Module 7

WALKS

The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.

Henry Miller

Module 7

WALKS

What is it?

A moving talk.

Why do we do it?

To provide an opportunity to directly connect the audience with the resources.

How do we do it?

Guide the audience through a series of thematically planned stops.

INTRODUCTION

Taking your talk "on the road" provides an opportunity to involve the audience directly with the resource being interpreted. For purposes of this module, we will call our moving talk a walk.

According to Sam Ham the qualities of any good presentation (enjoyable, relevant, organized, and thematic) are enhanced by the dynamics of the walk because something always seems to be happening. Whether the activity consists of strolling through an historic garden, canoeing a lake, exploring a cave system, or hiking in a forest, the visitors are actively involved in the resource. **You are the guide on this journey. How you move the group, hold their attention, enhance their understanding of the resource, and keep them safe requires techniques beyond simply talking.** In this module, we will discuss and examine the planning and mechanics of a successful interpretive walk.

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The movement of a group of visitors led by an interpreter whose goals are to develop sensitivity, awareness, understanding, appreciation, and commitment in the members of the group.

Grant Sharpe

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7.1 TYPES OF WALKS

In previous modules, you learned how to develop a theme and put together a talk. Now we see how we can deliver that talk as we move through the resource. Some of the more common types of walks include **resource, facility, site,** and **specialty.** Although we will use semantic differentiation to distinguish between types of walks, there are many elements from each that overlap and complement each other. Here we will briefly describe some common types of walks.

RESOURCE—NATURAL AND CULTURAL SETTINGS

A resource walk generally conjures up thoughts of walking along a trail, viewing and discussing the natural history of the flora, fauna, and landscape of your park. This type of walk is equally appropriate for cultural interpretation. Topics that focus on early inhabitants' uses of resources, hardships overcome by settlers to the area, and indications of past habitation might all be discussed as you walk along the path. Historic landscapes provide venues for "interpreting the life-style, technology, economy, society, and personalities of a particular historic period" (Helmich, 1997, p. 80).

Walks incorporate a variety of experiences.

FACILITY—VISITOR CENTER, HISTORIC STRUCTURE AND MUSEUM

This type of walk focuses on or around a facility. It is generally the facility and the cultural history associated with it that is being interpreted. Exhibits, furnishings, and displays provide interpretive media that assist the interpreter in explaining the resources and history of the site. Historic structures may be original, restored, or reconstructed edifices

of a particular period (Helmich, 1997). Historic setting museums (house museums) are either formal or adaptive. In the formal setting, the interpreter and the visitor are generally separated from the setting. In the adaptive, the visitor is guided into and through the setting.

Facility walks allow the interpreter to make connections between the specific location, the broader issues, the historical context, and the visitors' own experiences.

SITE—DEMONSTRATION, RESEARCH AND CULTURAL

Site visit walks orient the visitors to the features or values of a specific location and may emphasize natural or cultural resources. Many times, walking **to** the site is merely a prelude to a more extensive discussion **at** the site. The walk from the Año Nuevo visitor center to the breeding area of elephant seals is one example. Another example would be a walk through an historic town site, stopping to examine the architecture of a specific building, and ultimately ending at an archeological dig on the outskirts of town. The primary interpretive moment occurs at the dig site itself, and the walk is used to set the stage.

SPECIALTY—NIGHT, WET AND VEHICLE

The time of day, the environmental activities associated with an interpretive program, and even the mode of conveyance are all classifications for types of walks. For purposes of this discussion, specialty walks are something different from the normal offerings. While they may be routine in some parks, specialty walks generally provide a different way to view a resource. Because they are out of the routine, they may require additional preparation, time, and logistical effort, and they may present more safety issues. Specialty programs may offer adventure or provide new perspectives on the environment. Audience members who might not come on a typical nature walk may wholeheartedly join in an activity that lets them use their cars or bicycles. We will discuss the mechanics of a night, a wet, and a vehicle program later in this module.

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Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.

Rachel Carson

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While your walk should focus interpretation on specific resources, you must always be flexible enough to embrace the unexpected "teachable moment." Walks help immerse the visitors and the interpreter in the resource, providing an opportunity for a multisensory experience and a more comprehensive appreciation of that resource. **Only your imagination, resources, audience and purpose limit the types of walks you offer.**

7.2 PLANNING

As you already know, planning a walk begins by determining your subject, audience and purpose; conducting thorough research; identifying your tangible and intangible elements; developing a theme; and putting it all together into an interpretive program. **A walk encompasses all the elements of a talk, plus the logistics and mechanics of moving visitors through the resource.**

TOPIC AND THEME

Planning, research, theme development, and presentation skills are all critical elements of a good walk. When developing your walk, research both the cultural and natural features of the location. In the beginning, focus your research on the relevance of the route to your theme and your anticipated audience.

The selection of the route may be dictated by the resource(s) being interpreted. For example, if you are doing a facility walk through an historic building, or a site visit to a cultural location, or even a resource walk along the only trail in the area, your route options may be highly limited. In other instances, you may have more latitude regarding where you go and the sequence in which you view various features along the way.

