

Walkers Training Guide

**YOUR GUIDE TO PREPARING
FOR AN ULTRA CHALLENGE**

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Time to get ready!

The Ultra Challenge Series of events are ideal for anyone who wants to put on a pair of walking shoes and set out to achieve a new goal; across a wide variety of terrain each challenge is unique and accessible – for some it will mean getting fit, for others it will be achieving a new personal goal, but for all who take on these events the journey can be life changing and hugely rewarding. It may seem a daunting task at first but with some focus and the right planning each Ultra Challenge is achievable – that medal will be yours!



The fitter you feel as you step foot across the start line of your Ultra Challenge, the more confident you will be in your ability to get to the finish line – and the more you will enjoy it. Only you will know your current fitness level and where you would like your overall general level of fitness to be. Increasing your stamina will mean your recovery time after longer walks are reduced and that you aren't out of breath if your walk involves hill climbing. Occasional functional and core training can also be incorporated into your exercise schedule will help you cope with a rucksack and is an effective way to prevent injuries as you take on distances you've never experienced before.

Most importantly you need to train for the activity that you will be doing, and that's walking. While walking is relatively easy compared to many forms of exercise, over a prolonged period and across an 'ultra' distance your feet and legs will suffer.

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Understanding how to best deal with these effects can only be achieved by taking on some long training walks in advance of the challenge. To be well prepared for your event we advise a rounded plan which not only builds up your fitness level, but also tests your legs, knees, feet, and kit out in the elements.

Join us –Ultra Challenge training walks!

Across the year we will be hosting a range of training walks of varying distances and terrain to help you meet fellow challengers, test out your kit, and get a taste of the Ultra Challenge experience before the big day. A full schedule and how to book will be available on the Participant Area.

Get out walking!

The best way to prepare yourself for a long-distance walk is to get outside and get walking! In the UK we are blessed with a wide range of footpaths, trails, and National Parks – and many find that the training for their challenge is almost as satisfying as crossing the finish line. Getting the kilometres under your belt and building up the distances overtime will ensure that not only are you preparing yourself physically, but also mentally. Understanding how your body fares as the distance increases is important – particularly how your feet cope in your walking shoes/boots so you can review and adjust your kit and training before the next session. Of course, any additional time in the gym doing aerobic and leg strengthening exercises will also help with your preparation and confidence.



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Walking as part of your day

There is always an opportunity to build walking into your everyday schedule some ideas include:

- ✓ Walk to/from work if you can.
- ✓ Get off the bus 3 or 4 stops earlier – walk the rest.
- ✓ Take the stairs – say no to lifts and elevators!
- ✓ Go for a stroll at lunch time – even if just for 10-15 minutes.
- ✓ Substitute short car journey for walking instead!
- ✓ Schedule the longer training walks for your days off work.

Get a step counter!

These start from under £15 and even if they're not totally accurate, it gives you a good insight into your daily activity, and many mobile phones also have apps to track your daily steps. Aim for the recommended 10,000 steps a day as a minimum to build up your base walking fitness levels.

Build up your distance.

Try to cover your chosen distance over a weeklong period at some point during your training. This should be a few weeks prior to the walk which means that you can then slowly taper off in the run up to the event. Please ensure that you don't cover too much distance in the week of the event, take it easy and allow your body to recover in preparation for the challenge.

Step by Step - Stretch by Stretch

Break the exercise in slowly. Over-training can lead to injury and could disrupt your training programme. Start with manageable training distances and speeds and then work up from there. Try to aim to fit in a longer walk at the weekends and don't forget to stretch before and after exercise.

Try something different.

Just walking to build up fitness levels can become monotonous so consider using different forms of exercise to keep your training varied and interesting. Team and

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racket sports or cycling, for example, can work well within a training program for an event such as this and means you don't have to drop all your other interests.



Kit & Equipment

Train in your kit

It's crucial to not only have the right kit on the day, but to ensure it is worn in and tested on a long distance walk to prevent discomfort during the challenge. As an example, it is only by wearing a rucksack (complete with your water supplies, clothing, etc.) for a few hours that you'll know if it fits your back properly, or if it is too tight or too low. To keep your feet as blister free as possible you need to fully wear in the shoes you are planning on wearing on the walk, whilst also trying out sock combinations and testing their waterproofness!

