

Items to consider when route planning

There is more to any mountain activity than meets the eye, quite a lot of planning (including choice of route) needs to be done before you leave home, yet alone set foot on the mountain.

It is important that this planning takes place, and that it is done properly and fully.

Route planning	<p>Look at maps and guides; get an idea as to what routes you may wish to do.</p> <p>Some of the factors that need to be taken into account include those listed below :-</p>
Items affecting choice of route both during the walk and during planning	<p>Objective</p> <p>Time of year</p> <p>Daylight hours</p> <p>Size and experience of group</p> <p>Fitness of party</p> <p>Number and experience of leaders</p> <p>How well you know the area</p> <p>Difficulty of the ground</p> <p>Route length</p> <p>Available equipment</p> <p>Available transport</p> <p>Emergency procedures</p>
Other objectives and Considerations	<p>You may wish to combine a walk with other objectives</p> <p style="text-align: center;">E.g. training or navigation exercise!</p> <p>Do you have to start and end in same place? etc.</p>

Recording your route

There are a variety of ways to record this information but one of the most common is in the form of a route card, or route tracing or both. The information given on a route card should include: - bearings, times, distances, and terrain descriptions to use as a check on the hill. Also include emergency escape route(s).

You must know how to make and complete a route card, who to give copies to, this should include your home contact.

Anyone you give a copy to must know how to act on this card if you fail to return.

When planning a route remember

- Never plan too long a route, because it usually leads to disappointment.
- Remember to allow plenty of time for rests, interest stops and minor delays and be aware of escape routes in case the day needs to be shortened.
- Plan alternatives for use in bad weather and be prepared to change your route if fitness, weather or lack of time dictate; flexibility is the essence of good planning.

The old saying

"If a job is worth doing ~ its worth doing well"

is a very relevant way
of looking at route cards

A properly presented route card obviously shows some pride in the expedition, a well thought out route shows good expedition preparation, and some would consider most importantly a good choice of route shows the obvious safety aspects of an expedition have been assessed.

Hints, Tips and Requirements

- Route cards should be well presented - remember you need to be able to read them in the pouring rain and howling winds. If they are scrappy and illegible you'll get them sent straight back to you.
- Route cards must have the appropriate headings i.e. distance, times etc. and use the same design of card throughout the expedition. It is often very difficult to follow a route card when the order of the columns changes each day.
- Route fits in with the project.
- Route is of a suitable standard - not too easy or too difficult.
- Names of people on route cards must be correct and must not change each day.

Maps, Distance, Speed, Time, etc

- The group should start walking at a realistic time each morning and arrive at their campsite at a reasonable time. Time must be allowed for stops, lunch etc.

- Realistic walking speeds must be used, they must also be consistent throughout the expedition.
- Use Naismith's Rule at a realistic speed and remember to allow for height gain.
- Remember that with height gain, you count every time you cross a contour going up.
- You should also consider allowing some extra time if going down very steep ground (some versions of Naismiths do this) but generally you ignore any height loss.
- All totals must add up.(especially times) for example - remember there are only 60 minutes in an hour [1hour 40 + 1hr 30 is not 2hr 70m!!]
- Use metric maps, and ensure you use metric distances. Distances should be to the nearest 0.1km, height gain 10m.
- Escape routes are listed and are appropriate.
- Consider adding wet weather routes.
- Remember that National Scout & Chief Scout expeditions should go through wild country and not over it.
- The quoted magnetic variation should be correct; check on your map magnetic variation varies with latitude.
- Do not use ½ deg. - no-one can take a bearing off a map to that accuracy with a standard compass.
- Bearings are in degrees (not just N,S,E etc.)
- Mistakes on a route card re access etc. - a perfect route card implies that you know the area too well or more likely it is one that has been used by another group from that unit previously.
- Do not try and "fudge" your distances - if a route card is consistently over estimating distances you'll have to redo it. If you start at a height of 0m and the summit is 450m then your route card height gain should be 450m!!
- Also total distances are usually (and easily) checked from the tracing not from the route card totals.
- Use up all of the route card rows but try not to use a 2nd page unless necessary.
- Prior to completing your route card, draft it out and ensure the distances etc. add up to the required amount.
- Always use an up to date map (preferably 1:25,000) as access agreements/rights of ways are always changing especially over the last couple of years and having an out of date map is no excuse for trespass.

Checkpoints and Camp sites

- ✓ Camp sites clearly marked and proof that permission obtained or at least sought where appropriate.
- ✓ Think about where you use as a checkpoint.
- ✓ Checkpoints should be a clearly identified point on the ground such as: river junction, hill summit.
- ✓ A checkpoint also provides a valuable check as to how you're doing time wise. If you arrive at a checkpoint ahead of time you may have to wait there until you get back onto the time stated on your route card.
- ✓ If you're late your assessor/supervisor might be stuck there for several hours.

Route Tracings

- ❖ Tracings - these are a vital part of the planning cycle and enable people to check exactly how you plan to get from one checkpoint to the next where it often isn't exactly clear on the final route cards.
- ❖ Tracings should be on tracing paper (or grease proof paper).
- ❖ You can not see through to the map underneath with ordinary paper.
- ❖ There has also been a recent trend towards sending in photocopies of maps - as well as breaking copyright this suffers from the same problem as the ordinary paper and will usually be from a small scale map.
- ❖ It is personal choice if you use 1:50000 or 1:25000, if you use a 1:25000 you have shown the assessor that you have used one, remembering that where possible route planning should be done on the largest scale map possible.
- ❖ If possible, get someone to check you're tracing before you complete the route card. Filling in a route card is a very time consuming and laborious task, and even a very minor change to the route can require you to totally rewrite the route card for that day.
- ❖ When you do your tracing ensure you stick it well to the map so that it does not slide around while you do the tracing and mark on it the grid intersections at each corner. It should also state on it which map you've used, scale and your groups name as assessors are notorious for checking several routes at a time and therefore getting the routes etc. from several groups all muddled up.
- ❖ Use a separate tracing for each day as otherwise it becomes unmanageable

Tips for an assessor

- Do not complain if different days are written in different handwriting, this may be the nearest you can get to finding out that just one person in the team didn't plan all the routes.
- Remember to check the basics.
- Names of everyone in group, dates, contact numbers, must be shown on the card & must be correct.
- Remember - what to you is the simple task of filling in a route card may be several long hours work to a young person that is unsure of working with route cards.

REMEMBER - TAKE CARE WITH ROUTE CARDS AND EXPEDITION PREPARATION

LIVES MAY DEPEND ON THEM

Naismith's Rule

The rule was devised in 1892 by W.W.Naismith a Scottish mountaineer as an aid to estimating the length of time it would take to walk a predefined walking route including ascents and descents

5km per hour plus 1/2 hour for every 300 meters of ascent

Corrections for short distances

Going gently downhill - 10mins / 300m of descent

Very steeply downhill + 10mins / 300m of descent

Please remember that if you are in a party the time should be calculated for the slowest person

If the total distance for a walk is 15km, the height climbed over the route is 250 m, and the decent over the route is 150 m

Time for distance traveled = $12 \times 5 = 180$ mins.

Time for the ascent = $250 \div 10 = 25$ mins.

Time for the decent = $150 \div 20 = 7.5$ mins.

Total time = $60 + 25 + 7.5 = 92.5$ mins = 3h 32.5 mins.