The first order of business, as we learned in *Module 4—Planning,* is to research and inventory the features and topics of the location. With management's goals and objectives in mind, begin to develop a thematic interpretive program. To be able to select the best theme for any location, you must really get to know the entire setting. Your research should include walking the route in both directions, looking at features from different perspectives, and considering many issues. The more familiar you are with the location, the more personal experiences you will be able to share with your audience.

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To know a thing, what we can call knowing, a man must first love the thing, sympathize with it: that is, be virtuously related to it.

Thomas Carlyle

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR ROUTE SELECTION

- Choose a route that makes a loop, if possible.
- Be aware of length, time commitment, difficulty and accessibility
- Provide adequate staging and parking areas at the beginning
- Avoid hazardous, distracting or unpleasant areas
- Identify representative examples that develop your theme.

ROUTE SELECTION—CHOOSING STOPS

As you become familiar with the resource, start selecting locations for various stops along the route. Regnier, Gross, and Zimmerman (1994) liken various stops along the walk to a string of pearls. "Each pearl is a gem of insight. The strand is held together by a thread of unity, a theme along which all of the pearls are strung. You must carefully prepare each pearl and its placement on the string, but the visitor should only perceive the whole necklace" (p. 68). Let us discuss some of the elements that should be considered for stops.

Selecting Your Staging Area

The staging area is the advertised meeting point for the walk and should be the departure point for your walk. It should be easy to find, have adequate space for the group to congregate without interfering with other operations, and be located near the planned route. If possible, choose an open area where visitors can easily see the starting point and orient to the location. An open location also allows you to see visitors arriving for the walk, draws in visitors who may not be aware of the scheduled interpretive program, and affords a venue to provide an overview for the walk.

Many times the staging area location is the same for all program offerings; it is the logical

Make sure latecomers will know where to find you.

location to start a variety of walks. The front door of a historic building, the marina of a reservoir, and a major trailhead parking area are examples of easily recognized staging locations. Good staging areas provide a multitude of options for the interpreter.

Start the walk at the advertised time. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of starting on time. Do not penalize those who arrived on time by making them wait for latecomers. But keep in mind that not all cultural groups have the same time sense. You will need to address those who are ready at the starting time while remaining flexible to welcome latecomers. Although you begin your program, you do not have to immediately begin moving away from your staging area. **Remember—be visible, be approachable, and start on time!**

Latecomers

Inform staff of your planned route of travel so they can direct latecomers. Integrating latecomers into the group depends on many factors: group size, how far along you are in the program, how many newcomers are joining the group, and whether you think formal or just visual recognition is most appropriate and less distracting.

Selecting Your First Stop

The first stop should be within sight of the staging area. This allows latecomers to easily and quietly join the group. The first stop is, in essence, the beginning of the walk. While you have "started" the walk at the staging area by giving the visitors a cognitive map of the program (time commitment, difficulty, topic, etc.), it is at this first stop that you really introduce the theme of the walk. **This is where you plant the seeds of expectation, wonderment and mystery, and set the scene to begin the journey.**

Selecting Stop Locations

With your theme firmly in mind and a thorough understanding of the resources, you are now ready to plan the location of the specific stops. Each stop should be selected carefully so that it clearly and sequentially adds a "pearl" of information to your thematic "necklace."

Stops should not only be selected to best illustrate the subject being discussed, but also must accommodate the audience so that **everyone** can experience the setting, objects, and issues being addressed. When planning your stops, begin to think of the issues and challenges that might affect your presentation. Avoid distractions or uncomfortable locations that prevent the audience from paying attention to your presentation. Avoid locations with noise, visual clutter, and other annoyances. Similarly, plan stops that will allow you to be seen and heard easily while indicating those resources

that illustrate your point. Select locations where you can gather the audience around you, and choose settings that provide a natural stage or podium, or allow you to step away from the group with the particular subject you are discussing in full view of the audience.

ITS THE LITTLE THINGS

- **When selecting the stop, consider your audience.** Physical comfort is conducive to maintaining their attention. Is it too cool to be in the shade, too windy to hear, too confined a room? Is the sun in their eyes or the footing uneven? Little things may distract from your message.
- **Have more stops in the first half of the walk. People are more attentive in the beginning of the program.**
- **Plan carefully.**