Check the weather & Kit List

Refer to the App's kit list but also consider the weather in the lead up to the walk and make a judgement a day or so prior as to what essentials you will and won't need to minimize weight but also to prevent any crucial items from being forgotten.

Should you need a change of clothes, or have an overnight bag with you, there will be baggage storage situated at the start location which can be paid for on the event day. On our linear challenges, we will transport your bags from the start to the finish (or your camping location if you have booked this with us).

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Look after your feet.

Most people who pull out of a long-distance walk do so as a result of blisters which occur as a result of bad planning and preparation. We've put together the below advice from a number of our regular Ultra Challenge experts based on their experiences of long-distance walking.

- ✓ **Change your socks regularly!** Ensure you take plenty walking socks for the event (both thick and thin). If you are prone to getting blisters, then change your socks every 25km km to keep your feet dry.
- ✓ **Choose your footwear carefully** & check the weather. If your chosen leg is on hard surfaces like roads, pavement and gravel paths, trainers or boots with a softer sole will help to cushion the feet and reduce the risk of blisters. However, if your walk is across fields and trails (and likely to be muddy and wet) a Gortex/waterproof boot will be more suitable. Always monitor the weather; in hot conditions, wearing heavy hiking boots may cause your feet to sweat and swell, increasing the risk of developing blisters. Consider opting for trainers or trail shoes in such conditions. If rain is forecast, then you will need a waterproof boot or shoe – as wet socks and damp feet will almost certainly result in blisters. Shoes that fit well will also help combat blisters. Make sure they aren't too tight and that your toes and feet aren't cramped, but also not too slack that your feet move around in them. Make sure they fit well by trying them out with the type of socks you intend to wear on the walk. Whichever you plan on wearing – you must train in them and fully wear them in!

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- ✓ **Blister treatment** – don't wait until you get a blister to treat it – prevention is better than a cure! If you feel a warm spot or a part of your foot that is rubbing, stop and put a blister plaster on, ensuring your feet are dry before you apply it as it will not stick if the area is moist.

- ✓ **Tape up your feet!** Many people who are prone to blisters tape up their feet/toes and any known hot spots prior to a long walk, with zinc oxide tape which is available at most sports shops. There are many online videos which give you a guide as to how best to tape up your feet – we recommend trying it out on a training walk to see if it makes a difference.

- ✓ **Keep your nails neat** – make sure you keep your toenails clipped so that your nails aren't hitting the bottom of your boots on any downhill sections – this will likely lead to bruised (and even loss of) toenails during or after the challenge.

Nutrition & Hydration

On a long distance walk you will be burning upwards of 1000 calories. On your training walks you will need to ensure that you are keeping your body fuelled up with the right types of energy sources to ensure that you've enough fuel in the tank to keep going.

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Snacking regularly as you walk is also an important part of training to understand what your body does (and doesn't) react well to during a long walk. For some it is a mixture of sugary sweets/salty snacks and energy bars which do the trick – the key thing to remember is don't try a certain type of snack/food for the first time on the challenge itself.



The night before a walk we recommend large portions of pasta or rice with tomato or vegetable sauce (rather than meat or cheese-based sauces). Top up with more carbohydrate the morning of your walk - there are plenty of high carbohydrate breakfast foods such as porridge, toast, fruits, and cereal.

Just as important is keeping hydrated during the challenge; you will need to take on water often and in small quantities to keep your body hydrated. Camelpack/hydration bladders are great for walking as you can keep sipping little and often with minimal fuss (instead of stopping to dig out your water bottle from the depths of your backpack). It is a good idea to have a second bottle, perhaps filled with cordial or isotonic drink which will help replace sugar and salt stores on hot days and offer a refreshing taste to just plain water.

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Training Milestones – 50km

A prescriptive training plan is often difficult to adhere to with busy lives and hectic work schedules – so rather than following a set guide we would recommend trying to hit key milestones in your training and preparation.

12 weeks before

- ✓ Get some new boots or footwear sorted!
- ✓ Set out and aim to achieve x2 30-minute walks.
- ✓ Plan your forward calendar of training walks.
- ✓ Set out how you will exercise at least 2 times a week until the walk.

