



## WALK LEADER

# Toolkit



Irish Sports HQ,  
Sport Ireland National Sports Campus,  
Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

+353 (01) 625 1109  
[info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie)  
[getirelandwalking.ie](http://getirelandwalking.ie)

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# INTRODUCTION

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**The toolkit has been developed in conjunction with a research team in South East Technological University, and has taken into account the feedback and expertise from a range of Get Ireland Walking's programme facilitators.**

This toolkit aims to provide consistent and clear guidance on various issues and difficulties that Group Coordinators & Volunteer Walk Leaders may face during their time delivering one of Get Ireland Walking's community-based programmes. This toolkit is aimed at Group Coordinators & Volunteer Walk Leaders, Local Sports Partnerships and facilitators of Get Ireland Walking groups and programmes.

Research has been carried out on the effectiveness of Get Ireland Walking's Active Community Walking Programme (ACWP) and results have suggested that Group Coordinators & Volunteer Walk

Leaders as well as facilitators often needed extra support on the ground in the delivery of the programme. Multiple issues were outlined by you, the facilitators and leaders of Get Ireland Walking's programmes, that were found to cause problems during programme implementation.

This toolkit does not aim to be a one-stop-shop for all the problems and difficulties that may arise during the implementation of the programmes. However, it does aim to provide practical guidance and tips and act as a handy tool to refer back to whenever it is needed.

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# ABOUT GET IRELAND WALKING

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**Get Ireland Walking, is a national initiative aimed at maximising population level walking through public awareness, partnerships and community walking groups.**

Get Ireland Walking aims to unify and enable the efforts of all recreational, sporting and health promotion agencies and associations interested in promoting walking. Furthermore, Get Ireland Walking aims to identify and support all existing walking groups and assist the development of new ones.

Get Ireland Walking's programmes cover a wide range of community-based settings, such as schools, local communities and wooded areas. Get Ireland Walking aims to cater to a wide variety of the population, including young people, older adults and hard to reach population groups.

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# SAMPLE WALKING PROGRAMMES

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**Over the course of a programme you may see various changes in participants.**

These changes may come in the physical form - cardiovascular fitness, weight loss or muscle gain, or in the psychological form - improved mental well-being and increased motivation. Participants may wish to continue walking on their own as their motivation and self-efficacy for walking increases. The following pages

present some quick and simple walking programmes which you could provide to a participant who wishes to continue walking outside of the group. There are two programmes: one for a current walker and one for somebody who wishes to make walking a more regular part of their life.

## WALKING PLAN A

SOMEBODY WHO WISHES  
TO **MAKE WALKING A  
MORE REGULAR PART  
OF THEIR LIFE.**

## WALKING PLAN B

SOMEBODY WHO  
CURRENTLY INCLUDES  
WALKING AS A **REGULAR  
PART OF THEIR LIFE.**



# SAMPLE WALKING PROGRAMMES

## WALKING PLAN A:

This Walking Plan helps you to build walking into your daily life. This Walking Plan would also suit a walker who is starting into physical activity after a period of relative inactivity.

Top tip!

IF THIS PLAN PROGRESSES TOO FAST FOR YOU DON'T WORRY, YOU CAN FOLLOW THE PLAN FOR THE SAME WEEK A NUMBER OF TIMES UNTIL YOU FEEL READY TO PROGRESS. REMEMBER EVERY STEP YOU TAKE IS A STEP TOWARDS A HEALTHIER YOU.

WEEK	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12
<b>MON - FRI</b>	<p>Aim to walk a little more than usual as part of your usual daily routine.</p> <p>Try walk to the local shop instead of driving and take the stairs instead of a lift.</p>	<p><b>10-15 mins</b> Aim to do at least one walk of 10 minutes, three days a week. Time yourself and try not to stop for 10 minutes.</p>	<p><b>2 x 10-15 mins</b> Add another walk of 10-15 minutes, two or three days a week. Perhaps do one in the morning and one in the evening.</p>	<p><b>2 x 15 mins</b> Try to walk for 15 minutes twice a day every day this week.</p> <p>You could do one on your lunch break and one in the evening.</p>	<p><b>2 x 15 mins</b> You are still aiming for two 15 minute walks every day. Try walk briskly on at least one of them.</p>	<p><b>30 mins</b> Aim for a 30 minute walk each day. Do your best to include brisk walking into this 30 minutes.</p>
<b>SAT/ SUN</b>	<p>Go for a walk to visit a friend or use a nearby park for a walk.</p>	<p><b>20-25 mins</b> Try a slightly longer walk in pleasant streets, a park or in nature.</p>	<p><b>25-30 mins</b> Do at least one walk of 25 to 30 minutes in nice surroundings. Do your best to include brisk walking.</p>	<p><b>30 mins</b> Try walk briskly for 30 minutes on your weekend walk.</p>	<p><b>30-45 mins</b> Try a longer walk of up to 45 minutes, one day a week.</p> <p>Look for a pleasant area to do this walk, relax and enjoy.</p>	<p><b>45-60 mins</b> Now you are a fit and healthy walker, enjoy your new found freedom by walking further from home.</p>

# SAMPLE WALKING PROGRAMMES

## WALKING PLAN B:

This Walking Plan is for those who are already walkers or who already achieve moderate amounts of physical activity. This plan is designed to help you use walking as your primary form of exercise and to get fit. This plan is also suited to those who wish to lose and maintain weight loss.

Top tip!

FIND  
A FRIEND TO  
DO THIS WALKING  
PLAN WITH  
YOU!

