



## 1. Host an Introduction session:

- This helps participants learn more about your walking program and can be a great opportunity to engage with participants who are reluctant to join a group.

2. Once you have a final registration list, be sure to get participant emergency contact information and share this list with your admin or program team member.

## 3. Host an orientation session:

- This is for those who have registered and is meant to help participants become acquainted with the routes/trails/parks/paths you will be walking.
- Give participants handouts, have them sign waivers, complete registration information, and review the group norms and rules before the start of your walk.
- You can determine the level of mobility and plan for walk accessibility, accommodating those who may be a beginner/moderate/advanced walker.
- Encourage participants to complete SMART goals to clarify ideas they want to work on.
- Provide an early explanation of appropriate footwear, clothing, hydration during walks, and nutrition intake prior to walks. Recommendations include boots or shoes with good treads, “quick-dry” clothing, and appropriate rainwear.

## 4. Walk preparation:

- Pre-hiking your planned route is highly recommended.
- Plan your themes for walks, suggestions can be found in the reference guide.
- Split groups into similarities based on walking skill (beginner, moderate, and advanced), this helps prevent people from feeling discouraged or uncomfortable.

- Create/check your hiking pack: have safety equipment, first aid kit, water, sunscreen, and a warming blanket. Cellphones may not work in remote wooded regions, consider taking bird books, plant identification books, and/or binoculars.

## 5. While hiking/walking:

- Start with a nearby park that is familiar to you. Explore the park and its trails, you’ll be able to present manageable challenges i.e., increase the time, length, and speed of the hike each week.
- Remember to follow the rule of “no one walks alone”.
- If time is limited, find trails with parallel paths, and paved multi-use trails. This allows hikers with different levels of ability to get out together.
- Encouragement and flexibility are excellent ways to maximize participation.
- Find peers within your group to encourage interaction and communication, these individuals play a key role when welcoming and engaging participants!
- Share information about the healing benefits of nature, this may encourage participation. Benefits include reduced stress, better sleep, improved mood and concentration, reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, positive psychological effects, and better bone health and immune system.
- Bring swag, handouts, promotional items, brochures, water, and snacks.
- Be sure to celebrate the end of group series with a treat, ice cream or freezies, hot chocolate/beverage, or favourite treat of the group. This can help with registration, word of mouth to attract new members, and create tremendous “buy-in” by participants.