

# WALK 101

## INTRODUCTION

Walk 101 is based on the Walk Reebok program a comprehensive fitness walking program designed to educate fitness instructors and consumers about the benefits and techniques of walking. According to the National Sporting Goods Association, nearly 70+ million Americans currently participate in a regular walking program, the number one exercise choice in the United States.

Fitness walking, is defined as moderate to brisk walking that often challenges the cardiorespiratory system, it is an inexpensive, convenient and simple activity to perform with minimal risk for injury.

## ***SAFETY TIPS FOR WALKING ON YOUR OWN***

- Always try to walk with a partner.
- Stick to familiar neighborhoods with plenty of activity.
- Know your route. While traveling, check with the hotel desk for safe walking routes.
- Let a friend know your route and estimated walking time. If there is no one to tell, leave a note inside your home in a visible place.
- Varying your route prevents boredom and promotes safety. Never let your route become predictable to others.
- Try to walk in the daylight. Remember, the darkness before sunrise can harbor the same dangers in the dark, choose a well-lit path and wear reflective clothing so you are visible to motorists.
- If you feel that you are being followed by a motor vehicle, turn around and walk the other way, remaining on the same side of the road.
- Walk in the middle of sidewalks rather than close to alleyways, buildings or parked cars.
- Never wear expensive jewelry or carry valuables when walking.
- Observe your environment without distractions. Keep your walkman on low volume or on one ear only.
- Trust your instinct when it tells you something feels unsafe. Turn around, cross the street, or go for help.
- Stay alert, aware and in control. Radiate confidence and purpose.
- Always carry identification and some money in case of emergencies.

## ***HEALTH WALKING***

The HEALTH WALKING technique can best be defined as "strolling". The slowest of the three styles, HEALTH WALKING involves walking at a normal, leisurely pace. Generally it takes anywhere from 16 to 30 minutes to complete one mile.

This kind of walking is an energy efficient style that is particularly appropriate for individuals who are deconditioned, obese, arthritic or who are cardiac patients. HEALTH WALKING is perfect for those who are just starting a regular walking program or for individuals who enjoy the opportunity to stroll and "smell the roses" along the way.

The most important aspect of all forms of walking is good posture. Proper body alignment forms the mechanical foundation for safe and effective walking and allows a person to function and perform efficiently.

The following technique tips are designed for HEALTH WALKING:

1. ***Head:*** The head should be held in a neutral position. This means that the head should be centered so that it is in line with the spine and not leaning towards the right or left shoulder. The chin should be parallel to the ground.

It is very important that the head be comfortably balanced with a minimum of activity of the muscles of the neck. While it may be tempting for walkers to flex the neck to see where they are going, it is just as easy and far more efficient to focus the eyes downward without lowering the chin.

To practice proper head placement, instructors can ask walkers to imagine they are balancing a book on their heads.

2. ***Shoulders:*** The shoulders should be down and back rather than rounded. It is important that the shoulders remain relaxed. Walkers can experience pain in the neck from holding the shoulders in an elevated position of an extended period of time. Tightness in the shoulders can also impair arm swing.
3. ***Chest:*** The chest should be lifted or expanded. A dropped or closed chest results in improper spinal alignment. A useful teaching cue is to ask walkers to imagine that they are being pulled up by a string attached to the sternum.
4. ***Abdominals and buttocks:*** The abdominal muscles should be gently contracted throughout the walk. In addition the buttocks should be tucked under the hips. This creates a posterior pelvic tilt which helps to maintain proper alignment of the lumbar spine.
5. ***Arm Action:*** Arm swing should be natural and comfortable. The elbows should be relaxed as the arms swing in opposition to the legs. The forward swing should never cross the center of the body, and for the sake of efficiency, the arms should swing close to the sides of the body.
6. ***Leg Action:*** The length of each stride should be comfortable. Stride length will vary from one individual to another. According to Meyers (19) stride length is determined by leg length, hamstring tightness and pelvic rotation. A person with short legs, tight hamstrings and limited pelvic rotation will have a shorter stride length than someone with longer legs, flexible hip joints and greater pelvic rotation. Instructors should encourage walkers to find a stride length that is comfortable and efficient.

