



# Six Tips for Leading a Jane Jacobs Walk

## 1: A walking conversation

Jane Jacobs Walks are self-organizing walking conversations about neighborhoods and how people use cities. Provide interesting information and urge people to talk about their opinions and stories—use the space around you for illustrations and inspiration. Sharing the hosting duties with **friends or colleagues** is often a good idea.

As a host, remember to be friendly and welcoming to your group. With a smaller group you can start off by having people introduce themselves. Remind people to gather in close while you're talking and not to block the sidewalks for other pedestrians. Make sure the whole group can hear you.

## 2: Plan a route

Photocopy or print a **map** of your Walk route to hand out – options like road maps, Google Maps and MapQuest are helpful, or you can view a tutorial on making a Google MyMap at our Jane Jacobs Walk website ([www.janejacobswalk.org](http://www.janejacobswalk.org)). Before your walk, think through the stories, places, and people you want to talk about, and consider making notes. Aim for six to ten stops on your Walk, and try to budget an hour and a half to visit all the stops. The following questions may help you plan your route and highlights:

1. What are some important meeting spaces in your neighborhood?
2. What spaces are you most proud of in your neighborhood?
3. What are some important green spaces?
4. What are some interesting shortcuts you take?
5. Are shops and amenities easily accessible?
6. Is it easy or possible to walk, bike, use transit or drive a car?
7. Do any buildings have unusual marks or features?
8. Are there any old buildings that have been reconfigured into different uses?
9. Where do you feel most comfortable?
10. Are there any important historical spaces in your neighborhood?
11. Where do you not feel safe? Why?

For more information on how to bring Jane Jacobs Walk to your city

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12. What is a space that you really dislike?
13. Are there any places that mix retail, business and residential?
14. How do the buildings 'interact' with pedestrians at street level?
15. Are there spaces you would like to see change?
16. Is there an important question or issue that people should talk about?

### 3: Go for depth over breadth

Jane Jacob's Walks celebrate and investigate the walkability and potential of cities and neighborhoods. They don't have to cover wide territory. It's best if they are focused on **details** and **stories**. They are a way to get out and discover something about a community that people know or want to know better. It's not a tourism initiative, so pitch the content to locals who want to go deeper—ask them where they live and what made them curious about this neighborhood.

Consider involving some local residents or business people on the stroll. Talk to a hotdog vendor who is familiar with the characters, regulars, and rhythms of the street. You might want to drop into a store, feature an older neighbor with interesting **stories**, or even meet up with a local politician to get their perspective on the neighborhood. Shortcuts and hidden **details** are always popular. Learning these insider tips and secret vistas connects people to their community. Try to strike a balance between talking and moving. It is much harder to stand on pavement for two hours than to walk on it. Set an expectation that people can drop in and out if they need to take a break or get somewhere else.

### 4: Have fun!

Props and performances can add a novel and creative touch to a Walk. Ask your participants to read an excerpt from a local writer or newspaper clipping. Some tour guides have become very theatrical and arranged to have people in costumes *en route* to animate the site. **Handouts** of historical photographs or printed material (often easy to find online) are always popular. Try to start and end your tour near a coffee shop or pub so people can connect or continue their conversations afterwards. Ask people if they have been to these places, what it was like when they were there, what they saw, the things they did – **personal** anecdotes are always fun to hear and you'd be surprised how many people have fascinating stories to tell.

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## 5: Get to know Jane Jacobs

You don't have to be familiar with Jane Jacobs' work to lead a tour, but we have made it easier to learn about her with some online resources and bibliographies. In books such as *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) she introduced ground-breaking ideas about how cities function, evolve, and fail that now seem like common sense to generations of architects, parks, retail design and self-organization. She promoted higher density in cities, short blocks, local economies and mixed uses.

We encourage you to learn more about Jane Jacobs' ideas and incorporate them in any number of ways: bring along one of her books, have people read from it, observe the *sidewalk ballet*, discuss what "mixed use" means in the local context, and so on. Look for *Jane Jacobs Primers* at our website to understand some of her basic concepts, and discussion of them in context of current theory and examples.

## 6: Remember to project your voice

We cannot provide microphones or megaphones for hosts, but we encourage you to borrow or buy your own equipment. For groups bigger than 20 people, some form of amplification will help. If you want to buy something basic for this purpose, we've had success with a small mic/amplifier unit that costs around \$50 called the Sky Model WAP-50. It runs on batteries and the unit doubles as a battery charger if you buy rechargeable batteries.

If you don't have a microphone, you must face people when you speak. We cannot emphasize this too strongly: **gather your walkers** in tightly where there's as little street noise as possible and **face them** when you speak. You might get them to stand on stairs or a rise, and speak to them amphitheater style. Or you might climb on top of something a bit higher and project over the group. You will need to belt it out if you're on a noisy street. Don't be shy—you are the host and the more you share, the more dialogue you'll provoke.

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