



*Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs*

## Teachers Guide: The Countryside Code

These notes give guidance on how we should all look after the countryside when participating in a gentle stroll to a long distance walk. The countryside provides a great opportunity for the enjoyment, relaxation and health and well being of us all.

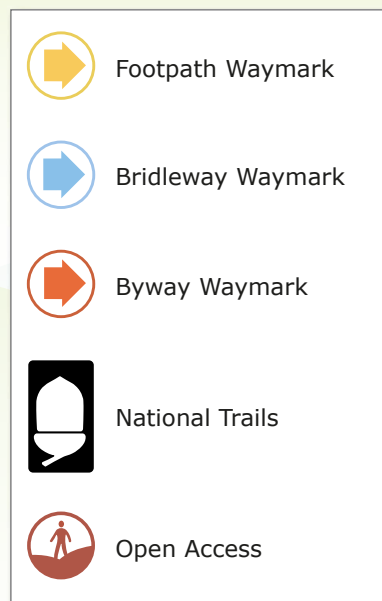
The Countryside Code should be followed whenever you go on a visit to the countryside and you will get the best enjoyment possible from your walk and help protect the countryside now and for future generations.



The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a protected landscape of chalk grassland, dry valleys, country parks, beaches, ancient woodlands, rivers, cliffs and forests, as well as thousands of miles of public rights of way and other signposted routes is there for you to explore on foot, on a bicycle or on a horse. You can also walk across some parts of the countryside designated as open land, heath, down and common land. Therefore it is important for you to follow this countryside code to ensure your safety.

### Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs

Even when going out locally, it's best to get the latest information about where and when you can go, refer to up-to date maps. Get to know the signs and symbols used in the



countryside to show paths and open access and to follow these signs. In fields where crops are growing, follow the paths where possible. Check the weather forecasts before you leave and don't be afraid to turn back and retrace your footsteps. In the countryside you may not see anyone for hours, take a mobile phone with you and to back it up, since there is often no clear phone signals, tell somebody where you are going, take a map, a compass, a drink and an energy bar.

You are responsible for your safety and others in your care so follow advice and local signs, and be prepared for the unexpected.

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*Take your litter home; respect plants, animals, gates and property*

## Leave gates and property as you find them

Please respect the working life of the countryside, as our actions can affect people's livelihoods, our heritage and the safety and welfare of animals and ourselves.

Use gates and stiles wherever possible, climbing over walls and fences can damage them and increase the risk of farm animals escaping. A farmer will normally leave a gate closed to keep livestock in but in certain circumstances the gate may be found open and this maybe to let the livestock gain access to food and water. Make sure the last person through a gate leaves it as it was found. Keep a distance from livestock and if an animal is in distress do not interfere but try to alert the farmer.



## Protect plants and animals, and take home your litter

We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants or trees.



Take all litter and left over food home since not only can it spoil the countryside but can be dangerous to all wildlife and farm animals and spread disease. Dropping litter and dumping rubbish are criminal offences. All animals can behave unpredictably if you get too close, so give them plenty of space. Fires can be as devastating to wildlife and habitats as they are to people so be careful and do not drop anything which has potential to ignite a fire. If you

see burning vegetation whilst out walking, check initially whether it is supervised controlled burning particularly on heaths before calling 999. This usually happens between October and early April although this is not practiced at the moment in the Kent Downs AONB. . Take care not to damage the natural environment since the removal of rocks, plants or trees could impinge on the homes and food for wildlife as well as everybody's enjoyment of the countryside.



*Keep dogs under control and consider other people*

## Keep dogs under close control



The countryside is a great place to exercise dogs, but it's every owner's duty to make sure their dog is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, wildlife or other people.

You must keep your dog under control so that they do not disturb wildlife and farm livestock. If a farm animal chases you and your dog let your dog go and do not try to protect it and risk getting hurt. Do not let your dog worry animals, farmers can by law destroy a dog which injures or worries animals. Make sure your dog does not scare livestock or

birds during the breeding season so follow all instructions left by farmers which are found on the gates and fences. Finally please clear up behind you, and make sure your dog is wormed regularly. Please bag and bin your dog's poop!

## Consider other people

Show consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone – at home, at work and at leisure. Think about sharing lifts when going out into the countryside. Do not block driveways or entrances. Make sure you give farm animals room when be gathered or moved and follow the directions of the farmer. Always slow down when passing livestock, walkers and horses. Support the local the economy.

Finally, an addendum to the code: If you are walking with children over a long distance and there are not any facilities, take a trowel and tissue with you and if required dig a hole out of sight and away from the public path and bury all trace.

