



Cumann Siúioiri  
na h-Éireann

## **IRISH RAMBLERS CLUB**

*"To Explore, Enjoy and Protect our Beautiful Countryside"*

# **Leadership Guidelines**

## **To All Hike Leaders**

Thank you for volunteering to be a hike leader. The following remarks should help to make the event safe and enjoyable for you and your fellow-walkers. Also many thanks (in anticipation) for completing and returning the Hike Report Card. Make full use of this card to feedback your experiences' and opinions to the committee.

### ***Hike preparation***

Provided you have a thorough understanding of the principles of mountain navigation and are confident of your ability to navigate in adverse weather conditions. a reconnaissance, while desirable. is not essential. However, you must have a clear plan of your intended route. Also remember that access routes could have changed: and in the current climate permissions may need to be obtained for your proposed route. If you need (or have difficulty obtaining) the assistance of a more experienced person, contact a Hike Coordinator. Plan your route to suit the grade of the walk. Try to avoid eroded areas and river crossings.

### ***Car pool departure point***

The departure point for most walks is a city car park. This arrangement is in line with the ethos of the club whereby the pooling of cars is encouraged. Hike leaders should be present at the car pooling point, or arrange for a deputy.

### ***At the starting point***

Having gathered your group introduce yourself and any joint-leader, rear-leader, etc., and welcome all. Have associate members identify themselves to encourage their integration into the group. At an early stage count the number of walkers. Remind the members that you will set an appropriate pace for the grade; encourage the group to take this pace and not to walk ahead of the leader.

Outline the proposed walk, the route, the distance, the height gain and the estimated time of return. This is an

opportune point at which to stress the volatile nature of mountain weather, and the necessity of packing the rucksack with an emergency in mind. Indicate the nature of the terrain and the anticipated weather conditions. Remind the group of the club guidelines about proper mountain walking equipment. While it is the personal responsibility of each walker to adhere to these guidelines, the leader should refuse to accept on the hike anyone in blatant breach of these guidelines. It is foolhardy for anyone, in any season, to go mountain walking without adequate raingear, boots, map, compass whistle, food, drink and a first-aid kit.

### ***The walk***

Do not shy away from modifying the route to take account of adverse weather conditions or signs of stress or exhaustion among the group. Be vigilant, attentive and proactive, particularly in challenging situations.

### ***Conservation***

**Path erosion:** Try to avoid widening paths. Ask your group to walk in single file, and in the middle of the path, even if this means muddy boots. Point out the places where this is necessary.

**Crossing walls and gates:** Cross walls, stiles and fences in single file to minimise damage. Replace any stones dislodged from walls. Open gates in preference to climbing over them. Close gates after the group has passed through. If a gate has to be climbed, do so as close to the hinged side as possible.

**Litter:** Consider encouraging your group to pick up a little litter as they go along. The best way to do this is by personal example.

### ***Complications and difficulties***

If a member of the party is unable to continue, or if in your judgement it is unwise for them to continue due to minor injury or fatigue, experienced walkers can be volunteered to accompany them down the easiest route. An injured or fatigued person must never be sent back alone.

### ***More serious problems***

If a member of the party suffers an incapacitating injury such as a broken ankle, or if due to exposure or exhaustion, they collapse or appear close to collapse, they should be sheltered from the wind and put lying down. They should be insulated from the ground and made as comfortable and warm as possible, using spare clothing, rucksacks and survival bags.

Be aware that while plastic survival bags provide protection from wind and rain, they do not provide insulation from cold or wet ground.

It is preferable that a seriously sick or injured person should not be moved until Mountain Rescue Services arrive. However, in harsh or foul weather conditions, particularly in dry, cold wind when the wind-chill factor is high, the balance of advantage may lie in moving them to a more sheltered position (e.g. the sheltered side of the nearest peat hag). Hot sweet drinks may be given unless internal injuries are suspected. Alcohol should never be given.

### ***Emergency***

To attract attention in an emergency give six whistle blasts, shouts or flashes of a torch. Then wait one minute and repeat as necessary. If you hear or see such a distress signal the reply is three blasts, shouts or flashes. In the event of there being no mobile phone coverage to hand, volunteers should be dispatched either to a higher point to obtain coverage or to a valley and a public road. These volunteers should carry with them details of the location, including a carefully checked written grid reference. They should phone the Emergency Services by dialling 999 and asking for Mountain Rescue.