

**JUST.
GET
ACTIVE**

THE WALKING SPORTS GROUP GUIDE



**A GUIDE FOR ANYONE WHO WANTS TO
START THEIR OWN WALKING SPORTS GROUP**

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THE BASICS



WHO ARE JUST GET ACTIVE?

We're Just Get Active – an initiative set up by **Just**, one of the UK's leading providers of retirement financial solutions.

We're dedicated to helping older adults get active, and enjoy a happier and healthier life. We believe walking sports are a wonderful way to get active and have fun. So we've made it our mission to spread the word.

You can learn more about Just Get Active and walking sports on our website - justgetactive.co.uk.

AN INTRODUCTION TO WALKING SPORTS

Walking sports are just what they sound like. They're versions of sports like football, cricket, or hockey that follow the rules of the standard game, but the players walk instead of run. They're great if you want to get involved in sport without the strenuous pace and intense contact.

WHY PLAY WALKING SPORTS?

Walking sports offer an enjoyable and gentler way to get active, which is perfect if you're recovering from an injury or illness or if you're just not as sprightly as you used to be.

They're a great source of regular exercise but trust us – it's no 'walk in the park'. Keeping pace with your opponents and the stop-start nature means you'll work up a sweat in no time but feel all the better for it. Then there are the mental health benefits – we promise walking sports will lift your spirits and put a spring in your step.

Sport of any kind has so many benefits for both your physical and mental health – it reduces the risk of many illnesses, from heart disease to dementia, as well as combating loneliness and depression. So, we're here to make it as easy as possible for you to be part of a sporting community.

The walking sports community offers you the opportunity to meet new, like-minded people in a friendly and inclusive setting. From friendly competition on the pitch to catching up over a coffee, it's social from start to finish.

If you want to get involved in walking sports, this guide will help you 'hit the ground walking' today!

You can learn more about walking sports on our website - justgetactive.co.uk.



SETTING UP YOUR OWN WALKING SPORTS GROUP

So, if you're interested in walking sports but there's nothing available in your area, or you'd simply like to set up your own activity – what can you do?

Why not start your own walking sports group? It's a wonderful way to get fit, get together with friends and meet new people. By starting the first walking sports group in your area, you could positively impact your community and make a difference to peoples' lives.

Your new group may just be for a few of your friends, or you may have bigger plans to grow a few groups across different sports.

Whatever your ambitions, our guide will give you all the information you need to get started.



DECIDE ON A SPORT

First things first – what sport do you want to get involved in?

Maybe you want to revisit a sport you played when you were younger, or perhaps you'd like to try something different.

Every walking sport is different, so it's important to find one that suits you. Are you a raring rugby player, nifty netballer or football fan? You can explore six different walking sports – touch rugby, basketball, cricket, hockey, netball and football – on [justgetactive.co.uk](https://www.justgetactive.co.uk).

FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH THE RULES

Each governing body of the sport has formulated a set of rules and guidelines. We recommend getting to know the rules before attempting to set up your own group, as they may differ slightly from the rules you're used to.

Follow the links below for the rules of some popular walking sports, direct from their governing bodies.

- The FA - **Walking football rules**
- England Netball - **Walking netball rules**
- England Hockey - **Walking hockey rules**
- Walking Basketball UK - **Walking basketball rules**
- U3A - **Walking cricket rules**

Here at Just Get Active we encourage you to use these rules as a foundation, but you can always adapt the rules to suit your group.

Although if you're feeling ambitious and want to enter leagues and tournaments, be aware that you may have to play by the rules set by the governing body.

GET KIT SORTED

Active wear

When you start organising your first walking sports sessions, you may get people asking what they should wear.

The good news is that most sports can be played in basic active wear, such as cotton t-shirts, shorts and tracksuits. As with any sports, it's important to dress appropriately for the weather – whether it's cold, rain or shine!

Our Just Get Active blog has a helpful article on **putting together a walking sports wardrobe**.

Shoes

What footwear players should wear depends on the sport and the surface you play on. For example:

Indoor court, wooden or concrete flooring

Trainers should be suitable although you can purchase specific indoor sports shoes if need be, which can be in the form of boots with indoor grip. These are great for indoor football. For most of the rest of the walking sports, trainers with a decent grip will be suitable. The great thing is that because walking sports are non-contact, they can be played indoors during the cold winter months and rainy days.

