

ALBERTA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION YOUTH RUN CLUB

# WALKING CHAMPIONS HANDBOOK



# WELCOME

## WALKING CHAMPIONS, PRESENTED BY THE AMA YOUTH RUN CLUB

Walking Champions is a free, fun and flexible walking program developed to introduce children and youth to the life-long health and wellness benefits of walking. Walking Champions will increase skills and knowledge about physical activity and get students excited about walking with friends.

Walking Champion Schools will have access to a free downloadable handbook, downloadable challenge and access to events and virtual talks from Canadian Olympians! Walking Champion Schools will also receive existing AMA Youth Run Club resources that support a foundation of physical activity in your school community.

This handbook contains all of the information you'll need to start a Walking Champions program at your school. Please ensure all coaches have the opportunity to read this handbook. In addition, you have access to the full collection of AMA Youth Run Club resources in the Coach's Corner – be sure to check them out!

In an effort to support coaches and our clubs, we have coordinators to help you. The AMA Youth Run Club Coordinators are available by phone at 780-454-4745 or by email at [runclub@everactive.org](mailto:runclub@everactive.org).

Thank you for helping make the AMA Youth Run Club and Walking Champions possible. Good luck to you and your walkers!

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## WALKING IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

Walking can be completed in many different settings. It is a great way to explore and learn more about the environments around you. You can walk in crunchy fall leaves, across snowy fields or through rain puddles. Below we share a few easy ideas of how to explore local environments while walking.

- Use the Map and Explore Your 2.4 tool (page 4) or your school's walk zone to establish a walking area. Identify parks, trails, water sources, playgrounds, and other cool destinations that you'd like to visit within this space.
- Plan time for a nature scavenger hunt (page 4) or a sensory walk where participants take time to explore, with all of their senses, what they see, hear, smell, touch, and taste.
- Try Mindful Walking using the Be Fit for Life Mindful Walking resource (page 4).
- Walk around a park identifying different plants, trees, insects, or birds (try an app like Seek by iNaturalist, or one of your choice).

## WALKING FOR TRANSPORTATION

Walking Champions is a great way to build important skills like safety awareness, community navigation, problem solving, managing information and more.

- Have participants step up their walking game by encouraging them to walk the whole way to and from school. Walking part of the way is also beneficial, however - work with participants to identify safe drop off locations and walking routes in the neighbourhood around your school. Participants who ride the school bus can join in the fun by walking around the school field before the bell sounds. Remember: youth should strive for 12,000 steps each day.
- A fun, curricular-aligned activity is to identify a safe walking route in your school neighbourhood, using a mapping tool to determine the distance of the route. Encourage participants to walk this route as a school group or with their families and to count each step they take. Have each participant make note of their steps to distance ratio. Can they use this information to calculate how many of their steps it would take to walk a kilometre? Have participants compare their ratios. Are they same? Discuss why or why not.

## WALKING FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION

Sometimes it can be tough to stay motivated to stay active, but it's all about finding what works for you! Interacting with others while you walk can help to keep you motivated and increase participant enjoyment.

Encourage participants to invite a friend to join Walking Champions. Allow opportunities for students to connect with their peers as they walk and make new friends. Having companions to run, walk, bike or be active with is a great motivational tool that makes the experience even more fun.

Coaches have reported that school-based programs like AMA Youth Run Club and Walking Champions have increased their positive relationships with students in their school community.

## WALKING FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

There are many physical and mental health benefits from walking.

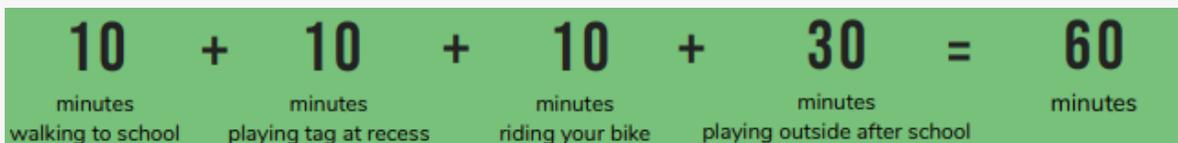
Being active everyday can improve your physical, mental and social health by:

- making your heart stronger
- helping your body to fight off illness and disease
- using up stored energy and helping you sleep better
- relieving stress and helping you relax
- providing chances to make new friends

Ask participants how their overall health has improved by becoming a Walking Champion!

### How active do you need to be?

Doctors want you to be active for at least 60 minutes every day. This includes 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity that gets your heart pumping. You don't have to do all 60 minutes at once! Add up all the activity you do from the time you wake up until you go to bed.



## WALKING FOR SPEED / WALKING FASTER

Once your students are ready for a challenge, you can introduce faster walking. Below are some tips to help introduce walking for speed.

Key points: head upright, look straight ahead, low / relaxed shoulders, hands gently closed, arms at 90-degree angle – swing from mid-chest to hip bone, land heel first with a straight knee (knee can bend as the rear leg is brought forward).

A few possible activities:

- Practise walking on the spot first: stand feet about hip-width apart, raise heel on left foot bending the left knee while keeping the right foot flat on the ground & right knee straight, switch so that the right heel is raised and the left foot is flat on the ground, slowly increase pace, use arms for balance (bent 90 degrees at elbow).
- Walk along a line, aiming to land heel first with a straight knee – slowly at first, and then increase speed while maintaining ‘correct’ technique (heel first, straight knee, relaxed shoulders, eyes looking ahead, use arms for balance – as left heel strikes the ground, the right arm should be forward & vice versa).
- A beanbag (or similar) balanced on head helps ensure that walkers aren’t bouncing up and down and also helps ensure eyes / head are in the correct position (not looking at the ground).
- Try a ‘walking relay’ to add an element of friendly competition – focus on maintaining ‘correct’ technique. Alternatively, set up smaller groups of 4-6 ‘teams’ and play follow the leader with the leader changing every 10-20 seconds on the signal of the program leader’s whistle – try to get teams to walk continuously building up to 5-10 minutes.
- Revisit the activity that participants carried out in Walking for Transportation. Using the skills learned to walk for speed, have participants "speed" walk the same route, counting each step they take. Afterwards, have participants record their steps to distance ratio. Is it different than their initial walking ratio for this route? Brainstorm reasons as to why a difference may exist.



