

BEDFORD RAMBLING CLUB
GUIDANCE NOTES FOR LEADERS OF RAMBLES

1. The club is keen to encourage new walk leaders and recognises that this could be a daunting task the first time. There are experienced leaders who will be more than happy to help you plan, walk out and lead your first walk. You only have to ask.
2. Preparation.
 - a) Plan your route using recognised public rights of way.
 - b) Consider possible short cuts and alternatives to use in the event of poor conditions, bad weather etc.
 - c) Walk out the route in advance and, if possible, a week or so before the actual walk.
 - d) Consider any hazards and how best to avoid or manage them. ie. narrow roads or difficult road crossings, stiles, steep banks, muddy field crossings, animals etc. Be aware that conditions will change at different times of the year and even from day with farm work being carried out.
 - e) The club does have a dog policy generally allowing well behaved dogs on a short lead. If the walk is not considered suitable for dogs or the leader does not want to give permission for dogs to attend the walk leader must make this clear in the walk description and if possible give a reason.
 - f) Plan where to stop and consider suitable locations for convenience breaks.
3. Leaders should be at the starting place for rambles a few minutes before the departure time specified in the programme.
4. Appoint a back-marker who should always be able to contact the leader if necessary by mobile phone, and be responsible for ensuring that gates are closed. It is also good policy to give the back- marker a map showing the planned route.
5. Include in your walk description all relevant information:- General description, start point including postcode, start time, parking arrangements, distance and/or time, any challenging sections (hill climbs etc.) Mention if refreshments and facilities are available.
6. The leader chooses the route, sets the pace and decides where to stop for rest or food. The pace must be suitable for the slowest member of the party even if some others find this too slow.
7. Do not let the party get too strung out. Stop occasionally to let the party reform. Always stop at serious obstacles, such as a busy road, to reform

- the party and help people cross it. When walking along a road without pavements walk on the right hand side facing oncoming traffic.
8. Never let people get ahead of the leader and keep the party together at all times. If someone goes missing stop the party and organise a search.
 9. Ask your party to walk in single file across a field which has been ploughed over or put down to crops, thus leaving a well-marked narrow path.
 10. When a lunch time visit is made to a public house, the leader shall ask members not to use the facilities without purchasing items at the bar, and to remove their boots if they are muddy.
 11. Remember to observe the country code:
 - a) Guard against the risk of fire
 - b) Fasten all gates
 - c) Keep dogs on a short lead and under proper control
 - d) Keep to paths across farm land
 - e) Avoid damaging fences, hedges and walls
 - f) Leave no litter
 - g) Safeguard water supplies
 - h) Protect wild life and plants and trees
 - i) Go carefully on country roads
 - j) Respect the life of the countryside
 12. For those rambles where reference is made in the programme to a meeting place in Bedford, the leader or a person appointed by him or her shall be present and arrange lifts, for those members who are on foot, with members arriving in cars.
 13. Clear instructions shall be given to the drivers as to the route to be taken to the starting place of the ramble, supplying an accurate Post Code if possible.
 14. Leaders shall bring their mobile phones and give the numbers to car drivers so that in the event of break downs, or drivers losing their way, leaders may be made aware and be able to make appropriate decisions.
 15. For people being given lifts in cars, it is customary to offer the driver a contribution towards the cost of fuel, usually £2.00.

There should be no need to enforce these rules with rigid discipline. Remember that a ramble is a pleasant and an informal affair.

John Dixon