

Plan a self-led visit to your local canal or river

This planning document will help you plan a self-led visit to your local canal or river. We have included an example risk assessment to give you an idea of what to include on yours.

We would ask you to comply with any reasonable instructions given on the towpath, e.g. by our staff or through signage and to ensure your school has public liability insurance.



Six simple steps to planning a safe visit to your local canal or river:

1. Carry out a pre-visit.

This will help you to work out how to move your group safely around, where the best access points are, what the towpath conditions are like and how long it will take to get to different locations.

Check whether you have mobile phone reception at your chosen site. How will you travel to the canal or river? Are there parking and toilet facilities? Is it accessible for a coach?



2. Complete your risk assessment.

Follow your school or organisation's guidelines on completing your risk assessment. This will help you identify the hazards and plan your safety measures. You can use the risk assessment at the bottom of this document for guidance.

3. Tell us when and where you would like to visit.

The waterway network is over 200 years old and requires ongoing maintenance. Before you visit, contact us to ensure there are no planned engineering works taking place on the towpath. Email explorers@canalrivertrust.org.uk

4. Plan your visit.

Follow your school or organisation guidelines on how many adults you need to accompany your group. Make sure all your adults are briefed before the visit. Make sure you have somebody responsible for first aid.

Carry a mobile phone and know who to contact in an emergency and your location (postcode or name of nearest road with access). Carry a recovery aid (such as a length of rope) to help somebody in the water. Make sure you have parental permission for the children in your group and ensure the children are wearing suitable clothing and footwear.

5. Use the Waterside Safety Challenge.

Before your visit make sure your children know how to be safe near water by using the water safety activities from canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers/water-safety Teach the water safety message 'Stay SAFE near water – Stay Away From the Edge'. If you haven't already done so, order your free water safety booklets.

6. On the day.

Check the weather forecast and postpone the visit if necessary. Remind the children of the safety message – Stay Away From the Edge. Have fun! You can tell us about your visit and send a photograph to explorers@canalrivertrust.org.uk Share a photograph with us on Twitter: @CRTE Explorers or Facebook: Canal & River Trust – Explorers.

Visit requirements:

The Canal & River Trust welcomes school and group visits to the waterways and is happy to help you with any queries you may have about your visit. Email explorers@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Your school/group will need:

- Public liability insurance.
- To provide your risk assessment on request (use the risk assessment at the end of this document as a guide).
- To comply with any reasonable instructions from Canal & River Trust authorised staff or volunteers.



TOP

TIP



RISK ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR GUIDANCE ONLY

Activity: Trail/Scavenger Hunt/Bird Watching/Canal Walk	Location:
Activity Date:	

Hazard identified	Persons at risk	Measures required to control the risk	Risk factor	Action to be taken By (Name)	Date completed and signature
Uneven ground due to tree roots, etc. Slips, trips or falls	All participants	Visit location beforehand to determine route. All participants told to walk slowly and to look where they are going.	Med		
Irritable and poisonous plants e.g. Nettles. Giant Hogweed, etc.	All participants	Participants told how to identify irritable plants and to try to stay away from them (information available from Canal & River Trust on request). Pre-activity safety talk to include this issue including some 'dos' and 'don'ts'. Staff to be aware of emergency procedures in place should any problems arise. All participants to wash hands as soon as possible after any activity and before eating or drinking. At least one member of team to be first aid trained and to have a kit on site.	Low		
Use of equipment for surveying, bird watching, etc	All participants	All participants receive instruction before using any surveying or bird watching equipment.	Low		
Use of equipment for scavenger hunting/bug hunting, etc	All participants	All participants receive instruction before using any equipment.	Low		
Moving heavy objects such as logs, stones, rocks, etc	All participants	Young participants should not be allowed to lift any heavy objects and should always have help lifting other small logs and stones. Older participants should have instruction in moving larger items before activity commences.	Med		
Contact with insects, etc	All participants	Participants instructed with regard to insect types they may encounter. Organisers to be aware of any participant who are known to suffer from allergic reactions. Organisers are made aware of emergency procedures and are equipped with mobile phones to contact emergency services.	Med		
Getting lost	All participants	Instructions given at start of activity. National guidelines followed with regard to ratios of organisers/participants. Regular head counts. Lost participant procedure.	Med		

Falling into canal/river	All participants	Site visit required to determine route. Participants to be supervised at all times. Avoid overcrowding near the water's edge. Participants are briefed before commencement of activity. Organisers are advised training in basic rescue procedures is preferable. Organisers should carry rescue aids as part of the emergency procedure. Organisers are advised to walk the path between the participants and the canal or reservoir's edge where appropriate and dependant on the age range of participants. Remember SAFE: Stay Away From Edge	Med	
Operable structures such as locks, swing bridges, etc.	All participants	Participants to be supervised at all times when near any operable structure. Where possible and if not causing an obstruction viewing should be undertaken from a footbridge if present. Brief participants with regard to crossing the canal and using a footbridge if present and not the lock gates.	Med	
Boats	All participants	Participants to avoid going near boats and briefed with regard to moored boats and entrapment between boat and bank.	Med	

ASSESSED BY:	Name:	Signature:	Date:
AUTHORISED BY:	Name:	Signature:	Date:

For further support on writing risk assessments and safeguarding, please contact your Scouting/ Guiding headquarters (for Scouts & Guides/Brownie groups) or the Department for Education (for schools).

Girlguiding Association: <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk>

Scouting Association: <https://www.scouts.org.uk>

Department for Education: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>