

Best foot forward – it's National Walking Month



Put your car keys away and forget about your travel pass – it's time to do a bit of walking. You'll feel better and you'll be doing something for the environment, too.

National Walking Month is organized every May by *Living Streets*, an organization that campaigns for the rights and the needs of pedestrians – indeed, the organization was previously known as the *Pedestrians' Association*. The association's aim is to make streets safe, attractive and enjoyable spaces for people to live, work, shop and play. By putting people (rather than vehicles) first *Living Streets* wants to create streets and spaces where people feel happier, healthier and more sociable.

The goal of *National Walking Month* is to make people more aware of the benefits of walking. These include the physical health benefits of becoming fitter; the environmental benefits of not using the car; the financial benefits of not using private or public transport; the delight of local discoveries – seeing more of your local area on foot; the social benefits of walking with other people, whether family, friends or work colleagues and finally the stress relief that comes from walking – walking can clear your head and is good for your mental health. Experts recommend that we should all be taking 10,000 steps a day – that means walking around five miles or eight kilometres daily.

Walk to School week, 19 to 24 May, is part of the month's activities and its aim is to encourage parents and schools to send children to school on foot, rather than take them in the car or let them use public transport. Its longer term aim is to make walking to school part of every child's daily routine, not just during this one special week.

Walk to School week in May was launched in 1995 with only five participating schools and nearly twenty years later, there are over one million children who take part. In autumn, October is *International Walk to School Month* and each year, primary school pupils from across the UK join forces with children in more than 40 countries worldwide to celebrate the benefits of walking to school.

Similarly, there is a *Walk to Work* week, 12 to 16 May, where adults are encouraged to do some of their commuting on foot. Getting off the bus a stop early or parking a few streets away are good ways to add more steps

to the daily total. Walking home is a great way to unwind and leave the stresses of the workplace behind. And during their working day, rather than having lunch at their desks or in the canteen, people can take a walk and get some fresh air.

Inspired? So what are you waiting for? It's time to get walking and talking!

To find out more about *National Walking Month*, click [here](#).

And if you would like to use *National Walking Month* as a topic in your classroom from A1.1 or B1.1 upwards, we have provided you with two activities. You'll find them in the following **Teacher's notes** and on the **Worksheet**.

Teacher's notes

Activity 1

Alternative A (Level A1.1 upwards, 15+ mins)

- On the board write: *National Walking Month*. Ask students what they think it is.
- Explain *National Walking Month* and its aims.
- Ask students what benefits walking can provide.
On the board write: *save money, keep fit, family time, find new things, clear head, friendly to the environment*.
- Help with unknown words if necessary and encourage discussion.
- Ask students to decide on the three benefits they think are the most important.

Alternative B (Level B1.1 upwards, 15+ mins)

- Copy Activity 1, **What's good about walking?** (see Worksheet) – one for each student.
- On the board write: *National Walking Month*.
- Explain *National Walking Month* and its aims.
- Ask students what benefits walking can provide.
- Give each student a copy of **What's good about walking?** and ask students to complete the exercise.
- Check answers together.
- Ask students to discuss the three benefits they think are the most important with their partner.

Key: 1d), 2e), 3f), 4a), 5c), 6b)

Activity 2 (Level A1.1 upwards, 40+ / 15+ mins)

- Copy Activity 2, **What can you see?** (see Worksheet) – one for each student.
- *EITHER*: take students on a short twenty-minute walk in the locality
OR: ask them to think of the walk from their home to the classroom. They should write down the things they can see or they did see.
- If you go on a walk, keep the group together and keep students talking. Remember, one of the aims of *National Walking Month* is that it is sociable. Students might like to use their smartphones to take photographs.
- Allow students ten minutes to complete the table on the Worksheet with the things they did see on the walk together or on their own journey from home.
- It is unlikely that anyone will be able to complete all the 26 letters. More confident students will be kept busy trying to find the more challenging letters.
- Give two points for an answer that only one student has got (i.e. a thing only he/she has written down), and one point if more than one student has got that answer (i.e. has written something that others have written as well). Be flexible with your point giving!

Worksheet



Activity 1: What's good about walking?

There are many benefits of walking. Match each phrase with its explanation.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1 better shape | a) make new discoveries in your area |
| 2 fatter wallet | b) cut your environmental footprint |
| 3 family time | c) blow away the cobwebs and relieve stress |
| 4 hidden treasures | d) burn calories and get fitter |
| 5 clearer head | e) save the cost of petrol |
| 6 carbon buster | f) go out for a walk together or take the kids to school |

Which three benefits do you think are the most important? Talk to your partner about your choices.

Activity 2: What can you see?

Complete the table with things you see on your walk.

A	N
B	O
C	P
D	Q
E	R
F	S
G	T
H	U
I	V
J	W
K	X
L	Y
M	Z