



Maidstone Group

Risk Assessment for walk grades: Easy; Leisurely; Moderate Walks

How to manage and reduce risk

What are the risks and hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we reduce these risks
Weather	Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat, or heavy rain	Leader should be prepared to cancel if extreme weather forecast. Leader reminds walkers to carry wet weather gear, hat, sunscreen, water, as appropriate. The leader is entitled to refuse attendance on a walk if walker is not suitable prepared. Stay alert to changing conditions and adjust plans accordingly.
More people want to take part than the leader anticipated	The leader is not aware if walkers are following guidance due to the size of the group	Leader asks experienced walkers to act as back-markers and also middle-markers as necessary to maintain a reasonable leader/assistant to walker ratio. See Maidstone Walk Leaders Handbook. Leaders and assistant should remind walkers during the walk if they fail to follow safety advice given at the pre-walk briefing. When submitting walks use booking options where numbers need to be managed.
Group separates	Large group splits, some become lost	Leader, backmarker and some members share phone numbers and load the OS Locate app. Leader shares paper copy of route. All walkers briefed to ensure colleagues follow at junctions. Leader pauses at crucial junctions to ensure all follow.

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Leader lacks experience	Leaders inadvertently makes poor decisions.	Leaders make use of Maidstone Walk Leaders Handbook, Ramblers checklist and training. New leaders can be offered a “buddy” experienced leader.
Physical conditions	Walkers slip, trip and/or fall, resulting in injury.	Leader briefs clear information about the nature of the walk and personal responsibility Known hazards advised at start of walk, others called out as walk progresses. Leader briefs on suitable footwear, use of poles after periods of heavy rain Contingencies are planned, and used where required, in response to group ability (fatigue, motivation, ability) and external risk factors (e.g. time, weather).
A member of the group is unwell/injured	No one takes charge of the situation	Leader: - Phone can be pre-registered with 999 emergency text service. - Carry a small first aid kit. - Consider escape routes to highways in advance. - Improve knowledge by viewing Ramblers’ “First aid on group walks” guidance or taking the “Preventing & Managing Incidents” training. - Consider attending a First Aid training course when these are offered Leader acts, or delegates to qualified assistants, to: - Assist the casualty; Offer first-aid, stay with casualty until emergency services arrive - Liaise with emergency services; - Keep other members of the group safe. Members are encouraged to carry an 'In case of emergency card' (ICE).

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Livestock	Walkers are at risk of injury from livestock.	Cross fields with livestock (horses, sheep) calmly and quietly, keeping the group together: With any dogs on a short lead. If cows on the route and a dog is present, find an alternative route. If livestock known to be in fields consider selecting “Dogs Allowed “No” on walk offer form. If cows likely always select “No” Leave gates and property as you find them (Ensure animals do not accidentally pass through a gate).
Road traffic	Walkers are at risk of road traffic accident when crossing or proceeding along the highway.	When crossing major roads, the leader should choose the best possible crossing place (clear line of sight and paths/verges on which to gather either side). Dangerous crossings are best avoided. For proceeding along the highway: Avoid main road sections without footpath/pavement when planning. On any roads without footpath/pavement maintain single file, all stay on the same side and cross for the outside of blind corners. Otherwise, when proceeding along the road the highway code states small groups should walk on the right so they can see oncoming traffic. Larger groups should walk on the left. Leader and backmarker to wear high-visibility clothing.

Railway lines	Walkers are at risk of an accident when crossing.	Leader briefs on “each individual need to decide it is safe to cross” At barrier crossings, place yourself where you can guide others not to cross if the warning sounds before the whole group has crossed. At gated or stile crossings, the leader and back-marker stand where they have the best line of sight in both directions. Each individual should decide it is safe to cross, so just a few at a time, to prevent bunching, thus ensuring walkers can clear the line when they cross.
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