WEEK	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12
<b>MON - FRI</b>	<b>30 mins</b> Walk for 30 minutes each day of the week.	<b>35 mins</b> Walk for 10 minutes at a moderate pace to warm up. Add 5 minutes of brisk walking, followed by 10 minutes of steady paced walking. Complete this 5 minute brisk walking followed by 5 minutes moderate pace again.	<b>40 mins</b> Walk for 10 minutes at a moderate pace to warm up. Add 10 minutes of a brisk pace, followed by 5 minutes of a steady pace. Complete this 10 minutes brisk pace and 5 minutes steady walking again.	<b>37 mins</b> Walk for 10 minutes at a moderate pace to warm up. Add 10 minutes of a brisk pace, followed by 2 minutes of a steady pace. Complete this 10 minutes brisk pace again and finish with 5 minutes walking steady again.	<b>37 mins</b> Walk for 10 minutes at a moderate pace to warm up. Add 10 minutes of a brisk pace, followed by 2 minutes of a steady pace. Complete this 10 minutes brisk pace again and finish with 5 minutes walking steady again.	<b>47 mins</b> Walk for 10 minutes at a moderate pace to warm up. Add 15 minutes of a brisk pace, followed by 2 minutes of a steady pace. Complete this 15 minutes brisk pace again and finish with 5 minutes walking steady again.
<b>SAT/ SUN</b>	<b>60 mins</b> Try a longer walk of up to 60 minutes on one day of the week. Try walk in pleasant surroundings so you can relax and enjoy the walk.	<b>60 mins</b> Try get in a 60 minute walk on one day of the week. Walk in a nice location and let it be your reward.	<b>60 mins</b> Ask a friend or family member to join you for a 60 minute walk. Walking and talking makes the time fly by.	<b>60 mins</b> Do your best to get into nature for your 60 minute walk, one day a week. Take time to observe the beauty and relax.	<b>60 mins</b> Try find new walking locations for your 60 minute walk. A change of scenery can be as good as a break.	Have you heard of parkrun? Find a friend to join you at parkrun.



## WHY WALKING?

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The recommended guidelines for physical activity in Ireland state that adults should take part in moderate physical activity for 150 minutes per week and children should aim for 60 minutes each day. However, a report conducted by Sport Ireland highlights that 13% of the Irish population are classed as ‘sedentary’ and do not meet the recommended guidelines for physical activity.

Recreational walking is a popular form of physical activity among Irish people with over 2.5 million people walking in their spare time each week. Walking has been described as “the closest activity to perfect exercise” and people who regularly walk can benefit from many physical and mental health benefits.

Walking is cheap, accessible, low impact and requires little skill, which makes it an attractive option for people who are sedentary and wish to increase their physical activity levels. Walking regularly may act as a gateway for some people to more strenuous forms of physical activity such as hillwalking and hiking.

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SUCH AS HIKING.**

# WHY WALKING? (CONT'D)

Here are some of the benefits that can be seen from walking regularly:

- |   |  |    |                                   |
|---|--|----|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Increases attention levels and improves your ability to make decisions | 7  | Improves overall fitness          |
| 2 | Limits chronic diseases  | 8  | Leg muscles become stronger       |
| 3 | Limits risk of developing colon cancer by 40%                          | 9  | Helps control weight gain         |
| 4 | Lowers your risk of developing heart disease                           | 10 | Improves blood pressure           |
| 5 | Cuts risk of Alzheimer's by 50%  | 11 | Helps control depressive symptoms |
| 6 | Helps control lower back pain  | 12 | Activates upper body muscles      |

**2.5 million weekly recreational walkers** are reaping the many health benefits of walking regularly.

These are some of the health benefits that come with walking regularly. Below is a list of reasons why we, Get Ireland Walking, promote walking:







# WALKING AND OUR MENTAL HEALTH

REGULAR  
WALKING ALSO  
HAS A HUGE PART TO  
PLAY IN IMPROVING  
OUR MENTAL HEALTH,  
TOO!

A recent review of the literature around walking and mental health has suggested that **there is substantial evidence for walking and its effect on depression and anxiety treatment and prevention.**

## BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- > REDUCED STRESS
- > IMPROVED WELLBEING
- > IMPROVED MOOD
- > IMPROVED ATTENTION
- > IMPROVED POSITIVE EMOTIONS
- > REDUCED NEGATIVE EMOTIONS
- > INCREASED SELF-ESTEEM



# WHAT MAKES A GOOD WALK LEADER?

Have a look at some some compliments about our Group Coordinators & Volunteer Walk Leaders to date:

**“ LOVE THE GROUP AND FACILITATOR, ONLY FOR IT I WOULDN'T WALK AT ALL.”**

Rita

**“ INFECTIOUS PERSONALITY, FRIENDLY AND FULL OF THE JOYS OF LIFE.”**

Derek

**“ CAN'T PRAISE THE LEADER ENOUGH, THEY GOT ME FROM BEING TOTALLY UNFIT TO WALKING.”**

Nicole

**Take a look at the list below** which describes some of the characteristics we think make up good Group Coordinators / Volunteer Walk Leaders:



## Characteristics of a great Group Coordinators & Volunteer Walk Leaders

- > Welcoming, friendly and sociable
- > Informative
- > Enthusiastic
- > A champion for walking
- > Good communicator
- > Knowledgeable – knows the route and potential hazards
- > Accommodating for everyone's needs

# WHAT MAKES A GOOD WALK LEADER? (CONT'D)

**As a Group Coordinator / Volunteer Walk Leader you can be the driving force to make walking more commonplace in your community. Be prepared to tell people within your community how beneficial walking is to their personal health and the health of their community.**

Most villages and towns in Ireland are never too far away from a mountainous or wooded area – so why not find out more information on walkable areas nearby? Contact your Local Sports Partnership, Sport Ireland Outdoors or the Irish Heart Foundation for Slí na Sláinte routes to find out more information about trails and potential walks for your group nearby!