Grass

In summer, moulded stud boots are best for football and touch rugby. If you're playing cricket on dry grass, trainers with a decent grip will do. In the wetter winter months, screw-on stud boots are best for gripping.

Astro turf or 3G/4G surface

For these surfaces, the best options are astro turf boots, moulded stud boots or trainers with good grip.

Bibs

As the organiser you may want to purchase some coloured bibs so you can distinguish teams during games. Before you spend your own money, try contacting the governing body of your sport as they may donate some bibs or offer a discount.



FIND EQUIPMENT

Your equipment needs will depend on your chosen sport. The equipment will be the same as what is required for the non-walking version of the sport. We recommend checking with the sport's governing body if you're not sure about equipment. See the 'useful resources' section for more information.

If you're starting out small, you might not necessarily need all of the equipment right away. For example, a kick-about with friends in the park may just require jumpers for goalposts. There is even a way to play netball without the nets!

If your chosen facilities doesn't have equipment you can use, it's worth getting in touch with your local authority or the governing body of your sport. They may have some funding available for sports projects. Each local authority should have a sports development officer you can speak to.

There is also no harm in charging a small fee for your sessions to cover costs. Walking Sports participants will generally pay between £2.50 and £4.00 for an hour's session.

FIND A VENUE

The next thing you need to do is find a venue. Depending on your sport, you'll have different requirements for facilities and even the surface you play on. It could be as simple as popping down to your local park or public sports pitches, where most sports can be played.

It's important to stay safe and make sure that your chosen location is appropriate for playing sport, to avoid injury.

Try our options below to find a venue that's right for you.

Local authority or council

Contact your local authority or council as they will have a list of potential facilities available to rent at reasonable rates, or maybe they'll let you use them for free if you're not charging participants for the sessions.

Schools, colleges and universities

Schools, colleges and universities often have sports halls or fields that they don't use at certain times, which are often in the evenings. Why not get in touch and see if they're available for booking?

Sports clubs

Your local sports club may be keen to get involved in walking sports, and maybe they'll let you use their facilities. They may have points during the week when their pitches/courts are free, such as during the week in the day time. Write to the Club secretary and propose running a taster session. Clubs are often looking to grow their membership and offer the local community other activities.

Leisure centre

Why not reach out to your local Leisure Centre? These centres are mostly operated on behalf of the local council and usually have excellent sports facilities.

The operators are often eager to grow walking sports groups and utilise their facilities, as they also are often less busy in the daytime during the week. The Leisure Centre may even be willing to help promote your group to their members.



Other things to consider

Once you've found a venue, there are a few other things that are worth considering to make sure it works for you. Such as:

- Is there a café or somewhere to get food and drink, or socialise after a game?
- Are there water fountains nearby?
- Is it accessible by public transport?
- Can it be used in all weather conditions?
- Is there parking? If yes, does the parking cost?
- Is there a secure place to store valuables?

HEALTH AND SAFETY

As with all physical activity, it's important to be aware of health and safety. We recommend checking with your local authority, governing body or the Club itself for advice, and following the rules laid out by the facility you're using.

TRAINING QUALIFICATIONS

The National Governing Body of the sport you're involved in will most likely want to help you or your fellow volunteers progress, so keep an eye out for courses in coaching, refereeing or first aid.

GROW YOUR WALKING SPORTS GROUP

Once you've got your equipment, kit and venue sorted, you're ready to grow your group! Take a look below at our best advice for recruiting players and volunteers.

BUILD A TEAM

The most fun walking sports are played in teams! So once you've decided to set up your own group, you'll need to find people who want to get involved.

Start with friends and family

It might seem obvious, but a good place to start is with friends and family. You may know some people who might be interested, or you could ask them to spread the word.

Be active on social media

A great way to get the word out is to post on social media. If you have your own Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account, you could post about the walking sports group. Hopefully, you'll receive some replies from interested friends and followers.

If you're feeling up to it, you could even set up your own social media accounts for your walking sports group. This could be a great way to reach more people and promote sessions. Don't forget that using relevant hashtags such as #walkingsports or #walkingfootball (or similar) will help more people see your posts.

If you're not social media savvy – don't worry! You could ask a friend or family member to help you.

Use Facebook

Facebook in particular is a great place to spread the word. You could find relevant Facebook groups to post in about your walking sports sessions – such as a local community Facebook group or the Just Get Active Facebook page.

