

Planning a sponsored walk: Top tips

A sponsored walk is a simple, fun way to raise money to help end global poverty. Here are our top tips for success, including key points to remember when planning your walk.

Set your goals and budget

It's important to set yourself a fundraising target that is more than what you'll need to spend. Think about ways you could raise money in addition to sponsorship, such as by selling refreshments.

Set yourself a budget that covers all costs, including publicity, refreshments and any venue costs at the start and/or end of your walk. To keep expenses down, why not ask local businesses to donate refreshments or cover the cost of printing posters?

Recruit helpers

It's a good idea to recruit a committee of volunteers to help you plan your walk. Delegate tasks and give each member a different role – for example, project manager, route planner, publicity officer and treasurer. Hold regular committee meetings to make sure everything is on track.

Choose a date

Before finalising the date for your walk, check what's happening in your area on or around your chosen date, to avoid any clashes with similar events.

Plan the route

If you haven't already chosen a route, look online for ideas: try walkingbritain.co.uk or nationaltrail.co.uk or ramblers.org

- A circular route that starts and finishes at the same place can work really well – especially if there's parking, toilets and an area for refreshments afterwards.
- Offer a choice of distances if possible, such as three miles and 10 miles. That way, experienced walkers can enjoy a challenge, while families with young children, for example, can walk the shorter distance at a slower pace.

- Think about access for disabled people, prams and buggies, and whether dogs are allowed.
- If young people are taking part, why not have a scavenger hunt or quiz to keep them entertained on the walk?
- Find out who owns the start/finish location and contact them. You'll need permission to walk on their property, and possibly a licence in the case of council-owned land.

Useful resources

Our website offers a range of resources to help you publicise and manage your sponsored walk. For editable posters, flyers, press releases, registration and sponsorship forms, and more, visit caid.org.uk/walks

Safety first

Route planning: Try to avoid roads with lots of crossings, as these slow down walkers and may be dangerous. If your walk includes busy roads, check that the pavements are wide enough for a group.

If you need to apply for a road to be closed to traffic, give your local authority at least three months' notice.

Get consent for under 18s: If anyone under 18 years of age wants to join in, try to ensure that they are accompanied by an adult who is responsible for them. If this isn't possible, they must bring a signed parental consent form with them on the day. Contact your local office for a form at caid.org.uk/regions

First Aid: We recommend that at least one of your marshals is trained in first aid and has a first aid kit. For larger events, you'll need a St John Ambulance volunteer on site. Find out more at sja.org.uk (England and Northern Ireland), stjohnwales.co.uk (Wales) or firstaid.org.uk (Scotland).

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Risk assessment: Make sure you carry out a risk assessment to identify any hazards and assess any risks that may occur at your sponsored walk. Don't forget to revisit your completed risk assessment a few days before the walk to check you've covered everything. Download a risk assessment form at caid.org.uk/walks

Public liability insurance: Christian Aid is not responsible for arranging insurance and does not guarantee that your walk will be covered by our insurance. You must send us a completed risk assessment form (see above) before we can check whether your walk would be covered by our insurance. Please contact your local office for more information – for contact details go to caid.org.uk/regions

Publicising your walk

Start publicising your walk at least three months in advance. Create posters and flyers using the editable templates at caid.org.uk/walks Distribute them to local churches, shops, businesses, clubs, schools, libraries and community centres. Also ask churches to include the walk in their notices, newsletters and websites.

There are lots of other ways to get your walk noticed. Here are our top tips, tailored to how long you've been running it:

Your first year

Start thinking about your publicity plan as early as possible. As well as creating and displaying your posters and flyers, try these other handy tips:

- Decide who you want to target and the best way to do so. For example, to reach young families get in touch with local schools and playgroups.
- Add your walk to caid.org.uk/yourway
- Invite people through Facebook and Twitter.
- Send press releases to local newspapers and radio stations. You could base your story around an unusual participant, such as a member of clergy or the local mayor, and emphasise the community element. Local media will love this. Download template press releases at caid.org.uk/walks
- Ask local companies for sponsorship, which also raises their profile in the community. Give them posters and flyers to display on their premises.

After two or three years

When your sponsored walk has been a success for a couple of years, here's how to keep interest and participation on the up:

- Ask a local MP, celebrity or other high-profile person to start the walk.
- Build a strong media campaign. Set up a photo call at the route – your local Christian Aid office can help you write the invite and accompanying press release. Remember to mention how much the walk raised the previous year/s and why it's popular.
- Add a different theme or fun element each year. For example, ask your walkers to wear fancy dress, red or maybe wigs.
- Which age/lifestyle group did the walk appeal to most last year? Focus on reaching the same types of people, but in a wider local area.

Well established walks

If your sponsored walk is now a familiar annual event, you may find that its success fluctuates from year to year. Here's how to boost walker numbers and amounts raised:

- Invite a few new people onto your committee; they may bring fresh ideas.
- Change your route and/or add a longer distance so repeat walkers can enjoy a new experience.
- Add a new challenge that reflects an aspect of Christian Aid's work. For example, walkers could carry water or bundles of firewood – which will also attract more sponsorship money per mile/km.
- Sell refreshments at the finish, or maybe have a picnic for walkers and supporters?
- How about a special certificate to celebrate people's 5th, 10th or 20th walk?
- If you need more walkers, start close to home – invite groups who use your hall or members of a neighbouring church.
- If you charge for registration, introduce a 2-for-1 deal to encourage walkers to bring a friend.

We're here to help!

If you've got any questions, want to discuss your ideas and plans, or would simply like some banners, balloons or bunting to decorate your walk, your local Christian Aid office is here to help. For contact details, go to caid.org.uk/regions