Another way you can act as the driving force for walking in your local area is by starting a discussion with local policymakers around any infrastructural changes that may need to be made. Walking routes, whether they are in urban areas, parks, or forests will have some aspects which may need to be changed to make them more walker-friendly. These can be something as simple as providing benches along

a route or something more substantial like adding streetlights or curbs. Nonetheless, you could have a part to play in “getting the ball rolling” in changing aspects of the physical environment in your community to make it more walkable.

People will walk if the environment promotes it. Providing sufficient walking infrastructure makes an area more walkable and in turn will entice more people to walk for recreation or for transport. If the infrastructure in your local area is not conducive to walking, liaising and working with your Local Authority can help with making your local community more walkable. Check out our Risk Assessment section for some examples of what you could look out for to help make your local area a better place for walkers.

**CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIP, SPORT IRELAND OUTDOORS, MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND OR THE IRISH HEART FOUNDATION FOR SLÍ NA SLÁINTE ROUTES & TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TRAILS AND POTENTIAL WALKS FOR YOUR GROUP NEARBY!**



# ADVOCATING FOR INFRASTRUCTURAL CHANGE

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The following is a sample of a Walkability Audit which can be used to help guide the assessment of the walkability of your local area.

Conducting a Walkability Audit such as this one, can help act as the first step in advocating for any needed infrastructural changes in your local area. It is important when lobbying with your Local Authority that your plans align to any local strategic development plans/policies which may be currently in place already – your Local Community

Development Committee (LCDC's) can help you gain an understanding of this. If you and a team of walkers successfully work with your Local Authority to help make your community a more walkable place make sure it is celebrated! Include it in your local paper, newsletter or on local radio!

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If you and a team of walkers successfully work with your Local Authority to **help make your community a more walkable place, make sure it is celebrated!**

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# WALKABILITY AUDIT

IN EACH SECTION, CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

## HOW DOES YOUR COMMUNITY STACK UP?

ADD UP YOUR RATINGS TO FIND OUT - 1 IS POOR AND 6 IS AMAZING:

5-10 It's a disaster for walking.

11-15 It needs lots of work.

16-20 Okay but it needs work.

### 1. SPACE: Is there enough room to safely walk?

- Yes
- No, there are problems
- There are no footpaths, paths or paved hard shoulders
- Connectivity: hard shoulders and paths start & stop
- Maintenance: hard shoulders are broken or cracked
- Maintenance: hard shoulders are covered with puddles or other obstacles
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ Location of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

RATING: (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6

### 2. TRAFFIC: Was it safe to walk along the side of the road?

- Yes
- No, there are problems
- Traffic volume: there is too much traffic
- Speed: vehicles drive too fast / speed limit is too high for safely walking along the road
- Driver behaviour: drivers don't respect the rules of the road, don't respect walkers
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ Location of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

RATING: (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6

### 3. CROSSING: Was it safe/easy to cross the street or road?

- Yes
- No, there are problems
- Road is too wide to cross
- There are no pedestrian crossings or traffic signals for crossing
- Pedestrian crossings: need some striped crosswalks or traffic signals (overhead lights)
- Visibility: we cannot see or be seen by cars (blind turns, parked cars block view of traffic, etc.)
- Visibility: we cannot see or be seen by cars (trees or shrubbery block our view of traffic)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ Location of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

RATING: (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6

### 4. ACCESSIBILITY: Is it possible for people of all ages and abilities to walk?

- Yes
- No, there are problems
- Children in strollers
- People who need to rest along the walk (need benches along the path)
- People with mobility issues (walkers, canes, wheelchairs, etc.)
- People with visual or hearing impairments
- Connecting with public transit
- Park and walk option
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ Location of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

RATING: (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6

### 5. OTHER FEATURES: Was the walk pleasant and attractive to you?

- Yes
- No, there are problems
- No trees or shrubbery to enhance the experience
- Lighting
- Debris, litter, rubbish, road kill
- Fumes
- Lack of shaded rest area
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ Location of problems: \_\_\_\_\_

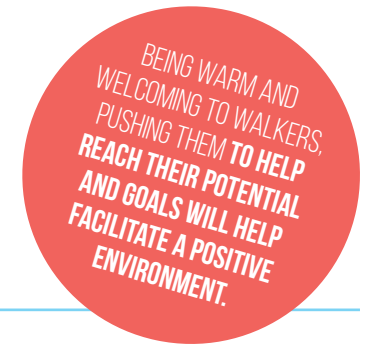
RATING: (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6

# RETENTION AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

There are examples of retention strategies which can be employed to help minimise dropout and keep participants motivated. Constantly changing things up is important to keep participants on their toes and stepping in the right direction! We have provided

some useful retention strategies which have been adapted from the literature and learnings from current facilitators to be useful in keeping participants involved in community health programmes:

Strategy type	How does it work?	What do you need?
Walker Recognition Scheme	It is important to recognise the commitment and hard work of regular group walkers. Using certificates, merchandise and other incentives after a number of completed walks (e.g. 10 walks) or if a person has progressed particularly well over the course of the programme!	Get Ireland Walking Walker Certificates Get Ireland Walking Hat/Notebook/Pens
Photo competitions	A way of keeping people interested is to host a photo competition over the course of the programme, with a prize being awarded by Get Ireland Walking at the end of the 12 weeks. Photos can be shared on Twitter ( <a href="https://twitter.com/GetIreWalking">@GetIreWalking</a> ) or through email to: <a href="mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie">info@getirelandwalking.ie</a> .	Smart phone/camera
Signposting	Providing walkers the knowledge about regular events such as parkrun, meets for your local hillwalking club, Couch to 5k's and other events in your community can help participants continue walking once a programme ends!	Knowledge of walking events in local area – your LSP can help with identifying some of these



Strategy type	How does it work?	What do you need?
Empowering participants	Encouraging participants to take ownership of the direction the programme takes is a great way of retaining participants in a programme.  Something as simple as giving participants the opportunity to choose walking routes is a way of giving participants autonomy.	Facility to host meeting.
Why not car pool to a meeting point	Participants with limited transport to and from the location of the walk may be less likely to stay involved as the weeks go by. A simple way of organising transportation for people who live within close vicinity of each other is to set up a WhatsApp group or discuss it on the first night.	Vehicle/ Smart phone

Above are practical examples of things you can do to enhance group motivation and adherence. However, an important aspect to bear in mind when helping people to stay involved in a walking programme is the attitude of the Group Coordinators/Volunteer Walk Leaders

and the atmosphere they help create. Being warm and welcoming to walkers, pushing them to help reach their potentials and goals will help facilitate a positive environment, and in turn, make people more likely to stay walking in the long run!

Constantly changing things up is important to keep participants on their toes and stepping in the right direction!

# SELECTING WALKING ROUTES

**An important role of the facilitator is to select suitable routes to walk on over the course of the programme. The key to selecting a good and suitable walking route is to make an effort to include walkers with a range of ability levels.**

People will want different things from a route: nice views, challenging terrain, lighting. Liaise with walkers and see what they want. But checking with group members is important - they may

have suggestions or may like to help in finding suitable walking routes. A handy acronym to keep in mind when planning and selecting a local walking route is WALT.



## Who will walk the route?

Is it for families? Teenagers? Older adults? Inclusive for people with mobility issues?



## Amenities along the route?

Are there public transport areas near the start/finish? Parking? Toilets? Refreshments? Seating?



## Location of the route?

Make sure it's local - starting at a community hub (sports ground, church) or at a local transport link

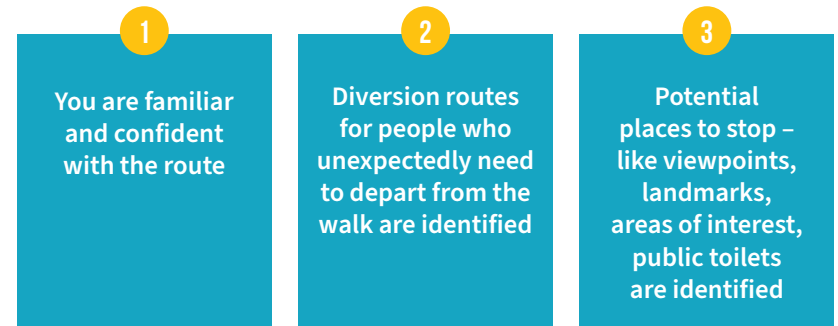


## Terrain and distance?

Important to consider time it will take to complete route (30-90 minutes) distance (2-5km) and the type of terrain (forest/woodlands/canals/footpaths/dirt tracks).

These are logistical aspects of the route which must be taken into consideration before choosing and selecting a route. All routes, however, must be inspected

prior to programme delivery to ensure there is no risks or hazards to walkers. Performing this walk before will ensure:



Performing a recce for a walk is important, even if you have experience walking the route before – new hazards may be on the route or things may have changed.

Another key role of Group Coordinators & Volunteer Walk Leaders before the start of a programme is to carry out a Risk Assessment of the route. Risk Assessments can be carried out on the recce, so you can tie two things in at once!

...checking with group members is important - they may have suggestions or may like to help in finding suitable walking routes.

# CONDUCTING A RISK ASSESSMENT

Walking is quite a low risk activity and incidents that happen on led walks are quite rare. However, as a Group Coordinator / Volunteer Walk Leader, you have a responsibility in ensuring that risks which do exist are minimised and managed.

A Risk Assessment is a handy way of clearing up potential risks on a walking route that you should be aware of before leading a group out on a walk. A Risk Assessment is easy to carry out – all you have to do is walk the route prior

to the group starting it and identify particular hazards, who might be most affected by them and think about how they can be lessened. Check out this sample Risk Assessment:

Where? (Location)	What? (Risk)	Who?	Action
John St	Traffic	Everybody – children in particular	Give group prior warning about where traffic might be and what times; use pedestrian crossings; wait for Green Man!
Steps at Meetinghouse Ln	Steep and slippery (when wet) steps	Everybody – slower individuals	Manage group down the steps; use judgement if heavy rain before/during walk and redirect route
Waterside	Water	Everybody – especially children	Warn parents; walk 2/3 foot away from waters edge; allow extra space when cyclists passing
Slievekeale Rd	Branches	Everybody	Allow a couple of feet between walkers; watch out for branches that spring back; be aware of branches on the ground which may be a tripping hazard

A Risk Assessment doesn't have to be done too often – maybe once every year or two. A handy way to record hazards while conducting a risk assessment is to use the voice recorder app on your smartphone!

