



Safe Routes
to School
National
Partnership

How to Create a Walking Route Map

If there was a quick, inexpensive way to support employees to be both healthier and more productive, would you, as an employer, use it? It may sound too good to be true, but walking is a free and evidence-based strategy to do both of these things.

In a day and age where many employees sit at a computer for eight hours a day, it is increasingly important to support employees to be physically active at work. There are several things employers can do to support employees to walk at work, including passing administrative or human resources policies to allow and encourage walking meetings, permit employees to wear comfortable shoes for walking meetings, and create walking routes in and around your workplace and encourage employees to go for a walk. To reap the benefits of employees walking at work, it is helpful to both provide route maps of where to walk and the policies and programs to support employees to walk. To learn more about the benefits of supporting walking at work, check out our fact sheet on [walking meetings](#).

Why map a walking route? Research shows that walking maps are a valuable tool for not only encouraging walking for physical activity, but also motivating individuals to explore their communities and visit local community destinations. People are more likely to walk and be physically active if they have a map that defines routes.¹

This guide provides step by step instructions for creating walking route maps using free tools. Section I describes how to map outdoor routes. Outdoor routes can be mapped using an online tool, [Plot a Route](#). Section II describes how to map indoor routes. Indoor maps can be created using a tape measure or other measuring device and building blueprints, if available. The guide is intended to be used by businesses to develop walking route maps for their employee or worksite wellness programs. However, you can use the same instructions to create walking route maps near your home, school, community gathering space, or any other location.



Photo: Flickr user Ted Eytan

Get creative with this guide! For example, shopping malls can use this guide to create indoor walking routes and promote them as venues for walking during inclement weather. As an added benefit, it could support bringing customers to shop in the mall.

References

¹ McNeill LH, Emmons K. GIS walking maps to promote physical activity in low-income public housing communities: a qualitative examination. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2012;9:110086. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd9.110086>

Candace I.J. Nykiforuk, Laura M. Nieuwendyk, Shaesta Mitha, and Ian Hosler. "Examining Aspects of the Built Environment: An Evaluation of a Community Walking Map Project." *Canadian Journal of Public Health / Revue Canadienne De Santé Publique* 103 (2012): S67-72. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/canajpublheal.103.2012.0s67>.

Section 1: Mapping Outdoor Walking Routes

Before You Start: Determine the Distance(s) You Want to Include.

- A half mile route will take about 10 to 15 minutes walking. A mile route will take about 20 to 30 minutes.
- Walking briskly for 2 hours and 30 minutes each week – easily broken up into five 30-minute walks – helps you meet the U.S. Physical Activity Guidelines!

Step 1: Identify Potential Routes and Map Them Online.

Use the online mapping tool [Plot A Route](https://www.plotaroute.com) to map potential routes and measure distances. (Note: Google Maps and Map My Run are other online mapping tools that you might want to use. We found that Plot A Route has features and functions that are useful and work well, for example it allows users to plot a route that includes portions of street, bike trail, and walking path.)

A. To get started, create an account:

1. Visit www.plotaroute.com
2. Click “Plot A Route Now”. If it is your first time using the site and you’d like to be able to save the routes you create, you must first create an account. Click “Create a Free Account” and then follow instructions. After you create an account, when you visit the site you will click “Plot a Route Now.”

The screenshot shows the Plot A Route website homepage. The browser address bar displays <https://www.plotaroute.com>. The site header includes the logo, navigation links (About, Tutorials, Routes, Forums, Info), a search bar, and social media icons. The main content area features a large image of two hikers on a mountain trail. Overlaid on the image is the text "Plot and share your routes" and "Map and measure your walks, runs, bike rides and more, with directions and elevation profiles". Two buttons are visible: "Plot a route now!" and "Create a free account", with the latter circled in red. Below the buttons are icons for "GLOBAL", "PLOT", "SHARE", "FIND", "PRINT", and "DOWNLOAD". A testimonial from Gary on the Forum is also present.

