This is where we all start! At this stage we do not understand or know our limitations.	Be humble. Be open to other people's feedback. Accept other people know more than you and accept your limitations when they are pointed out.
Awareness	At this stage we accept there are gaps in our knowledge and skills. It may feel a little uncomfortable.	Be curious. Find ways to learn new skills and people who can help.
Learning	At this stage we develop some degree of competence that we can apply with focus and concentration.	Be open. Start applying your learning and leading with support from more capable leaders.
Mastering	Here we are so capable that we apply our skills like they are second nature – it might look effortless to others but there is a great deal of skill and effort involved.	Be generous. Share your expertise and apply your skills. Keep learning so you're up to date. And stay humble!

Reflect on these 4 levels of competence, and ask yourself these questions:

- How experienced am I and how do I know?
- What level(s) of walk am I competent in leading?
- How can I demonstrate my abilities?
- What else can I do to develop my abilities?

According to the Health and Safety Executive there are four ways leaders can demonstrate competence. These are:

- to hold the relevant national qualification
- to hold an equivalent qualification
- to have received appropriate in-house training
- through sufficient relevant experience.

Use our [Competency Framework](#) to identify what skills you have and what you might want to develop over time.

It's important that you are honest with yourself, about your abilities and how you can demonstrate them. Remember, don't confuse feeling *confident* for being truly *competent*. A responsible leader will never intentionally over-reach themselves.

The Ramblers offers training to help you develop the foundations of good walk leadership. This will be enough to get you started with a social exploration of local greenspaces and straightforward days out in the countryside that everybody can enjoy. These are the most common walks people enjoy, week in - week out. We love them!

And if you want to go further, support from more experienced leaders will be invaluable to extend your experience, build your competence and broaden what you can offer. Any previous experience may also give you the skills to lead more challenging walks. As will attending training courses and gaining qualifications.

Have a look at the [Inspiration and Knowledge hub](#) and the Ramblers website for more information.



thank you

Thank you

Walking is at the heart of what we do at the Ramblers, and we want to share that with as many people as possible - whether they grew up with a love of the outdoors or are just starting to get out exploring.

We know this may seem like a lot. But we all have a responsibility to make sure every walk we lead is safe, enjoyable, and welcoming to all. And by bringing the Ramblers Approach to life, we give ourselves the best chance of creating safe and inspiring walks we can share with others.

Developing skills and confidence takes time, so be honest about your starting point and make the most of the inspirations and signposts we've shared in this guide. And remember, you're never far from someone who wants to share their expertise to help you on your journey.

Visit the Ramblers website for loads of inspiration and additional guidance so you can bring this approach to life in a way that works for you.

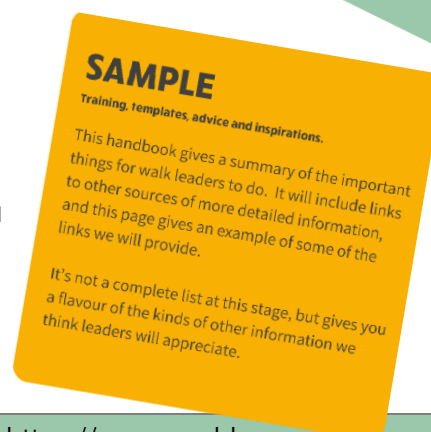
See you out there!



appendix

Inspiration and knowledge

Keep up to date with these handy weblinks which give you more information and signpost you to training and development opportunities.



The Ramblers	Weblink	https://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking-hub/walking-advice
Advice and inspiration hub for walk leaders		
Eventbrite – England and Wales	Courses and events	www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/ramblers-3448430213
Ramblers' events and courses for people in England and Wales.		
Eventbrite – Scotland	Courses and events	www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/ramblers-scotland-8968954256
Ramblers Scotland events and courses for people in Scotland.		
National Navigation Awards Scheme (NNAS)	Courses and training	www.nnas.org.uk
A scheme for all ages to learn navigation skills		
Ramblers Skills: A Beginner's Guide to Navigation	Films	https://tinyurl.com/4up3hfe8
A series of short films to help you develop the foundations of good navigation.		
Mountain Training Association	Courses and training	www.mountain-training.org
Develop your skills in the outdoors with accredited learning.		
British Red Cross	Courses and training	www.redcross.org.uk/first-aid/book-a-first-aid-course
First aid courses across GB.		