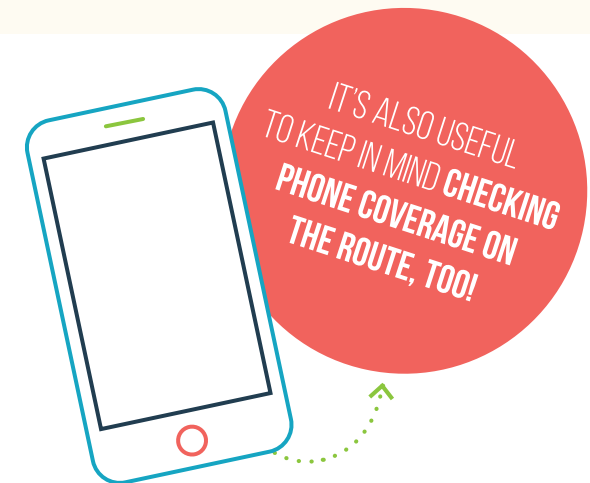
Alternatively, you could take some photos to refer back to later. It is a lot easier than trying to stop and write down hazards as you see them.

Not sure what you are looking for when conducting a Risk Assessment?

Here are some of the things that can be a hazard to walkers and impede your walk from going smoothly:



- > Cyclists on shared use paths
- > Livestock
- > Traffic at road crossings
- > Slip and trip hazards
- > Uneven paths and steps
- > Cracks in the footpath
- > Overhanging branches







## SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT THE PROGRAMME OR GROUP

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**Getting participants to the programme is as important as keeping them involved.**

Methods from face-to-face encounters, word of mouth and referrals have all been found to be effective when increasing reach of community health programmes. Printed materials such as leaflets, flyers and posters are all great for getting the word out about a programme within a local community or workplace.

However, we must be careful in the language we use in printed materials, because many of the people looking at these posters may be new to group walking. Your poster is their first impression of your programme and may be the reason people choose to attend or not. The Get Ireland Walking editable poster is on our website: [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie)

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**Printed materials such as leaflets, flyers and posters are all great** for getting the word out about a programme within a local community or workplace.

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# SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

With this in mind – think about T-W-I-N-D-I (Times, Welcome, Information, Name, Description and Images) when adding information to a poster or flyer to spread the word about the programme in your area:

**T**... **TIME:** the time a walk starts and is expected to finish are essential.

**W**... **WELCOME:** people who are new to walking or are a bit apprehensive about joining the programme will need that extra push through a welcoming message and inclusivity!

**I**... **INFO:** information about the pace of the walk as well as the terrain it takes place in will help potential participants paint a picture of the programme/walk. Information about refreshments and facilities on the walk can also be provided here.

**N**... **NAME:** “Thursday loop walk” and titles of the like should be avoided. Make the title informative and include place names where possible. A potential eye-catching name might be something like: “Enchanting walk through Portlaw woods”

**D**... **DESCRIPTION:** there is no need to describe every aspect of the walk in detail. Give people an idea of the special parts of the walk. Giving an insight into the interesting aspects of the walk may entice people who are not sure about attending to come along to one of your walks!

**I**... **IMAGES:** photos catch people’s eye immediately. Try including photos of the actual route which will be walked on the day (you could take some photos when performing the recce!)

...GIVING AN INSIGHT INTO THE INTERESTING ASPECTS OF THE WALK MAY ENTICE PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT SURE ABOUT ATTENDING TO COME ALONG TO ONE OF YOUR WALKS!

As part of a poster, it can be useful to provide participants with a map of the route.

This can be done using Google Maps or other online resources. ViewRanger and AllTrails are fantastic ways of tracking and sharing walking routes. These free apps are available online or on smartphone and can record your walk using GPS. Below is an example of an

urban route map, tracked using AllTrails. This can be used as part of a poster or shared to participants before the walk as it provides distance, elevation gain and can be easily followed!



Map - All Trails App.

# HOW TO MOTIVATE GROUPS / DIFFICULT GROUP DYNAMICS

Two out of three people who take part in the Active Community Walking Programme do not take part in any other physical activity and you will see that people who join your programme may have a range of abilities and fitness levels. It's important to know some different types of walkers that may join your group, and have different options for them:

## PEOPLE NEW TO WALKING

People with low PA levels are people we hope to join the programme. Offer people from this category short walks (15-20 minutes) at a slow pace. You can modify the pace/distance over time as fitness levels increase.

## WALKERS WHO WISH TO WALK MORE REGULARLY

You may be able to signpost these people to other organisations who host walks for people with higher fitness levels. Alternatively, you could signpost them to Mountaineering Ireland, [mountaineering.ie](http://mountaineering.ie) who could put them in touch with their local hillwalking club who can provide a whole new challenge for them.

## REGULAR WALKERS

If the walker is keen to be a part of the group, welcome them and encourage them to stay at the pace of the Group Coordinator / Volunteer Walk Leader or the person at the front of the group. These are the people who should be encouraged to become a Walk Leader.

WALKERS MAY BE  
MOTIVATED BY MEETING  
NEW PEOPLE, WALKING  
LONGER DISTANCES EACH  
WEEK OR JUST BY  
FINISHING A WALK.

