

Beforehand

While we don't want to make numerous rules about what leaders can and can't do it is sensible to agree some basic principles to avoid misunderstandings.

Preparation & Pioneering

- Plan and pioneer your walk in advance
- **Always pioneer your walk with someone else and follow the Health & Safety guidance**
- Seek help at any time!
- Keep to Rights of Way
- Identify any hazards
- Measure the distance
- Assess the grading
- Assess parking facilities. If using a pub car park obtain permission
- Identify suitable places for lunch, breaks etc.

Book the Walk

- Agree with the Walk Secretary a date for your walk.

Walk the Walk

- Introduce yourself to the group. Give an overview of the route describing any serious hazards before setting out
- Appoint a back-marker
- Know how many people are walking with you
- Don't let others dictate the pace it's a walk not a race
- Carry a map of the route. If challenged by a landowner smile and apologise!
- Seek help at any time!
- Remind walkers when nearing hazards especially busy roads, awkward stiles etc.
- Strive for a pace that is comfortable for all
- On hot days increase the number of breaks and take plenty of water
- Enjoy the walk!

Rights of Way

Besides public roads other rights of way in popular use include footpaths & bridleways. Walking across private land without permission is trespassing. Mistakes can occur. If you find that you are where perhaps you shouldn't be, smile, apologise and ask to be shown the right way. However it's better to find out when pioneering beforehand.

Gradings

Walks should be graded according to the degree of difficulty. Unfortunately people have widely different views and this subject provokes more discussion than any other.

The club grades its walks on the ABC method.

A – Rigorous, B – Moderate and C – Easy
Categories can be modified by a '+' or '-' which increases or reduces the grading.

Some examples may help to clarify the individual grading:

- A+ High level walks (Snowdonia)**
- A Remote areas (Staffs. Moorlands)**
- A- Areas of difficult terrain (Stiperstones)**
- B+ Hilly areas (Malvern's, Shropshire Hills)**
- B Less severe hills (Clent, Lickeys)**
- B- May include some short sharp climbs**
- C+ Undulating walks (no steep ascents)**
- C Mostly level walks (gentle rises)**
- C- Flat walks (towpaths; no stiles)**

A further factor to be considered is the level of ability or fitness within the group. Clearly a walk that presents little difficulty to a fit person will pose a much stiffer challenge to an inexperienced or less fit walker.

The prime purpose of grading is to try to convey advance information to enable persons to decide whether the walk is within that individual's capability.

Length of Walks

Leaders are required to ensure that the distance of the walk as shown in the programme is as accurate as possible.

A 10% tolerance should not be exceeded.

Each side of a grid square on an Ordnance Survey map measures 1km; the diagonal across the square is roughly 1.5km. A map measurer can be used for more accurate assessment; alternatively a length of string measured along the route, thence on the scale will provide the distance.

Reducing the Risks

Much ado has been made about Risk Assessments in recent years! Without realising it everyone carries out numerous Risk Assessments every day of our lives. Crossing the road, driving a car, running a bath each involves a risk that we evaluate and act on accordingly. Risk Assessments are plain common sense, nothing more nothing less!

When a hazard is identified the walk leader must first evaluate the risk and then try to reduce the danger.

- For example, if it is necessary to cross a busy road find a safe place to do so and avoid people bunching up at the side of the road
- If faced with a slippery section with no alternative route, warn people of the danger and ensure that members receive help / support as required
- Walk in single file facing oncoming traffic on a road with busy traffic.

Pioneering with a friend is sensible as a second opinion about a hazard may prove invaluable.

Map Reading

Although it is not always necessary to resort to using a map as most routes are way-marked, OS maps contain a wealth of information.

Experienced members will be pleased to provide assistance when out on the trail which is the best place to learn or to test your map reading ability. The Club also arranges occasional map-reading sessions. Before rushing out to buy any map ask for advice about the merits of the different scales and which might be most suited for your particular needs.

Health & Safety

- It is recommended to register your mobile phone to text 999
- It is advised that all members take their own first aid kit on all walks (**Including pioneering**)
- Members should carry their membership card with emergency contact details completed