Self-assessment

Are you ready to lead?

You may choose to delegate some responsibilities to trusted people in the group. What's important is that *between you*, you have everything you need to stay safe and enjoy yourselves.

The leader

Adventure Smart

- ☐ Am I confident I have the knowledge and skills for the day?
- ☐ Do I know what the weather will be like?
- ☐ Do I have the right kit?

Knowledge

- ☐ Do I know where the local facilities are for public transport, parking, toilets, as well as refreshments?
- ☐ Do I know the route well enough to lead with confidence?
- ☐ Do I know where emergency services can get access throughout your route?
- ☐ Does someone else need to know where the group are going, and when we'll be back?

Skills

- ☐ Do I have the wayfinding and navigation skills needed for your walk?
- ☐ Are my group management skills sufficient for the group I am leading?
- ☐ Will I delegate any responsibilities to members of your group?
- ☐ Is there someone in the group with adequate first aid skills? Who?
- ☐ If there is an accident, how will I keep any casualty – along with yourself and the rest of the group – safe and comfortable while waiting for emergency services?
- ☐ What are my limitations?

Kit

- ☐ What kit have I chosen to take for the group and why?
- ☐ Will I carry everything myself or ask other people to carry some kit for the group?
- ☐ Am I carrying kit for an emergency as well as my day-to-day kit?

Your plan

Before the walk

- ☐ Do my plans reflect my abilities to lead within my skill level?
- ☐ How long could the walk take? Can we cope if it takes longer?
- ☐ What may have changed between my planning and the day of the walk?

- ☐ What hazards could there be in the walk?
 - Who may they affect?
 - What can you do to reduce risks?
 - What will you do in an emergency?
- ☐ How will I position myself within the group, in order that I have the best grasp of how everyone is doing?
- ☐ Who have I shared my plans with? Do they know what to do if I don't return as expected?

During the walk

- ☐ How flexible are my plans?
- ☐ What are my contingency plans if things need to change?
- ☐ How can I increase or decrease the challenge and opportunities if that's what the group want?
- ☐ Does anyone else in the group know my plans, in case they need to take over or help you?
- ☐ Who will I call in an emergency?

Your walk

People

- ☐ Do I know who is coming on the walk?
- ☐ How will I make everyone feel welcome?
- ☐ How will new people be looked after and made to feel part of the group?
- ☐ Are the leader-to-walker ratios adequate?
- ☐ Does everyone know what to expect and what to bring?
- ☐ How will I know people's emergency contacts and if they have any relevant health conditions?
- ☐ If more people attend than I am confident leading, what is my contingency plan?

Conditions

- ☐ What will it be like underfoot?
- ☐ What opportunities and challenges will the physical conditions create and how am I prepared for these?
- ☐ Are we climbing any hills or mountains that will affect the weather? (i.e., are we walking at height?)
- ☐ Are we by the coast and know what the tides and swell will be doing?

Weather

- ☐ What will the weather be like through the day?
- ☐ Do people know what to bring and what to wear?
- ☐ How will I cope if the weather deteriorates, or becomes too hot?
- ☐ Could the weather in the lead-up to the walk affect my route? How?
- ☐ Am I likely to have poor visibility at any point? Do I have the skills and plans to cope?

Competency Framework

Use this framework to help you to gauge what level you are at. It's important that you are honest with yourself, about your abilities and how you can demonstrate them. Remember, don't confuse feeling *confident* for being truly *competent*.

A responsible leader will never intentionally over-reach themselves or the group.