Providing walkers continuous advice and encouragement when they are progressing can be crucial. Many Group Coordinators & Volunteer Walk Leaders as well as facilitators learn the skills of motivating others through experience. We know that people who join the Active Community Walking Programme, for example, do so for a number of different reasons and walkers

can be motivated by a number of different things too! Walkers may be motivated by meeting new people, walking longer distances each week or just by finishing a walk. Walkers can be made feel more comfortable by having the route set for them and guided by trained, confident Group Coordinators / Volunteer Walk Leaders

## SOME GUIDELINES TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN MOTIVATING WALKERS WHO NEED IT:

### DO

Give walkers the choice – choose routes that vary in distance that accommodate to different levels of fitness (i.e. figure 8 loops)

Keep in mind that walkers can set their own personal goals

Tell walkers the benefits of walking at any pace & build up the pace slowly

Tell walkers about their individual strengths!

### DON'T

Walk at a pace that isn't suitable for the group. Be mindful of the pace of the group & walk with them.

Give all your time to one walker. It is important to support all of the walkers.

Get bogged down with leading 'weekly one-hour walks'. People new to walking may start at a lower level than the faster walkers of the group & will need more support.

Compare one walker to another by pace, fitness levels or strengths/weaknesses.

# HOW TO MOTIVATE GROUPS / DIFFICULT GROUP DYNAMICS (CONT'D)

Here are a few practical tips to consider when trying to keep a group motivated and vibrant:

**1** **FIGURE 8 WALKS:** Figure 8 looped walks are a great way of accommodating for a group with mixed abilities. Fitter and more able walkers could do the full loop while walkers who are less able walk the lower loop! If planned properly, all walkers could finish at the same time and everyone can experience the sense of achievement together!

**2** **MIX IT UP:** You can also look to change the walks you do on a weekly or monthly basis. Each looped walk can be walked in either direction to add some variety. As long as you can keep the distances similar and the start point the same, you can keep yourself and group members entertained and enthusiastic.

**3** **TURN UP THE PACE:** Another method of progressing with a walk is to increase the walking speed periodically throughout the walk. Once you feel able, you could decide that the third and fourth kilometre of a 5km walk could be performed at a quicker pace. This would allow the first 2km as a warm-up at normal pace and the last kilometre to return to the normal pace. This could be increased every couple of weeks.

**4** **ORGANISE TRAINING & SHARE INFORMATION:** The group, through networking with Get Ireland Walking and our partner organisations, could access and share information on walking, physical activity, and healthy living. Training courses could be organised for the group through the Local Sports Partnership. The group could also invite speakers on related topics such as historians, environmentalists, healthy eating, etc., to meet the group.

**5** **WALKING EVENTS & TRIPS:** To further extend the reach of your group, you could look at the possibility of hosting a walking event in your local area. This could be a fantastic way to generate support from the local community and to get local businesses on board. you can advertise the event by sharing on social media and tagging: [GetIrelandWalking.ie](http://GetIrelandWalking.ie). An annual walking trip (it could be a day or weekend) for the group can be a great group- building experience for everyone involved.

**6** **BE PROGRESSIVE:** As a walking group organiser, you will always be keeping an eye out for people who are starting to lose enthusiasm. If people do decide to leave your group, it may be for positive or progressive reasons. They may want to start walking a longer distance or feel that they are able for a quicker pace. You can help accommodate these people by creating a second walk, perhaps one for strollers and one for pacers. A handy tip is to stagger the start times so that both groups finish up at approximately the same time. This will help contribute to the local community atmosphere and make people feel part of a larger walking group.

IF PLANNED PROPERLY,  
ALL WALKERS COULD FINISH  
AT THE SAME TIME AND  
EVERYONE CAN EXPERIENCE  
THE SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT  
TOGETHER!

# HOW TO MOTIVATE GROUPS / DIFFICULT GROUP DYNAMICS (CONT'D)

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## Dealing with Excuses:

If someone is finding it difficult to get active through walking the following tips will help them to overcome some of the excuses which they may place in their own paths.

### **“ I just don’t have the time in a day to walk”**

It’s only takes 30 minutes of your time to do a walk that will help to maintain your health. Just go out the door and walk, there is no extra time needed to travel to a venue or to prepare.

Try to fit walking into your daily routine or use it as an opportunity to meet a friend and catch up. Let family and friends know about your plans and ask them to support you to stick with the routine.

### **“ After a busy day, I’m just too tired to walk”**

Try fitting in a walk when you feel most energetic, this could be early in the day. Walking will actually give you more energy. Try it out and notice the difference in your energy levels for the day.

### **“ I have an illness and really don’t feel like walking”**

Talk to your doctor about getting active at your next visit. You could also check out the health promotion organisations for advice on your illness and walking.

### **“ I’m really unfit and I never walk”**

Walking is one of the easiest ways to get active. You can set your own pace and length of walk. Over time you can gradually increase this.

### **“ I’m overweight and wouldn’t feel comfortable walking”**

Combining walking and healthy eating is a really good way to lose weight. Walking is a very safe way to start to get active and people of all ages, shapes and fitness levels are embracing walking as a way to get active and shed the weight.

### **“ My family and friends are not interested in walking”**

Chat with them about walking, its benefits and why you want to try it out. Invite them to join you, they might find they enjoy it too. Ask them to support your efforts to get active through walking.

Find a local walking group

Check out:

[getirelandwalking.ie/findgroup](https://getirelandwalking.ie/findgroup) and join like-minded people for a walk.



