

## Kings Park Volunteer Guides -Training Course 2026

### Leading a Guided Walk

Leading a Guided Walk is one of the major activities of a Kings Park Guide (the other being duty in the Visitor Information Centre). Doing it well requires that you develop the appropriate knowledge and skills and continually maintain and improve them. These notes are meant to serve as both an introduction and a reference resource. The other document you should refer to frequently is the Peer Observation Checklist for Walks, which is a list of points to remind yourself of what makes a competent and successful walk leader.

**There are four phases to a walk** – planning for the walk, immediately before the walk, during the walk and after the walk.

#### 1 Planning for the walk.

Adopt the 4P model: “Preparation Prevents Poor Performance”. Good planning and preparation **before the walk day** is essential.

- **Plan your route.** Do a “recce” (reconnaissance) through the area, check what is flowering or what is of interest. Think how you might link points together
- **Check** on event closures, spraying, or other restrictions such as concerts. Read PMO monthly briefing notes.
- **Plan your staging.** Spread the interesting points out – don’t exhaust all the discussion in the first half of the walk and be left with a boring hike back to the start point
- **Select** a few key stops/examples/stories as a ‘skeleton’ for your walk – if all else fails you definitely have these anchors.
- **Revise your facts.** Make sure you have all relevant information in the front of your mind ready for recall.
- **Check your props.** It’s handy to have a few props in your bag – things you can’t readily pick up or point to on the walk itself. **But don’t overdo them – the best aids are those that are right in front of you on the walk.**
- **If sharing a walk with another guide,** plan how you will do it. You may like to share out who will speak at each stage or share in a more impromptu manner.

#### 2 Immediately Before the Walk

On the day, setting up the walk with the right tone and expectations at the start leads naturally into a good walk.

- **Get into Guide Mode.** Consciously adopt the right frame of mind – cheerful, enthusiastic, friendly, knowledgeable, helpful, organised.
- **Do the Admin.** Sign in, check any last-minute developments with the VIC guides, check the weather, pick up a two-way radio and a Chattervox if required.
- **Arrive early.** Be at the starting point 10 minutes before time. If there are no visitors, wait for another 10 minutes after the start time in case of late arrivals.
- **Chat** to the visitors as they arrive. Build rapport, smile, be friendly. Enquire if there is something a visitor especially wishes to see.
- **Start** at the advertised start time and welcome the visitors, introduce yourself and the walk, and set expectations (re photography, questions and the like)
  - Outline **length of time** the walk will take, where it starts and finishes. Reassure the visitors that there is no problem if they must leave early.
  - Outline **duty of care** issues - type of paths; slopes; sun-protection; weather.

- **Tell a bit about Kings Park.** Size, history, overall layout, WA biodiversity, why is it special. Role or functions of Kings Park.
- **Keep it short** – one or two minutes at most.
- **Invite questions**, both at the intro and through the walk.

### 3 During the Walk:

This is obviously the biggest and most important phase. There are many things to keep in mind, but practice will improve your ability to keep all the balls in the air.

#### 3.1 Attitude: Be a “Host” to your Visitors.

- **Be a considerate and knowledgeable “host”.** Be relaxed, but not complacent.
- Treat visitors as your guests, be friendly and inclusive.
- **Show enthusiasm.** Show appropriate enthusiasm and respond to their questions and comments.
- **Be engaged.** Talk to your visitors, not at them. If you look and sound interested, they will be too. If you are indifferent, they will be too.
- Use humour if you wish but be wary of cultural differences and sensitivities. Humour that relies on subtleties in language will fall flat with people whose first language is not English.
- Keep children occupied to avoid disruptions. Set them a task to do (counting something or listening to or looking for something or give them an activity sheet from the vertical file in the VIC). When talking to small children, crouch to their height so you seem more welcoming.
- **Involve people.** Make physical contact with an item under discussion, if possible, to focus the attention of the group quickly. Use the senses when appropriate - smell, touch, sight and sound - but not taste. Be alert to possible allergy problems.
- Encourage participation – allow people to share their (hopefully short) anecdotes, invite any experts in your group to share their special knowledge.

#### 3.2 Mechanics: Moving your group

- Transitions - moving the group between stops. Don't just walk off. Tell them where you are going next and invite them to move with you to the next point.
- Set a reasonable pace - keep the group together - not too fast, not too slow!
- Set an example for appropriate behaviour. Always keep to paths, check for traffic before crossing roads.

