

GM Walking Festival

Hosting or organising a walk: tips & advice

We all benefit from moving more. Walking is the simplest way for most people to be more active as part of a daily routine, for pleasure, active travel, and to look after the environment.

People are more likely to join walks if they're organised and hosted by familiar faces, which is why anyone is welcome to host a walk as part of the GM Walking Festival.

You don't have to be qualified or part of an organisation. A passion for sharing the joy of walking and connecting people with each other and the environment is all it takes.

If this is your first time hosting a walk, or you need a refresher, below is a summary of key recommendations to consider.

Pre-walk planning

- **Think about where to walk**
 - How far should it be for the people taking part?
 - Should the route be linear or circular?
 - Are there quieter roads or greenspace you can include?
 - Any points of interest?
 - Are there options to change the route if required? E.g. Make it shorter, longer or avoid an obstacle?
 - Any facilities needed along the way, such as toilets, somewhere to sit, a café etc.?
- **Check out the route**
 - Walk the route beforehand with a group in mind. A group will take longer to walk the route than an individual or pair.
 - Make a note of anything that would make walking in a group more challenging than walking on your own or in pairs. Things to consider may include (but not limited to):
 - Are there roads to cross? Where is the safe crossing point? Would a group of 10 or more be able to cross at once?
 - Are paths wide or narrow, or over-grown? Will it be slippery if wet?
 - What are the pinch points that may spread the group out?
 - Any stiles or barriers that will make it difficult for some people to access?
 - Do you need to wait for group to come back together at any point?
 - Consider if anything on the route means the walk poses a hazard? Is there anything that people should be made aware of verbally as you approach it on the walk? E.g., over-hanging branches
- **Consider the conditions**

- Terrain e.g., are there hills, inclines, cobbles or mud on the route, or is it near water etc.?
- Weather e.g., it is wet, slippery, icy, windy, are there puddles etc.?
- Footwear e.g. is it appropriate for the conditions?
- **Route planning tools**
 - [Go Jauntly App](#).
 - [Komoot app](#)
 - [Love Exploring app](#)
 - [GM Walking website](#) routes, resources etc
 - Themed walks ideas to keep things interesting, like nature, history, photography etc.

Walking with your group

- **Before**
 - Have a well-charged mobile phone in the unlikely event of an emergency.
 - Mingle with and chat to walkers on arrival to welcome them and put them at ease
 - Outline the route, length of walk, summary of terrain, points of interest etc.
 - Encourage/answer any questions.
 - Do a head count – would your group size benefit from having an identified walker at the back of the group known as the 'back marker', to ensure no one is left behind?
 - Ensure any under-18s or vulnerable adults attend with someone to supervise them.
- **During**
 - Set a pace which matches the ability level of the group.
 - Keep an eye out for the whole group and adjust pace if needed.
 - Keep people motivated and point out anything of interest.
 - Pause and regroup when necessary.
- **After**
 - Repeat headcount.
 - Thank people and encourage them to come again.
 - Encourage people to continue walking independently (self-led)

What to do in an emergency

If there are any incidents, stay calm and assess what needs to be done. Call the emergency services if specialist help is required. It is likely that the group will respond collectively to support anyone who has a minor slip, trip or fall. For example, moving to the side to rest, keeping warm or help with wiping clean a small cut or graze.

Questions and further support

Find more information in the FAQs document on the [Festival website page](#).

Alternatively you can visit the website page, or drop us an email at info@gmmoving.co.uk

Please note: Walks for children and people with additional needs may need to be delivered within the context of additional safeguarding considerations and procedures.

If you're planning and taking a walk as part of your job, or in a voluntary capacity in an organisation, it is worth checking with the organisation if there are any existing organisational procedures to follow for running group activities