



Step stats

- 2.5 feet: average person's stride length
- 2,100 average steps: about one mile
- 10,000 steps: about 5 miles
- 10,000 steps: expends about 300 to 400 calories (depending on body size and walking speed)
- 1,200 steps: 10 minutes of walking
- 3,100 - 4,000 steps: 30 minutes of moderately intense walking

Note: all these equivalents are averages that will vary among individuals
Sources: Research Digest, Walking.about.com

Count the steps to motivate walking

By Pat Ryan

Walking requires little equipment and provides lots of health benefits. You can facilitate walking by helping the older adults you work with use two tools: a step counter (pedometer) and a walking log. These tools are inexpensive and, with your guidance, a great way to start walking or to increase steps. In this article, you'll learn how to use step counters and logs to increase walking. The Client Handout features a walking log to copy for your participants.

Step counters and pedometers

The simplest pedometer is a step counter. It clips to the waistband and counts the number of steps walked for less than \$10 US. A step counter works like a pendulum, using the movement of the hips to count the steps. That's why it is important to clip the device at the front crease of the pants, where the belt loop is, and straight (horizontally) to make it more accurate.

Step counters and pedometers are more accurate when walking is done at an even pace and less accurate when walking is slower. (But, if the counter is off a few steps, how much does that really matter? Isn't the goal simply to start or increase walking?)

More advanced pedometers (\$10 to \$30) calculate distance in miles or meters and have a clock. These pedometers require programming in stride length. For a good overview of how to measure stride length, visit www.walking.about.com. Modern pedometers get even more sophisticated (\$30 and more) and add a host of functions



up to highly accurate devices using Global Positioning Satellite technology.

Your participants don't need a lot of fancy technology. A step counter will get them started.

Why use a step counter?

Just having a step counter hooked onto the waistband is a reminder to walk. Step counters are real eye openers when they show how few (or how many) steps are taken in an average day. They also help walkers set goals and gradually increase the steps they take. When the steps are recorded on the log, the walker can look back and see improvements, which motivates more walking.

How to get started

On the next page you'll find the basics for using the step counter and log.

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Appropriate for



Athlete



Active now



Getting started

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- Wear the step counter throughout the day for a week. Snap it on in the morning and take it off at night before going to bed. Record the steps taken at the end of the day on the Daily Activity Walking Log. Look for an average number of steps.
- The next week, try to increase the average number of steps by walking more (parking at the end of the parking lot or walking up stairs) and adding a planned walk. Perhaps that is walking around the block one time, or to a destination, like a friend's house or a park. Maybe it's walking as far as possible around a track at a gym or high school. A short distance is fine. Record the number of steps on the log.
- Increase the number of steps gradually. Walk around the block twice, or complete a circle of the track. Use the step counter to see how many more steps are walked.
- Use the number of steps recorded on the log to set goals. For example, a goal for many people is to increase walking by 500 steps a day. If a participant walks an average of 1,000 steps a day for one week, the next week the goal is 1,500 steps a day. Use the step counter to count, and the log to record the number of steps.

Program ideas

- Start a walking club for your community. Organizations sell quantities of very inexpensive step counters that will start the club walking.
- Launch the 10-week progressive walking program described in Functional U (see Resources).
- Present a one-hour walking clinic. Talk about posture and how to use the step

counter and log. Everyone can practice walking.

- Invite a podiatrist or reliable shoe store expert to talk about choosing a walking shoe. Could this person bring measuring devices to fit shoes during the talk?
- Measure stride length as part of a fun activity or an exercise class people would attend anyway. Place tape on the floor to measure a distance, for example 10 feet, and have people walk across it a couple times. Count the steps for them, divide by 10 and they have their stride lengths.
- Host an orienteering (using compasses) or fitness caching (use GPS devices) event, where participants follow clues to find the end of the trail. These activities also exercise mental skills.

Increase the number of steps

Now that participants have a foundation of walking fitness, they are ready to increase their steps. Use the incremental goal of about 500 steps a day (depending on each individual's capabilities) to keep increasing the number of steps. People can stay motivated and progressing by:

- following a planned walking program
- increasing the pace (speed) to walk more steps in the same amount of time
- lengthening the amount of time walked
- choosing more hills (within their capabilities)
- joining a walking club through the parks and recreation department, a health club or organizations like Sierra Club or volksmarch
- selecting a walking vacation
- walking at different locations, and different times of the day

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How many steps for an active lifestyle?

