

Buddying new walk leaders

Becoming a walk leader is a great opportunity to share our passion for walking with others. At the Ramblers over 14,000 people volunteer their time to do this. Experienced walk leaders are in a great position to be able to help new volunteers find their feet and build their confidence.

This guide gives you some tips on being a buddy (or mentor) for new walk leaders.

Being a buddy is not a formal role at the Ramblers but is still an important way we welcome new walk leaders.

1. What is a buddy?

When new walk leaders start to volunteer it is helpful to get some help and advice from people who are more experienced. A buddy (or mentor) can be anyone who is available to help you find your feet.

Buddies don't need any formal training, but many people have experience of mentoring, coaching and buddying.

2. Who can be a buddy?

The best buddies are experienced in leading walks with the Ramblers and have excellent people skills. A buddy will be able to help a new volunteers to grow into their role.

A good buddy will:

- ✓ Understand the walk leadership role at the Ramblers
- ✓ Be able to help others identify their own solutions
- ✓ Give advice and share experiences
- ✓ Be able to listen and empathise
- ✓ Be able to encourage and be supportive when things don't go to plan
- ✓ Help new volunteers to use Ramblers systems like the Ramblers app to take walk registers and Group Walks Events Management (GWEM) to promote walks

3. How do buddies help?

When we speak to our walk leaders, they tell us that they enjoy helping new walk leaders by:

- ✓ Doing a recce together
- ✓ Talking through plans for a walk
- ✓ Co-leading the first few walks
- ✓ Giving feedback on walk descriptions
- ✓ Giving advice on how to manage group dynamics
- ✓ Sharing simple navigation techniques
- ✓ Being there to listen
- ✓ Giving good feedback after a walk
- ✓ Helping new volunteers believe in their abilities
- ✓ Helping to reassure and build confidence after a difficult situation or challenging walk
- ✓ Being available for a coffee and chat to see how things are going

4. How long should I be a buddy for?

Each new walk leader will need something different, so there is no fixed time for the buddying relationship. Many new walk leaders will appreciate some support for the first few walks they lead. Some may just like a chat about a few specific things to get started. Being a buddy is not a formal role, so it's for you to decide. And not all new walk leaders will feel they need a buddy.

5. What are the benefits of buddying?

For new walk leaders, the benefits include:

- ✓ Feeling more connected to their group
- ✓ Being supported to develop new skills
- ✓ Gaining confidence in the Ramblers approaches to leading group walks
- ✓ Having a listening ear from a peer who understands the role
- ✓ Feeling welcomed into a new volunteer role

For **buddies**, the benefits include:

- ✓ Being able to pass on skills and experiences
- ✓ Helping the group to increase the number of walk leaders and offer more walks, and more diverse walks
- ✓ Seeing new walk leaders develop their own style and grow in confidence
- ✓ Leading by example and having the opportunity to bring the Ramblers values to life

6. What resources should we use?

The **Document Hub** on [Assemble](#), is full of handy tools for all walk leaders. These tools will help new walk leaders to understand what they need to do, and when.

Buddies should share experiences and give personal tips too. They will also listen to new walk leaders and help them to discuss how they would like to lead their walks. You may have different styles and approaches to some things, and that's OK.

7. Training and development for new walk leaders

e-Learning training has been designed for walk leaders. It's called **Walk Leader Foundations**.

All walk leaders can access it by going to the training tab on [Assemble](#).

Useful link

Take a preview of the **Walk Leader Foundations** course here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=He7noQnnD6A&feature=youtu.be>



We also encourage Walk Leaders to join events, such as online Walk Leader Conversations and other opportunities provided by the Ramblers. They offer a great way for volunteers to network and learn from each other.

The monthly Volunteer Newsletter is also a good course of information and news. Look out for it in your email inbox each month.

8. Guidance and support documents

Once new volunteers are recorded as a Walk Leader, support documents on the Assemble **Document Hub** will be available to them. Some of the most important documents for the role include:

- Risk assessment
- Incident reporting form
- Ramblers guide to insurance

9. Here for you

If you are in **England and Wales** stay in touch by emailing us at volunteersupport@ramblers.zendesk.com

In **Scotland** you can email the team at walkleadership@ramblers.org.uk

Related factsheets

- ✓ Recruiting and inducting new walk leaders
- ✓ Information for new walk leaders



We encourage all new Walk Leaders to complete this course. Buddies may also find it helpful to do this course, so you have the latest knowledge and understanding of what's expected of the role at the Ramblers.