

First Aid Kit

Carry a basic first aid kit, which should include:

- 10 plasters in various sizes
- 2 large sterile dressings for management of severe bleeding
- 1 medium sterile dressing for care of larger wounds
- 4 triangular bandages to support suspected broken bones, dislocations or sprains
- 1 eye pad in case of a cut to the eye
- 4 safety pins to secure dressings
- disposable gloves to implement good hygiene

Ready-made first aid kits for walkers are available from outdoor shops. [St John Ambulance](#) Supplies do a kit especially for walkers, as do the [British Red Cross](#).

SAFETY AND SECURITY

General safety rules

Walking in most of Britain should present no serious problems provided:

- **you're aware of your capabilities and don't overreach yourself:** if you're unsure, start with easy walks through populated areas with plenty of "escape routes" so you can cut your walk short if you get tired
- **you know where you're going and what to expect:** study maps and guidebooks beforehand to get an idea of the territory
- **you can find your way** using guidebooks, maps, navigation equipment and skills as necessary
- **you are properly equipped** for the walk you want to do
- **take a sensible approach to the weather**, which in Britain is rarely severe but changeable and often wet. Check the forecast before you set out, always take a waterproof and keep an eye on the sky. Rain, mist or fog and cold are the obvious hazards, but strong winds can be a problem too, especially on exposed hillsides or coastal cliffs.
- **If there are less able walkers in the group** ensure they are aware of potential hazards such as stiles, hills, busy road/rail crossings etc. and the length of the walk.
- **For groups of large numbers (more than 20 walkers)** nominate a back-marker equipped with a mobile phone and/or whistle to obtain assistance if necessary.
- Make sure **Walks Leaders** are familiar with the principles of safety and of choosing the appropriate clothing and equipment for walks. Consider taking training in first aid and carry a small first-aid kit.

Insurance

All walkers must be aware that they walk at their own risk. *(Note: some groups have a disclaimer form which all walkers are requested to sign.)*

Walks organised by U3A Groups automatically have **Public Liability insurance** cover, provided the leaders are U3A members, through the Third Age Trust. This is designed to

protect leaders against claims for damage to property and for injury or death which might have been occasioned on the walk. Contact Lin Jonas for full details.

FAQ - U3A Liability Insurance.

Question:-

Does Public Liability cover the Local U3A against accidents whilst out walking or any other type of strenuous activity?

Answer.-

So long as it is remembered that the Public Liability policy is an insurance against legal liability, the answer question about accidents happening whilst out walking etc., is in the affirmative. The Policy is not an automatic Personal Accident insurance. It would have to be shown that U3A, its agents or members had in some negligent in causing injury to the victim.

Note: This answer was confirmed by Lin Jonas U3A National Office in April 2005.

Question:-

Are all U3A Walking Groups covered for public liability insurance?

Answer.--

All Local U3As who have paid their annual membership subs to the Third Age Trust are covered for Public

Liability Insurance underwritten by Ecclesiastical and ACE Europe.

SOME ADVICE FOR LEADERS OF A WALKING GROUP

Introduction.

These notes are to help U3A members who wish to start a Walking Group and gives some advice about leading walks.

General.

Consider you are taking a group of your friends for a walk around an area you know well and have enjoyed in the past. Make each walk or ramble on a regular date and time. Begin with some very modest ambles of not more than say 2 or 3 miles. If possible finish where the members can have some refreshments, a pub or a tearoom. Ambling and walking should be a sociable activity enjoyed in some attractive surroundings. The pub or café stop has become a tradition of U3A walks and enables the Leaders to get to know their members. Arrange the type of walk or ramble requested by your membership – ask for suggestions.

If possible share the Leadership of your Group with another member – one person may choose to lead walks while the other may be an organiser (and perhaps the backmarker).

Walking is currently the 2nd most favourite activity in the U3A whose members not only find interest in the countryside but also enjoy the companionship of a ramble.

Many Leaders of other U3A Walking Groups may offer their advice on starting a group and organising walks and can be contacted via the U3A Walking Network Co-Ordinator Neil Meek.

Information for your Members

Before your initial walk prepare an 'Information Leaflet' for potential members. This could be your 'mission statement' for the group. Include some of the following:-

a) Describe the programme of walks or ambles.

- Give distances in miles (many have problems with km)
- State the areas where the walks will be held, locally to start with so members should know the area.
- Give an idea of what type of path, track, bridleway or road will be used.
- Also give some idea about hills and stiles as many older walkers can only manage flat easy walks.
- Circular walks are best but linear walks can be arranged using public transport for the return.
- Some members may like to bring their dog on the walk – you should make a statement about this aspect.
- b) General Information.
- Suggest the Group walk only on one day each month.
- Choose a specific week and day in the month i.e., every third Wednesday of each month.
- Have a specific start time (am/pm)
- Publish the programme of walks in your U3A newsletter.
- If your U3A has a regular monthly meeting then you could set-up a "poll station" to meet your members, give them full details of the next walk in the programme and to ask members to register their interest for the walk.

c) Walking Gear

Suggest good walking shoes are worn or boots if preferred.

