

Going and Growing

Congratulations on getting our Club up and walking! You go from motivated, not keep them motivated for big success. Use the tips to make sure our Walking Club doesn't break stride.

Mix It Up

After a while, the same old route can start to get boring. Break a few simple tasks can help make the route more interesting.

- **Experiment with different walking routes.** A change of scenery may be exactly what you've needed to keep your one-legged in gear. If the usual route keeps you on a errand, head for the hills. Or if you typically walk on a beach, take a hike on the trail. In the summer months, you could do it in for an occasional walk in the pool.
- **Speed things up.** Amp up your routine with interval walking. Here's how to work it: Take off with a short burst of fast walking. Slow down to a steady pace for a couple blocks and then crank it up again. It not only adds variety, but you'll also burn more calories and be able to walk longer and with more energy.
- **Start the conversation.** Give them something to talk about by selecting a topic for the walk. They can chat about the latest book they're reading or favorite vacation spots.

Recognize Achievements

Don't hold the applause until they reach their lofty goal. You can highlight their small victories along the way.

- **Cheer them on.** Recognize our Walking Club all-stars when they reach special milestones—25 miles, 50 miles, 100 miles. Or set the bar at a certain number of steps or hours walked. This is also a good opportunity for members to keep track of their progress in a walking log, where they'll be reminded of their goal.

- **Commemorate the achievement.** Celebrate each milestone with a certificate, an American Heart Association award, or a special gift. Consider presenting a Walking Club gift bag. For a workplace Walking Club, highlight the accomplishments in the company newsletter.
- **Gloat a little.** Take pride in the success of our walkers by sharing their triumphs on Facebook.

Offer Incentives

There's nothing like a little incentive to help walkers log more miles. Add some fun to their walk by offering goodies.

- T-shirts or hats with your Walking Club's name
- Water bottles
- Pedometers
- Sunscreen
- Educational brochures
- Notebook to record walking log

Friend in the group will know when to stop, and have the ability to help out on the way.

Do Something New

venture off the beaten path and do more with your Walking Club. Rally your walker for new adventures and special events.

- **Turn a walk into a mission.** Give new purpose to your ride by entering charity walks together.
- **Have some healthy competition.** Organize mileage challenges, either a individual or a group against other Walking Clubs. You can also pair your walker for a walking challenge.
- **Don't just walk.** Try a different physical activity from time to time. Take a dance or yoga class, or take a bike or in or on.
- **Walk 'n learn.** Invite local experts to talk about health and fitness. A kinesiologist can discuss health, aging, and the runner's demonstration of stretching exercises and proper walking technique, and a foot specialist can talk about how to prevent foot problems.
- **Combine activities.** Mix it up by adding an activity to your walk. The Club could take a litter walk and clean up a walking route. Or schedule a post-walk picnic, barbecue or playground.
- **Start a spinoff.** Feed your Walking Club's social interest by forming other groups, such as a book club, bridge club or potluck.

I started a walking club in 1989 when I was working as a personal trainer. I got people talking about how their bodies looked or how much weight they had lost and got them focused on something that was measurable that they could improve. So every three weeks, they would challenge themselves to a one-mile walk. They walked a fairly good pace, and it became a competitive goal.

Michael Rohl

Champion hip race walker

Track and cross-country coach at Manhattan College

HOW TO FIND NEW RECRUITS

- Encourage existing members to invite a friend, family member or coworker to join the Walking Club.
- Continue to promote your Walking Club and the health benefits of walking on Facebook and other social networking sites.
- Post each walk on Meetup Everywhere so that interested walkers can find it.

TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR WALKING CLUB STICK WITH IT

Too busy, too tired, too cold? Are you struggling to keep your Walking Club and their new goal? Offer them the help:

- If last-minute projects and obligations tend to get in the way, walk in the morning.
- Schedule exercise on your calendar by making it a recurring appointment in your email calendar.
- Don't let errands and work sidetrack you. You'll have more energy for your workout after you've walked.
- Have a light snack in late afternoon – yogurt and a handful of almonds, or a piece of fruit and a slice of fat-free or low-fat cheese – so you don't experience a late-day dip in energy and walk on your own terms.
- Is your schedule so crazy that you've lost time with your spouse or friend? Get them to join you on walks.
- Limit your intake of caffeine, sugary foods and energy drinks so you don't hit the wall when you should be hitting the road.
- Ask your spouse and children to share the workload so you can carve out time for a walk. They'll see you modeling a healthy lifestyle and learn valuable life lessons and teamwork.
- A climate-controlled shopping mall can be a great indoor walking option. Many malls open before the store for walking groups.
- A babysitting exchange with neighborhood moms and dad can help everyone out. One of you can watch the kids while the other goes for a walk.