Ramblers Grades Ramblers Wellbeing Walks Easy Access & Easy	
Wellbeing Walks Ramblers Wellbeing Walks are welcoming, inclusive short group led walks from as little as 10 minutes suitable for everyone along accessible, easy-access paths. Comfortable shoes or trainers and appropriate clothing is advised.	
Easy Access Walks for everyone, including people with conventional wheelchairs and pushchairs, using easy-access paths. Comfortable shoes or trainers can be worn. Assistance may be needed to push wheelchairs on some sections.	
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.	
Key features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking on clear, well-maintained paths. • Walking is mostly (or exclusively) on the flat. • Throughout the walk the group will generally be no more than a few hundred meters from a key access point such as a road, car park, lay-by or populated area. • Any significant water features (canals, rivers or streams) will be crossed using bridges, tunnels or other structures. • These walks are not appropriate when it is very icy. 	
First Aid skills Check out our Preventing and Managing Incidents eLearning course for more information. The most you are likely to have to deal with are simple blisters and bruising. If there is a fall it may result in a sprain or a simple fracture. You should know how to summon help along your route and where you can access emergency services/roads. You should ideally know how to give CPR if you are leading elderly or less fit group.	Navigation skills Check out our navigation films to learn more. https://tinyurl.com/4up3hfe8 These walks require the most basic day-to-day skills, which include being able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and estimate the route and duration of a walk (often from a simple map). • Pace and time a walk. • Use simple features to stay on track (sometimes called 'tick', 'handrail' and 'catching' features.)
You may choose to delegate some responsibilities to trusted people in the group. What's important is that <i>between you</i> , you have everything you need to stay safe and enjoy yourselves.	

<h2>Ramblers Grades</h2> <h3>Leisurely & Moderate</h3>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Key features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These walks are in more open countryside, moorland and heath but not in mountainous terrain. • You'll follow paths for much of the walk and may also cross short sections of open countryside. • Paths may not be on a map. • You won't be walking in very steep or rocky areas or along cliffs. • Any significant water features (canals, rivers or streams) will be crossed using bridges, tunnels or other structures. • Some remote walks can quickly become a technical walk in wintery conditions. Refer to the technical competences that you may also need if you are leading in challenging conditions. 	
First Aid skills	Navigation skills
Check out our Preventing and Managing Incidents eLearning course for more information.	Check out our navigation films to learn more. https://tinyurl.com/4up3hfe8
<p>You must be able to deal with simple cuts, blisters and bruising and know how to summon help along your route and how you can access emergency services.</p> <p>If someone has a fall it could result in a significant sprain, fracture, broken bones and/or blood loss that may need first aid whilst help is arriving.</p> <p>Ideally, you will have a knowledge of CPR if you are leading elderly or less fit group.</p> <p>You will know how to do a primary survey and place somebody in the recovery position whilst help is on the way.</p> <p>You will have other ways of calling for help if it is not possible to get a mobile phone signal.</p> <p>You will be able to keep a casualty warm and as comfortable as possible while you wait for help to arrive – which could take several hours.</p> <p>As well as the casualty you'll need to keep the group warm, safe, and comfortable till rescue arrives to prevent more casualties from exposure.</p>	<p>On leisurely and moderate walks, you'll need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan the route and estimate the duration of a walk from a map. • Use features to stay on track (sometimes called 'tick', 'handrail' and 'catching' features.) • Understand your access rights. • Understand map colours, symbols and keys/legends and basic contours. • Understand how to orientate a map using key features or a compass to determine your direction of travel. • Know how to (re)locate yourself on a map. • Accurately communicate your location to external/emergency services. <p>On moderate walks you'll also need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-plan short parts of the route on the move in response to changing or unexpected circumstances. • Appreciate the benefits and limitations of digital mapping and GPS devices. • Provide a 6-figure grid reference. • Measure distances on the map and ground and judge distance travelled on the ground using techniques such as pacing or timing. • Navigate away from linear features in poor visibility and/or darkness. • Understand contours and how to identify up and downhill gradients and major land features.
<p>You may choose to delegate some responsibilities to trusted people in the group. What's important is that <i>between you</i>, you have everything you need to stay safe and enjoy yourselves.</p>	

