



Leeds YHA Walking Group

“Leading the way.....”

Walk leader’s planning sheet

Planning the walk

What do I do if I want to lead a walk?

- Tell someone on the committee. The programme is planned in January (summer programme) and July (winter programme). The committee will be looking for leaders at these times specifically, but you can tell them about your ideas any time.

How do I plan a walk?

- Work out how many hours of daylight there will be.
- All our weekend walks are graded in the programme. Grades range from 1 to 5, with 5 being the hardest. By looking at the distance, the type of terrain and the anticipated walking speed, try to decide what grade the walk will be. Please speak to a committee member for further guidance on grading. Alternatively, see our grading system in the current programme.
- Consider alternative routes and/or short cuts, should the weather turn bad on the day.
- Remember that a group walk will take longer than an individual walking alone. You need to allow time for catch-up stops. Generally speaking, the larger the group, the slower the pace will be.
- It is recommended that all walks be no more than one and a half hours’ travel from Leeds. Experience has shown that journeys of over one hour will reduce the take-up rate.
- If you are organising a walk using public transport, check times and reconfirm these a couple of weeks before the walk.

What does the committee need to know about your walk in order to produce the programme?

- A brief, written summary of the walk (by email, if possible) including:
 - Location of the starting point of the walk, with guidance of how to get there
 - Grid reference (unless obvious e.g. railway station)
 - Grade and difficulty of walk and distance
 - Points of interest e.g. towns, hilltops, cafés
 - ... and anything else that you think will encourage members to take part in your walk.

Pre-walk preparation

- If a new member to the group approaches you as walk leader, requiring a lift, please do not give them a list of phone numbers. Instead, try to find out which drivers may have space in their car and try to arrange a lift for the new member. This should encourage new members to join the group.
- Try to promote your walk and update the group about it as the walk date approaches. This will avoid last-minute complications. Prepare and send an email addressed to members of the group to Michael Daly (yorksmdaly@outdoorlife.org.uk). He will forward the email, on your behalf, to all people on the group’s email database.

Pre-walk preparation (continued)

- It is your responsibility, as walk leader, to ensure that the equipment listed below will be carried on the walk:
 - First aid kit*
 - Extra energy food e.g. chocolate
 - At least two compasses and maps of the area, in case the group needs to be split for any reason. Maps need to be protected from bad weather e.g. by lamination or a map case.
 - * Paul Clifton keeps these items. Ensure that you collect these well in advance and return them to him after the walk.
- You do not have to carry everything but you do need to make sure that someone in the group is carrying the above items of equipment. The group shelter is available for wet and windy weather*
- Ensure that everyone who contacts you prior to the walk, especially new and inexperienced members to the group, is aware of the clothing and equipment requirements for your walk, as well as its level of difficulty. Experience has shown that it is better to assess people's abilities and preparation in advance, rather than on the actual day. A 'Guidance for walkers participating in group walks' help sheet can be obtained from the committee, our website and on our Hotmail account. This help sheet is designed to inform new people with the group about our walks, expectations and basic safety. New people to the group will generally have received this help sheet when we first sent them details about the group. Please encourage new people to the group to obtain a copy if they have not already read it.
 - Check the weather forecast and consider revising or shortening the planned route and possibly even cancelling the walk.

What do I need to do on the day?

- Assess prospective walkers' ability, clothing and equipment for the planned walk. e.g. take note of anyone who is not suitably dressed for the day (e.g. no waterproofs; or wearing jeans) and advise the individual of the risks to themselves and the group. Occasions may arise where you need to ask people not to come on the walk for their own and the group's safety. The walk leader reserves the right to refuse ill-equipped walkers. If you are unsure, consult one of the committee members or one of the more experienced members on the day.
- Be aware of how many people are on your walk. Make a headcount at the start of the walk, and at regular intervals along the walk. It is important to make extra headcounts when the group stops for breaks e.g. at lunchtime and at pub or toilet stops.
- If there is a large group, try to appoint a more experienced walker (with a map, if possible) as a back marker. The back marker can be alternated to ensure that they can mix with others during the walk.
- For safety, it is advisable for at least one other person on the walk to be aware of the planned route.
- Keep the group together and stop at suitable intervals to allow people to catch up if they fall behind.
- If the weather is particularly bad and the group is struggling, be prepared to shorten the route or to split the group; but then there should be at least 3 people including a competent map-reader per group.
- The committee would recommend that all walks be started at a faster pace than that required for the walk's grade. This will assist the walk leader in identifying, at an early stage, those who may not be capable of maintaining the required pace for the day's walk. Experience has sadly shown that too often, walkers do turn-up for walks where they are not capable of maintaining the walking pace of the rest of the group, especially for our harder graded walks. Early identification of potential problems will make everyone's day more enjoyable.

It is useful if the walk leader informs a member of the committee of how many people attended the walk. In addition, the walk leader should inform the committee of any problems or concerns that arose on the day. You could also write an article to be published on the group's website or for other promotional occasions, with photos as appropriate.

The above points are intended as an aide-mémoire to assist you in protecting yourself and the group. Weather conditions can change at very short notice and there is a risk of hypothermia, if walkers become cold and wet.