You can also set up Facebook events for free, for taster days or the sessions themselves. As long as the Facebook event is set as 'public' it can be shared and anyone can view the details and decide if they want to attend.

Create flyers and posters

You could create some simple flyers or posters to promote your walking sports group. Try to keep the design simple, so that the most important details are clear. You'll need to include the 'What? Where? When? And how much?' as a minimum. You should also consider putting contact details in case anyone has any questions, or the details of your social media accounts. Adding a few lines about what walking sports are and the benefits is also a good idea!

Ask local businesses – such as cafes, post offices or libraries – if you can put up your posters or give them some flyers. You can also ask your council if you can put something up on your local community board.

Get in the paper

Is your group unique to your town or village? Try getting in touch with your local newspaper to cover a story about your walking sports group. Walking sports are growing in popularity, but awareness is still low. The press may take an interest with an editorial feature, which would help promote your group for free!



Tell us to put you on our activity finder

We have an activity finder on our Just Get Active website that helps our visitors find walking sports activities close to them.

Once you have started running sessions, let us know so we can add you to our activity finder. Also, follow our Just Get Active Facebook page. You can keep an eye out for people asking about groups in your area, where you can reply with details about your group.

Don't do it alone

Promoting something like this can be a big job for one individual. If your venue is a Leisure Centre or Sports Centre, they may help you promote your group to their existing members. They could put flyers on their reception desk, promote your sessions in their newsletters, or talk about you on their social media channels.

Don't underestimate 'word of mouth'

Word of mouth is still one of the best forms of marketing. Once you have a group established, ask your members to tell their friends and family about it. You could run 'bring a friend for free' sessions – as some people may be interested, but feel nervous about coming on their own.

RECRUITING HELPERS

As your walking sports group grows, you may find that you need some help with the sessions. Maybe you'll need help with coaching, organising the sessions, promoting the group, or even just providing tea and cake!

Types of helping

- Organising and running sessions
- Coaching
- Refereeing
- Drinks and snacks
- Social media management
- First Aid

The tips in the section 'Build a team' will also work for recruiting volunteers for your walking sports group.

One tip for recruiting volunteers in particular, is to promote the volunteering as a way to develop their skills and experience. You may find a college student doing a sports coaching course who wants to get work experience, a student who is interested in marketing, or an amateur baker who would be happy to provide treats for after the sessions.

WHAT MAKES A WELCOMING WALKING SPORTS GROUP?

One thing that is crucial to the success of any walking sports group is how welcome you make your participants feel. Walking sports is a great way to be active, but some people also use it as a way to socialise and enjoy the company of others.

Take a look at our top tips below for making sure your walking sports group is welcoming to all:

Make it all inclusive

One of the wonderful things about walking sports is that it can be enjoyed by almost anyone. Whether you're an ex-professional or a complete beginner; a man or a woman; 50 or approaching 100; there's a place for you in walking sport.

Our advice would be to keep your walking sports group as inclusive as possible, so that everyone is able to enjoy the benefits it can bring.

Don't forget the social side of things

Walking sports is increasingly becoming an effective way to tackle isolation and loneliness in older people. It's a wonderful way to meet new people and socialise, so why not make the most of it?

You could arrange a spread of tea and biscuits for after your sessions, or you could organise regular outings with your group. Those who fancy it can come along, and you might make a big difference to someone's life.

Friendly competition

A little bit of friendly competition is always good, but try to keep it light-hearted. It can be easy for players with a competitive streak get carried away, which may be off-putting to people who may be new to the sport or less physically able.

If you have enough players, you can always put together teams based on ability so that everyone's playing at a level they're comfortable with.

Stay in touch

Once you've got a group together, how do you keep them excited and engaged? You could create a Facebook group to share the latest news or (with their permission) add the players to a WhatsApp group so you can all stay in touch.

If you're feeling up to it, you could email your attendees – updating them with the latest news about your group and timetables for sessions.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Just Get Active

justgetactive.co.uk

Walking rugby

Englandrugby.com

Walking basketball

basketballengland.co.uk

walkingbasketballuk.com

Walking cricket

U3A.org.uk

Walking hockey

walkinghockey.com

englandhockey.co.uk

Walking netball

englandnetball.co.uk

Walking football

thefa.com

CONTACTS

If you have any questions about Just Get Active, or if you would like any advice, please email us at: get-active@wearejust.co.uk

