# So you want to lead a walk – a guide for leaders

This guidance has been comprehensively reviewed in the light of Covid-19 and the Government guidance published in July 2020 and updated in December 2020 relating to the broad ‘recreational team sport’ sector. We are indebted to the Ramblers Association, the national body for walking to whom the CRC is affiliated, for getting official recognition of the value of our more gentle physical activity for organized groups. However, in order to provide Club walks for between 6 and 30 people – the maximum allowed – we have to operate in a very different way from the past. The Ramblers website provides a comprehensive guide ‘How to return to group walks in a Covid-secure way’.

# Planning a walk

* Where to walk? In the current climate, where official guidance recommends avoiding public transport and opportunities for car-sharing will be limited to household and ‘social bubble’ members, it is a good idea to keep fairly close to Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.
* Circular walks and ‘figure of eight’ walks are recommended. The latter may be especially good for people who may not have been walking much since March.
* The route can be taken from a book of walks, downloaded from the internet or planned using a map. The OS Explorer (1:25,000) maps and online downloads, which show all rights of way, are ideal. However, also note that there are many permissive paths on the ground which aren’t shown on OS maps. For example, Trumpington Farm Estates and the Countryside Restoration Trust at Lark Rise Farm Barton offer many paths very close to Cambridge. The Coton Nature Reserve, Wandlebury and Gog Magog Trust lands also offer many paths. Most of these provide online maps of walking routes.
* Car parking may be a particular problem whilst car sharing is impossible. However, many village halls may welcome visitors who are willing to make a donation. Some groups like to use pubs and many provide large car parks for customers.
* If you want to have coffee and/or lunch in a pub you must contact the publican in advance and check that they can accommodate the numbers you expect. It is advisable to get hold of a menu and arrange to phone through orders early on in the walk itself – either at the start or at a mid-morning break.
* The length of the walk depends on the group you are leading for – if you have any queries, please contact the relevant Programme Secretary
* It is essential to complete a CRC risk assessment checklist before leading a walk; this is a requirement of the government guidance for group activities. However, this isn’t onerous! You can download the form on-line. It must be retained for 12 months, either as a paper copy or electronically.
* The risk assessment suggests that it may be advisable to avoid very busy paths and congested areas – these may vary depending on the day and time. Food for thought!
* A ramble may be planned and walked out months in advance, but we recommend checking it again closer to the scheduled walk. It is surprising what a strong wind or a week of rain can do! Think about alternative routes you could take to avoid stiles or narrow footpaths and escape routes if you need to cut the walk short.
* When checking out your walk look for suitable morning and afternoon drink stops – especially those which can offer some undergrowth or woodland for loo stops! This also applies to lunch stops if you are not eating at a pub. Ideally arrange the lunch stop more than halfway through the walk to allow for afternoon fatigue! Be aware that sub-groups should be physically-distanced at all refreshment stops.
* Consider how many people you are willing to lead; you can set a limit and ask your Programme Secretary to publicise this. In view of physical-distancing, which requires walkers to be split into sub-groups of no more than six, you may want assistance from a co-leader, middle-marker and/or back marker – think about who you might ask to help.
* It is useful to provide any co-leaders or ‘markers’ in sub-groups with a marked-up map of your route. Although it is possible to keep sub-groups within sight of each other, there may be awkward junctions to negotiate! It may also be useful to sound out people coming on your walk to ask them to take on a ‘marker’ role.
* People will need to book a place on your walk ahead, either by texting you, phoning or via email. Under no circumstances can you lead more than 30 people. If you have set a limit you must tell people if they have a place or not.
* As the leader you will be responsible for collecting and holding the contact details of everyone coming on your walk for 21 days. This is a requirement for Covid-19 ‘test and trace’. Think about how you will do this. We recommend asking all walk participants to text you their name/phone number in advance or on the day of the walk. You should delete the information after 21 days.
* Finally, experienced leaders are generally very willing to assist new leaders in planning their first walk. Programme Secretaries can help with contacts.

# On the day – at the start of the walk

* You must keep a record of everyone on your walk; as stated above, the most convenient way is to save a text on your mobile phone from everyone present if that is possible. But you may have to take a few names and other contact details down on paper - so bring a pen and note pad along. You must retain these details for 21 days in case they are required by NHS ‘Test and Trace’.
* You should have a map and/or GPS trace covering the entire route, together with any notes you have made. A compass can be useful.
* A torch, whistle and mobile phone are helpful
* You should carry a face covering and hand sanitizer
* At the start of the walk, first check that everyone expected has arrived. Please note that on no account can more than 30 people currently walk together. Any extras must go home!
* Food orders at a pub may best be made by telling people the options and writing down the choices. Bring a pen and paper! On figure of 8 walks starting from a pub car park it may be possible to arrange for orders to be made directly with the pub. At present, eating in a pub is not realistically an option, but we are hopeful for later in 2021!
* If you phone lunch orders through to a pub, please give an expected time of arrival
* Gather people together, checking that everyone expected has arrived and give brief details of the walk, including any information about any pub and where people with their own packed lunches can eat. It is helpful to indicate a likely finish time.
* Give an overview of the walk, identifying interesting views or places of interest. Ask walkers to look out for those behind them, especially at path junctions. Whilst we are required to walk in small groups this is particularly important. Warn people about any potential hazards, such as busy roads which need to be crossed or walked along.
* Do a head count; if there are 6+ you must break the group down into sub-groups, with a maximum of 6 people in each. It may also be a good idea to someone in each sub-group to open/close gates for everyone, to minimize the need to touch.
* Remind everyone about Covid-19 risk mitigation: social-distancing of 2 metres at all times; no crowding around gates and stiles; use of hand sanitizer after touching gates etc; taking care when passing people en-route; no sharing of refreshments or walking equipment beyond households. Sub-groups should keep well apart and people should not mix between groups on the walk.

# During the walk

* At any refreshment stops, give people some idea of when you will resume walking. A 2 or 3 minute warning is usually appreciated!
* If stopping at a pub for lunch, please make sue that everyone knows what has been arranged with the publican and what time you wish to resume walking. It is a nice gesture to than the pub staff on behalf of the group. Please make sure that no-one consumes their own food on pub premises unless the landlord has given permission; in no circumstances should Club members consume their own drinks on pub premises.
* Allow a few minutes to look round churches etc; by all means point out interesting details but do avoid a long lecture!
* It is the walk leader’s responsibility to *record accidents and incidents*. The Club maintains a register, which is held by the Club’s President. Any accident or incident must be reported to the Club’s President by the walk leader - if in doubt, please consult the President:
  + Accidents are those that require medical treatment at the time by the emergency services, local doctor, first aider or Club member or result in professional medical treatment at a future date. Accidents such as minor cuts, stings and bruises do not need to be reported.
  + Incidents are a non-medical event such as escaping livestock, damage to a fence or stile, accidental trespass (which has been noticed), dispute with a publican or another member of the public involving Club members etc.
* At the end – please check everyone has arrived! We have lost folk occasionally….

# After the walk

* Please keep a record of who was on the walk for 21 days; the list should then be destroyed
* If you are contacted by NHS ‘test & trace’ please provide the contact details of everyone on the walk
* Please retain a copy of the risk assessment completed for the walk for 12 months – either electronically or as a paper copy.