



South Downs Society

formerly Society of Sussex Downsmen

Protecting the Beauty of the Downs

Guidance for leaders of South Downs Society walks and strolls

All individuals who walk with the Society are responsible for their own personal safety. However there are some basic safety precautions that leaders should take which may help to avoid problems on walks. Mostly they are based on common sense for group walking and have been developed with the involvement of experienced leaders.

Basic Safety Advice

- Normally, leaders should walk-out the route beforehand. Make a note of any possible significant risks (you may wish to use the attached checklist as a guide). Point out any potentially unsafe areas on the day, noting on the checklist that you have done so, and file when you get home. At the start, remind walkers of the distance of the route.
- Advise walkers on the safest walking position on public roads and ensure participants are walking safely in accordance with the Highway Code (obtain from the office, or visit http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/DG_070108).
- When compiling the brief walk description for the programme, mention features which some may find difficult, such as steep slopes and numerous stiles.
- Only use rights of way, permissive paths and access land
- Carry a map.
- In larger groups have a back marker ideally with route map and whistle/phone.
- In normal circumstances, avoid exceeding the given mileage by more than a mile.
- Be aware of the effect of extremes of weather.
- Carry a mobile phone or ask if another walker has one.
- When filling in for another leader at the last minute, point out that a walk-out has not been completed, so unsafe areas have not been identified.
- Make it clear that anyone who leaves the walk must inform you.
- Responsibility for dogs lies with the owners, who must do as requested by the leader.
- Go at the pace of the slowest walker. Be particularly vigilant where there are new or non-members. Look for any walker who is having particular difficulty.
- In exceptional circumstances, the leader may cancel a walk for safety reasons, giving as much notice as is possible.

General Suggestions

- Be at the start point in good time.
- Introduce the walk briefly eg timing, and interesting points
- Remind people they are responsible for their own safety.
- Welcome any new walkers.
- Count the number walking – and check during the day!
- Follow the Countryside Code (obtain a copy from the office or visit <http://tinyurl.com/67aewig>)
- Check pub lunch numbers and maybe ring pub.
- Have rest stops as terrain and weather suggest. Also comfort breaks, with cover!
- Walkers may be offered a guiding hand over stiles or other hazards where appropriate
- Lunch stop with a pub/cafe is usually around an hour.
- Potential shelter/seats for picnickers are a bonus if possible.
- At the end check everyone gets away safely eg all cars, including yours, start OK.
- Be prepared to be adaptable – pubs close, weather worsens, fields flood.
- Report any path obstructions encountered on a walk or walk-out to the relevant highway

authority (see appendix 3) and inform the office.

- Have a good time.

Serious accidents are rare but experience has shown that awareness of some points may help to deal with such incidents quickly and safely.

In case of serious accident

- Dial 999 as soon as possible.
- Be ready to give details of the casualty/ies the grid reference of your location and/or a suitable access point if calling for help, medical or otherwise.
- Take advice from the paramedics, especially about moving the patient.
- If the rest of the group continues walking, ensure appropriate leadership both for this group and for supervision of the patient's care. Keep in touch by phone.
- Report serious accidents to the office using the attached form at appendix 2. Copy to the walks/strolls co-ordinator.

In case of an incident or problem

The duty of the leader is to provide - as far as they can - an enjoyable and safe walk, which causes no damage. If a landowner makes a complaint to a leader, in most cases, the leader should politely ask them to contact the office. The leader should be as helpful and polite as possible (eg by providing them with the telephone number and address), and after the walk, alert the office to the likely complaint, and include any useful information (eg an account of what happened, names and contact details of anyone who was involved). There would be some commonsense exceptions - eg where a member was causing criminal damage, then the leader should try to persuade the member to stop!

Lastly

- Tell the walks co-ordinator afterwards how many people, including leader(s), were on the walk.

Appendices

Checklist of Significant Risks – Appendix 1

Serious Accidents Report Form – Appendix 2

Reporting Path Obstructions – Appendix 3



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CHECKLIST OF SIGNIFICANT RISKS

When walking-out a route, leaders are asked to make a note of any possible significant risks or hazards, and later to bring them to the attention of the group at the start of the walk. You may wish to use this checklist as a guide. It is ONLY the significant risks that need to be drawn to the attention of walkers. As an example - on nearly every walk in the countryside, walkers will encounter tree roots, so it is exceptional/extensive areas of tree roots which need to be flagged up. After each walk, please keep a written note of the hazards you drew to the group's attention. Please sign and date it and keep it at home. If there was a major incident on the walk which resulted in, or might have resulted in serious injury, please alert the South Downs Society office as soon as possible on 01798 875073, and send the note of the hazards you drew to the group's attention to the office at 2 Swan Court, Station Road, Pulborough RH20 1RL, info@southdownssociety.org.uk.