### **“ I really just can’t get motivated to get moving”**

Try planning ahead arrange to meet a friend for a walk. That way you will be more likely to go rather than change your mind at the last minute.

Commit to the 21 Day Walking Challenge which is available on our Get Ireland Walking app (download on the App Store and Google Play). or any other walking challenge.

Join a walking group, where you can support each other to get walking and keep walking.

### **“ I have too many family obligations to go walking”**

Trade babysitting time with friends and neighbours.

Walk with the family. Play games like I-spy, treasure hunt, etc. while walking and everyone will enjoy the outing and get the exercise.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - INSURANCE:

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**The Get Ireland Walking Initiative has put in place an insurance scheme for registered volunteer walk leaders and walking group co-ordinators. The scheme aims to provide an appropriate level of protection and peace of mind for people leading or organising group walks.**

▶ **Who provides the Insurance Scheme?**

The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme is provided by Aviva Insurance Ireland DAV through Arachas Corporate Brokers Limited t/a Arachas.

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▶ **Who is covered under the Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme?**

Once a walking group's request to register with Get Ireland Walking has been approved and the names of Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders have been submitted to Get Ireland Walking ([www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie)), the insurance cover will be put in place (except for those groups that choose to opt out). The insurance will apply to the named Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders.

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▶ **Type of cover provided?**

The Public Liability Cover protects Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders in the event that a legal claim is made against them, alleging negligence on their part when leading or coordinating a group walk, in the case of a claim being made against them by a third party, such as a member of the public or a walker.

▶ **Insurer stipulations**

- This cover is limited to public paths, public roads, lowland walking trails and looped walks below 300 metres.
  - Cover operates on a basis of 1 leader to a maximum of 15 walkers. Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders should nominate a responsible adult walker, over the age of 18 years to support the walks as a sweeper (last person in the group), to provide reassurance around group safety and group management minimising risk to walkers and group.
  - A waiver should be signed by all walkers where they accept responsibility for their own safety on the walks. Get Ireland Walking will provide a template for Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders to use.
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▶ **What the Insurance Scheme does not cover?**

The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme does not cover Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders for the following non-exhaustive list:

- Personal accident and medical cover.
- Motor cover.
- Activities other than those connected with the Walking Group.
- Claims arising from walks held prior to registration with Get Ireland Walking. The Insurer strongly recommends that the guidance provided by Get Ireland Walking; (log onto: [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie)) be followed when leading group walks.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - INSURANCE: (CONT'D)

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## ▶ What incidents should I report to the Insurer?

There is no simple rule about this: use of judgement and common sense is required. As a general guide the Insurers don't need to know about minor incidents that don't result in an injury. Get Ireland Walking need to know about incidents that may give rise to a claim.

Listed below are some examples where an incident should be reported:

- Emergency services called.
  - Urgent medical help required.
  - Outside help needed to get someone to safety.
  - A death.
  - Incidents involving significant loss or damage to property.
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## ▶ How do I report an incident?

The Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders should complete an Incident Report Form. Copies of this form are available to download from: [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie)

Any accidents or incidents should also be reported to Get Ireland Walking by email to: [info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie)

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## ▶ What cover do walkers in the group have?

The scheme does not provide public liability cover or personal accident cover for the walkers in the group. The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme provides cover in the event of an accident due to proven negligence on the part of the Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders.

## ▶ Does the Insurance stipulate a maximum distance for walks?

There is no stipulation on the maximum distance for walks. Get Ireland Walking recommends that groups provide walks that are accessible for people with low levels of physical activity. We also advise that Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders make sure that everyone knows the distance and terrain the walk will cover and the pace of the walk to enable people to make the decision as to whether they will be able to manage the walk.

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## ▶ Does the Insurance scheme cover organised walking events and festivals?

The policy does extend cover for a registered Walking Group's own walking event oriented towards growing local participation in walking. A walking festival is not covered. Please note each Walking Group is covered to a maximum number of 50 people. Larger groups will need to organise separate cover through their own group insurance policy. Insurers Arachas ([www.arachas.ie](http://www.arachas.ie)) can provide cover for a walking festival and larger event 50+ participants. Contact Arachas for further information.

For the purposes of this insurance scheme, an event is a walking event that would be delivered for the benefit of the local community to encourage participation in walking whereas a festival is more akin to a service for tourism. The difference is slight but important.

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## ▶ Does the Insurance scheme cover a night walk?

Yes, once the walk complies with the above. Get Ireland Walking would strongly recommend that a risk assessment be conducted taking the conditions of night time walking into account and, in particular, where participants will walk on the road or on uneven ground.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - INSURANCE: (CONT'D)

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▶ **Does the Insurance scheme cover other physical activities e.g. jogging and running?**

No. The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme only covers 'walking'.

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▶ **Does the Insurance stipulate an age limit for walkers?**

No. All walkers should be reminded to take responsibility for their own health and ensure that they are fit and well enough to participate. Get Ireland Walking recommends that people that have been diagnosed with a chronic condition such as diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis or have symptoms such as chest pain or pressure, dizziness or joint pain, talk to their doctor for advice on getting active and managing their condition.

Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders should make sure that everyone knows the distance and terrain the walk will cover, to enable people to make the decision as to whether they will be able to manage the walk. Get Ireland Walking suggests that children and young people be welcomed to join Walking Groups, but must be supervised by a parent/guardian.

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▶ **Does the cover apply where a group is using the grounds of a local club?**

Cover is provided for walking on public paths, public roads, lowland walking trails and looped walks below 300 metres. The Insurance scheme has not made any stipulations in relation to routes on privately owned land, which includes the grounds of local sports clubs. Get Ireland Walking strongly recommends that Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders discuss this with the relevant land owners / local clubs.