<h2>Ramblers Grades</h2> <h3>Strenuous</h3>	
<p>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. Paths may be unclear on the ground so map and compass skills are essential.</p>	
<h4>Key features</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climbing activities (which include “pitched climbing” where members of a party ascend in stages one after the other with the aid of a rope) are not included. • In winter conditions a strenuous walk can quickly become a technical walk. Refer to the technical competences that you may also need. 	
First Aid skills	Navigation skills
<p>You must be able to deal with simple cuts, blisters and bruising and know how to summon help along your route.</p> <p>If someone has a fall it could result in a significant sprain, fracture, broken bones and/or blood loss that may need first aid whilst help is arriving.</p> <p>You will know how to do a primary survey and place somebody in the recovery position whilst help is on the way.</p> <p>You will have a knowledge of CPR.</p> <p>You will have other ways of calling for help if it is not possible to get a mobile phone signal.</p> <p>You will be able to keep a casualty warm and as comfortable as possible while you wait for help to arrive – which could take several hours.</p> <p>As well as the casualty you'll need to keep the group warm, safe, and comfortable till rescue arrives to prevent more casualties from exposure.</p>	<p>You must be able to lead a group with confidence and navigate efficiently in hill, moorland and mountain terrain, with limited linear features to assist navigation and in challenging conditions such as high wind and low visibility. In addition to the skills for more leisurely and moderate walks, you must also be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the parts of the compass and their use. • Take accurate bearings from the map and use them to stay on course over long distances. • An ability to orientate the map to more limited features on the ground. • Know how to take a bearing along a linear feature. • Measure distance accurately on the map and estimating distance travelled on level terrain. • Relocate in remote areas. • Use contour details such as aspects of slope, re-entrants, ridges, ring contours in un-pathed terrain. • Use a paper map and compass to estimate the distance travelled on a bearing over varying terrain. • Plan routes on pathless terrain. • Navigate on pathless terrain (e.g., aiming off; use of attack features; boxing). • Navigate in poor visibility (e.g., inundated by cloud, mist, fog, whiteout, or darkness).
<p>You may choose to delegate some responsibilities to trusted people in the group. What's important is that <i>between you</i>, you have everything you need to stay safe and enjoy yourselves.</p>	

<h2>Ramblers Grades Technical</h2>	
<p>Technical Walks are for experienced and very fit walkers with additional technical skills. They may require scrambling and use of ice axes or crampons. Paths may be unclear on the ground so advanced map and compass skills are essential. This includes walks where equipment such as crampons, ice-axes, ropes are needed for safety reasons (due to the conditions over ground that could normally be crossable without this equipment).</p>	
<h3>Key features</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climbing activities (which include “pitched climbing” where members of a party ascend in stages one after the other with the aid of a rope) are not included. • Technical walks require additional equipment to be safe - careful check of kit for all walkers is essential for technical walks as the consequences of inadequate kit can be significant. • Technical leaders will have significant experience most likely gained through specialist training such as Winter Mountain Leader qualification and additional winter skills training. 	
First Aid skills	Navigation and technical skills
<p>Check out our Preventing and Managing Incidents eLearning course for more information.</p> <p>You must be able to deal with simple cuts, blisters and bruising and know how to summon help along your route.</p> <p>If someone has a fall it could result in a significant sprain, fracture, broken bones and/or blood loss that may need first aid whilst help is arriving.</p> <p>You will need to have additional avalanche specific skills, including rescue from burials, partial burials and having snow probes and shovels to deal with such an incident, and a knowledge of cold injuries and how to identify and treat them.</p> <p>You will know how to do a primary survey and place somebody in the recovery position whilst help is on the way.</p> <p>You will have a knowledge of CPR.</p> <p>You will have ways of calling for help if it is not possible to get a mobile phone signal (e.g., emergency beacon).</p> <p>You will be able to keep a casualty warm and as comfortable as possible while you wait for help to arrive – which could take several hours.</p> <p>As well as the casualty you'll need to keep the group warm, safe, and comfortable till rescue arrives to prevent more casualties from exposure.</p>	<p>You must be able to lead a group with confidence and navigate efficiently in hill, moorland and mountain terrain, with limited linear features to assist navigation and in challenging conditions such as high wind and low visibility. In addition to the skills for all other grades of walk, you must also have these additional technical skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The knowledge of how to plan your day by being Avalanche Aware: https://beaware.sais.gov.uk/ • The ability to plan your route using an avalanche forecast. • The ability to adjust your timings and pacing to account for winter conditions. • The ability to identify and avoid geographical hazards that are specific to winter conditions. • The ability to use a confidence rope to aid a participant in a non-planned capacity. • The ability to assess snow conditions and features dynamically on the day and adjust the route if appropriate. • The ability to interpret a map when features such as paths, walls and water features are obscured by snow cover.
<p>You may choose to delegate some responsibilities to trusted people in the group. What's important is that <i>between you</i>, you have everything you need to stay safe and enjoy yourselves.</p>	

