



# Lowland Leader Skills Checklist



## Introduction

This skills checklist is designed to enable you, as a Lowland Leader candidate, to both record what you have covered as your training progresses e.g. as a technical diary and, at the close of your course, reflect on the syllabus topics covered during your Lowland Leader training allowing you to rate yourself using the 'learning stage' described below.

It is hoped that this process will then assist you in completing your Action Plan (which you can share and discuss with your course director at your end of course debrief) which will guide you in consolidating and developing your experience and skills post training and pre-assessment.

When reflecting you might find it useful to refer back to the Lowland Leader Candidate Handbook. In addition our publication [Hill Walking](#) details many of the techniques that might be used by a Lowland Leader and will be useful for refreshing your memory of specific techniques or skills covered at training.

## How to appraise yourself

The syllabus is broken down into headings. Against each competency you can give yourself a 'learning stage' number – each number 1-3 corresponds with a description as detailed below. Learning stage 3 would very broadly equate with the degree of competency you'd expect from a qualified and experienced Lowland Leader.

## Learning stage descriptions

### Cognitive or understanding phase (Learning stage 1)

In the first stage of learning performances are inconsistent and success is not guaranteed. Performing the skill requires all of the candidate's attention and so they rely on the trainer for cues. This is a process of trial and error. Correct performances must be reinforced through external feedback.

### Associative or verbal motor phase (Learning stage 2)

Performances are becoming more consistent as knowledge and skills are being formed. While the simpler parts of the performance now look fluent and are well learned, the more complex elements require most of the candidate's spare attention. The candidate is starting to get a sense of internal 'kinaesthetic' and 'cognitive' feedback when they perform or apply a skill well. They are starting to detect and correct their own errors.

### Autonomous or motor phase (Learning stage 3)

In the final stage of learning, performances have become consistent, fluid and 'unconsciously competent'. The knowledge and skills involved are well learned and stored in the long-term memory. There is now spare attention which can be focused on group members and adapting appropriate leadership approaches and techniques as applied to situations. To retain the new skill at this level, it must be regularly practiced to reinforce the motor and cognitive programmes.

**Management and decision making** - Lowland Leaders have responsibilities as a group leader with regards to the care and safety of the group. This includes safety management, their own leadership behaviours and ethos as well as dealing with hazards and emergencies. They will be able to:

|  | LEARNING STAGE | NOTES |
|--|----------------|-------|
| <b>1 Leader Responsibilities</b>   |                |       |
| 1.1 Explain their general responsibilities to the group and, where appropriate, to parents/guardians, the organising authority, committee or manager of the activity, the outdoor user and the general public.                         |                |       |
| 1.2 Explain their specific responsibilities to choose appropriate objectives, to complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed for the activity.   |                |       |
| 1.3 Demonstrate an understanding of current legislation and the legal responsibilities that relate to the care of groups under their charge, including safeguarding issues specific to supervising young people and vulnerable adults. |                |       |
| 1.4 Demonstrate an awareness of the variety of barriers to participation, including mental and physical disability, ethnicity, fitness/health and be aware of the impact of various medical conditions.                                |                |       |
| 1.5 Be able to evaluate the experience and signpost towards further participation.   |                |       |
| <b>2. Leadership and decision making</b>   |                |       |
| 2.1 The Leader demonstrates adaptable leadership behaviours and decision-making.   |                |       |
| 2.1.1 Monitor the group, environmental conditions and activity, and can adapt their behaviours and decisions to meet ongoing safety, group and task requirements.  |                |       |
| 2.1.2 Be consistent and confident in their decision making to achieve positive outcomes and communicate these clearly to the group.  |                |       |
| <b>Vision</b> – The leader is a positive role model and aims to inspire others.  |                |       |
| 2.3 Articulate clear and agreed values for their group; lead by example; and behave how they want the group to behave.   |                |       |
| <b>Support</b> – The leader creates a positive and supportive environment for the group.   |                |       |
| 2.4 Recognise, respect and adapt to individual needs, differences, strengths and abilities.  |                |       |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 2.5 Encourage independent learning; establish an environment where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities and provide clear and positive feedback to support this                              |  |  |
| <b>Challenge</b> – The leader provides relevant and appropriately challenging experiences.  |  |  |
| 2.6 Agree group goals and calibrate the level of challenge to individual abilities and motivations.   |  |  |
| 2.7 Encourage and support the group and individuals to be part of the decision-making process and encourage them to solve their own problems.   |  |  |
| The leader understands the Mountain Training ethos of leadership and has developed their own. They should be able to:   |  |  |
| 2.8 Articulate their own leadership ethos and beliefs along with those of Mountain Training.  |  |  |
| 2.9 Acknowledge and describe a range of leadership approaches, models and associated ethos.   |  |  |
| <b>3. Planning and weather</b>  |  |  |
| Prior planning  |  |  |
| 3.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the scope of the Lowland Leader qualification and plan walks that lie within this terrain. Know where to find information to assist with the planning of walks. |  |  |
| 3.2 Choose objectives appropriate to the experience, skills and motivation level of the group, the prevailing conditions and the leader's own experience and ability.                               |  |  |
| 3.3 Complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed.  |  |  |
| 3.4 Build in flexibility when planning routes; respond to changing circumstances.   |  |  |
| Weather   |  |  |
| 3.5 Interpret and use reliable sources of weather information. Recognise and continuously evaluate the effect of weather on route selection, equipment choice and activity.                         |  |  |

