

# Walking Workplaces

## A Guide to Walking Meetings

paths  
for all

FOR A HAPPIER,  
HEALTHIER SCOTLAND



# What is a walking meeting?

Walking meetings are a simple concept. They take place on the go, rather than in the confines of an office, a meeting room, or online. They are typically held outdoors. They may also take place indoors where larger office spaces or corridors offer space for movement. Walking meetings should welcome those of all abilities, including those who use a wheelchair or walking aid.

Walking meetings are a dynamic way to conduct workplace discussions while offering a break from the desk, promoting physical activity and boosting mental wellbeing. Walking meetings also encourage colleagues to talk in a relaxed, engaging and open manner.

This guide can help you and your team to understand, plan, and implement your own walking meetings.

# Why should workplaces consider walking meetings?

Walking meetings offer many benefits for you and your colleagues.

**Better physical health:** walking helps you meet daily activity goals, which improves cardiovascular health and reduces prolonged desk time.

**Boosted mental wellbeing:** walking in natural surroundings reduces stress and anxiety, boosts mood, and improves focus and concentration.

**Enhanced creativity:** movement stimulates cognitive functions, leading to improved problem-solving and innovative thinking.

**Improved engagement:** the stimulation of a change of scenery and movement can encourage openness and creativity, and improve ideation and communication with your colleagues.

**Increased sustainability:** walking meetings reduce the need for formal meeting rooms and electronic devices, aligning your workplace with sustainability goals.

## When could workplaces use walking meetings?

Walking meetings are generally informal. They are suitable for small group brainstorming sessions, check-ins and one-on-one discussions.

They may not be ideal for meetings that require substantial note-taking, visual presentations, or access to specific equipment. They are also not advised when the content of the meeting is confidential.

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## Planning a walking meeting

### Step 1: Assess suitability

- Decide if a walking meeting is appropriate for the type of meeting you are hosting, the number of participants and the ability of those joining.

### Step 2: Choose the route

- Identify, map and risk assess a safe, inclusive walking route, appropriate for all participants, including those living with disabilities.

### Step 3: Schedule the walking meeting

- Send a calendar invitation in advance with clear details about the start location, route, and duration of the walking meeting. You may wish to include alternative arrangements due to poor weather.
- Factor in time for getting ready, such as changing into suitable footwear.

#### **Step 4: Plan for accessibility**

- Plan your route according to the needs and comfort of your colleagues, including those with disabilities. Consider the length of route, meeting duration, pace of the walk, rest stops, and the weather forecast.

#### **Step 5: Set an agenda**

- Keep the agenda simple and focused on key discussion points.
- Share the agenda in advance to encourage colleagues to reflect before the meeting, and come prepared.

#### **Step 6: Prepare your colleagues**

- Inform participants of any specific requirements such as comfortable shoes and weather-appropriate clothing.
- Advise your colleagues of any identified risks such as road crossings, road safety and uneven ground.

## **Hosting a successful (walking) meeting**

**Limit group size:** a small number of people (2-5) can work best for group walking, clear communication and helping you to stay safe.

**Keep it simple:** avoid complex agendas that require reference materials or formal note taking.

**Start with an introduction:** clearly state the purpose of the meeting and the expected outcomes.

**Safety first:** prioritise participant safety and choose well-maintained paths or pavements.

**Be weather-aware:** have a contingency plan in case of poor weather.

**Set the pace:** ensure a comfortable pace that allows for easy conversation.

**Encourage participation:** prompt quieter colleagues to share their thoughts.

**Time management:** be mindful of the time and ensure key points are addressed within the time scheduled for the walking meeting.

**End with recap and next steps:** summarise key take-aways and assign follow-up actions.

**Avoid over-scheduling:** ensure sufficient gaps between walking meetings to allow participants to cool down or freshen up.

## Overcoming walking meeting challenges

While walking meetings are beneficial, you can face some challenges. Here are some examples of challenges that may arise, along with ideas for how to address them:

### **Your colleagues seem reluctant:**

- Highlight the physical, mental, social and creative benefits.
- Host a pilot meeting with a small group of colleagues or department to identify any challenges, find solutions and refine your approach.
- Gather feedback from colleagues and make changes where needed.

### **Physical accessibility:**

- Ensure the route is inclusive and accessible for colleagues living with disabilities or those who use a wheelchair or walking aid.
- When assessing a route for suitability, consider things like stairs, obstacles, surface type, width of the path, rest stops or benches, path gradients, lighting and visibility, height clearance and length of the route.

### **Your colleagues aren't engaging:**

- Begin with short walking meetings and build up to slightly longer ones.
- Include breaks for stretching, hydration, refreshment and brief note-taking.
- Offer a selection of routes through urban and greenspaces. A change of location and scenery can keep your meetings varied and engaging.

- Choose routes with minimal noise, distractions or obstructions to help encourage focused discussions, support creativity and inspire ideation.

#### **Note taking and recall:**

- Take a small notebook and pen, and schedule short breaks during the walking meeting to take notes.
- Use mobile apps like voice recorders to capture key points on the go.

#### **Managing weather issues:**

- Be mindful of the forecast - offer an alternative indoor walking route or move indoors to an office or meeting room if the weather is poor.
- Reschedule if poor weather conditions hinder the meeting.

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## **Let's walk!**

We hope you have found this introduction to walking meetings useful.

Walking meetings are a simple yet effective way to boost health and wellbeing, encourage collaboration, strengthen working relationships and boost productivity. They can also break down barriers, encourage open, creative dialogue and a positive workplace culture of physical activity.

By using the information and advice outlined in this guide, workplaces can successfully integrate walking meetings into their daily routines, benefiting you, your team and your wider organisation.





Paths for All is Scotland's national walking charity. Our vision is for Scotland to be a walking nation, where everyone has the opportunity to be active every day, ensuring a happier, healthier and greener country.

We encourage workplaces to be active through initiatives like our Step Count Challenge and Walk at Work Award, which support people to increase their daily walking.

[www.pathsforall.org.uk/workplacewalking](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/workplacewalking)

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