- **sedentary:**
<5,000 steps/day
- **low active:**
5,000-7,499 steps/day
- **somewhat active:**
7,500-9,999 steps/day
- **active:**
>or=10,000 steps/day
- **highly active:**
>12,500 steps/day

Source: Tudor-Locke C, Bassett DR Jr., Sports Medicine

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The number of steps and the time it takes are all recorded on the walking log. In fact, as participants become more interested in walking, they can also record the things they see, the people they meet and other details. At this point, they will probably want to upgrade to a more sophisticated pedometer!

How many steps?

The optimum number of steps depends on each person's capabilities. The best motivator is personal improvement. Each individual starts at a personal baseline and gradually increases the number of steps. People are challenging themselves, not competing against a norm.

One program that has gained a lot of momentum is "10,000 steps a day." It is a good goal for many people--about five miles. Keep in mind there is no scientific basis for 10,000 steps, according to walking researcher Catrine Tudor-Locke, Ph.D., at Arizona State University.

For a more frail, elderly or chronically ill adult, this is far too many steps. Tudor-Locke reports that healthy older adults walk about 6,000 to 8,500 steps/day while people with disabilities and chronic diseases walk about 3,500 to 5,000 steps/day. On the one hand you don't want to discourage people who will never be able to achieve a high number of steps from even trying. On the other hand, a healthy and active older adult can walk more than 10,000 steps in a day.

A recommendation you'll find is 6,000 steps for general health and 10,000 steps or more for weight loss. From a different perspective, James O. Hill, Ph.D., at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, recommends taking 2,000 more steps

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Resources

Walking Programs and Logs

America on the Move
free on-line goal-setting, logging and tracking
www.americaonthemove.org

ICAA Walking Program
correct posture, stride technique, 10-week program, Functional U, Vol. 2, No. 5
www.icaa.cc/archives

Pedometers
choosing and buying pedometers, free Step Counters Pedometer Program
www.walking.about.com

Step Up to Better Health
10-week program and online log
aarp.stepuptobetterhealth.com

The First Step Program
pedometer-based program for persons with type 2 diabetes
www.uwo.ca/actage/new/first_step.htm

Adventure Walking

Fitness caching
walk to a hidden cache using coordinates and GPS (some wheelchair accessible)
The Journal on Active Aging, July-August 2004, www.icaa.cc/archives

Orienteering Federation
walk to a series of points shown on a map
www.us.orienteeing.org

Volksmarch
non-competitive 6-mile (10 kilometer) trail walks (some wheelchair accessible)
www.ava.org/walk

Walking the World
Walk 500 program, walks for 50+ through Europe and other locations
www.walkingtheworld.com



More information

Motivation and fun exercise are the themes of 4 sessions on walking at Active Aging 2005:

- GPS adventure quest senior style
- Turn walking into a total body fitness program...just add poles
- Walking in the full presence of life
- What wonderful events happened on your walk today?

www.icaa.cc/events

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(about 1 mile) above the number walked now and eating 100 fewer calories (about a pat of butter) for weight loss.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends older adults experience 30 minutes of moderate-intensity cardiorespiratory exercise at least five days a week, and more minutes for fitness and weight management.

As your participants' logs enable them to relate the number of steps to the amount of time it takes them to walk, they will be able to work on time goals to meet the Surgeon General's recommendation. •

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References

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General recommendations. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved April 11, 2005, from http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/recommendations/older_adults.htm

Hill, J. O. America on the Move. Retrieved April 11, 2005, from <http://www.americaonthemove.org/WActiveLiving.asp?PageID=8>

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ICAA member benefits

Client handouts



Print-ready tools keep your clients informed

Satisfy your clients' hunger for knowledge with educational handouts. Simply download the free handouts, insert your company info and photocopy or print.

These 1 to 4 page learning tools feature topics such as:

- Check your walking pattern
- 10 ways to age successfully
- Choosing shoes: a guide for people with diabetes
- Resistance exercises to strengthen the lower extremities
- High blood pressure: what you can do about it

Hand out after class, stack at the reception desk, post on bulletin boards and insert in welcome packets.

It's easy to access this member benefit. Go to www.icaa.cc and enter your member number and password. Click on "Member support tools" at the top of the left column. On the next page you'll find a link to "Client handouts."

Download and print the PDF files using the free Adobe Reader (www.adobe.com).

Questions? Call Shari at
866-335-9777



Daily activity walking log

Month: _____

Week: _____

Goal for this week: _____ more steps

	Number of steps all day	Number of steps in planned walk	Time used for planned walk	Notes:
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				
Total for week				



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