

WALKING MEETING GUIDE

University of Wisconsin–Madison

WHAT IS A WALKING MEETING

Walking during breaks or over the lunch hour is a common way to get in more steps during the day, but what if you could go on your daily walk while working? Many people assume serious conversations must take place within the office. In reality, the most creative moments take place outside them.

Walking meetings are a great way to get out from behind your desk while having a productive conversation and meeting. This type of meeting isn't new, walking meetings have been used in the past by people like Steve Jobs, Sigmund Freud, and Aristotle. ^[1]

Check out this [TED Talk](#) explaining walking meetings!

BENEFITS

Americans spend around 10 hours per day sitting! Not only are there major health consequences associated with a sedentary lifestyle, but sitting in one place can also affect one's productivity and creativity. The following are benefits of turning your regular meeting into a walking meeting:

Improve Productivity:

- Shifts group dynamics ^[2]
- Allows the mind to become more flexible and better able to solve problems ^[2]
- Breaks down the hierarchical barrier between managers and employees ^[1]
- Increases levels of engagement ^[3]

Improve Health:

- Incorporates movement into day ^[2]
- Energizes and improves alertness ^[2]
- Improves mental and physical health ^[2]
- Gets employees up and moving:
 - Prolonged sitting can cause health problems like back aches, muscle degeneration, organ damage, and an increased risk of mortality ^[4]
 - Prolonged sitting is associated with a higher risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, cancer, and depression ^[5]
 - Prolonged sitting (more than 8 hours per day) along with no physical activity has the same risk of mortality as smoking ^[6]
 - Walking 30-60 minutes a day can help reduce the risk of breast and colon cancer ^[1]

Improve Creative Thinking:

- Inspires new ideas and stimulate creativity ^[2]
- Creates more novel ideas than sitting or standing meetings ^[7]

- Enhances creative thinking by increasing serotonin levels ^[1]

How to Implement

PREPARATIONS

Planning walking meetings ahead of time is necessary to ensure a successful meeting. Here are some preparation tips:

- Keep the meeting small: Try to stick with 2-3 people, it may be difficult to walk and talk with a large group. ^[1]
- Tell colleagues ahead of time: This gives them the opportunity to bring appropriate clothing, footwear, and water. ^[1]
- Be prepared: If it is warm and sunny, wear sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, etc. If it's cold, walk inside or plan to bring appropriate outerwear. ^[1]
- Plan the route: Decide how far and how long the meeting will be and tell everyone ahead of time. Plan to walk in safe areas and in places with a walking path or sidewalk. For walking routes on campus, click [here](#).
- Keep it structured: Let everyone know the points you'll be covering, how long the meeting will be, and how far they will be walking. ^[1]
- Assign roles: Be sure to decide who will be leading the meeting, guiding the group, and taking notes. Here are possible roles to assign:
 - Facilitator: leads the meeting by going through agenda items
 - Tour guide: responsible for creating and following the walking route
 - Note taker: writes notes during the meeting (or directly following the meeting) and distributes the notes to everyone afterwards

CONSIDERATIONS

- Be considerate: Pay attention to safety and mobility issues. When preparing a walking meeting, accommodate to the abilities of others in the group. ^[2]
- Keep the pace comfortable: Always walk at a pace that is comfortable for everyone, and take breaks when needed. ^[2]
- Include an “extracurricular” destination on route: Walk by the oldest building on campus, an iconic statue, etc. and point out the history or share a fun fact. Naming a point of interest provides more rationale and incentive for others to walk. ^[3]
- Avoid including unneeded calories on your route: Opt against stopping for an unhealthy snack or sugary drink on/after/before walking. ^[3]
- Cool down: Take the last few minutes at the end of the meeting to recap key takeaways while doing some gentle stretches. ^[1]
- Evaluate: After the first few walking meetings, ask the group for feedback on what can be improved for your next walking meeting. ^[2]

Other Resources

WELLNESS RESOURCES

- [Healthy Meeting and Event Guide](#): If you don't think a walking meeting fits with your group size, meeting format, etc. you can still incorporate wellness practices in your meeting. Check out this guide for creating healthy meetings on campus.
- [Walking Routes](#): Check out this series of walking routes on campus. Whether you work near the UW Hospital or on East Campus Mall, these walking routes span campus and can be used to plan your next walking meeting or lunch-time walk!

RESOURCES CITED

1. Wello. (2018, July 10). "Walk and Talk: Move Your Meetings." Retrieved from <https://wello.ca/2018/07/10/walking-meetings/>.
2. University of California – Riverside. "Walking Meetings 101." Retrieved from https://wellness.ucr.edu/Walking_Meeting_Guidelines.pdf.
3. Clayton, R., Thomas, C., & Smothers, J. (2015, August 15). "How to Do Walking Meetings Right". Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2015/08/how-to-do-walking-meetings-right>.
4. Berkowitz, B. & Clark, P. (2014, January 20). "Health hazards of sitting." Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/apps/g/page/national/the-health-hazards-of-sitting/750/?tid=a_inl_manual.
5. Schulte, B. (2015, June 2). "Health experts have figured out how much time you should sit each day." Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/06/02/medical-researchers-have-figured-out-how-much-time-is-okay-to-spend-sitting-each-day/?utm_term=.b938b4fe2913.
6. Laskowski, E. (2018, May 8). "What are the risks of sitting too much?" Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/sitting/faq-20058005>.
7. Wong, M. (2014, April 24). "Stanford study finds walking improves creativity." Retrieved from <https://news.stanford.edu/2014/04/24/walking-vs-sitting-042414/>.