B. Explore existing routes

1. You can browse maps created by other users on Plot A Route. To do so, once you have your starting address set, hover over the word “Find”. Drag the cursor for the length of route you are looking for. Check or uncheck the types of route you are looking for. (We suggest unchecking motorcycling, horse riding, and other.)
2. Another option: If there are employees who already walk in the area, have them map their routes from your building.

The screenshot shows the plotaroute.com website interface. The search bar at the top contains the address "29 Victoria Street, Keen". A modal window titled "Search for Routes in this Area" is open, displaying various filters. A red circle highlights the following filters:

- Length:** A slider set to 5 miles long.
- Suitable For:** Walking (checked), Running (checked), Cycling (checked), Horse Riding (unchecked), Motorcycling (unchecked), Other (unchecked).
- Terrain:** Road (checked), Off-Road (checked).
- Hillsiness:** Flat (checked), Undulating (checked), Hilly (unchecked).
- Circular Only?:** Unchecked.
- Creator:** Anybody (checked), Me (unchecked).

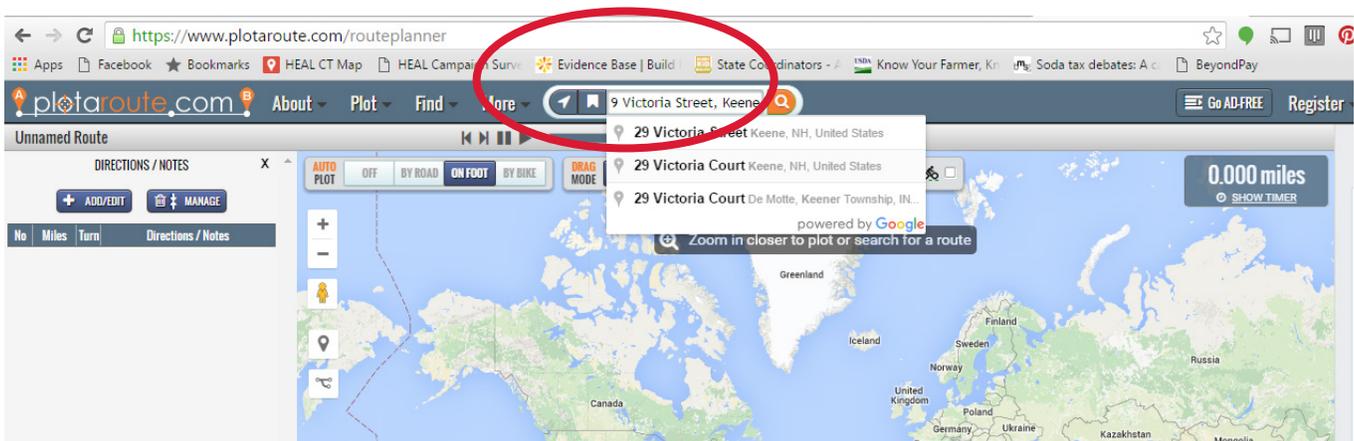
The background map shows a street grid with a highlighted route. The distance of the route is shown as 0.197 miles. The website footer includes the year 2016, the URL www.saferoutespartnership.org, and social media links for Facebook and Twitter.