#### 4 Hazards and emergency procedures

##### Hazards

4.1 Demonstrate the ability to recognise and manage common hazards in the environment whilst leading groups, including:

- Badly eroded trails, uneven and wet sections.
- A variety of man-made features e.g. stiles, stepped decking, steps etc
- Animals; both livestock and wild
- Roads and traffic, including awareness of the Rules for Pedestrians in The Highway Code (UK) and the Rules For the Road (Ireland)
- Other users and their needs e.g. runners, bikers and horses
- Working environments e.g. farmyards, quarries, forestry operations
- Water features such as rivers or lakes
- Poor visibility

##### Emergency procedures

4.2 Be able to select an appropriate first aid kit and additional group equipment suited to the environment and prevailing conditions.

4.3 Deal with common injuries and medical problems in the hills.

4.4 Manage self and group in a variety of different weather conditions including heat, cold, rain and high wind.

4.5 Take appropriate action to ensure the group and the casualty's well-being in the event of an incident or accident including knowing how to get appropriate assistance.

4.6 Plan and follow 'escape routes', using appropriate navigational techniques, to nearby assistance.

4.7 Manage a group to perform a small-scale search for a missing person.

4.8 Explain the causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment of sunburn, hypothermia and heat disorders.

**Technical competence** - Lowland Leaders will be personally competent hill walkers who are able to provide safe walking experiences for novice groups and individuals. To fulfil this role effectively they will be able to:

| <b>5 Equipment</b>  |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 5.1 Demonstrate knowledge of personal and group equipment required for day walks considering the environment and prevailing weather conditions.   |  |  |
| 5.2 Choose appropriate food and drink for day walks.  |  |  |
| 5.3 Demonstrate an understanding of additional equipment required by a leader.  |  |  |
| 5.4 Be able to pack equipment effectively for personal and group use.   |  |  |
| 5.5 Demonstrate an understanding of the design and construction of equipment, including its material characteristics, care and maintenance.   |  |  |
| <b>6 Walking styles</b>   |  |  |
| 6.1 Demonstrate good practice with regard to individual walking skills: pace, rhythm, foot placement, conservation of energy, balance, and coordination.  |  |  |
| <b>7. Navigation</b> - Lowland Leaders should have the ability to choose from a range of techniques and select those that are appropriate to the terrain and conditions. They should be able to:                            |  |  |
| 7.1 Navigate using a variety of commonly used maps and understand the use of scales and symbols.  |  |  |
| 7.2 Demonstrate an understanding how contours & other cartographic methods are used to represent relief & use them to effectively to navigate in the terrain. Be able to recognise topographical features in the landscape. |  |  |
| 7.3 Orientate the map. Relate the map to the ground and vice versa. Recognise key features in the landscape and identify them on a map.   |  |  |
| 7.4 Be able to relocate efficiently in a range of situations. Provide six figure grid reference on doing so.  |  |  |
| 7.5 Measure distance accurately on a variety of maps and calculate how long it will take to get from one location to another.   |  |  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 7.6 Effectively measure distance travelled on the ground using appropriate techniques, in complex terrain incl. accurate timing. |  |  |
| 7.7 Use a compass effectively to indicate general direction, a footpath or linear feature.                                       |  |  |
| 7.8 Navigate competently in poor visibility due to weather conditions or darkness.   |  |  |
| 7.9 Explain and use the information given on maps with regard to rights of way and access to land.                               |  |  |
| 7.10 Describe the benefits and limitations of using handheld GPS devices.  |  |  |

**8. Teaching and learning skills** - Lowland Leaders should be able to teach others and promote learning to ensure the safe enjoyment of lowland walking. They should be able to;

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 8.1 Demonstrate an ability to adapt the teaching style to meet group needs.                          |  |  |
| 8.2 Identify and use appropriate tasks to develop safe group activity.                               |  |  |
| 8.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for evaluating a journey and success of the outcome. |  |  |

**The walking environment** - Lowland Leaders introduce and support people to participate in walking, encouraging sustainable and sympathetic use of the outdoors by all users. They will be able to:

**9. Access, conservation and the environment**

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 9.1 Inspire and enthuse their groups in lowland terrain in the United Kingdom and Ireland and expand their personal knowledge*, appreciation, and understanding of lowland environments.   |  |  |
| 9.2 Demonstrate knowledge of permissive access agreements, rights of way and access legislation such as CRoW Act 2000 and Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the importance of being aware of, and adhering to, access restrictions where relevant. |  |  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 9.3 Explain how to obtain information about access to lowland terrain and know how, and to whom, access issues are reported.   |  |  |
| 9.4 Explain relevant campaigns and codes of good practice such as Countryside Code, Scottish Outdoor Access Code and Leave No Trace, and acknowledge one's responsibility to minimise impact and promote sustainable use of the outdoors.                      |  |  |
| 9.5 Demonstrate knowledge of land management in lowland terrain and the long-term effects of the human pressures created by its multiple uses.   |  |  |
| 9.6 Demonstrate knowledge of relevant conservation legislation as well as the nature of specially designated areas and limitations on their use. Leaders should also show an appreciation for the challenge and complexity of conservation in lowland terrain. |  |  |

\*examples of relevant personal knowledge include flora, fauna, geology, landform processes (geomorphology), local history, heritage and language, place names, folklore, the evolution of our landscape and future challenges.

#### **10. Background knowledge**

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 10.1 Explain the role and ethos of Mountain Training and its schemes, the mountaineering councils and walking clubs. Demonstrate an awareness of the history, traditions and ethics of recreational walking in the UK and Ireland. |  |  |
|--|--|--|

#### **Lowland Leader ACTION PLAN – *Expand as required***

|  |  |
|--|--|
| What is the timescale for doing your assessment?   |  |
| How many Quality Low-Level Days – that meet ALL of the criteria (see below) have you logged?       |  |
| List three syllabus areas that you feel/think you're particularly confident or practised in.       |  |
| List three syllabus areas that you feel/think you require further practice.                        |  |
| What opportunities can you foresee for gaining experience to develop your Lowland Leader skillset? |  |
| Given your answers to the above briefly outline your way forward for becoming a Lowland Leader?    |  |

## Appendix

### Assessment requirements

- You must have attended a Lowland Leader training course (or have been granted exemption)
- You must be familiar with the syllabus
- You must have an up to date logbook (preferably DLOG) with evidence of;
- 20 varied low level walks in the UK and Ireland. This is a minimum requirement. Other personal walking and leadership experience is useful but not essential.
- You must have physically attended and completed (i.e. not online) a first aid course which involved at least two full days or sixteen hours of instruction and included an element of assessment.

Experience gained in other mountain activities is useful, but not a pre-requisite. Some non-UK/ Ireland experience may be included, but should be in terrain and conditions that are similar to the UK/Ireland and must be unguided. Normally any overseas days would be considered as additional experience and should not form a substantial part of the required total.

### Terrain definition for Lowland Leader

A qualified Lowland Leader can lead others on day walks in low-level countryside and woodland environments. Qualification holders are able to manage groups safely during this activity.

### TERRAIN

Low level countryside and woodland in the UK and Ireland meeting the following criteria;

- Walks must follow paths or tracks that are both marked on a map and clearly visible on the ground and that do not require navigation across untracked areas. *There may be situations where crop growth, ploughing or simply heavy leaf fall might obscure a path temporarily, however entry and exit points to such areas will normally be easy to locate.*
- Throughout the walk the group should generally be no more than 3km away from a key access point such as a car park, lay-by or populated area.
- Walks must use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.
- Any potential escape routes should also lie within the scope of the defined terrain for the Lowland Leader qualification.

### EXCLUSIONS

The scheme does not cover;

- Walks which cross open countryside where paths or tracks are not clearly visible.
- Walks which cross any hazardous terrain (e.g. cliffs, very steep slopes, water hazards etc.). *There should be no requirement to cross any hazardous terrain such as very steep slopes or cliffs although it must be recognised that some paths in appropriate lowland terrain may be steep and broken.*
- Walks undertaken in winter conditions. This scheme does not provide training or assessment of the skills required to cope with the hazards of winter conditions, particularly lying snow and ice. 'Summer conditions' are defined by the conditions prevailing and not by the calendar.

### Definition of a Quality Low-level Day

A 'Quality Lowland Day' for the Lowland Leader should take place in lowland terrain in the UK or Ireland.

The quality element lies in such things as the conditions experienced both overhead and underfoot, the exploration of new areas, the terrain covered, the skills deployed and the physical and mental challenge. The experience of a quality day should contribute to knowledge, personal development and associated skill acquisition.

All the following criteria should be fulfilled:

- The individual takes part in the planning and leadership.
- An unfamiliar locality is explored.
- Navigation skills are required.
- Knowledge is increased and relevant skills practised.
- Judgement and decision making is required.
- Four hours or more journey time.

These criteria mean that days as a course member under instruction, a member of a group practising skills, or days spent repeating familiar routes are very unlikely to meet the requirements of a quality day. However, these can be recorded in the appropriate place in your logbook even though they are not suitable for use in meeting the minimum requirements for attending assessment