Generic Risk Assessment

Adopt or adapt this template to capture how all leaders in your group are expected to reflect the Ramblers Approach. Use it as a generic record of how things work in your group and refresh it as things change. You may want to review it on an annual cycle if you've not needed to make any changes throughout the year. You do not need to complete this ahead of every walk. Individual leaders may also wish to use it when planning each walk to capture what's specific about their walk. Add additional rows and information as required.

Date of plan	About the walk
08 November 2023	Leisurely and Moderate Walks – [xxx] Ramblers Group – 2023-2024

SAMPLE

This is an example of a generic risk assessment for Leisurely/Moderate walks.

- Two other samples will be created for
- Wellbeing/Easy/Easy Access
 - Strenuous/Technical.

Groups are expected to review and adapt them to reflect best practice in their group.

How we manage and reduce risk

What are the risks and hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we reduce these risks
Adopt or adapt this table to reflect the best practice in your group. Share with all leaders.		
Lack of confidence and/or skill	Leaders are stressed and walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks.	<p>All new walk leaders complete introductory training.</p> <p>Peer-to-peer support available from more experienced leaders.</p> <p>Additional training promoted throughout the group.</p> <p>Leaders only lead within their capabilities.</p>
Too many people walking in the group	<p>Walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks.</p> <p>Leader stressed and overwhelmed.</p>	<p>The group adopt the ratios reflected in the Ramblers Approach.</p> <p>We know who can be called on to act as a trusted additional helper (sometimes known as back braker / middle marker / co-leader) to enable us to increase numbers and keep within overall ratios.</p> <p>We advertise walks in advance including contact details for the leader/group.</p> <p>People can book in advance.</p>
Walkers act recklessly	<p>Walkers put themselves and others at risk.</p> <p>Leader stressed and overwhelmed.</p>	<p>Responsibly and expectations of the participants are made clear. Opportunities for clarification include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At sign up • In advance • On the walk • Throughout the walk
Weather	Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat, wet	<p>Check the weather before the walk.</p> <p>Let people know what to wear, what to bring. Make contingency plans.</p> <p>Take adequate breaks.</p> <p>Remain vigilant to the risks of extreme temperature and adjust plans accordingly.</p>
Getting lost / Going missing	<p>Walkers get lost / go missing.</p> <p>Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat, wet. Communications blackout.</p>	<p>Where possible walks are reced a week or so in advance, or else carefully planned with good local knowledge, guidebooks and/or maps.</p> <p>Carry whistle and emergency shelter for more remote walks.</p> <p>Pre-register phone with 999 emergency text service.</p>

Getting lost / Going missing (continued)		<p>There are the necessary navigation skills in the group for the walk and possible conditions.</p> <p>If there is a risk of white-out or walking in the dark, carry headtorch.</p> <p>On more remote walks, complete a Route Card in advance and leave a copy with the designated Emergency Point of Contact (EPOC). 'Late back procedure' should be implemented by the EPOC when needed.</p>
Physical conditions	<p>Walkers slip, trip and/or fall, resulting in injury.</p>	<p>A dynamic risk assessment will take place throughout the walk.</p> <p>Check for muddy/slippery sections when planning/ doing recce and adapt the route if necessary.</p> <p>Zig-zag up/down any steep unconsolidated ground where possible and offer reassurance to nervous walkers. Highlight the benefit of walking poles.</p> <p>Clear information about the nature of the walk and personal responsibility of each walker is provided in advance and throughout the walk.</p> <p>Advise walkers to bring suitable footwear for the conditions.</p> <p>Ensure the group stays hydrated and fed throughout the walk. The leader can carry additional high-energy snacks.</p> <p>Take adequate breaks throughout the day to allow the group to refresh.</p> <p>Contingencies are planned, and used where required, in response to group ability (fatigue, motivation, ability) and external risk factors (e.g., time, weather).</p> <p>The group will have the means to contact emergency services – including mobile phone and/or GPS beacon.</p> <p>The leader will ensure that there are skills and equipment in the group to tend to any casualties whilst waiting for emergency services – such as basic first aid, emergency shelter, extra layers, first aid skills etc. sufficient for the group.</p>
Unsafe/unstable geographic features or obstacles (e.g. water, rock fall, overhangs, fallen trees)	<p>Walkers slip, trip and/or fall, resulting in injury.</p> <p>Walkers drown.</p>	<p>Follow any local warnings or signs and advise walkers to keep away from sheer drops / edges.</p> <p>Check paths are suitable for a group to use safely and make changes if necessary.</p> <p>The leader will have sufficient skills to re-route and navigate around unexpected features.</p> <p>Avoid crossing any significant water features. Walks must use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.</p>
Livestock	<p>Walkers are at risk of injury from livestock.</p> <p>Property and the wider public are at risk of damage/injury.</p>	<p>Cross fields with livestock calmly and quietly, keeping the group together and any dogs on a short lead (releasing the dog if charged by cows).</p> <p>Follow the Countryside Code (England & Wales) and Access Code (Scotland).</p> <p>Leave gates and property as you find them.</p>
Roads (walking)	<p>Walkers are at risk of road traffic accident.</p> <p>Other road users are at risk of accident.</p>	<p>When crossing roads with a group, maintain single file on any road sections without footpath/pavement.</p> <p>When crossing roads with a group, the leader will avoid routes along busy roads and/or check for suitable crossing places.</p>
Roads (driving)	<p>Road traffic accident puts walkers and other road users at risk of injury.</p>	<p>Walkers are aware that the drive to/from the walk is often the riskiest part of the day.</p> <p>Drivers are reminded to drive with care, take adequate rests on longer journeys and maintain fluid and blood sugar levels, especially at the end of the day.</p>
Add more rows as needed		

Route Card

This tool will be more valuable for challenging and remote walks. It helps you plan your walk and share information about your walk with other people who can act as an Emergency Point of Contact and will add to the information on a generic risk assessment for the grade of walk you are leading. Always lead well within your capabilities and remain flexible on the day.

Date of walk	Walk name and summary	Planning/Recce date
Select	Provide an example version and a blank version	Select

Emergency Point of Contact (EPOC)

Name	Contact Number	Alert Police time
		00:00 hrs

On safe return, contact your Emergency Point of Contact (EOPC) to confirm safety. Ask EPOC to contact the Police if they have not had confirmation that you are safe at the *Alert Police Time*. To contact the police [dial 999 & ask for Police](#). Where possible have the group's likely location and mobile numbers to hand when calling.

Group members

	Name	Mobile Number	Any known medical conditions that are relevant
Leader 1:			
Leader 2:			

Planning

Weather forecast Date checked: Select www.metoffice.gov.uk				Sunrise		Sunset	
				00:00 hrs		00:00 hrs	
Likely conditions underfoot (e.g., mud, marsh, etc)		Possible access restrictions (e.g., stalking season 1 July to 20 October)		Avalanche risk www.sais.gov.uk			
				<input type="checkbox"/> High risk <input type="checkbox"/> Possible risk <input type="checkbox"/> No risk			
Moving time (hrs): from - to		Ascent (m)		Distance travelled (km)		Break times	
00:00 hrs 00:00 hrs							
What are the risks and hazards? ¹		What could happen and who could be harmed?		How we reduce these risks			
Add more rows as needed							

Standard safety measures (tick those that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone pre-registered with 999 text service	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional phone battery
<input type="checkbox"/> OS Locate loaded on phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Group shelter
<input type="checkbox"/> Escape routes / contingency routes planned	<input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit
<input type="checkbox"/> ICE cards for walkers	<input type="checkbox"/> Head torch
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional clothing	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant map, guide, compass
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional food and drink for emergencies packed	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Point of Contact are aware of plans

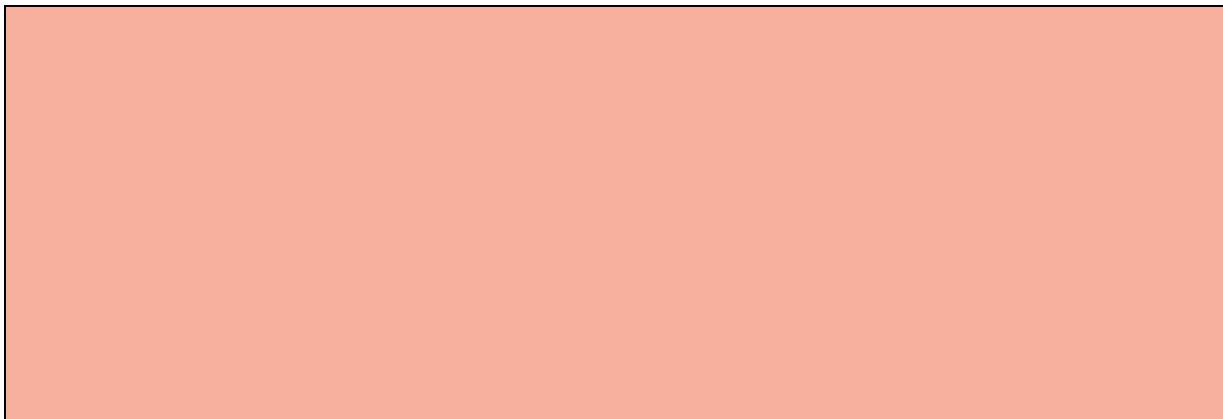
Self-Assessment - Am I Adventure Smart? www.adventuresmart.uk

Do I have the right knowledge & skills ?	Do I have the right gear ?	Do I know enough about the group ?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
Do I know what the ground conditions will be like?	Do I know what the weather will be like?	Have I planned to be flexible ?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet

¹ Use this template in conjunction with the Generic Risk Assessment for your group and make note of **additional** risks and measures you will take for your specific walk.

The Route

You can include a copy of the map with the highlighted route, a link to an online route map and description, or attached a paper copy of a map.



The Leader should

- Complete this form in advance of a walk/training day.
- Plan the day with a careful eye on timings and mobile phone coverage.
- Share a copy with the EPOC and check in with EPOC at start of the day.
- Advise EPOC if timings on the day change (i.e. final 'Alert Police Time' is going to be later than planned)
- Check in with EPOC at end of the day.

The EPOC should

- Read the information on the form upon receipt and clarify any details that are not clear.
- Store this form safely – it contains personal information.
- Be available by phone to receive end of day confirmation at the allotted time.
- If no contact has been made by final 'Alert Police Time' call the phone numbers of other participants to try to contact the leader.
- Contact appropriate emergency services if no contact with the leader has been made by final 'Alert Police Time'.
- The EPOC needs to be **available** and **able** to respond if there is an emergency.

Contacting emergency services

- Call 999 and ask for Police to put you through to Mountain Rescue or ask for Ambulance in areas with road access, or Coastguard in coastal areas.
- Be ready to share information from this form, including:
 - Group size and description
 - Route outline
 - Expected location based on timings from this route card.
 - Contact details.
 - Possible escape routes