Deciding Where to End the Walk

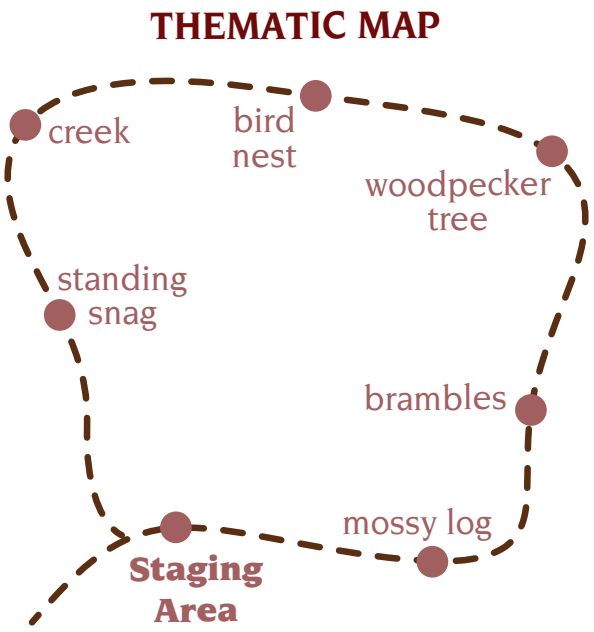
It is nice to select a route that will allow you to end the walk near the starting point, but this is not always possible. Just like all the other stops, the final one should strongly support the theme of the program. Sam Ham suggests that if the end of the walk culminates at a spectacular feature (waterfall, vista, impressive architectural feature, etc.), then consider presenting your conclusion in advance of arriving at this location unless the feature itself relates directly to your theme. This way you will not compete for the audience's attention.

THEMATIC MAP AND OUTLINE

The more familiar you are with the route, the easier it will be to select appropriate stops. Select your stops much as you would select a location to take a photograph. Does the location illustrate the subject, allow you to get close, provide correct lighting, and have a non-distracting background? Will you and your audience be comfortable in the setting? Careful planning should go into each stop selection. Obviously, the first question you should ask yourself is, **does the stop support the theme?**

During the planning stage, you inventoried and researched the resources. Your theme was developed with management objectives in mind. You selected a route with stops that illustrated and supported your theme and accommodated your audience. Prepare a map and outline of how all these elements fit within the framework of your walk to organize the planning process.

An individual location might provide several topic elements. For example, at one stop you could discuss bird-nesting behavior, the cover provided by the trees, or how habitat destruction is affecting bird reproduction. Because you have mapped these various stops, subthemes begin to determine which locations most appropriately fit into the sequence of your story. In short, a thematic map is a spatial picture of all potential stops along the selected route. This picture assists in the final selection and order of stops used to develop the program (see figure above).



As discussed in *Module 5—Programs* there are specific thematic elements you must include at each stop. **In outline form, you now develop your focusing sentence, a description or explanation, a thematic connector, and the transition.** By outlining these elements, you begin to focus on how each stop is a "pearl" for the entire presentation.

PRACTICE—FROM PLANNING TO DOING

Practice is a crucial step between planning your walk and actually conducting it. Practice on-site if you can, so you become more familiar with each stop. While on-site practice is not always possible, your thematic map and outline will permit you to focus on the stop and rehearse your presentation. At first, rehearse your presentation by yourself to work out some of the initial logistics and personal internal conflicts. Then it is a good idea to do a "dry run" with several coworkers and friends. With their help, you will discover issues and distractions you have overlooked. They can help you refine your narrative, anticipate and prepare for questions, and focus on your timing. This dry run will help physically illustrate the logistics of organizing each stop. It will become clear whether the stop will serve your purposes or present any problems. Practice your presentation at least five times, out loud, all the way through without stopping. Practice thoroughly to boost your confidence.

Practicing your narrative alone or with a small group is one thing, but how do you plan for the unexpected or the extra time a larger group takes to go between stops? With experience you will gain insight on how to plan your time and how to build in contingency measures. During this practice phase, determine approximately how much time you need for each stop. Then add time as the potential group size increases. In a normal one-hour

walk, allow an additional five minutes for groups of 12-15 people and as much as 10 minutes when the group exceeds 15. Groups of over 25 may require special attention and planning. Now that we understand the basic elements of planning for a walk, we are ready to review the actual mechanics of conducting a walk.

7.3 MECHANICS

As discussed, a good talk has an introduction, a body and a conclusion. A good walk incorporates these elements into a continuum of the staging area, the first stop (introduction), stops along the walk (body of the presentation), and an ending (conclusion). Each stop should have a purpose; each stop should be a carefully prepared "pearl" on the necklace. Once you have a great walk planned, you will want an audience. Next we'll take a brief look at the importance and elements of advertising your walk.

ADVERTISING

An amble, a scramble, a saunter, a stroll, or a strident march—how you advertise your walk potentially determines your audience. Your description helps visitors decide if they are interested in participating in the walk. It is important that you know your audience and match your description, purpose and theme to the group. Visitors who understand what they are getting into will be much more receptive to your interpretive message.

Visitors attend walks for numerous reasons. Hopefully, they want to learn about the resource and are willing to do so in an active manner. **When you advertise your program, use words that appeal to the widest audience possible.** For instance, some people may be disinclined to go on a "hike," but call it a "stroll" and you may capture a broader audience.

The common time commitment for a walk is 45 minutes to an hour-and-a-half. Group size, route layout, complexity of topic, and presentation all contribute to the length of a walk. Walks that last over an-hour-and-a-half are considered to be extended walks and require special considerations. We will discuss some of the complexities later in this module.

USE DESCRIPTIONS THAT ENTICE

- Walk along the path of Native Peoples.
- Explore the ancient art of recycling: decomposition.
- Wade the wetlands to discover nature's cleaning crew.
- Peek into desert holes and hiding places.
- Stroll through the back streets of history.