I advised the group of the following significant risks:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Extremely uneven ground | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very steep slopes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Numerous/high/wobbly/obstructed stiles | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Major tree roots | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| High risk of falling branches | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Frisky cattle/horses | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Toxic vegetation (e.g. blackthorn, hemlock) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Contagious diseases (Lyme disease, water-borne diseases) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stings and bites | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Weather exposure (e.g. sunburn) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Deep mud | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Areas where barbed wire presents a significant risk | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Areas where traffic presents a particular danger | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Additional hazards specific to this activity (please note in the space below) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Date of walk:

Signed:



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SERIOUS ACCIDENTS REPORT FORM

Please report serious accidents as soon as possible by telephoning the South Downs Society on 01798 875073. In addition, this form should be completed by the leader and sent to the South Downs Society at 2 Swan Court, Station Road, Pulborough RH20 1RL, info@southdownssociety.org.uk. Please aim to return it within 10 days of the incident.

Title of walk given in the programme:	
Date of walk:	Leader:
Address:	
Landline:	Mobile:
Email address:	
Name of injured person:	
Address/tel of injured person, if known:	
South Downs Society member?	
Were there any injuries? If so, please list their nature:	
Was medical attention given by a paramedic?	
Was medical attention given by a fellow walker? If yes, what treatment was received and for how long, and who administered the treatment?	
Time of incident:	Emergency services called?
Grid reference:	Description of location:
What happened? Please give as much information as possible - eg what action was taken, whether the casualty continued on the walk/was removed to hospital/other - and use a continuation sheet if necessary	
Witness name:	South Downs Society member?
Witness contact details:	
Names of others on the walk:	



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Reporting Public Rights of Way Defects in Sussex and East Hampshire

Ensuring Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are open and easy to use is the responsibility of local Highway Authorities. Whilst they may carry out inspections periodically, problems can of course occur at any time. The Society has its own network of Area Access Officers (AAOs) who keep an eye on most of the parishes in the South Downs National Park. It is also vital for those who wish to enjoy being active in the South Downs countryside that PRoW defects we encounter are **reported promptly by us all**.

Please report defects to Highway Authorities 'On Line' by telephone or post as follows:

(Also send a copy to the Society office: sally.gilbert@southdownssociety.org.uk or 2 Swan Court, Pulborough and inform the Society's office of the final outcome to the problem when known.)

1. Location and noting the defect

It is not necessary to know the RoW number to report a defect. Using the local 'Ordnance Survey Explorer Map', (or information from Authority web-sites below). note the six-figure grid reference identifying the location of the problem, and the names of the places at either end of the RoW. Also a prominent local land mark and the parish in which it is situated will be helpful. Include as much information as possible to describe the problem in detail.

2. Reporting the Defect

2.1 For problems within **East Hampshire**

2.1.1 On-line go to: www.hants.gov.uk/rh/row/problem-report.html

Preferably report a fault using online mapping which is very precise.

Telephone: 0845 6035636 or 01329 225398

Post: The Rights of Way Section, Countryside Service, Mottisfont Court, High Street, Winchester, SO23 8ZF

For general information on East Hants, Rights of Way go to:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/row.htm>.

2.2 For problems within **West Sussex**

2.2.1 On-line go to: http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/forms/prow_report.htm

Telephone: 01243 753600

Post: Rights of Way Manager, West Sussex County Council, County Hall, West Street, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RQ

For general information on WSCC: '**Footpaths and bridleways**' and '**iMap**' go to:

http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure/getting_around_west_sussex/footpaths_and_bridleways.aspx

2.3 For problems within **East Sussex**

- 2.3.1 On-line go to: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofway then click on 'Report a problem – Rights of Way' or use the 'ESCC Rights of Way Report Form' (attached) which can be saved as a word doc., details inserted & attached to an email (or posted, see below)

Telephone: Work Phone: 0345 60 80 193

Post: Rights of Way and Countryside Management team. County Hall,
St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1SG

Email: rightsofway@eastsussex.gov.uk

For general information on ESCC Rights of Way, go to:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofway

2.4 For problems within Brighton & Hove

On-line go to: <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk:80/index.cfm?request=c1214175>

Telephone: 01273 292929

Post: 'The Countryside Team, Cityparks, Stanmer Nursery, Stanmer Park,
Lewes Road, Brighton, BN1 9SE

Email cityparks@brighton-hove.gov.uk

For general information on B&H Rights of Way, go to:

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=a9>

Note: Although these details were correct at the time of writing, Web Masters do have the habit of "tweaking" where things are filed, so as time progresses be prepared for slight changes.

Rights of Way Report Form

Location

Parish Path Type

Path Number Asset Number Grid Reference

You can get these details from the East Sussex online Rights of Way map at:
www.eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofway

Problem

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Bridge | <input type="checkbox"/> | Electric Fence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stile | <input type="checkbox"/> | Locked Gate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gate | <input type="checkbox"/> | Overgrown Path | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Steps | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ploughed/crops | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Path | <input type="checkbox"/> | Aggressive animal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Signpost | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hazardous Tree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other (please give details)

Your Details

Name	
Address	
Post Code	
Email Address	
Tel. Number	

Please forward your report and any relevant photographs to:

Rights of Way rightsofway@eastsussex.gov.uk

Email:

County Hall
6080193
St Anne's Crescent
479536
Lewes

Tel: 0345

Fax: 01273

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofway

East Sussex
BN7 1UE