

**AOAC Standard Operating Procedure for Walking**

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**1. Introduction**

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets out the procedure for walking events within the Avon Outdoor Activities Club (AOAC). The document identifies the responsibilities of Activity Leaders and participants to ensure that walking events are safe and enjoyable for all.

This SOP applies to walking events listed on the Club Calendar or Forum, all of which must be led by an approved Activity Leader. The SOP does not apply to walking activities unless they are listed on the club calendar or Forum. Private events are not covered by AOAC policy or insurance.

**2. Participation Statement**

Walking is an activity with a risk of personal injury or death. Participants in this activity should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions, equipment and involvement.

**3. Event Planning**

At least every twelve months the Walking Coordinator will convene a meeting to establish the framework for a calendar of walking activities. The meeting will also determine, so far as possible, the Event Organisers and Activity Leaders responsible for each event. The events will be suitable for participants with a range of different experience levels and will be listed on the Club Calendar by the Event Organiser.

**4. Experience Levels**

Experience Level is the level at which participants can confidently and safely undertake walks identified in the walking grades table at Annex A. The levels are self-selected by the participant and it is strongly recommended that caution is exercised in doing so. As club members progress, they may choose a higher level; however, it is recommended that they seek the opinion of an Activity Leader before doing so.

Participants must be confident that they are suitably fit, equipped and skilled to safely perform for the duration of the walk in the intended environment and potential weather conditions.

**5. Individual Event Requirements**

Each AOAC walking event must be led by an approved Activity Leader with appropriate experience for the planned walk. The Activity Leader will run the event in line with their responsibilities set out in Section 6 and participants will participate in events in accordance with their responsibilities set out in Section 7.

**6. Responsibilities of Approved Activity Leaders**

The Activity Leader must:

* Be familiar with the published AOAC generic walking risk assessments
* Carry out risk assessment both before and during the activity, mitigating risk as necessary
* Undertake a pre-activity brief
* Inform the Walking Coordinator of any accident, injury or ‘near miss’ as soon as possible and report details of the incident using the form on the website
* Check that participants are suitably equipped for the environment and potential conditions.

**7. Responsibilities of all Event Participants**

Event participants must ensure that they:

* Self-select into an appropriate experience level and err on the side of caution if unsure
* Contact the Activity Leader prior to the event to confirm that there is space on the event
* Advise the Activity Leader of any relevant medical conditions
* Are appropriately equipped as per the AOAC [walking equipment list](https://aoac.co.uk/content/walking-kit-list) in relation to the grade of walk and conditions that may be encountered
* Follow the instructions of the Activity Leader
* Act in a way which does not negatively affect the enjoyment of other walkers.

**8. Selection of Approved Activity Leaders**

AOAC has a list of approved leaders for insurance purposes. The ability to lead walks depends on a number of factors including the personal skills and qualities of the leader, the group size and ability, the location, environment and conditions encountered. It is good practice to lead walks that are easier in nature than those you would feel comfortable undertaking yourself, as a group member or with peers.

A Walk Leader Application / Remit Increase Form can be found at Annex B and prospective walk leaders or those who wish to have their remit increased are invited to contact the Walking Coordinator at [walk@aoac.co.uk](mailto:walk@aoac.co.uk) for an informal discussion. Applications will be considered by the Walking Coordinator and two other experienced club walk leaders with the aim of providing a response in two weeks.

**9. Risk Assessments**

Generic risk assessments for walking activities are available on the website and will be maintained by the Walking Coordinator. The generic risk assessments should be reviewed by Activity Leaders as part of event preparation.

* Walking Risk Assessment [Grades A-B](https://aoac.co.uk/sites/default/files/AOAC_documents/RAs/Walking%20RA%20Grades%20AB%202021%20v1.0.docx)
* Walking Risk Assessment [Grade C-](https://aoac.co.uk/sites/default/files/AOAC_documents/RAs/Walking%20RA%20Grades%20CDE%202021%20v1.0.docx)E
* Activity Leaders and participants must follow the [AOAC Health & Safety Policy](https://aoac.co.uk/content/a1-health-and-safety-0) at all times.

**10. Dogs on Walks**

Well behaved dogs are welcome on many walks however it is up to the individual Activity Leader whether to allow dogs on their walk. Walks where dogs are not allowed should be marked 'Assistance dogs only'.[[1]](#footnote-1) If an Activity Leader is concerned about the suitability and safety of the walk for a participant with an assistance dog, then that participant can be asked to get in touch in advance to discuss the walk. If the walk is considered unsuitable a discussion can be had about other solutions, for example bringing a sighted companion (who does not need to be a member). Linear walks may be marked 'Dogs by arrangement' because of the car-sharing required. If event details are silent about dogs please contact the Activity Leader in advance to determine the suitability of the event for dogs.

The dog owner is wholly responsible for the control of the dog, the actions of the dog and its welfare. The dog must always be under control and the owner must be mindful that other participants may be wary of dogs. Please see Ramblers [Walking with Dogs](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/safety/dog-walkers.aspx) for guidance on walking near livestock and for meeting aggressive dogs. You can also download [The Dog Walking Code.](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/~/media/Files/Advice/thedogwalkingcode.pdf?la=en&hash=FAC89996BB6FB7C08602A689FBB253EF)

**11. Definitions**

**Activity**: Any walking activity listed on the AOAC calendar including day and overnight trips.

**Activity Leader**: The person approved as leader by AOAC for the type of activity being undertaken with the duties of overall risk management, supervising, directing and providing guidance to participating members during the course of an AOAC activity or part of an activity. An Activity leader may also impart knowledge through coaching or instructing in order to develop skills, experience and knowledge.

