

April 2008

THE THIRD AGE TRUST



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Walking

Neil Meek

HOW TO START A WALKING GROUP

Introduction

This note offers some advice to those U3A members wishing to start a Walking Group.

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 Group Leaders to get to know their members. Arrange the type of walk or ramble requested by your membership – ask for suggestions. Ask for advice from a local U3A walking group.

If possible share the leadership of your walking group with another member – one person could lead walks while the other could be the programme organiser (and perhaps act as a 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.

Information for your membership

Prepare an 'Information Leaflet' for potential members. Include some of the following:-

1. Describe the programme of walks or ambles.

State distances in miles and km. Describe the areas where the walks will be held.

Give an idea of what type of path, track, bridleway or road to be used. Describe the terrain and number of stiles, as many older walkers prefer flat easier walks. Circular walks are best but linear walks could be arranged using public transport for the return. State whether the group will permit owners to bring their dog on a walk.

2. General Information.

Suggest the Group only walk 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, it is an ideal venue to meet with your members with full details of the next walk in the programme and for members to register their interest for the walk.

Ensure members are aware of the Countryside Code.

3. Walking Gear

Suggest good walking shoes or boots if preferred should be worn. State your policy for wet weather walking.

4. Joining A walk/amble.

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

5. Walks Leaders

Ask members whether they would be willing to lead walks. Give notice if the Leaders have no specific medical expertise.

6. Safety and Security.

Ensure the U3A members are aware that they walk at their own risk. Some groups request new members sign a disclaimer. All U3A walking group leaders are covered by the Third Age Trust Public Liability Insurance and details are available from the U3A National Office. Ensure the walks leaders are aware of the U3A Accident Report Form.

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

Neil Meek

Walking Network Co-ordinator

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