If a local club is setting up a Walking Group to walk within their own grounds, Get Ireland Walking recommend that they check their own insurance, as most organisations and clubs will have appropriate cover for activities held on their premises. The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme will complement

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this as it will provide additional peace of mind for the Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders when leading a group walk on their own premises or on other routes.

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▶ **Is Walk Leader Training a requirement of the Insurance?**

Currently the insurer has no stipulation in relation to training requirements for Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders. Get Ireland Walking strongly recommend that people taking on the role of Group Coordinator and/or Volunteer Walk Leader do access training. Further details on training can be obtained from your Local Sports Partnership or from the Irish Heart Foundation. Get Ireland Walking has a Walk Leader Toolkit available on line [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie). It is a useful resource to help plan, manage, monitor a successful walking group.

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▶ **Is First Aid Training a requirement of the Insurance?**

Currently the insurer has no stipulation in relation to training requirements for Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders. Contact your Local Sports Partnership to find out about first aid training in your area.

While walking is a very low risk physical activity, injuries can occur. Walkers should be reminded that a person's own health is their own personal responsibility. Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders or other volunteers are not there to assess walkers health or provide medical intervention should things go wrong.

Any administration of first aid will be at the judgement of the individuals present and limited to their own knowledge, capacity and or confidence and call the emergency services in case of an injury.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - INSURANCE: (CONT'D)

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▶ **Is it mandatory for Group Coordinators and Volunteer Walk Leaders to carry a first aid kit?**

No, currently the insurer has no stipulation in relation to carry a first aid kit, but Get Ireland Walking advises that basic first aid kit and a first aid response plan is carried for all walks. Having general first aid at hand including emergency contact numbers are responsible safety measures.

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▶ **Does the insurance policy have any stipulations in relation to footwear?**

Currently the insurer has no stipulation in relation to footwear. Get Ireland Walking strongly recommend that all walkers wear sturdy, comfortable shoes or trainers. If a walker insists on attending a walk without proper footwear (or no footwear) please advise them that it is not recommended and they must take responsibility for their own participation.

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▶ **Where can I access additional cover for my Walking Group?**

For cover beyond the scope of this scheme you should contact an insurance broker. Members of Mountaineering Ireland ([www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)) benefit from an extensive insurance policy (hillwalking, climbing, etc.), including €13 million of public liability cover, directors' and officers' cover and limited personal accident cover.

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▶ **Additional Questions**

If you have any other questions that are not answered please contact: [info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie)

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▶ **Please Note**

Each Walking Group is covered to a maximum number of 50 people. Larger groups will need to organise separate cover through their own group insurance policy: [www.arachas.ie](http://www.arachas.ie)

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# RECOGNISING AND REWARDING WALKERS

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Here are 5 useful and practical tips to keep in mind when thanking and recognising your volunteers:

1

Send birthday/special occasion messages.

2

Tell walkers they are doing a great job and provide information of where they could work on.

3

Provide certificates to signify anniversaries of involvement

4

Remember names: a basic one but quite important to ensure that they feel appreciated!

5

Provide access to merchandise (mail [info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie) to see what merch we have!).



# 21 DAY WALKING CHALLENGE RECORD CARD



AFTER YOUR WALK MARK YOURSELF OUT OF 10 FOR:

- F** HOW YOU'RE FEELING
  - M** YOUR MOOD
  - E** YOUR ENERGY LEVELS
- 1 - BAD / LOW 10 - GREAT / HIGH



EVERY TIME YOU GO FOR A WALK REMEMBER TO JOT DOWN THE AMOUNT OF TIME YOU WALK FOR. SET YOURSELF A TARGET FOR EACH WEEK AND CONSIDER HOW YOU FEEL AFTER YOUR WALKS.

To find out more visit: [GETIRELANDWALKING.E](http://GETIRELANDWALKING.E)

Get Ireland Walking, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, D15  
01 625 1109 | [info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie)



SUPPORTED BY



SPORT IRELAND

+



HOSTED BY



NAME: .....

START DATE: .....

WEEK 1 TARGET	WEEK 2 TARGET	WEEK 3 TARGET
MINS. DAY 1	MINS. DAY 8	MINS. DAY 15
F M E	F M E	F M E
MINS. DAY 2	MINS. DAY 9	MINS. DAY 16
F M E	F M E	F M E
MINS. DAY 3	MINS. DAY 10	MINS. DAY 17
F M E	F M E	F M E
MINS. DAY 4	MINS. DAY 11	MINS. DAY 18
F M E	F M E	F M E
MINS. DAY 5	MINS. DAY 12	MINS. DAY 19
F M E	F M E	F M E
MINS. DAY 6	MINS. DAY 13	MINS. DAY 20
F M E	F M E	F M E
MINS. DAY 7	MINS. DAY 14	MINS. DAY 21
F M E	F M E	F M E
<b>WEEK 1 TOTAL</b>	<b>WEEK 2 TOTAL</b>	<b>WEEK 3 TOTAL</b>



# \* CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT \*

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

FOR COMPLETING THE 21 DAY WALKING CHALLENGE  
AND TAKING THE FIRST STEPS TO A HEALTHIER LIFE \*



#BEACTIVE

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



# CONTACT

## GET IRELAND WALKING

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Phone: 01 625 1109

Email: [info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie)

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