

# Notes for Jane's Walk Leaders

Practical advice on walk planning, walk strategies and safety, in advance and on the day

**Excited? Spread the word**  
**#janeswalkcolch**



**Support Materials are available at:** <https://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/janeswalkleaders>

*The following guidance is taken in part from advice from Jane's Walk HQ (Toronto) and in part based on our former experience in Colchester.*

*Do take a look at Jane's Walk Toronto's '6 tips for Leading a Jane's Walk' document ( find it on our Jane's Walk Leaders' page, above); it's a very nice introduction to the spirit of leading a Jane's Walk, which I've not tried to replicate here – this is more practical. The two alongside one another I hope give you a really helpful insight into what makes a for a great (and safe!) Jane's Walk.*

## The Jane's Walk Principles

Here are the international Jane's Walk Principles; uncontentious I'm sure! Note, since the international site is currently down, I've hosted them on Jane's Walk Colchester, but they are the original set of principles established in Toronto in 2007: <https://tinyurl.com/583nextb>

## Meeting your group

- Identify yourself as walk leader - make yourself conspicuous and be proactive in looking out for people who are looking out for you! If you said in advance that you would identify yourself one way or another, make sure you do in fact do so on the day.
- Keep to the agreed starting point and try to start promptly (ideally within 5 minutes of your published start time), but *don't be tempted to start early* (maybe because you already have a good number...).

- Ideally, have a friend supporting you (for various practical purposes discussed further below, eg to take a headcount, take photographs, bring up the rear, keep the pavement clear, look out for people who are looking lost or may need assistance). Especially useful where a large turnout might be anticipated.
- Note the makeup of your group – eg any disabled walkers or chair users (accompanied or unaccompanied), whose presence may impact on the route due to the presence of barriers, or who may not be able to fully participate on all walk points (eg due to step etc). Have an individual word before setting off as you feel necessary.

## Information to cover at the beginning of all walks

*It may seem like a lot to cover but these notes are mostly only brief mentions, and this time at the beginning of the walk does also allow latecomers to catch up and the group to fully assemble.*

### INTRODUCTIONS

- Introduce yourself!
- A word about the wider festival, in Colchester and worldwide
- A word about Jane Jacobs, the festival namesake (aim to know enough to answer basic questions about who she was, when she lived, some of her key ideas)
- A short overview of your walk, what it's about and the general route you plan to take (this doesn't need to be detailed but helps a larger group stay together, especially in the busy city centre).

### EXPECTATIONS

- Our walks are not tour guide walks: they do not claim expertise in quite the same way (although walk leaders may be very knowledgeable about their subject areas); in principle anybody can lead a walk; they encourage conversation (in fact this is one of their main objectives).
- Make this clear at the outset. Acknowledge the lay expertise of walk participants, encourage questions, and the sharing of knowledge and personal stories.

### A WORD ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHS

- Please encourage people to take photographs (perhaps even have a friend lined up to do this?). We try to gather images from every walk. Do let people know though at the outset of the walk that images might be used on social media and ask if any participants would prefer not to feature. If children are present be especially mindful of this.

Our social media accounts are as follows:

Instagram: @janeswalkcolch  
 Twitter: #janeswalkcolch.  
 Email: info@walkcolchester.org.uk

### WALK SAFETY

- A word of caution given at the outset of your walk is always a good idea e.g. encouraging the group to stay together, to take care crossing roads etc. It may seem unnecessary, but it is also about ensuring that we have done what we can to make our walks safe....
- It is also *very important* that we speak to the group about ensuring the safety of other path/pavement users, i.e. those not part of our walks but potentially negatively impacted by them.

In particular we MUST be mindful of always keeping a route along the pavement clear, especially important in busy locations within the city centre, allowing sufficient space for passers-by.

This is *everybody's* responsibility, hence the need to mention it at this point. BUT it is the walk leader's responsibility overall, despite the fact that you are not always in the best position to keep an eye on such issues when preoccupied with delivering other aspects of your walk. Another reason for the particular importance of having a friend co-lead on such practical aspects.

## HEADCOUNT

- Please take one! Or make sure somebody on your walk is responsible for this as you set off. Although large numbers do not always make the best walks (so don't be disheartened if yours is small), this remains the main way we can measure impact, and it is helpful at times for future funding applications etc.

## Helping walks work well en route

*You are strongly advised to run through the full route of your own walk, stop by stop, with the practical and safety points below in mind (in your head if not in person). What is your Plan B in the various scenarios that might present themselves (unexpectedly large numbers; a wheelchair user turning up; poor weather etc).*

## CONSIDER THE SUITABILITY OF STOP LOCATIONS

- A great point of interest (POI) is not necessarily a great place to stop! Think about the size and nature of the space available and the nearby alternative locations that might be better suited to stopping and talking.
- Hold that thought! If there isn't adequate room for the group to stop safely at the actual POI, stop there long enough just to point it out, then relocate to talk about it, somewhere there's more room or cover from the weather or less noise etc. You don't need to be immediately in front of a POI to talk about it.

## GIVE NOTICE OF NEXT STOP/S

- Just as suggested at the route outset, it's a good idea at each stop to let your group know where you're headed next, especially on longer route sections. This helps keep the group together and prevent floaters getting lost and peeling away. Again, this is especially relevant to walks with large numbers where it really is possible to lose walkers in the busy city centre...
- Note, walks typically gain and lose some walkers as they go. Don't be disheartened if walkers peel off occasionally; this happens for all sorts of reasons (other commitments, children's needs, even occasionally to join another walk!), but we regularly pick up walkers too, especially on city centre walks.

## BE HEARD (especially on large walks and in busy city centre settings)

- Wherever possible position yourself where possible so that your back is against the wall or similar, as a buffer, so your voice project fully outwards, and is least affected by peripheral noise.
- Consider standing on a low wall or a bench or similar, to give you the advantage of some height above your group, and the group the possibility to see your face.

- Consider using voice amplification. Few of us have made this work successfully out of doors, but it is an option. A portable PA system was once used, but for a Rock n Roll History of Colchester (over 100 turned up), so a microphone turned out to be not only necessary but perfect!

#### ALLOW TIME TO RE-GROUP

- On larger walks especially, some walkers tend to trail out between stops. A bit of re-grouping keeps walkers engaged with what you're saying, avoids repetition and helps with the problem of being heard (above).
- Don't wait so long though that you begin to lose the engagement of those walk participants up front, especially where the weather is poor etc. There's a judgement obviously to be made. On a nice day, a 2- or 3-minute break whilst others catch up is a great opportunity for conversation. But it is very often conversation that is slowing down those bringing up the rear, so no need always to worry too much about them!

#### BRING IT TO AN END!

- It sounds obvious but do find some way of rounding your walk up, with some final comments, and opportunity for chat and questions. A perfect way to do this is might be over a cup of tea/coffee or beer etc, so bear this in mind when thinking about the location of your walk stop?

#### HAVE FUN WITH IT 😊

Whether this is your first walk or you're a seasoned Jane's Walker, hopefully you will find your stride, relax into it and have a great time!

I hope this all helps you on the day! Most of it is common sense and just to be treated as a check list, but worth a look over each time, even if you've led plenty of walks previously. We also welcome your additional comments for inclusion here, based on your experience. Please be in touch to discuss; likewise with any concerns or questions you may have.

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## Links

JW Web: <https://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/janes-walk-colchester>

JW Walk leaders: <https://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/janeswalkleaders>

JW Blog: <https://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/talking-walking-colchester>

Facebook: Jane's Walk Colchester

Twitter and Instagram: #janeswalkcolch