



Going and Growing - Keeping an individual and a group vibrant and motivated

Being progressive

As a walking group organiser, you will always be keeping an eye out for people who are starting to lose enthusiasm. If people do decide to leave your group it may be for positive or progressive reasons. They may want to start walking a longer distance or feel that they are able for a quicker pace. You can help accommodate these people by creating a second walk, perhaps one for strollers and one for pacers. A handy tip is to stagger the start times so that both groups finish up at approximately the same time. This will help contribute to the local community atmosphere and make people feel part of a larger walking group.

Mix it up

You can also look to change the walks you do on a weekly or monthly basis. Each looped walk can be walked in either direction to add some variety. As long as you can keep the distances similar and the start point the same, you can keep yourself and group members entertained and enthusiastic.

Turn up the pace

Another method of progressing with a walk is to increase the walking speed periodically throughout the walk. Once you feel able, you could decide that the 3rd and 4th kilometre of a 5km walk could be performed at a quicker pace. This would allow the first 2km as a warm up at normal pace and the last km to return to the normal pace. This could be increased every couple of weeks.

Social recognition of milestones

Although walking is not intended to be competitive, it may be a good idea to remind people of how well they are progressing by letting them know how many walks they have completed. This could be done at the start of each walk whereby people who complete 5, 10, 20, etc. walks are congratulated at the beginning. This may entice people to continue walking in order to improve their walk numbers and keep them interested.

Organise training and share information

The group, through networking with Get Ireland Walking and our partner organisations, could access and share information on walking, physical activity and healthy living. Training courses could be organised for the group through the Local Sports Partnership or the Irish Heart Foundation. The group could also invite speakers on related topics such as historians, environmentalists, healthy eating, etc., to meet the group.





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Healthy challenges

You can easily keep track of how many kilometres your group completes each week. If you walk 5 kilometres and have 20 members, then your group has covered 100km in that week. You could find out what a similar group of your size completes and look to keep each other motivated for a more sustainable walking group. Check out our 21 Day Walking Challenge and contact our partner organisations about other walking and physical activity challenges.

Cut out the excuses

If you find that your time out walking doesn't allow for enough time to be spent with loved ones, why not encourage them to come on the walks with you? That way you'll have plenty of time to talk and you will both be in a social setting within the community.

By having a specific walking time that's strictly kept, your friends and family will understand that, for example, between 7 & 8pm every Tuesday night, you're not available and it's important that they respect that. If you were involved in team sports and had specific training times, you would be less likely to make an excuse for missing a session. Your walking group should be no different.

Walking events and trips

To further extend the reach of your group, you could look at the possibility of hosting a walking event in your local area. This could be a fantastic way to generate support from the local community

and to get local businesses on board. You can advertise the event on www.getirelandactive.ie. An annual walking trip (it could be a day or weekend) for the group can be a great group building experience for everyone involved.

Continue to accommodate and actively encourage new people to join the group

Plan walks for a season or set period (8, 10 or 12 weeks), commence the walking series with a kickoff event and finish with a social event at which the achievements of the group are acknowledged. The beginning of each series provides an opportunity for new people to join the group.

