



Introduction

Many Groups have years of experience of putting together excellent walks programmes which are popular with their members and attractive to new members.

Successful walks programmes tend to concentrate on two areas which are each as important as the other.

- A range and variety of walks
- Clear information about each walk to help people decide if it is for them

Range of walks

The more varied a walk programme, the more likely it is to appeal to a wide section of the membership and the general public. Clearly, each Group is dependent upon the commitment of its walk leaders so is to a great extent dependent upon the walks that they wish to lead. Very often, the diversity of the walk leaders themselves, and their different interests in walking results in a varied walks programme. Nevertheless, it is good for the Group committee to have in mind some view of what a varied programme should look like in their particular context. On many occasions, if the committee as a whole makes a call to walk leaders for more walks of a particular type, existing walk leaders will oblige, or new walk leaders may come forward.

The most obvious way to vary walks is in length. We suggest that the following lengths of walks provide a good range.

- Less than 3 miles (should be very flat surfaced with smooth terrain and easy walks, good for people who are less able, such as, a health walk/programme, vulnerable people or for families) which could include a walk around the local area or park.
- 3-5 miles (Good for “beginners” who find longer distances strenuous. Also good for fitter people who want to get out for a part of a morning or afternoon)
- 6-10 miles (good for people who are comfortable walking reasonable distances)
- More than 10 miles (longer walks for people who are happy with the distance)

Clearly the separation between the ranges is somewhat arbitrary. It is quite possible to have a flat 6 mile walk that is much less strenuous than a 4 mile walk with steep hills. For this reason many Groups grade their walks. We have developed a standard grading system used on the Ramblers Group Walks Finder which is appended below.

However walks are categorised, we encourage Groups to look at their programmes critically. Groups with most of their walks of a particular length or level will only appeal to a limited sector of the membership.

In addition to varying the length or grade of walks, the following can help to provide greater variety:

- A range of times/days. Traditionally many Groups walk regularly on one day at the weekend. Walks on weekdays or shorter walks in summer evenings can prove very popular amongst members.
- Public transport walks. Organising walks that can be done with public transport is a great way

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to encourage those without cars to take part, and to give a feeling of liberation to those who rarely get out of their car. Many walks planned with public transport in mind have the advantage of being able to plan linear rather than circular walks.

- Figure-of-eight walks. Longer walks that are designed as a figure-of-eight give the option to members of walking for part or all of the walk.

Clear information

Listing the following information in a walks programme is an excellent way to help members decide if the walk is for them or not.

- Date and departure time
- Name/description of the starting point. You could also include a full two letter, six figure Ordnance Survey grid reference, and some groups now include a nearby postcode as many people use these for looking up locations on electronic mapping, but they are sometimes misleading. See our information on maps for more details <link>.
- Distance and estimated time, including lunch stop
- Grading, terrain and pace you intend to take the walk
- Is it suitable for people with disabilities, less able or children and buggies
- Lunch. Should food be bought or can it be obtained along the way?
- Public transport details. Allow in your planning for late running services. If travelling by car and your Group has an arrangement to meet at a central point before setting out at the start of walks, allow time for this too, and give details of where to park safely and unobtrusively
- Dogs: state whether they are allowed, and whether they must be kept on a lead
- Your contact details: phone number, and email if you have one

Do you have walk leaders with particular styles/ interests?

A great way to encourage new people to take part on the walks is to let them know something about the walk leaders. Many walk leaders tend to specialise either in walks of a particular length or type. Many also have years of experience walking locally and leading walks. Including this information in the walk programme could encourage members onto walks and help them choose appropriate ones for them. Including a page or two at the beginning of a programme to introduce the leaders to members could be a good way to encourage more involvement from the membership.

Publicising the programme

It's important that non-members can find out about your walks as well as members. Many Groups do both a printed programme to send to members and distributed locally, and also an electronic version on their website and/or sent by email. You should also list your walks on the Group Walks Finder <link> on this website as many new members now find out about Ramblers walks using this system. For more information on how to do this see www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer/groupwalksfinder.