



Canberra Bushwalking Club

Guidelines for Participants in Club Activities

These notes contain information about what to expect and what to bring on a Club trip, about the risks you may face in taking part in one of our activities and your obligations as a participant. They aim to cover all Club activities, from day walks to long, multi-day walks though not all aspects will apply on each walk. The requirements for day walks differ somewhat from those for overnight walks.

About the Club

The Club was founded in 1961 to promote bushwalking and related activities and to foster appreciation and conservation of the bush. Its program includes both day and overnight walks on most weekends plus mid-week walks and some longer trips, mostly within a few hours' drive of Canberra. Club activities are led or coordinated by Club members.

The Club holds monthly meetings with guest speakers and occasional events such as dinners and barbecues. The monthly newsletter, *it*, includes the activity program, reports of recent trips and general information for members. The Club also has a website at <http://www.canberrabushwalkingclub.org>.

Booking on a Club Trip

Once you have found a trip that interests you, contact the leader as soon as possible. While the closing time for bookings is normally 2pm of the Thursday before the walk, many walks are booked out well before this time.

Walks are graded by distance (short/medium/long) and difficulty of terrain (easy/medium/rough). If you have not walked with the Club before, the leader will want to know about your fitness and walking experience. Your first walk should be no harder than medium/medium, but the leader has the right to refuse your participation on any walk if he/she doubts your ability to do it. If the leader does decline you, he/she might refer you to a leader who has a walk that might suit you better.

If you are accepted, the leader will give you further information about the trip. If you subsequently need to withdraw from a trip, please tell the leader as early as possible.

Risks and Obligations

Your leader will describe the Club's *Acknowledgment of Risks and Obligations* form which you will need to sign on the day of the walk. You can find it on the Club's web site or he/she might email the form to you so that you can read it before the walk. If you are not prepared to sign this form, you will not be permitted to go on the walk.

The form requires you to acknowledge that your participation in a Club activity may expose you to known and unanticipated risks that could lead to injury, illness or death or to damage or loss of property. These risks include, but are not restricted to, slips and falls, being hit by falling rocks, prolonged exposure to extremes of weather, drowning, burns, bites and stings and getting lost.

These risks cannot be eliminated without jeopardising the essential qualities of the activities carried out by the Club. You have an obligation to minimise these risks by ensuring, as far as possible, that any activity you do with the Club fits your experience, skills, fitness and confidence and that you are



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carrying food, water and equipment appropriate for the activity, including a compass, map(s), GPS if you have one and a first aid kit.

The form also requires you to tell the leader if you are taking any medication, have any physical limitation or suffer from any condition that might affect your participation in a Club activity. In particular, you should tell the leader if you are asthmatic, epileptic or are allergic to insect stings or bites. Asthmatics should carry a puffer. The leader will not disclose your medical information to others without your consent, except where necessary for your medical treatment or where the safety of the party would otherwise be compromised.

You must take care to avoid acts or omissions which you can foresee could lead to injury to others or could place them at risk. Your signature on the *Acknowledgment of Risks and Obligations* form indicates that you have considered these risks and have advised the leader of any medical condition you have that he/she needs to know about.

Transport

On most walks, there is a car pooling system with costs (including National Park entry fees) shared equally among all participants. The leader will ask for your address and contact details so that he/she can include you in the car pool. You will be contacted, normally on the Thursday before the walk, by your driver who will arrange to pick you up. If you have a suitable car, you should be prepared to offer to drive once you know how the car pool works.

At the Start of the Walk

The leader will introduce the participants, show them the planned route on a map and answer questions. He/she will ask you to sign the *Acknowledgment of Risks and Obligations* form. The leader may ask another participant to act as a 'back marker' (i.e. walk at the back of the group to keep an eye on the slower walkers), particularly in larger groups.

On the Walk

The leader is in charge of the walk and you must comply with his/her instructions. Participants who do not cooperate with leaders (and other members of the party) may be refused participation in other Club trips.

During the walk, you need to keep with the group. Keep in visual contact with the people immediately in front of you. If you lose contact, you should call out to those in front to stop and wait for those behind to catch up. You should not walk ahead of the group without the consent of the leader. You must tell the leader if you are not comfortable with the pace of the trip, if you become affected by fatigue, heat, cold, illness or an injury, or if you have any other concerns.

