1. **What is social media?**
   According to the great social site that is Wikipedia, social media is “interaction among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks”, i.e. an online space for people to chat and share interests.

   Social media is changing the way that organisations and individuals communicate – much as email once did – it’s faster and much more inclusive because it breaks down hierarchies and enables members of the public to talk directly to one another and organisations. Organisations also use it as part of their marketing activity and ‘customer’ engagement.

2. **Why should the Walking for Health schemes use it?**
   1.4 billion people worldwide use Facebook; 490 million users on YouTube each month and 140 million worldwide use Twitter - it’s the way the majority of people (and not just young people) communicate. We also know that digital is overtaking print media as a way that people gather information and news.

   We can use social media to raise awareness of healthy walks and inspire a passion for getting active and staying active.

3. **It’s ever-evolving**
   Social media changes all the time. There are new developments every day. Neither you, or I, can ever know everything. You just need to experiment and share new learning with others – it’s a new way of learning (you can’t just read a manual and know everything).

4. **Have a conversation**
   Social media is a perfect tool to get people talking about your scheme, but you have to go about it in the right way. Think about going to a party – you wouldn’t turn up and start talking about yourself the whole time. The etiquette is to talk and share, not sell things. Social media users are savvy and will spot a sales pitch a mile off (and they won’t be impressed). Respond in a timely fashion and if the conversation moves off the point then take into a private message (so others don’t see it and get confused about what you’re trying to say).

5. **Be personal and professional**
   Individuals use social media to share their interests and to network whether they are
walkers, politicians, journalists, volunteers, members, so talk as to would to a person (i.e. be friendly and down to earth) but always maintain a professional standard – you’re representing your scheme and all the good work it does in the local area.

How to avoid/salvage mistakes. Checks and balances, e.g. switch off the main account when consuming alcohol/not working! If you do make a mistake don’t panic, but think carefully about how to move on and not compound it. Sometimes it’s okay to delete a tweet for example and send another one. Sometimes you need to ride it out.

6. Tailor to your audience
Think about who you are trying to target (the council, health practitioners, the local WI) before you use social media and always remember that unless you are using a private message, everyone can see your posts/tweets.

7. Recruit and nurture
Set time aside to research new people to follow, otherwise you'll only be reaching the same people all the time. Regularly share other organisations’ and individuals’ (relevant) statuses on facebook and start and continue conversations on twitter and facebook. You must interact with others, not just push out your own messages (see 4).

8. Images, questions and hashtags
Questions (eg Fill in the blank: My favourite thing about healthy walking is _____) and images are easy ways to engage and increase follows/likes. Hashtags are also another way to increase reach on twitter eg #walkingworks. It is important to be genuine when asking and responding to questions – people are not forgiving of obvious marketing ploys.

9. Calls to action
Always consider your call to action in all messages. If you want people to attend a walk then give them the link to your scheme webpage website so they can easily find the information they need. People are lazy, especially those on social media, so make it easy for them!

10. Management tools and content
There are many social media management tools you can use to make running your account easier. Using tools like Sprout Social, Hootsuite or Tweetdeck means you can preload tweets and posts to go out at a later date, and make responding to your notifications easier too.

Have a question?
Can’t find what you’re looking for?
We’re here to help!

Contact the team on walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk or call 020 7339 8541