## ***FITNESS WALKING***

The objective of this walking style is to increase cardiorespiratory fitness and caloric expenditure. To accomplish these goals, most class participants will need to walk at a 13- to 15-minute mile pace (4 to 4.6 miles per hour). Walkers should be completely comfortable and successful with the techniques of HEALTH WALKING before they begin a program using FITNESS WALKING.

FITNESS WALKING builds on the foundation of good posture established while performing HEALTH WALKING. Instructors should now place greater focus on the arm swing and foot placement.

The following technique tips are designed for FITNESS WALKING:

1. ***Posture***: Head up, shoulders down and back, chest up, abdominals contracted and buttocks tucked under the hips.
2. ***Arm-Action***: At about 4 miles per hour (15-minute mile pace), the elbows will automatically begin to flex. A flexed elbow produces a shorter pendulum than does a straight arm which in turn allows the arms to maintain a faster swing. A faster arm swing causes an increase in stride frequency (increase in leg speed).

The movement of the arms is produced at the shoulders, not the elbows. The elbows should be maintained at approximately a 90 degree angle throughout the arm swing. The forward part of the arm swing should not cross the center of the body or swing higher than the top of the walker's sternum. The thumbs should trace an arc from the hips at the waistband to a point in space 6 to 12 inches directly in front of the sternum. The elbows and forearms should be held close to the sides of the body.

Walkers should avoid swinging the arms side to side like "windshield wipers" (elbows close to the body with the forearms hanging and swinging low across the center of the body) or swinging as if "rocking a baby" (elbows swinging up and away from the side of the body). Hands should be held in a loose fist and kept in line with the forearms. The arms naturally move in opposition to the legs.

3. ***Leg Action:*** The knee of the right leg should be almost fully extended when the right foot is planted on the ground (the knee should not be locked). Bending the knee prematurely can cause a bobbing or bouncing action. The goal is to produce a smooth and fluid gait.
4. ***Hip Action:*** The hips or the pelvis will have a slight natural rotation (one hip is forward while the other hip is backward). As walking speed increases so will hip rotation. It is important however, that walkers allow hip rotation to occur naturally.
5. ***Foot Placement:*** At heel plant, the forefoot and toes are raised toward the shins (dorsiflexion). The forefoot is then lowered to the ground with control to avoid slapping or pounding. The foot rolls from heel to toe. The faster the rear leg is brought forward, the faster the rate of walking (stride frequency).
6. ***Forward Lean:*** Around 4 miles per hour, the amount of forward lean tends to increase and walkers experience the feeling of "falling forward" into each step. The forward lean should occur from the ankles and not the waist. Excessive and prolonged forward flexion from the hips can lead to pain and discomfort in the lumbar spine.

**Source:** Walk Reebok Program developed by Ellen Abbott, Dr. Peter Francis, Dr. Lorna Francis, Reebok International and the Reebok Development Team

## WALK 101

### 10 WEEK WALKING PROGRAM

WEEK	DAY OF WEEK	LENGTH OF WALK	ADD ONS
Week 1	Monday Wednesday Friday	10 minutes 10 minutes 10 minutes	
Week 2	Monday Wednesday Friday	10 minutes 12 minutes 10 minutes	
Week 3	Monday Wednesday Friday	12 minutes 15 minutes 12 minutes	Add an incline
Week 4	Monday Wednesday Friday	15 minutes 15 minutes 15 minutes	Add an incline  Add speed for 2 minutes
Week 5	Monday Wednesday Friday	18 minutes 20 minutes 18 minutes	Add an incline Long & easy
Week 6	Monday Wednesday Friday Sunday	18 minutes 20 minutes 18 minutes 15 minutes	Add an incline  Medium speed Easy
Week 7	Monday Wednesday Friday Saturday	20 minutes 20 minutes 25 minutes 20 minutes	Add 2 inclines  Long & easy Medium speed
Week 8	Monday Wednesday Friday Sunday	22 minutes 25 minutes 30 minutes 22 minutes	Add 2 inclines Add speed for 3 minutes  Easy
Week 9	Monday Tuesday Wednesday Friday	25 minutes 25 minutes 25 minutes 20 minutes	Add 2 inclines Add speed for 5 minutes  Medium plus 1 hill
Week 10	Monday Tuesday Wednesday Friday Saturday	25 minutes 30 minutes 25 minutes 20 minutes 15 minutes	Add 2 inclines Add speed for 6 minutes  Add 1 incline

Frequency may also vary depending on the other activity the individual will be doing