**Walking Coordinator**: The person with overall responsibility for organising and leading the AOAC walking programme.

**Event Organiser**: The person advertising and organising the event.

**Participant**: The AOAC member participating in a specific event.

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**Annex A - AOAC Walking Grades Table**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A – Easy – For most active people, suitable for novices. | Terrain | Some undulation, modest ups and downs on easy paths, possible mud |
| Distance | No more than 5 - 8 miles (8 – 13 km) |
| Ascent | Less than 300m |
| Time | Up to 5 hours with breaks (eg Bristol & Bath countryside) |
| B – Moderate – Occasional walkers, fitter novices, those with active lifestyles and reasonable fitness | Terrain | Varied paths, trails and open hillside |
| Distance | 8 – 12 miles (13 – 20 km) |
| Ascent | Up to 450m |
| Time | 4 – 7 hours with breaks (Mendips, Cotswolds & lower level Welsh Hills) |
| C – Moderate/Strenuous – Active and fit novices, regular hill walkers. | Terrain | Longer walks on varied paths, trails and open hillside, some rough sections |
| Distance | 8 – 14 miles (13 – 22 km) |
| Ascent | Up to 700m |
| Time | 5 – 8 hours (Brecon Beacons & Black Mountains) |
| D – Strenuous – Experienced and active hill walkers with recent and regular walking experience | Terrain | Rough ground and trails, off path, sometimes rocky |
| Distance | 8 – 14 miles (13 – 22 km) |
| Ascent | Up to 1,250m |
| Time | 6 – 8 hours (High level walks in the Lakes, North Wales & Scotland) |
| E – Challenging – Fit and highly experienced walkers with much practice at the C and recent D walking grades | Terrain | Mountain terrain, steep, some paths, possible scrambling in some places |
| Distance | 8 – 16+ miles (13 – 26 km) |
| Ascent | Up to and beyond 1,400m |
| Time | 6 – 10+ hours (High Mountain technical walks, Crib Goch, Tryfan, Striding Edge) |

Most new walkers should be able to do a ‘B’ level walk however we wouldn’t advise people to start with a higher level than this unless they are either a regular walker or confident of their physical fitness and stamina. The pace will generally increase with the grade. Winter conditions will increase the difficulty of the walk. The hardest walks can be very demanding and to really enjoy them requires a reasonably high level of fitness.

Please note that the Leader reserves the right to exclude members that do not have suitable clothing or physical fitness for the selected walk. If in doubt contact the Leader in advance. There is a list of recommended walking kit on the [AOAC web site](https://aoac.co.uk/content/walking-kit-list).

**Annex B - AOAC Walk Leader Application / Remit Increase Form**

Name

Mobile phone no

Email

There are five levels of walk leader authorisation. Full details can be found [here](https://aoac.co.uk/sites/default/files/AOAC_documents/RAs/Walking%20RA%20Grades%20Table%20v%201.0.docx). Please indicate which level of authorisation you are requesting.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Level | (✓) | If you are an existing walk leader applying for an increase in authorisation, please indicate your existing authorisation. (✓) |
| A Easy |  |  |
| B Moderate |  |  |
| C Moderate/Strenuous |  |  |
| D Strenuous |  |  |
| E Challenging |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Experience  Please provide an overview of your personal walking experience. You should have completed at least 5 walks in the kind of terrain that you want to lead in. Do not include walks where you were a member of a led group or walks from more than three years ago. Those wishing to lead at ‘D’ or ‘E’ levels should include walks in at least two different areas.   | Date | Location | Status\* | Relevant Comments - Weather, Route, Group Details, Notable Events | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | |
| \*Leader, solo or with peers. |

On a scale of 1 - 6 (1 = poor, 6 = excellent) how proficient do you think you are at;

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Map Reading |  |
| Using a compass |  |

Please outline any walk leading experience you have, either formal or informal e.g. what types of group you have led, group size and type of walk. If you have led walks under the supervision of an existing AOAC walk leader please provide details.

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Please provide any other information that you feel is relevant. If you have any outdoors training or qualifications please give details. If you have ‘shadowed’ or assisted an existing walk leader on a walk please provide details.

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Please provide the names of two experienced AOAC walk leaders who you have walked with in the last year who would be willing to discuss your application.

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Please send the completed form to the Walking Coordinator at [walk@aoac.co.uk](mailto:walk@aoac.co.uk)

**Avon Outdoor Activities Club - Walking Route Card**

**Leader: Mobile: Assistant: Mobile:**

**Date: Time start: Time Finish:**

**Start point: OS Sheet: Weather:**

**Overdue Contact: Phone: Overdue time: Dark at:**

**Total Distance (km): Total Height Gain (m): Total Time (hrs):**

**No in Party: Speed travel (km/hr): Ascent rate (m/hr):**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **From** | **To** | **Travel**  **km** | **Ascent m** | **Time (minutes)** | | | | | **Description, Direction, Terrain** |
| **Travel** | **Up** | **Down** | **Break** | **Total** |
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**Escape route/s:-**

1. Under the Equality Act (2010) the wording of ‘No Dogs’ is in breach of the Act. The Act covers indirect disability discrimination. This occurs when there is a policy or practice which disadvantages people with a disability. An example from the Act is a ‘No Dogs’ rule which particularly disadvantages assistance dog users. Therefore an organisation is required to make reasonable adjustment to this rule to ensure that no disadvantage occurs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)