C. Create a new walking route

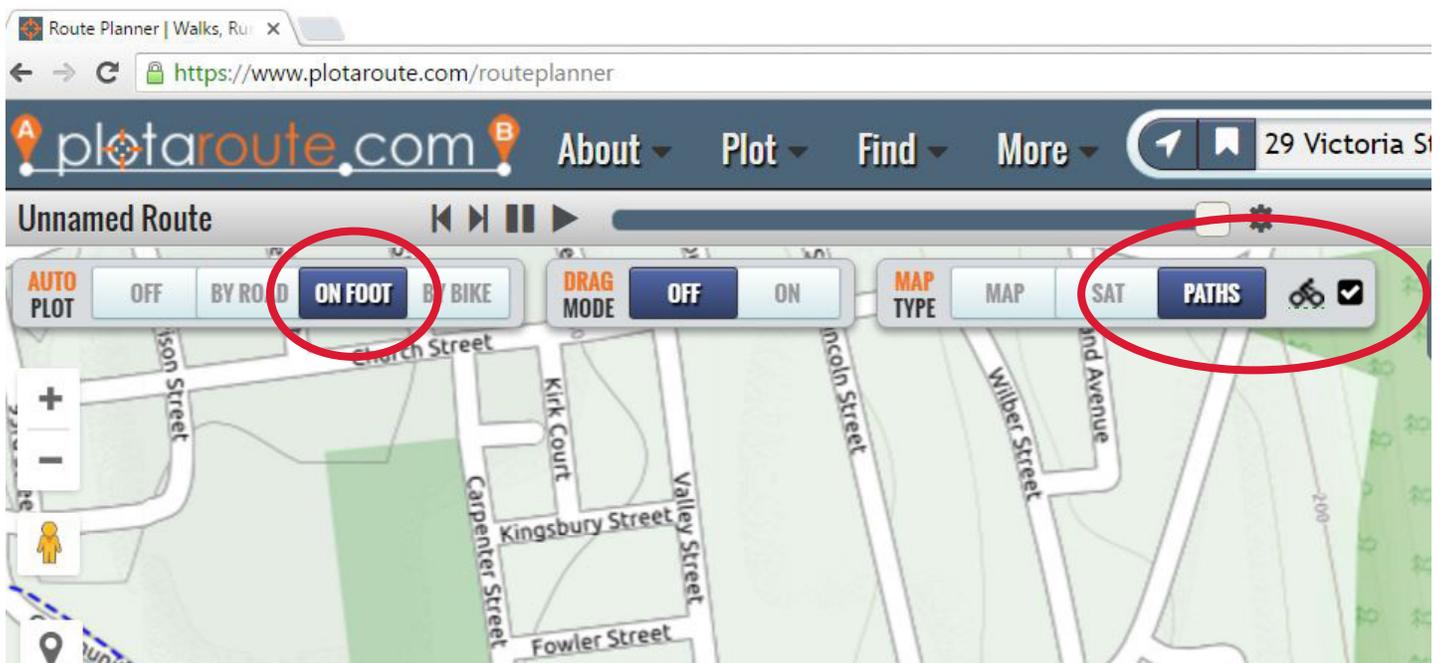
1. Select your starting area. You have two options:

- Show Local Area – using your IP address, it will display the area around you currently. You can move the map area and zoom in to where you would like to begin.
- Show World Map – you can search for a place by address and your route will start at the address you input.