The leader will stop from time to time to allow people to rest, go to the toilet and drink, with longer breaks for morning tea and lunch. If you need to make an unscheduled stop, you must let the leader or 'back marker' know.

At the end of the walk, you will be asked to pay your driver for transport. The amount may differ from that advertised especially if some cars are not full. The group may stop for coffee or a meal on the way home.



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After your first walk you will better understand your own fitness and that of others and the 'style' of your leader, all of which will help make the choice of your next walk easier. Some of the other people on the walk will probably recommend forthcoming trips to you! If you enjoyed the walk, tell the leader!

Leaders

The Club has taken reasonable steps to ensure that your leader is capable of leading the activity in which you are taking part, but you must recognise that our leaders are volunteers and not paid guides and certainly not infallible.

Insurance

The Club has Public Liability insurance to protect the Club, its leaders and its members from claims for damages arising from injury and/or property damage caused by negligent acts committed on Club operated activities.

Equipment, Clothing and Footwear

You should bring appropriate food, water and equipment for the trip in a suitable backpack as well as a towel and spare clothes to change into at the end of the trip if you think you might get wet or dirty. What you carry and wear on a trip will depend on the expected conditions. Club trips may take place in alpine areas, coastal areas and many places in-between. Temperatures in the Canberra area may exceed 30°C in summer and fall well below zero at night in winter. You may be exposed to rain or wind at any time of the year and it can snow in alpine areas even in summer.

You must be comfortable with the expected weather and be prepared to cope with conditions worse than those anticipated and with accidents and emergencies.

On day walks, you will need to take your lunch, water, toilet paper, wet weather gear and a jumper.

If you take part in weekend or longer activities, you will need a tent, sleeping bag and fuel stove as well. You can hire these from the Club at nominal cost and inexperienced walkers are advised to do so while they observe the equipment of other walkers (who will readily give advice). The trip leader will advise if there is any particular equipment required on a trip.

The clothing that you wear needs to be appropriate for the conditions. In sustained cold, wet weather it is unrealistic to expect to stay dry. Wool when wet and next to the skin becomes warm and is recommended. There are synthetic materials that are also quite good and which may dry-out more quickly; but the user needs to establish which are satisfactory. Cotton is always cold when wet and slow to dry-out but would be preferred in hot weather. Denim jeans are not a good general choice for walking as they are cold when wet and also cause chafing. Hats and gloves are also important for protection from the sun, wind and cold. Head covering is important in winter because most heat loss occurs from the head.

Wet weather gear must be carried on all trips. The gear you take should enable you to cope with any realistic weather conditions. A Goretex jacket or one made of a similar membrane material is recommended. Proofed nylon does not provide adequate protection in extended wet weather.



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Footwear is a very individual thing and the primary consideration is that it should be comfortable for you. Joggers and walking shoes are often satisfactory on easy walks, especially on tracks. If you are planning a longish walk, especially in rough conditions, you should probably use boots, which give better protection to your feet and provide better arch and ankle support. You should consider high grip footwear (e.g. Dunlop Volley tennis shoes) if the walk involves a lot of wet rock surfaces.

In deciding what to pack for a trip, you need to strike a balance between being well equipped and the weight in your pack. The Club has a gear checklist and your trip leader can advise you; but deciding what to pack is ultimately up to you. The leader will not inspect your pack to make sure that you have brought the right gear, but if you are obviously ill equipped, you may not be allowed to take part in the trip.

Food

People mostly cater for themselves. This is simple on day walks.

On overnight trips, cold breakfasts are the norm. Lunches are seldom cooked but dinner is usually cooked, though this may not be possible due to rain or the risk of fire. What you cook will normally be a compromise between effort and gourmet appeal. It should be capable of being easily prepared.

If doing overnight or multi-day walks, you should consider carrying enough food for an extra night out. Weight is an important consideration on longer trips. As a guide for longer trips, it is recommended that people of average build aim to keep their total food weight below 1kg/day. With planning, it is possible to keep your food weight to about 600g/day.

On overnight walks, you should also carry food of high calorific value, such as chocolate, nuts and dried fruit, and items like instant soup for snacks. Plastic containers or bags with snap locks are suitable for carrying most food. Aluminium or plastic screw top containers are good for liquids or easily damaged items. Glass containers and cans are not generally taken on walks. Liquids should be decanted into leak proof, unbreakable containers.