#### 3.3 Delivery: Talking to the group

- **At each stop**, talk reasonably briefly and to the point.
- **Position the group** well - not looking into the sun or standing in hot sun.
- **Get your facts right.** It's important that you give factually correct information. If you can't remember dates, write them down, or avoid quoting exact dates. If you can't remember scientific names, use common names. Frequent revision will make most things stick. And if you don't know something, admit it and offer to look it up later back at the VIC.
- **The amount of information** you impart is important - don't overload the group with too much information, but don't leave them wondering either. You can get some indication from their reaction – if they start looking around or checking the time, it's too long. But if you are too brief, it will appear that it's you who isn't particularly interested.
- **Be a leader. Posture** conveys an instant impression. Be upright with head up and shoulders back a little. **Stand** where the whole group can see you and speak towards the group. **Smile.** It projects confidence and induces people to smile back.
- On the other hand, don't go over the top. Remember that they are there to enjoy the experience, not to act as a captive audience for you.
- **Repeat any questions** asked and answer them to the whole group.
- **Talk to everyone**, not just part of the group, and make eye contact with different people in turn.

- **Vary the pace and intensity** - allow some quieter times. Give people time to look around at the setting.
- **Use props, anecdotes or story-telling to illustrate points.**
- **Accept the spectacular or unexpected** - a stunning tree in bloom will attract the eyes of the group even if you are talking about a monument! Digress, talk about it, appreciate it then get back to business. **Be flexible.**
- **Use your voice.** In general, you should **speak loudly and clearly** so everyone can hear, but modulate your voice in volume, tone, and speed. **Occasionally** lowering the volume or the tone, or slowing the speed, can heighten people's attention. Use a chatter-vox if a large group or if you speak softly.
- **Stagger your messages.** Don't try to tell them everything you know about every item; keep it stimulating and allow questions to pry more deeply if the group wants it. You might see the same plant a little further on and can add a little more at that stage.
- **Remember to have fun yourself.** If you're enjoying yourself, it will be infectious! Share the joy!

#### 4 After the Walk:

This is the wind-down & the wrap-up. You should have finished the walk at the advertised time, and be back to where you started the walk by now.

- **Summarize** any key ideas or themes you were trying to get across during the walk.
- **Invite feedback**, discussion and questions.
- **End on a 'high'** Happy, positive memories of the walk and a desire for more - in KP or further afield.
- **Give further options** - Wildflower Festival; concerts/films in the Park; transport info; etc.
- **Thank** the group for their participation. Wish them well for their further travels.

#### 5 Some other things:

- **Two-way radios.** Take the two-way radio on ALL walks as mobile phone coverage is patchy. This is in case of emergency. After the walk, return the two-way radio to the VIC, sign it back in and put it on charge.
- **Chattervox** If you have a soft voice or are expecting a large group, consider using a Chattervox. Count the visitors while you are greeting them – if there are at least 10 you will probably need a Chattervox. At the end of the walk, return it to the VIC and put it on the charger.
- **Sharing a walk with another Guide.** Allow the other Guide their share of leading time without interruption. Keep up with the leader so as not to form a splinter group in front or at the rear. Do not interrupt the leader or add your comments unless invited to do so.
- **Confidence** You do not need to feel confident to project an image of self-confidence. If you behave in a confident manner, there is a good chance that your feelings will catch up with your behaviour.

#### 5.1 Guide Stereotypes

##### Which one are you?!

- **The Dictator:** Orders everybody around, doesn't listen, doesn't answer questions.
- **The Mouse:** Not sure why they are there, timid and worried that they can't do it.
- **The Professor** Data dumper, full of dreary information and impervious to body language.
- **Hosts:** enjoy people, and 'invite' participants to share the joy of Kings Park.

#### 5.2 The Most Common Errors

- The Guide does not wait for the entire group to catch up at the next point before speaking again.

- The Guide turns his/her back on the group and spends more time looking at and talking to the plant, sculpture or other feature rather than the group.
- The Guide answers a question without repeating it for the benefit of others – so most of the group is left wondering what she/he is talking about.

Adapted from notes of Jacqui Kennedy, BGPA. KPBG. Rachel Craven 2004. Reviewed by Doug Hooton, 2018, Georgina Wilson, 2023 and Helen Clifton and Anne Yates 2025.