6 weeks before

- ✓ You should have walked at least 25km in one go.
- ✓ Your pace should be aiming for a pace of 4km per hour.
- ✓ You should be walking at least 3 times a week for 20 mins or more.
- ✓ Exercising at least 2 times per week

4 weeks before

- ✓ You should have walked at least 2 days of 20km during one week.
- ✓ Walking at a pace of 4km per hour
- ✓ Wear your backpack for the walk, and any kit you plan on wearing on the event.
- ✓ You should be achieving 2 longer walks per week.

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2 weeks before

- ✓ By now you should have walked at least 30km in one go.
- ✓ You should be covering the distance at 4km per hour.
- ✓ You should know your socks/blister prevention technique.
- ✓ You should have all the kit required from the walk.
- ✓ You should be achieving 3 shorter walks per week.

5 days before

- ✓ Ease off the training – give your feet a rest.
- ✓ Aim to keep hydrated - drinking lots of water.
- ✓ Have a quiet week – no late nights!
- ✓ Have all your kit packed and ready – keep an eye on the weather.
- ✓ Enjoy a week of lots of pasta & carbs!

Training Milestones – 25km

12 weeks before

- ✓ You should have walked at least 10km in one go.
- ✓ Your pace should be aiming for 3-4km per hour.
- ✓ You should be walking at least 3 times a week for 20 mins or more.
- ✓ Exercising at least 3 times per week.

6 weeks before

- ✓ You should have walked at least 15km in one go.
- ✓ Walking at a pace of 4km per hour
- ✓ Wear your backpack, and any kit you plan on wearing on the event during your training walks.
- ✓ You should be achieving 2 shorter walks per week.

4 weeks before

- ✓ You should have walked at least 20km in one go. You should be covering the distance at 4km per hour.
- ✓ You should know your socks/blister prevention technique.
- ✓ You should have all the kit required from the walk.

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- ✓ You should be achieving 2 longer walks per week.

5 days before

- ✓ Ease off the training – give your feet a rest.
- ✓ Aim to keep hydrated - drinking lots of water.
- ✓ Have a quiet week – no late nights!
- ✓ Have all your kit packed and ready – keep an eye on the weather.
- ✓ Enjoy a week of lots of pasta & carbs!

Training Milestones – 10km

12 weeks before

- ✓ Get some new trainers and your footwear sorted!
- ✓ Set out and aim to achieve x2 10-minute walks.
- ✓ Plan your forward calendar of training walks.
- ✓ Set out how you will exercise at least 2 times a week until the walk.

6 weeks before

- ✓ You should have walked at least 4km in one go.
- ✓ You should be walking at least once a week for 20 mins or more.
- ✓ Exercising at least 2 times per week

4 weeks before

- ✓ You should have walked at least 6km in one go.
- ✓ Wear your backpack, and any kit you plan on wearing on the event during your training walks.
- ✓ You should be achieving 2 short walks per week.

2 weeks before

- ✓ By now you should have walked at least 8km in one go.
- ✓ You should be covering the distance at 3km per hour.
- ✓ You should know your socks/blister prevention technique.
- ✓ You should have all the kit required from the walk.

5 days before

- ✓ Ease off the training – give your feet a rest.

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- ✓ Aim to keep hydrated - drinking lots of water.
- ✓ Have a quiet week – no late nights!
- ✓ Have all your kit packed and ready – keep an eye on the weather.
- ✓ Enjoy a week of lots of pasta & carbs!

Further Information

If you have found this document useful, you may also find the community of 10,000 challengers on The Ultra Challenge Club group on Facebook a great place to find some hints and tips from people who have been through what you're about to take on. We are proud of the collective comradery that we see within the forum, and we hope it might help support you as you embark on this journey.

You can also join our Instagram community (@ultrachallenges) for updates on inspiring participants and the chance to have your own stories featured when you tag us during the walk!

You can achieve your goals! Get outside, get some fresh winter air, come home with boosted endorphins, and enjoy the cosy indoors feeling proud of what you've just achieved.



Find out more

ultrachallenge.com