## WALKING MENTORS

Evan Dunfee is our program ambassador. He is the current Olympic and World Championships bronze medalist in the 50km race walk. Evan, who lives in Vancouver, will provide an online session that is sure to inspire and motivate Walking Champion participants. Throughout the school year there will be a few opportunities to join Evan and other Walking Champion Schools for a virtual talk. Check the AMA Youth Run Club website for opportunities.

# RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES TO ADD TO YOUR PROGRAM

## ORANGE MARKS THE SPOT

A fun way to introduce outdoor adventure skills to participants aged 5-12 years!

The Alberta Orienteering Association and the Be Fit For Life Network have partnered to create this resource! There are 6 lesson plans included, and this resource is designed for use in a variety of settings including school, recreation, sport, and community programs. Each lesson is designed to be approximately 1 hour in length. Use these lessons as a guideline to support each activity, allowing for participant and instructor creativity.

[Download the resource for free here](#)



## MINDFUL WALKING

Use these walking meditations as a means to support your physical and mental health; combining mindfulness, being present in the moment, and movement.

Walking is a great way to engage in physical activity, and best of all, it is free and waiting for you outside your front door.

This resource was created in collaboration with Jordan Lynn Bell, M.A. Counselling, CPC. Explore the many benefits of walking and try out a series of walking meditations.

[Download the resource for free here](#)



## MAP AND EXPLORE YOUR 2.4

Map and Explore Your 2.4 is a free mapping tool to encourage schools and families to get out and explore the "walk zone" of 2.4km around the radius of their school or home.

[Download the resource for free here](#)



## Nature Family Scavenger Hunt

Explore the outdoors and develop physical literacy! Check off as many boxes as you can on the Nature Family Scavenger Hunt.

[Download the resource for free here](#)





# EXPLORE YOUR 2.4

SAFE WINTER WALKING STARTS WITH YOU



A pedestrian using Point, Pause, Proceed when crossing a road	A marked crosswalk (may have signs, painted road lines, lights)	A stop sign	Sidewalks cleared of snow and ice	Neighbourhood Watch or Block Parent Program signs
A safe place to go for help, if needed	Lights along sidewalks and pathways	A person wearing bright, reflective clothing	Traffic lights with pedestrian signals	A shared or multi-use pathway, away from road traffic
A winter cyclist wearing a helmet	Other people		A bridge or crossing over water or ice	A vehicle that is cleared of snow and ice
A driver stopped for pedestrians at a crosswalk or intersection	A person dressed for winter weather	Two or more people walking together	A backpack equipped with a light or a reflective strip	A recognizable landmark (so we know where we are)
Vehicles being driven a safe speed	A police officer or peace officer	A school AMA Safety Patrol team	A vehicle parked 5 metres from a stop sign	A person walking without distractions (not using earbuds or a cell phone)

Suggestions for teachers:



- These squares are intended as conversation starters. Ask students how each helps them to feel safe in their community. The sheet can be used for Bingo, I Spy, or even a scavenger hunt!
- For younger grades, plan a route with your class for a 30 minute walk and see how many items you can spot during this time.
- For older grades, plan a route and challenge students to find: one row/column, two rows/columns, a diagonal line, an X, four corners or as many squares as they can!



Interested in learning more about Explore Your 2.4?  
 Visit : <https://everactive.org/projects/ast/explore-your-2-4/>



# EXPLORE YOUR 2.4



## SAFE SUMMER ACTIVE TRAVEL STARTS WITH YOU!



A bicycle, scooter or skateboard securely stored	A driver stopped for pedestrians at a crosswalk or intersection	A cyclist using hand signals while riding	A sidewalk, multi-use pathway or designated bike lane cleared of debris	A cyclist who has registered their bike on <a href="http://bikeindex.org">bikeindex.org</a> - you count!
Neighbourhood Watch or Block Parent Program signs	A controlled intersection with a pedestrian crossing signal	A person wearing closed toe shoes while cycling, scootering or skateboarding	A cyclist riding in a designated bike lane or on the right hand side of a multi-use path	A vehicle parked 5 metres from a stop sign
A person wearing a helmet while riding a bike, scooter or skateboard	A person wheeling in a controlled manner		A cyclist performing a safety check on their bike - you count!	A driver wearing sunglasses
A wheeler walking their equipment at a crosswalk	A bicycle equipped with a bell	A walker or wheeler dressed in bright clothing	A pedestrian using Point, Pause, Proceed when crossing a road	A bicycle equipped with a water bottle and holder
A safe place to go for help, if needed	A pedestrian wearing a sun hat	A person walking or wheeling without distractions (such as earbuds)	A shared or multi-use pathway, away from road traffic	Two or more people walking or wheeling together

Suggestions for teachers or caregivers:

- These squares are intended as conversation starters. Ask students how each helps them to feel safe while actively traveling in their community. The sheet can be used for Bingo, I Spy, or even a scavenger hunt!
- For younger grades, plan a route with your class for a 30 minute walk and see how many items you can spot during this time.
- For older grades, plan a route and challenge students to find: one row/column, two rows/columns, a diagonal line, an X, four corners or as many squares as they can!



Interested in learning more about Explore Your 2.4?

Visit : <https://everactive.org/projects/ast/explore-your-2-4/>



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