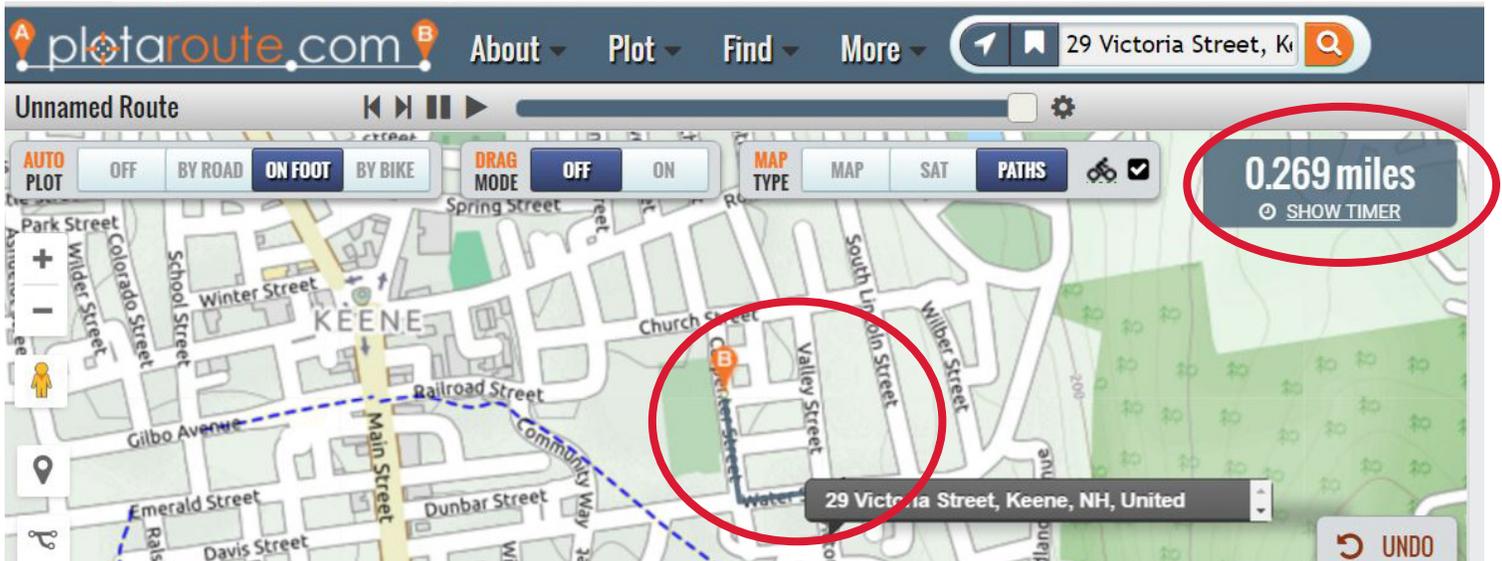
2. In the search bar, where it says “Search For a Place,” type the starting address (such as the location of your business).



3. Set AutoPlot to “On Foot” and Map Type to “Paths,” and check the image of the bicyclist. This ensures that you can see streets, walking paths, and recommended bike lanes. *Note: In urban areas, choosing “Paths” may make your map appear cluttered. Experiment with the different map types to find the one that works best for you.*



4. To start mapping your route, place your cursor at your starting point and click to start mapping a route. Click along the streets that you would like to take. You can see the distance is tracked in the top right corner.



5. Click along the route you would like to take. You will notice that you can easily shift between streets and paths. This is a unique function of this mapping site.

6. Click along the path until you reach your end point. If you plan to go back the way you came, you can use the “Same Route Back” function in the plot menu.



Ready to create another map? To begin a new route, click the “plotaroute.com” logo in the top left corner. This will bring you to your saved page, where you can begin to plot a new route by clicking “plot a route”, see your saved routes, and explore route suggestions. Be creative! Don’t limit your route to just streets. Think about creating loops around (or inside – see below) your buildings, in parking lots with low car traffic, or in nearby parks and open space.

Step 2: Test the Route(s).

Before finalizing your walking route map, you will want to test it out.

A. Walk the route yourself

Print the route map (see instructions below) and walk the route(s). We recommend doing this as a group during lunch or another break.

B. Assess the route

Print and use the companion [Walkability Assessment Checklist](#) to help assess the routes you mapped. Talk with the group about how they feel along the route. Is there adequate shade or lighting? Are you comfortably separated from car traffic? Do you feel safe crossing the streets? Think about all potential users. Some people may need more time to cross streets or curb ramps to navigate the route in a wheelchair.

C. Make adjustments

As you walk the route or soon after you return to your worksite, identify any necessary adjustments to the routes.

Step 3: Finalize and Share the Route

In order to encourage walking among your employees, it is essential to share the route you've created. *(Note: Refer to the screen shot on the next page for help with the following steps.)*

A. Obtain directions

To obtain turn-by-turn directions, use the menu bar in the bottom right of your screen and click "Dir'ns." Turn-by-turn instructions with street names will appear on the left hand of your screen.

B. Print route map

In the bottom right menu bar, click "Print" and select the layout you would like to print. If you would like to include turn-by-turn directions, be sure to click "yes" for print directions.

