

Leisurely, Moderate and Strenuous Walks

Use this risk assessment as a starting point to think about your specific walk. We recommend making a note of any additional hazards.

Review and share your plan with walkers on the day – and make changes if you need to.

What are the risks or hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we manage the risks
Lack of confidence and/or skill	Leaders are stressed and overwhelmed	- All new walk leaders complete introductory training and make the most of opportunities to develop their skills - Peer support available from more experienced leaders - Leaders only lead within their capabilities
	Walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks	
Too many people walking in the group	Leaders are stressed and overwhelmed	- Leaders refer to recommended ratios and manage group size depending on the specific circumstances - Identify additional helpers (e.g. walk assistant, co-leader or backmarker) for large groups - Advertise any limits on group size (and booking information, if needed) in advance - Where needed, limit invitations to people with a specific shared experience (e.g. women-only walks, cancer support groups)
	Walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks	
Walkers act recklessly	Walkers put themselves and others at risk	- Share information with walkers in advance to establish clear expectations and responsibilities - Give a walk briefing before setting off, to share your plan and expectations - Communicate with walkers throughout the walk
	Leaders are stressed and overwhelmed	

Weather	Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat, or wet	- Check the weather before the walk - Let people know what to wear and what to bring - Make contingency plans - Set an appropriate pace and take breaks as needed - Stay alert to changing conditions and adjust plans accordingly
Getting lost	Walkers get lost	- Where possible, recce the route a week or so in advance – or carefully plan with good local knowledge, guidebooks and/or maps - Leaders are familiar with the route and contingency plans in case changes are needed - Ensure appropriate navigation skills in the group for the walk and possible conditions - Pre-register phone with 999 emergency text service - Know the hours of dusk and darkness, and plan accordingly - Carry relevant kit – for example a whistle, headtorch and emergency shelter for more remote walks
	Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat or wet	
	There is a communications blackout	
	Walkers run low on food/drink supplies	

Terrain	Walkers trip or fall, resulting in injury	• Leaders complete training on Preventing & Managing Incidents • Check for muddy/slippery/steep sections when planning • Advise walkers of terrain and suitable footwear in advance • Make contingency plans, to draw on if needed in response to the group & conditions • Zigzag up/down any steep sections – highlight benefits of walking poles • Offer reassurance to nervous walkers & take adequate breaks • Adjust plans on the walk if needed
Unsafe/unstable geographic features or obstacles (e.g., water, tides, rock fall, overhangs, and fallen trees)	Walkers trip or fall, resulting in injury	• Follow any local warnings or signs and advise walkers to keep away from sheer drops/edges • Check paths are suitable for a group to use safely and make changes if necessary • Make contingency plans to deal with unexpected features and obstacles • Avoid crossing any significant water features – use bridges or other recognised water crossing points • Check the tide times
	Walkers get into difficulty and drown	

Livestock	Walkers are at risk of injury from livestock	• 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) • Follow the Countryside Code (England & Wales) and Scottish Outdoor Access Code (Scotland) • Leave gates and property as you find them
	Property is damaged	
	The wider public are at risk of injury from escaped livestock	
Roads	Walkers are at risk of road traffic accident	• Maintain single file on any road sections without footpath/pavement • Plan route to avoid busy roads where possible • Check for suitable crossing places
	Other road users are at risk of accident	
Roads (driving)	Road traffic accident puts walkers and other road users at risk of injury	• Remind walkers that the drive to/from the walk is often the riskiest part of the day • Remind drivers to take care, take adequate rests on longer journeys and maintain fluid/blood sugar levels at the end of the day
Losing walkers	Walkers could get left behind/lost	• Leader knows who is on the walk – asking for names and emergency contact details • Regular headcounts and communication with the group • Appoint a backmarker • Communicate with group throughout the walk
Accident or medical emergency	Walkers require first aid or medical attention	• Leader knows who is on the walk – asking for names and emergency contact details • Ask walkers to complete and carry an In Case of Emergency (ICE) card • Leaders complete training on Preventing & Managing Incidents • Know how to contact the emergency services • Ensure mobile phone is fully charged, and consider carrying a power bank • Carry a first aid kit – and extra supplies/layers to keep people comfortable while waiting for help to arrive • Ensure appropriate first aid awareness and skills amongst the group