State your policy for wet weather and if you choose always to walk in the wet then suggest waterproof clothing.

d) Joining the walk/amble.

Ask your members to register their desire to join a walk by adding their name and telephone number to a list at your monthly U3A meeting (if you have one) or by telephoning the walk Leader.

Suggest members make their own travel arrangements to get to the start of the walk. Car sharing is popular although some walking groups only use public transport.

Make it clear that members must inform the Leader if they are unable to join a walk

e) Leaders

Give your phone number and mobile number if you have one.

Ask for other members who would be willing to lead walks.

f) Safety.

Please ensure the U3A members are aware that they walk at their own risk by including a note in your *Walks Programme*. *U3A members cannot be accompanied by children or dogs on U3A walks owing to the possible risk of accidents to other walkers.*

Give notice if the Leaders have no specific medical expertise.

Boots the Chemist sell a good First Aid Kit for about £5 which Leaders may wish to have with them on the walks in case of minor injuries or blisters.

g) Lunch Stop

It is essential to have a good stop for lunch on an all day walk. Pubs are most popular with U3A members. Leaders should ensure the pub is notified of the visit by the group and often they will reserve tables, which can be very agreeable. A small pub may have problems if there large numbers of walkers. In the summer a picnic is a good alternative.

Walks Programme

Prepare a *Walks Programme* which should be given to all members.

Start with a *Provisional Programme*, say for about the first 6 months.

Give Dates, Day of the week, Time of the start, Brief description, distance and the name of the Leader. List the telephone number of all the Leaders. Make a note that this provisional programme maybe subject to alteration.

Suggest you may consider a programme of walks with a particular theme in mind such as local parks, walks by water or with local interest or flora i.e. daffodils/bluebell walks are popular.

Each Walk

Complete details of the proposed walk should be made available to those members who are going to join the walk sometime before the date of the walk. Its is important to detail where and when the walk starts, give OS references if necessary. Choose a well known place, a station car park for example, preferably with toilets available. The Leader house is also a good venue for car sharing. Describe your walk with the places you will visit and state where you will stop for refreshments. Don't forget to state the time of the start and the approximate time of the finish. Warn the members if the walk could be muddy. Give the phone number and mobile of the walks Leader.

Advice for Walks Leaders

Compile a List of your Members with their names, addresses, emails and phone numbers.

Buy a simple compass (SILVA type is a good one) and learn how to use it. Collect maps of your area and local walks.

Refer to the U3A Walking Group Leaders Checklist.

A SUGGESTED CHECKLIST FOR U3A WALKING GROUP LEADERS

BEFORE YOUR WALK

Choose the Route

- area, length/timing, circular/linear, consider terrain/elevation/ascent/season/strength of party
- from map or guidebook or combination, research points of interest
- transport options, check timings, lunch options, rest stops, bad weather alternatives/escape routes
- write route card

Carry out a Recce (take a friend)

- walk full route, note critical navigation points and bearings, assess risks, adjust route/escape routes if necessary, check timings, check rest and toilet stops
- give a summary in the walking programme

THE DAY BEFORE YOUR WALK

- check and assess weather forecast, review alternative route if necessary
- check personal gear, first aid kit, compass and mobile phone.
- check public transport, warn pub if necessary.

ON THE DAY – AT THE START

- be early, be welcoming, especially to newcomers
- check walkers on the list
- check fitness and equipment of party, identify anyone with special needs
- appoint a backmarker, if required.
- introduction: welcome, introduce yourself, give walk details, points of special interest, refreshment and rest stops, estimated return time
- count party and signal the start.

ON THE DAY – THE WALK

- stay at or near the front, check often you can see your backmarker
- set a reasonable pace, watch for stragglers
- concentrate on navigation, check timing against route card
- manage: flow of party/regrouping/passage past gates and over stiles/impact on countryside/rest stops
- be alert to problems (individual, weather, road walking etc.) involve others in party as necessary
- enjoy the walk!

AT THE END OF THE WALK

- check everyone has returned and can get home
- record any incidents

AFTER THE WALK

- write a short report for the U3A Newsletter
- record those members on the walk.
- file the walk details for a possible future walk.

Finally, good luck with your group and enjoy your walks.

This information is provided by Neil Meek. U3A Walking Network Co-Ordinator.

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