Walks are generally expressed in time requirements instead of mileage. In the advertisement, you should also mention any special clothing or gear requirements (e.g., bring a water bottle and a flashlight), and describe any special physical challenges (e.g., participants must be ready for a strenuous climb at a high elevation.)

Sell Those Programs

Let's compare two examples of program advertisement:

> Today's discovery walk is very easy. We will only walk a half-mile.

The short mileage might sound perfect to a more sedentary person but could send a message that the walk is too easy for active people. The description also says nothing about what the audience will "discover."

Instead, describe the event this way:

With a description such as this, you are much more likely to attract both sedentary and active participants. Some people will read "easy," others will read "action packed," and even others will read "history."

> Today's walk along a relatively easy trail will last one hour. Join us for an action-packed tour, as we discover many facets of the Maidu culture present and past. Bring a water bottle and wear a hat, if possible.

Advertise carefully to entice the broadest range of participants.

GETTING STARTED

Use the staging area to gather the group together, welcome them on behalf of California State Parks (agency recognition), introduce yourself, gain information about your audience via visual and spoken clues, and provide a cognitive map for the audience.

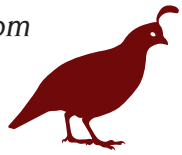
INCLUDE IN YOUR COGNITIVE MAP

- **Topic**—What you expect to see and experience along the route
- **Route**—Time commitment, difficulty, ending location, accessibility
- **Availability of facilities**—e.g. restrooms, drinking water
- **Need for appropriate clothing and footwear**—e.g. rain gear, hat, boots, etc.
- **"Ground rules"**—e.g. you are the leader, receptive to questions, stay on walkway, need for reverence, no flash photography
- **Special health and safety issues**—e.g. pollen, heights, hazards, low ceilings
- **Recommended items to bring**—e.g. binoculars, camera, field guide, water
- **Equipment needs**—e.g. bicycle, personal flotation device, flashlight

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL WALK

As with all interpretive programs, it is important that you arrive early. Fifteen minutes early is probably sufficient for a walk. This means 15 minutes prior to the start time, you are there, unhurried and ready to go. Sometime immediately prior to the walk, check the route to make sure there are no surprises such as room lights burned out, areas closed for rehabilitation, litter/graffiti, or a special activity taking place.

By arriving 15 minutes early, you can establish some personal connections with individual visitors. This will not only establish rapport between you and individual visitors, it will also "break the ice" and allow visitors to be more comfortable within the group. Avoid letting one individual/group dominate your attention. Recognize and welcome everyone as they join the group. When it is time to begin the walk, turn your attention from chatting with individuals and address the whole group with your opening welcome.



FIRST STOP

The first stop affords many benefits when used wisely. When you begin on time, you establish, however subliminally, your credibility. Then you move the group, which helps reinforce that you are the leader. For the visitor, this stop signifies the start of the journey.

This first stop, within sight of the staging area, allows you to determine the group's actual size and composition. Additionally, this short walk provides clues as to how to adjust the tone or pace of your presentation. These are defined by how rapidly you move, how quickly you speak, how you want the group to gather around you, and how knowledgeable and approachable you appear.

The introduction of your theme could be delivered at either the staging area or this first stop. If the staging area is a busy location with distractions and other traffic, then introduce the topic but wait until the first stop to divulge your theme. Your theme is where you plant the seeds of discovery and anticipation.

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…tell them your theme. But, don't do it by saying, "my theme today is…" Rather, "today I'd like to take you on a walk into the past. Let your imagination guide you as we step back 700 years to a time when household chores were the same as now, but their solutions were somewhat different. As we tour the ruins I think you'll begin to see many similarities to life today, and one of the goals of this walk is to help you develop a kinship with that not so distant or alien past."

Grant Sharpe

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Stay in front of the group and be the leader.

LEADING

When you think of yourself as the host of the walk, you will want to arrive early to ensure that everything is ready for your guests. Double check … are your sunglasses put away? Did you get rid of your gum? Now greet everyone as they arrive, explain the activities that will take place, and invite them on the journey. What host would not want to make sure that all of his or her guests are comfortable and know who is in charge of the event? Stay in front of the group and **be** the leader. Staying in the lead allows you to control the pace and determine when to move briskly and when to saunter. You know the route, so if something unplanned happens, you will most likely be the first to notice and point it out to the whole group. Being in front also lets you better manage and guide the group to avoid potentially hazardous situations.

As the leader, you know when to stop the audience so everyone can see and hear. This is especially important with large groups. Keep track of the audience and **keep the whole group together.** Remember you are the host. **It is your obligation to ensure no one gets lost or left behind, and that everyone has an enjoyable and educational experience.**

TIMING

Keep the group moving, with each stop averaging five to seven minutes, although some stops may last just a few moments. If the stop is particularly important, or if you want more time for the group to experience the setting, the stop may last 10 or more minutes. However, individual attention spans wane quickly. Walks with larger audiences take more time. We will discuss special considerations for larger groups shortly. When you have a large audience, you may have to curtail, combine or even eliminate some stops to stay on schedule.

