



## Guidelines for Walks Leaders

This document is not exhaustive. Please adopt the spirit of the guide and apply it to club activities.

1. Only choose a walk route you are comfortable to lead and ensure you are appropriately equipped (e.g. map, compass, etc.).
2. Get the latest weather forecast.
3. Depending on the nature of the walk consider escape routes.
4. Have the route planned in advance (e.g. by reconnoitre, previous experience, consulting with other leaders, guide books, maps etc).
5. Communicate to the group: the planned route, duration, level of difficulty, obstacles (e.g. gully's, streams, rock / boulder fields, very steep ground, and degree of exposure).
6. Take account of the fitness and capability of the members in the group.
7. Be prepared to alter the route based on weather conditions and the group.
8. Appropriate walk group size will depend on the level of difficulty of the walk, the route, whether technical or non-technical elements, nature of terrain, and weather conditions.
9. Consider appointing a sweeper or back-marker to stay at the back of the group in poor visibility or if the group is large (e.g. greater than 15).
10. Give consideration to splitting the group if it is large (e.g. greater than 15). Another member can take the role as a second leader with an assigned set of people.
11. Carry out headcount prior to walk, at breaks during the walk, and at the end of the walk. In poor visibility more frequent head counts may be appropriate.
12. Ensure participants complete the sign in sheet prior to the walk and bring it with you during the walk. If anybody leaves the group during the walk they must sign out. All should sign out at end of walk.
13. Show good example to the group with regard to safety, conservation and enjoyment of group activity.
14. Encourage group members to develop their mountain skills.
15. It would be useful to have some training in first aid and carry a small first aid kit.
16. The walk's program organiser will ensure new leaders on their inaugural walk will be accompanied by an experienced leader.
17. With experience leaders can move on to lead more challenging walks.
18. Leaders should:
  - Try to create a balance of: excitement, pleasure, interest, encouragement, spontaneity, freedom, versus excessive discipline, regimentation, monotony.
  - Act not to inflate one's ego.
  - Provide an enjoyable but safe walk.
  - Be aware of dangers and safety.



## Guidelines for Walks Leaders

By completing and signing on the Walk Registration Sheet at the beginning of each walk participants accept that mountaineering is an activity with a danger of personal injury or death, that they are aware of these risks and shall take part at their own risk and abide by these guidelines and any others issued by the leader or the committee.

The committee of the Comeragh Mountaineering Club asserts that no walk leader can be held responsible for the welfare of individuals participating.

In addition to the above, the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) in their Club Guidance Notes strongly recommend where advice is given within a Club type environment, the club should ensure:

**"Any person involved is aware that those that might be perceived of as "in charge" are not Necessarily qualified, do not need to be qualified, are not regarded by the Club or regard themselves as "technical experts", but are amateur climbers, walkers or mountaineers with some experience who are happy to impart their knowledge, and that any advice given be viewed with this in mind by the recipient."**

### Philosophies for leaders to consider:

*Start together, stay together and return together - not a race to the top but a deliberate and steady pace to accommodate all the participants on the walk.*

### Mountain Log Autumn 2006:

*"We like to make our members aware that "It is not in reaching the top but in each step that we take that the joy and beauty lies." If we were to have a motto, it would not be "The fastest and the fittest" but more along the lines of the stronger members encouraging the weaker, the faster waiting for the slower and, above all, our members enjoying the beauty and tranquillity of the open mountain that is so special."*

### **Points Made By Mountain Skills Training Program:**

The person leading others on hill walking in Ireland should be competent in the following areas:

**Navigation** - ability to use map and compass in poor visibility

**Terrain** - ability to deal with the different types of terrain encountered in the Irish hills

**Equipment** - have knowledge of hill walking gear suitable for the wide variety of Irish conditions

**First Aid** - be able to administer basic first aid if required

**Emergency** - know what to do if an accident occurs.

### Preparation:

**Route Selection** - use the map to choose a route, taking into account the experience and fitness of the group.

Work out approximately how long the walk will take.

**Weather** - get the weather forecast and know how it may affect the walk

**Equipment** - make sure the leader/s and the group are suitably equipped

**Transport** - organise transport and meeting places before and after the walk

### During Walk:

**Stay Together** - if people become separated from the group they may get lost or injured

**Inform People** - tell people where they are going and how long it should take. Show them on the map

**Shared Responsibility** - avoid taking all the responsibility by delegating the different jobs of organising and leading the walk.

**Size of Group** - large groups should be avoided - difficult to manage, cause environmental and access problems, approximately six people to one leader.\*

\*MCI Good Practice Guide, Feb 2005, for environmental and safety reasons keep group numbers small.

Ideally group size should be less than 10 people, and should not exceed 15.