

Lupine Adventure Co-op Coaching Up-hill Walking



In my 10 years as a Mountain Leader it goes without saying that I have spent a lot of time walking up hills with a wide variety of clients. Some people, while they find it difficult, find their own pace and rhythm and simply get on with it. Others could benefit from a bit of coaching.

Develop an Alpine Plod

Probably the best way to move efficiently uphill is to take small, purposeful steps at a pace that is slow enough to maintain without needing to stop and start. This is often referred to as an Alpine Plod. It means getting into a good steady rhythm that you can maintain for a long time. The pace should be slow enough for you to be able to hold a conversation whilst walking. One common pitfall is an overly long stride leading to wasted lateral and vertical movement. Steps should be short and efficient.



A group developing an Alpine Plod in winter conditions.

Drilling the Alpine Plod

On a training walk get the group to walk up a steep hill using the Alpine Plod paying attention to every foot placement. Start by setting the pace yourself then step aside to let the rest of the group pass, then tag on to the back. Get each member of the group to set the pace for a minute or so before stepping aside and moving to the back. See how long you can all just keep going for. If any member of the group can't keep going at the pace set then have a short break and set off again at a slower pace. Encourage silence while doing this at first so there is complete concentration on foot placement. After a while engage members of the group in conversation and see if you can all keep going with good technique while still talking.

Consider the use of walking poles

Walking poles can help with walking up hill in two ways. Firstly, by using your arms to provide propulsion you are taking some of effort away from your legs. Secondly, they can help to develop a good rhythm when engaging the Alpine Plod. If members of the group are using poles, remember to tell them to not use the straps on terrain where they may slip or fall, in order that the hands are free to help stop a fall if necessary.

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop”

Confucius ~500BC



This briefing sheet is one part of an array of resources available to download for free from Lupine Adventure Co-operative.

www.lupineadventure.co.uk