HOW MANY STOPS?

That depends on a number of factors:

- Time allotted for the walk
- Size and abilities of the group
- Length and difficulty of the route
- Theme complexity and time needed to develop it
- Remember, you already have three stops—the staging area, the first stop, and an ending location. It's best to plan no more than seven additional, well thought out, and focused stops—10 stops total.

GROUP CONSIDERATIONS—TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

We have already discussed your role as the leader. What can you do to make the journey more inviting and enjoyable for all involved? From the very beginning, use keen observation and sensitivity to assess the physical and mental abilities of the individuals in the group. Describe the physical demands of the walk to the entire audience at the start of the program. Keep in mind that "all visitors are welcome." Certainly you should not embarrass or exclude anyone, but if necessary, make it absolutely clear that the physical route may be difficult. Hopefully the advertising and announcements about the program have forewarned individuals of impediments, but do not assume anything. Do your best to select routes that will accommodate as many individual needs as possible while supporting the theme of your walk. Use vocabulary that is appropriate for a diverse audience; as always, a friendly, conversational tone works best.

The safety of your audience is paramount. If there are potential hazards along the route, be sure to explain them fully to your audience at the beginning of the talk, before arriving at the potentially hazardous location, and then again as you approach the specific area of concern. For example, if you know that poison oak occurs alongside the path, it is appropriate to tell the group before encountering it. Then, when you arrive near the poison oak, specifically point it out. Always demonstrate safe practices.

Be sure to note the exact number of people attending your walk, not only to keep track of everyone, but also for recording attendance data (DPR 918). Wait for the entire group

to arrive at each stop before you resume your talk; field questions and chitchat while you wait for the group to collect.

Establish a pace that is comfortable for your audience. This may sound obvious and easy to accomplish, but in reality it can be quite a challenge. You should stick to the schedule you announced at the beginning of the walk. However, there are many things that can disrupt the schedule. We will discuss unexpected teachable moments and emergencies later in this section.

We should not attempt to describe that which is only—or better—to be comprehended by feeling.

Freeman Tilden

Generally speaking, you should set the pace based on the slowest person in the group. Start the walk out briskly from the staging area. This will give you an opportunity to assess the group's abilities. If you are going too fast, you will notice large gaps in the group. It will ultimately take longer to reassemble the group at the next stop than to set a slower overall pace. Be careful not to set too slow a pace because some participants may become bored and distracted, causing you to fall even further behind schedule. Keep track of the entire group's abilities and adjust accordingly. Check behind you periodically to make sure that everything is okay.

Be open to questions and discussion, especially when in transit between stops, but do not let one person monopolize your attention. Include others in the conversation, especially if it relates to the theme. If a particular point is relevant to the group, you should brief everyone at the next stop. Remember, it is very wise to clearly repeat the question asked by a visitor. Not only does this let everyone else know what question you are answering, it also clarifies that you understand the question and keeps the whole group involved in the dialogue.

Much of your time is spent moving between stops. Do not forget to use this time to help accomplish program goals. For example, **asking visitors to observe, smell, or count phenomena along the way keeps them involved.**

Being Heard

Let us discuss some techniques to help everyone hear. When you stop, make every attempt to position yourself in the center of the group so everyone can see and hear you. Most importantly, face your audience. This directs your voice at them and, if any participants need to, allows them to lip read or to infer what you are saying.

Be constantly aware of your surroundings and any distractions that may make it difficult for you to be heard. Use a conversational tone. Be observant and take note of nonverbal

Make sure your audience can see and hear you at each stop.

feedback. Are audience members tilting their heads, moving closer, or asking others what you said? Be aware of the cues, and do not hesitate to ask the group if they can hear. Note: if you ask, "Can everyone hear me?" you'll get a loud yes from the people in front, who can, indeed hear you. Try saying, "Raise your hand if you can hear me." or choose a few individuals in the back to ask. Adjust your volume accordingly. Speak clearly, avoid using jargon and scientific terms, and do not forget to breathe.

Sometimes you should be quiet. Do not constantly talk. Use pauses and silences to emphasize a point, set the stage, or enjoy the moment. Sunlight streaming through the tiny window of an adobe house may emphasize the hardships endured in that era. The sound of the crashing surf may imply the dangers of being a seaman, and the sunset may require only silence to punctuate its beauty.

Large Groups

When group size increases, the time needed to organize the group at each stop, the transit time between stops, and the time spent clarifying issues and answering questions also increases. Since you told your audience that the walk would last a certain length of time, and the pace is generally dependent on the slowest person, your options for keeping on schedule are limited. Reducing the time spent at each stop, eliminating a stop (or stops) entirely, or a combination of both are the most obvious remedies. In any case, you will have to make a value judgment on the information you can eliminate without weakening your theme. Do not be tempted to try to make up time by walking and talking at the same time.

Large groups require special organization.