Water

It is important to drink adequately and regularly to avoid becoming dehydrated. Heat stress from dehydration is too frequent on Club trips. Water needs vary with body weight, the length and strenuousness of the trip and the temperature, but two litres would be the minimum for a day trip. You should carry more if it is hot e.g. several litres even for a medium length walk on a hot day. On day trips, you should be able to carry all the water you need from home, but you should ask your leader about availability and purity of water on overnight trips. Some walkers use drinks with electrolytes (such as Gatorade) in addition to water.

First Aid

You should take a first aid kit with all the medication you are likely to require, including sunscreen, band-aids, elastic and triangular bandages, antiseptic, and an analgesic such as paracetamol. For longer trips in remote areas, you should consider carrying medically prescribed antibiotics for your personal use.



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The Club has published an *Emergency Information Sheet* (see Club website). You should carry a copy of this sheet in your first aid kit. The Club recommends that members undertake appropriate first aid training (and will subsidise you to do so).

Packing your Pack

On a weekend trip, you might aim to carry a pack of around 10kg or less in summer, a little more in winter. For winter alpine trips your pack may weigh 15kg or more. You can often save weight by arranging beforehand to share a tent or cooking equipment with a friend.

It is important to ensure that the contents of your pack remain dry during the walk. To achieve this, items should be placed inside a pack liner. Strong garbage bags make good pack liners.

Most people put their sleeping bag at the bottom of their pack with items for use during the day closer to the top for ready access. Put softer items near your back. Don't tie anything to the outside of your pack as it can be easily damaged or detached. Avoid containers that might leak or break.

Minimal Impact Bushwalking

The Club has developed its own *Minimal Impact Bushwalking Code* describing how to walk to minimise erosion, how to bury your faeces and avoid contaminating watercourses. It also addresses issues like the use of fire and campsites and the removal of rubbish. All participants in Club activities are requested to observe the *Code* which is on the Club's website.

Discrimination and Harassment

A copy of the Club's guidelines for dealing with discriminatory or harassing behaviour can be found on the Club's website or obtained from the Membership Secretary. Complaints about discriminatory or harassing behaviour should be referred to the Club's Training and Safety Officer (or another Committee member) in the first instance.

Getting 'Unlost'

Don't leave the party without the knowledge of the leader or the back marker. If you are having trouble keeping up with the party, shout for them to wait before you lose contact. If you become separated from the party, call out immediately. If there is no response, return to where you were last with the party, if you can confidently do so, as this is the first place they are likely to look for you. Otherwise, remain where you are, sit down, have something to eat and think it out. The rest of the party will begin to search for you once they realise you are missing, and is unlikely to be far away. Do not keep going if you are not absolutely sure of the party's direction.

If you have your mobile phone and are in a location with reception, phone the leader or any other member of the party known to have a phone, or if you do not know their numbers turn the phone on so the rest of the party can phone you. Alternatively, call the Check-In Officer on 02 6230 1081 (h) or 0421 607 667. Do not call in emergency services unless you have given the party reasonable time to find you and you are unable to make phone contact with anyone else on the trip or the Check-In Officer.

It is difficult to be specific about what to do if you are lost - it depends on your experience, the weather, the type of terrain, your fitness and your degree of disorientation. You must use your own



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judgement. Determine as well as possible your location. If you decide to sit and wait, choose a prominent but sheltered place. Mark it well with bright colours contrasting with the bush so that you can be seen even if you are asleep. You should always keep your pack with you. If you expect to wait for some time, make sure you have ready access to drinking water. Do not wander around aimlessly! If you think the emergency services are searching for you, you must stay at your campsite.

If you decide to move, head for a suitable landmark such as a road or hill and, if possible, keep to the ridges. Leave prominent messages giving your plans, the date and time. If you get lost or delayed overnight or longer and then 'unlose' yourself, make sure you urgently contact the Club's Check-In Officer to call off any search for you at the earliest opportunity.

Club Check-In Officer

Concerned friend or relatives should contact the Club Check-In Officer if you are late returning from a Club activity. Contact details are listed in the Club's newsletter.

Training

The Club runs training courses in navigation and the use of a GPS and will subsidise training in first aid.