C. Share route

In order to share your route, you must first save it as a public route. There are a number of ways to share this route with colleagues and friends. The easiest way is to share a link via email, either by copying and pasting the link or clicking the icon that looks like an envelope. You can also post to Facebook and Twitter. If you'd like to embed it on a website — for example, if your workplace has a wellness page — select the size you'd like the map to appear on the web page and use the code displayed in the white box.

D. Download the map

To insert the map into a document, such as a walking brochure, newsletter, or publication, click “D’LOAD” and “Save to file.” Adjust the settings to:

- File type: Image
- Image for: Custom
- File format: JPG (or your preferred image format)
- Add title: No

Then click “download.” The image will be saved to your downloads folder. From there, either copy and paste or drag and drop the image into the desired location for the walking brochure, newsletter, or publication.

No	Miles	Turn	Directions / Notes
1	0.000		Continue onto Victoria Street
	0.055	←	Turn left onto Water Street
	0.275	↗	Turn right
	0.914	↙	Turn sharp left onto Eastern Avenue
5	1.198	→	Turn right onto Bellevue Street

Step 4: Start Walking!

Now that you have a mapped walking route around your place of employment, it's time to lace up those sneakers (or comfortable shoes) and get going! Try taking a walk during your lunch break or schedule a walking meeting.

Section 2: Mapping Indoor Walking Routes

Providing indoor walking routes is a great alternative and/or supplement to outdoor walking routes. There are a number of reasons to develop and share indoor walking maps:

- For days with excessive heat or cold, rain, or snow, walking indoors is a great alternative to walking outside.
- Some buildings, such as within hospitals or universities, are so large that to get outside is a walk in itself. By mapping an indoor route, you enable employees to make the most of the time they have to spend walking.
- Not every business or place of employment has a nice or safe place to walk nearby, so creating an indoor route provides the opportunity to walk in spite of the lack of outdoor locations.
- Some employees may prefer walking indoors, so providing them with options may engage more employees in walking at work.

How to Make Indoor Routes

Unlike planning walking routes outdoors, where online mapping tools like Plot A Route use streets and trails to measure distance, indoors you must rely on a good old-fashioned tape measure. With a little bit of time, and perhaps some assistance from a friend or colleague, you can measure out distances of hallways in your office building using a tape measure or [measuring wheel](#).

Suggestions and tips for indoor walking routes:

- With permission from administration, hang signs in the hallways marking distance at a regular interval, for example 1/10 of a mile.
- Consider advertising the routes by the amount of time they will take rather than the distance, which may seem like a barrier to less physically active employees/colleagues.
- Consider creating routes for different distances and stringing them together to create longer routes. If you work in a small building, consider creating laps. If creating laps, consider creating ¼ mile laps, which take approximately five minutes to complete. This way, it's easy for employees to keep track of their distance. If you work in an especially small building, you can post/share the number of laps around the building or times up and down the corridor equal a certain distance. For example, 10 laps up and down the hall equals ¼ mile.