SIZE MATTERS

- Limiting the size of the group may be necessary in some instances. Once again, preplanning is the key. For especially large groups (35 or more), try to have an extra staff person available to assist or take half the group.
- When approaching a stop, walk past the targeted spot until about half your group has passed it. Walk back to the focal point (now the middle of the group) before you begin speaking. When you start out again, ask the group to let you resume the lead.
- Whenever possible, request that the group form a semicircle a few feet away from you at each stop. Encourage children and shorter people to stand in the front. Be sure everyone sees the focal point before moving on.
- Use elevated or separated positions that increase your visibility. Keep your head lifted and project your voice slightly over the group.

EXTENDED WALK

An extended walk (over an hour and a half) is generally viewed by the visitor as more of an "outing" with the interpreter than a focused program. It requires a little more stamina and a little less structure. This does not mean an extended walk is not without a purpose, planned stops, or a theme. It does mean you must modify your presentation. **Often visitors attend extended walks because they want to spend time with a resource person who knows the area well and can provide in-depth insight into the park's resources.** Other times they just want to take a walk with the ranger who will keep them safe and return them to the starting point in one piece.

Make sure all participants are aware of the length and difficulty of an extended walk. Prior to setting off on the walk, you must directly address personal needs such as the appropriate clothing and footwear, whether they need to bring food and water, what sanitary facilities to expect, etc.

Since you will most likely be walking longer stretches between formal stops, there will be more opportunities to talk informally with individuals. Be cautious not to let one person dominate your attention. Others might feel ignored and become bored or feel left out. Do your best to enhance group dynamics and engage everyone in the experience.

TEACHABLE MOMENTS

When that special something happens during the walk, do not ignore it—let the audience savor the experience. Be watchful for that teachable moment and be flexible. Do not be afraid to diverge from your outline. Build on the unexpected, and weave it into your story if at all possible. Challenge yourself to make that connection from the unexpected teachable moment to the theme, but do not get carried away. Stay on theme. Stay on schedule.

An example: Unexpected Teachable Moment

On the walk you are discussing how cacti have developed adaptations to survive extremely long periods without water. Just then a snake is spotted nearby, eating a mouse. The snake is the unexpected event, but moving the talk to snake adaptations for survival without water provides linkage for your theme. On the other hand, if you are talking about the architectural style of an historic structure and you spot the snake eating a mouse, it might be too great a stretch to link the two. Just acknowledge and witness the event, interpret the moment, and return to your theme.

EMERGENCIES

Accidents happen. Hopefully you and other staff have contingency plans in place to handle emergency situations as efficiently and professionally as possible. If someone becomes ill or injured while on the walk, you will be required to make some decisions quickly and under pressure. Depending on a host of variables (radio, proximity to assistance, seriousness of emergency, etc.) you have two major responsibilities—assist the injured/sick individual, and direct the rest of the group. **Your immediate concern must be for the individual's welfare; however, leadership for the group also remains your responsibility. People in the group understand the higher need.** They just want to be recognized and directed. If the emergency requires that you leave the group, consider selecting a reliable individual to act as leader to make sure the entire group gets back to the staging area safely. Choose wisely, as you are still responsible for everyone's safety.

RULES AND REASONS—THE "EDUCATIONAL EXCEPTION"

Set a good example, not only with the park rules and regulations, but also with the nuances of stewardship. Pick up the gum wrapper or other litter as you pass it. Do not pick flowers, pull the starfish off the rock, or handle the historic document without proper care. People watch your actions and inactions; set a good example and a professional standard.

There will be times when you really want to share some experience or examine something more closely with your audience. The vast majority of the time you can do so without infringing on rules and ethics. Instead of picking the bay laurel leaf off of the tree, find some on the ground for the group to smell. Pass around reproductions instead of actual artifacts for the group to examine. In addition, if you walk off trail or go beyond the barrier to better address the group, do so carefully. Explain to the audience that you are doing so as an "educational exception." If it is critical to your program that you must "disrupt" an object, do so with consideration and respect. Opening the historic book with care when showing different pages, or gently turning the salamander over and returning it to where you found it, are just two example of this principle. Do not forget to always tell your audience why you are doing it and that it is not the "norm" for behavior.

This is where your kit bag of tools will come in handy. Use the mirror you carry in your kit bag to show the audience the underside of a mushroom. Individuals can view the gills without disturbing the plant. Handheld items and props really help illustrate your point in an ethical manner.

Use props to enrich your walk and to help illustrate your main points.

ENDING

Remember what we said about beginning on time at the staging area? Well, the same is true for ending the program—ON TIME! It is okay to leave them wanting more.

Have a clear and definite ending to your walk. The conclusion incorporates all the elements we discussed in *Module 5—Programs.* Have a strong concluding statement that reinforces the theme, summarizes the walk experiences, and brings the audience full circle with a clear ending. Thank the group for joining you when you conclude the walk. If you have announcements, need to tell the group about returning to the staging area or wish to let the group know you will be available at the end of the walk, do so before beginning the conclusion. Do not detract from your strong ending with minor, ancillary issues.

If you end the walk at a location other than the staging area, make sure you clearly inform the audience how best to return. Give them the option to stay and enjoy the setting or to join you as you return to the staging area. Notify the whole group of the precise time you will return should they wish to join you. If you end the presentation at the staging area, you have just made a loop. In both cases, it is a good idea to conclude your program before the audience sees the destination. Otherwise, you may lose the attention of the group before you complete your conclusion.

A-B-Cs OF A WALK

- Wait for everyone to arrive before beginning.
- Be a good host. A comfortable audience is more receptive.
- Be sure everyone can see and hear you.
- If possible, place yourself in the center of the group when you stop.
- Focus attention.
- Interpret rather than inform.
- Link information to the theme. Build connections between the resources and your audience.
- Provide a transition to the next stop.
- If appropriate, between the stops have the audience look for or think about things that support the theme.
- End on time.

7.4 OTHER TYPES OF WALKS

We will discuss just a few of the more specialized types of walks. Many times these are engaging for both the audience and the interpreter, but they require special considerations.

▪ ▪ ▪

May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome,
dangerous, leading to the most amazing view.

Edward Abbey

▪ ▪ ▪

NIGHT WALK

A night walk can be a dramatic change from the usual programming and an entirely new and exciting activity for participants. Consider how our perception of the environment changes with the alteration of ambient lighting. The normal daytime walk through the mission may take on an entirely different character when the rooms are illuminated by candlelight. The nature trail where you have guided walks for the past six months will look entirely different when it is dark.

Appropriate themes should be developed, different equipment and props may be necessary, and special issues must be addressed. Probably the biggest issue is that the audience will not be able to see everything as easily with the reduced lighting. There are certainly exceptions to this statement. The historic home with its electric lighting may provide just as many visual cues as during the daytime, but generally speaking, it is more difficult to see at night. This reduction in sight is a benefit to the night walk. Reducing the ability to see in the ordinary way heightens the use of other senses and provides a whole new way to experience the resource.

To be effective, night walks must be designed differently from daytime walks. Because you generally do not have the visual cues to read and keep track of your audience, you must plan accordingly. Choose a very safe route; avoid uneven terrain, protruding objects, and areas with hazards. Count and keep the group together more than you normally would. This may mean that you must restrict group size as necessary. Ask the group to help keep track of each other; have each person watch out for a "buddy." Explain that it takes time (15-30 minutes) for human eyes to adjust to darkness. Consider providing each individual carrying a flashlight with a red covering to avoid those "blinding accidents," (Red light allows our eyes to see quite well in the dark.) Request that white lights not be used.

NIGHT VISION

It takes at least 15 minutes for your eyes to adjust from daylight to night. During this adjustment the pupils dilate, allowing the eyes to collect more light. The human eye has rods and cones. The cones help you see color; the rods help you see in the dark. Rods have a chemical called rhodopsin, which takes approximately 15 minutes to reach a good level for seeing in the dark after being exposed to white light. Rhodopsin is not as sensitive to red light.

Consider starting the night walk at dusk. Dusk affords better lighting conditions for the group to assemble and for you to provide a cognitive map of the program. This also lets everyone's eyes adjust more naturally to the changing light. Be aware of the moon phases. A full moon may make walking easier, but a new moon might make stargazing spectacular. Use the lunar cycles to your advantage. Starting too late may restrict participation of children who generally go to bed at an early hour. Consider an earlier "night walk" for families with kids.

A GOOD NIGHTTIME HOST WILL

- **Instill confidence that this will be a safe experience.**
- **Challenge visitors to use their other senses as effectively as they do their sight.**
- **Provide information about "night vision" and how the eyes can attune to the lighting when given an opportunity.** Objects that you stare at tend to disappear at night; coach the group to keep their eyes moving. Tell them to look for shapes, shadows, contrast, and movement.
- **Provide/use equipment adjuncts—**red film to cover flashlights, laser pointer to highlight features, rope/string to "link" everyone together, etc. Covering a flashlight's beam with red cellophane film provides plenty of light but does not destroy night vision.

WET WALK

A wet walk can be fun, unusual, revealing, and can literally get everyone immersed in the theme. However, safety is a major concern when around water. Choose your route or location carefully and be aware of the depth, temperature, hidden hazards, etc., that may compromise the safety of the participants.

Provide a very clear cognitive map for the wet walk. Make sure everyone knows prior to beginning the walk what to expect—e.g. how to use equipment, the safety precautions, etc. It is very important to **thoroughly** inform participants of what to expect (they may get their feet wet), and to carefully discuss any instructions prior to entering the water. It is also a good idea to ask that everyone stay close to you so you can share "discoveries." Keeping everyone close has the hidden benefit of allowing you to watch everyone, control the activities, and lessen the distractions that inevitably occur with this type of walk. Safety first!

Your kit bag of tools for a wet walk might include clear plastic bags, shallow trays, buckets and dip nets that allow for better viewing of the specimens. Always emphasize concern and respect for the health of any animal that is captured. Make it extremely clear that you expect all things to be returned to their original setting.

Not all interpretive "walks" take place on a hiking trail.

VEHICLE TOURS

Vehicle tours might include the use of automobiles, bicycles, watercraft, or any other mode of transportation (rollerblades, skateboards or ski tours). Use your imagination and reach out to an audience that might not otherwise participate. For example, if a lake is a prominent feature of your park, a canoe or kayak trip may be appropriate.

BIKE, PADDLE, DRIVE, SKATE, DIVE, SURF...

Advantages	Drawbacks
• You can cover more area, allowing for diverse examples supporting topic/theme development. • You can appeal to a specific audience, bicycle riders, nonwalkers, boat enthusiasts, surfers, horseback riders. • Happy visitors are more receptive. • You can to travel to resources not easily accessible on foot. • You can teach the skills needed for quality recreational experiences in your park's resources.	• Personal communication occurs only at stops. • Logistics—interpreter loses and has to reclaim the group-leader status. • Takes longer to reassemble the group at each stop. • There is a potential for accidents. • Equipment can distract attention from your theme.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

Next we will discuss how to plan and execute the most traditional and well-attended program offered in parks, the campfire program. All of the principles we have learned regarding how to present a good talk and walk also apply to planning and conducting a successful campfire program. So where are the marshmallows?

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Module 7

WALKS

SELF ASSESSMENT

Answer each question in the section below before reviewing the material in *Module 7—Walks*. The answers are not provided. Check your answers with your colleagues and as you read the *Module 7—Walks*. Items from the self assessment may be reviewed and discussed in class.

1) Name and describe three different types of interpretive walks.

1. _____
_____

2. _____
_____

3. _____
_____

2) List four considerations for selecting the route of an interpretive walk.

1. _____
_____

2. _____
_____

3. _____
_____

4. _____
_____

3) To ensure you do not miss any latecomers for your walk, starting about five minutes late is acceptable practice.

   a) True

   b) False

4) Which of the following is a preferred route configuration for a walk?

   a) Linear

   b) Loop

   c) Figure eight

5) For a one-hour interpretive walk, you should factor in approximately _____ minutes for "walking time" if the group is over 15 people.

   a) 2

   b) 5

   c) 10

   d) 15

6) You should practice your presentation at least _____ times all the way through without stopping before presenting it to the public.

   a) 1

   b) 3

   c) 5

   d) You can't practice too many times

7) The first stop of an interpretive walk should always be within sight distance of the staging area.

a) True

b) False

8) You should walk in the middle of your group so that all can hear you when you speak.

a) True

b) False

9) Which of the following determine the number of stops for a walk? (Circle all that apply.)

a) Time allotted for the walk

b) Size of the group

c) The route

d) Topic and theme

10) You should not needlessly worry visitors about potential hazards along the trail until you get close to encountering them.

a) True

b) False

11) If the walk is taking longer than expected, which of the following are acceptable methods of shortening the planned walk? (Circle all that apply.)

a) Walk and talk at the same time

b) Shorten the stops

c) Skip stops entirely

d) Walk faster

12) Should you have more stops in the first or last half of the walk?

_____

13) What is a teachable moment?

_____
_____
_____
_____

14) What techniques should you employ at each stop of your walk?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Now that you have completed the self assessment questions, review the material in *Module 7—Walks* to confirm your answers. After reading the module, move on to the workbook learning activities, which will assist you in developing your skills.

WORKBOOK LEARNING ACTIVITIES

To help you review and apply the material covered in *Module 7—Walks*, a selection of review questions and/or activities is provided. Again, no answers are included. Use the material from the module, outside sources, and your colleagues to help you complete the activities and answer the questions. There may be more than one right answer. Use the questions and activities to generate discussion about the material. Be prepared to discuss, perform, or demonstrate your answers in class.

1) You have planned and advertised a fairly difficult two-hour hike to the top of a ridge in the park. As the group gathers at the staging area, a family with a teenager in a wheelchair arrives. Describe how you should handle this situation.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2) You are giving a walk based on the thematic map (found on page 264). Give two examples of how you could use foreshadowing in this walk.

1. _____
_____
_____
_____

2. _____
_____
_____
_____

3) You will be leading a walk for Asilomar visitors. You will be leaving from the dining hall and walking through the dunes to the beach and back. What will you address in your cognitive map to prepare visitors for the walk?

4) You are planning a wet walk. List ten items you might include in a kit bag.

Take it to YOUR Park

Answer each question with the information specific to your park. You will have to conduct some research in order to answer each question. Use the answers as a guide for beginning your career in California State Parks.

WALKS

Park name _____

1) What types of walks are traditionally offered at your park?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2) What special concerns, issues, or conditions will impact interpretive walks planned in your park (e.g., poisonous plants or animals, dangerous terrain, heat, not touching marble, steep stairs, staying on carpet runners)?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3) Are there variations on the types of walks offered in your park or are they all standard one-hour presentations? List some creative ideas for walks in your park.

4) Follow the appropriate steps, and create an outline for a needed walk in your park. In addition, indicate the location, subject, theme, target audience and purpose for the walk.

5) Create an appropriate advertisement for the walk.