

WALK LEADING MADE EASY

How to start

Choose a walk that you like. It may be from a book, (there are plenty to choose from in our Rambling for Pleasure books), on-line or just somewhere you know well.

Walk out your walk looking for potential hazards, like dangerous road crossings, too many stiles that slow the group down, (report broken stiles; see below) or long stretches of road walking. Remember that you are choosing a walk several months ahead and path conditions may be different by then. Often a walk that 2 people enjoy may be more hazardous with a group.

Make a note of any special or unusual buildings, trees or landscape features of interest that are worth pointing out to your group during the walk.

If everything is OK, then consider the parking. We can get up to 20 cars on some walks. If the recommended parking is not big enough, then look for somewhere more suitable as you walk round and start the walk from there. If you are eating at a pub after the walk, they will often let you use their car park. Sometimes you need to add a short loop to reach somewhere suitable to park.

As you walk round choose where you are going to have a “banana” break, usually about an hour and a quarter/ half into the walk. Is there a “wee woody” nearby?

Help: If you are unsure, ask an experienced friend or a committee member to walk round with you.

Before your walk

A week or so before you lead your walk, walk round it to remind yourself where the path goes and to check that nothing has changed, no trees have fallen or stiles need repairing.

If you find a hazard, report it on-line to the relevant Borough website, looking under “Highways” then “Rights of Way”. If you give them the date of the walk, they can often move fallen trees beforehand. Stile repairs take longer. If in doubt, contact: planning@eastberksramblers.org

Make a copy of your walk, for yourself and the backmarker. It is easier than following it on the folded OS map and can be put into a polythene bag to keep it dry and clean.

On the Day

Arrive at the start in plenty of time.

About 15 minutes before the start of the walk, call everyone together and introduce yourself, if necessary, and welcome any newcomers.

Give a brief outline of the walk and any potential hazards.

Appoint a backmarker (see separate document), give them a copy of the walk and explain the route. Exchange phone numbers, or make sure they have a whistle, so they can attract your attention if necessary.

Bring an OS Explorer map covering the walk. Sometimes you need to go off the chosen route and it may not be on your copy of the route.

Cancellation:

You are **not** obliged to lead the walk if you are unwell or consider it unsafe. If you decide that the walk cannot go ahead because of the weather conditions, or for any other reason please Cancel the walk in Walks Manager, or ask the Walks Coordinator walkcoordinator@eastberksramblers.org to do so. You must make sure that you or someone else goes to the start and stays until 5 minutes after the advertised start time to notify any who might turn up that the walk is cancelled.

If an alternative leader comes forward, they must be a Group member. Otherwise, if members decide to go ahead with the walk, it must be made clear that they do so on their own judgement and that it is no longer a Group walk.

A Group walk needs 3 members in addition to the leader to be viable. If there are fewer than 3 other members, you are not obliged to lead the walk but, if you (and/or the others) do go ahead, please point out that it is no longer a Group walk and that participants walk at their own risk as a group of friends. (Unless you feel it unsafe to do so)

On your walk

Ask someone to count the number of walkers as you leave the car park, or at a convenient stile or gate.

As you walk, look back to see if gaps are developing. If they are, then stop and let the backmarker catch up. Do not move on until you are sure the people at the back are OK.

Pause after, not before, gates or stiles which are often slow to pass, particularly with a large group.

If your path takes a sharp turn, especially in woodland, either wait until everyone is with you or leave someone as a "human sign post".

Give a 3 minute warning before you move off at the end of the "banana break" (5 minutes for after a lunch break).

After Your walk

Please send a walk report to Kaye Carver: walkreports@eastberksramblers.org

Tell her the number people on the walk, plus visitors (that is anyone who is not a member of Ramblers or is trying us out before joining) and any problems encountered with parking or paths plus details of any injuries. Report any problems with the route, i.e., broken stiles, overgrown paths, cross field paths not re-instated, etc., to the appropriate local authority on-line (details above).

Other essential reference documents

- Backmarker's duties
- Emergency Plan