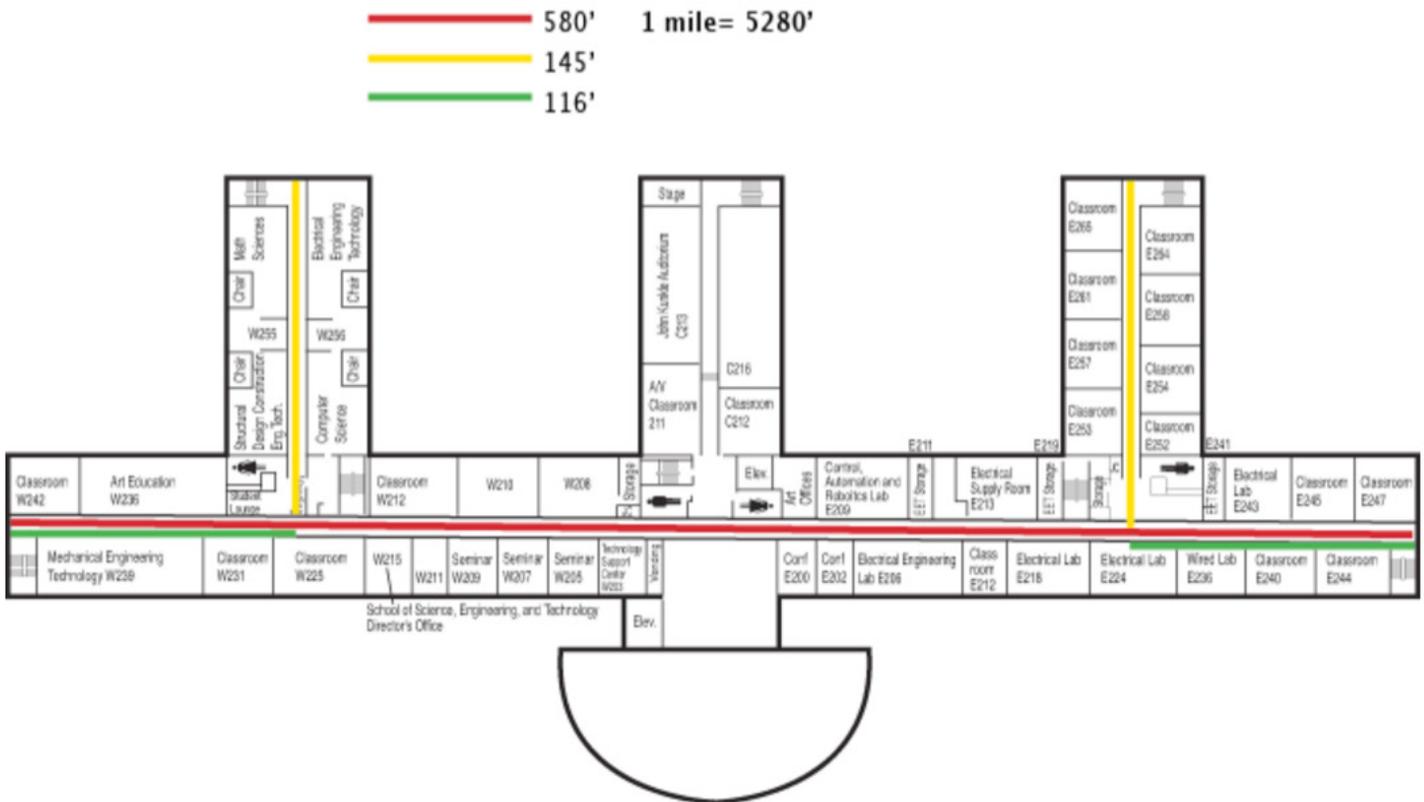
Tips for walking indoors:

- When walking with more than one person, keep voices low so as not to disrupt your colleagues who are working.
- Keep an eye out for doors opening.
- Pay special attention when going around corners so that you do not run into people coming from the opposite direction.

Maps

Visual maps of buildings are most helpful for developing the initial route, but for sharing with employees, written instructions will typically suffice. If you'd like to provide a map, you can utilize a blueprint image of the building or create a rough sketch yourself. To obtain a blueprint or interior map of your building, you may need to contact the city or county department of license/inspections, buildings, permits, or planning. (They have different names in every city!) For a simpler option, consider drawing a rough sketch of the building yourself and then drawing out the routes.

Here is an example of a map of indoor walking routes from [Penn State University](#):



Written Routes

Written descriptions of routes are more common than maps for indoor routes and will be probably be sufficient. Here is an example of written indoor walking route from University of North Carolina Medical Center:

Route 3: Loop Around Second Floor (.5 miles)

Starting at Employee Recreation Desk, walk toward the escalator and walk up the escalator (no riding!) to the Second Floor. Circle back around to the right and then turn right to walk down the long hallway with the lockers on the left side. Turn right and walk past the ICUs all the way down to the very end of the hall. Turn right at the Overlook Cafe and walk down the stairs to the Ground Floor. Follow the concourse back down to the Employee Recreation Desk.

Prepared for:

