

RUCK IT.

A practical guide to putting one foot
in front of the other.

Even when you are carrying some weight.



MOVE | CONNECT | BELONG

 **RUCKCLUB**
RUCK CLUB AUSTRALIA BY EYESTAR

RUCK IT.

A practical guide to putting one foot in front of the other.

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ABN 50 696 487 082
Office 21, 135 High Street, Fremantle WA 6160
eyestar.com.au

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Rucking involves physical exertion and outdoor hazards, including heat, uneven terrain, traffic and wildlife. You are responsible for your own safety and for deciding what is suitable for you. Stop if you feel pain, dizziness or unwell.

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A FEW MILES AGO.

01 THE BASICS

What is rucking?

People have carried weight over distance for thousands of years. In 2026, almost everything is designed to make life physically easier.

One person who is still expected to carry heavy loads, fast, over rough ground is the soldier. Different organisations have their own names for it.

Tabbing

BRITISH ARMY

To tab: Tactical Advance to Battle.

Yomping

ROYAL MARINES

Same job, Marines' word for it.

Rucking

US MILITARY

From the rucksack on your back.

Broadly speaking, they all mean the same thing: walking with weight on your back, as a group.

Despite modern vehicles and technology, soldiers still carry a lot of kit over a long way: serious weight, difficult ground, long distances and real fatigue. Over time that takes a toll on backs, knees and feet. Soldiers do it because a team sometimes needs to move at speed, together and with the right equipment, and then carry out a task when it arrives. That takes high standards of strength and endurance.

Recreational rucking is different.

You choose the weight, the distance, the ground and the pace. Done sensibly, it's a very effective way to make walking more demanding.

Why ruck?

Walking is useful exercise. Put some weight on your back and the same walk asks more of you, without you needing to go any faster.

IT'S PRACTICAL

- It's cheap. You probably own most of what you need already.
- It can be done almost anywhere: footpath, beach track, bush trail.
- No gym membership.
- It fits around normal life. Before work, at lunch, a Saturday morning.

IT WORKS FOR A GROUP

- People of different fitness levels can walk the same route.
- A fitter person carries more. A beginner carries less, or nothing at all.
- Everyone still walks together.

Getting outdoors is worthwhile in its own right. And walking does something that sitting across a table rarely does: people talk.

You end up walking next to someone you wouldn't normally meet, and a few kilometres later you know them a bit better. Good networks tend to form that way, without anyone trying too hard.

RUCK CLUB AUSTRALIA IS ABOUT

**Getting outside. Moving. Talking. Meeting people.
Having a decent session.
Sometimes pushing a little harder.**

What it isn't: our recreational walks are not a contest or a military bootcamp experience.

Before you buy anything

There's plenty of good advice online from people who have spent years walking, tabbing, marching or carrying weight for a living. Some of it is worth listening to.

There are also plenty of people telling beginners they need a particular brand of backpack, a specialist rucking pack, expensive weight plates, specialist clothing and a list of accessories.

They don't.

If you already have a decent backpack, start there. Put useful things in it. Go for a walk. If you find you enjoy it and want better kit, upgrade then.

Sort your pack

An ordinary rucksack, packed well, does the job.

CHOOSING YOUR PACK

- A decent hiking backpack is fine. Around **20–35 litres** is often enough for a normal day ruck.
- Padded shoulder straps and a supportive back panel.
- A sternum strap, and a hip belt that actually takes some of the load.
- Secure compartments, good stitching and buckles that work.
- Check the manufacturer's load rating.

Litres tell you how much fits in the pack. They don't tell you how much weight it can safely carry.



Fitting it

- 1 **Hip belt first.** Sit it comfortably and do it up.
- 2 **Shoulder straps.** Snug enough that the pack sits securely against your back.
- 3 **Sternum strap.** Clipped, not cranked.
- 4 **Check the load.** The weight shouldn't all be hanging off your shoulders.
- 5 **Walk a few minutes,** then make small adjustments.

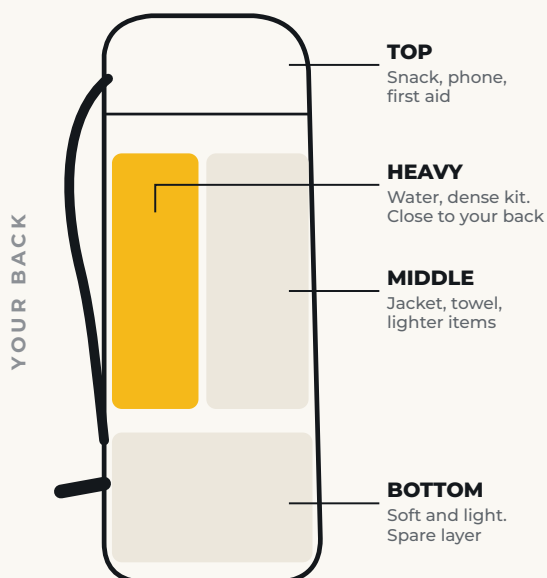
Once it's on, take a breath.

If the straps are restricting you or something is digging in, sort it before you go any further. Secure is good. Pulled so tight you can't breathe properly is not.

LOOSE STRAPS

Roll the excess webbing and secure it with tape, elastic keepers or hook-and-loop. Keep adjustment points usable and buckles where you can reach them. Flapping straps are irritating for one kilometre and maddening for ten.

Packing the weight



- Heavier items close to your back.
- Keep the load balanced side to side.
- Stop things moving around. A towel or spare clothing fills gaps well.
- Nothing hard pressing against your spine.
- Keep what you'll need on the move where you can get to it.
- Spare socks and anything that mustn't get wet go in a waterproof bag.
- Test the pack before you leave.

Don't make your first proper ruck the first time you've worn the pack loaded.

Pack it, put it on, walk around with it and make sure it's comfortable first.

What to put in it

You don't need to buy weights just to make the backpack heavier. Start with things that might actually be useful.

Local day ruck

THE BASICS

WATER

- ☐ Hydration bladder or water bottles

WEATHER

- ☐ Rain jacket or light outer layer
- ☐ Hat, sunscreen, sunglasses

FEET

- ☐ Spare socks in a waterproof bag
- ☐ Small towel
- ☐ Blister dressings

ESSENTIALS

- ☐ Small first aid kit
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ ID and emergency contact details
- ☐ Small snack: banana, muesli bar, dried fruit
- ☐ Small rubbish bag

EARLY OR LATE

- ☐ Head torch, reflective belt or vest, clip-on light

Longer or remote

ADD

- ☐ More water, and a bottle as backup in case the bladder or hose fails
- ☐ Snakebite pressure-immobilisation bandages
- ☐ Lightweight splint
- ☐ Portable power bank
- ☐ Simple food for the distance
- ☐ Gels or chews for harder sessions, if you like them
- ☐ Electrolytes where appropriate

A hydration bladder is convenient because you can drink without stopping. On remote routes, a bottle is cheap insurance.

1 L ≈ 1 kg

A litre of water weighs about a kilogram.

A 3 litre hydration bladder adds roughly 3 kg before anything else goes in the pack.

Don't guess.

Pack the bag as you intend to carry it and weigh it. A cheap set of hand-luggage scales or hanging scales does the job.

Already own a weight plate?

If you already own a home-gym weight plate and want to increase the load, wrap it securely in a towel and place it in the yellow section, close to your back, as shown on page 6. Make sure it can't shift around.

Look after your feet

Feet are usually the first thing to complain. Look after them and most other problems get smaller.



FOOTWEAR

Military boots aren't required. Trail shoes, walking shoes and hiking boots can all work. It depends on the ground and the load.

Uneven terrain and higher loads make ankle support a smart choice. Whatever you wear, comfort is a must: enough room for your toes, particularly downhill, and not much heel movement. Use footwear you've already tested.

Don't buy new boots and go straight out on a long ruck.

ZINC OXIDE TAPE

Use it on spots you already know rub. Clean, dry skin. Lay it on smooth with no wrinkles, and not too tight. There's no need to tape everything for the sake of it.

SOCKS

Some people wear a thin liner sock under a thicker walking sock, so some of the friction happens between the sock layers rather than against the skin.

Only do it if your footwear still fits comfortably. Not everybody needs two pairs. It's usually recommended for people prone to blisters.

GENERAL FOOTCARE

Trimmed toenails. Dry socks where possible. Spare socks and blister dressings in the pack. Have a proper look at your feet after longer walks.

Hot spots

A hot spot is the early warning. If something starts rubbing:

1 Stop	2 Footwear off	3 Check the sock	4 Remove foreign objects	5 Adjust the laces	6 Tape or dress it if needed
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Don't wait until a blister has fully formed, unless you're competing and have made that conscious decision.

Get comfortable with the weight

There's no universal perfect starting weight.

What's manageable depends on:

Body weight

Current fitness

Experience

Previous injuries

Distance

Terrain

Temperature

Pack fit

You'll see percentage rules, such as 10% or 20% of body weight, used as rough reference points. That's all they are. They aren't a prescription.

IF YOU ARE...

START WITH...

New to walking

No additional load.

A regular walker, new to rucking

A light pack with useful essentials.

Already comfortable carrying a pack

A familiar, manageable load.

An experienced rucker

The load that suits the session. Not ego, and not an old military standard.

Find our starting-weight guide on the EYESTAR website.

The first job isn't to see how much you can carry. It's to get comfortable carrying something.

- Get the pack sitting properly.
- Walk a few kilometres.
- Learn how it feels going uphill and downhill.
- See how your feet and legs feel later that day, and the next morning.
- Once that all feels fairly normal, add a bit more.

DON'T MAKE IT HARDER IN YOUR HEAD

If you're new to carrying weight, the pack can feel surprisingly heavy when you first put it on.

Give yourself a few minutes. Start walking. Settle into it. See how it actually feels before deciding it's too much.

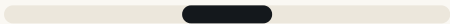
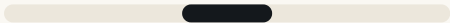
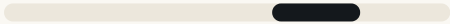
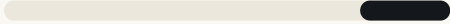
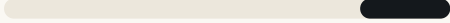
If it genuinely is too heavy, take some weight out.

Simple.

Build yourself up

- Start with shorter, flat routes.
- Get used to the pack.
- Once you're comfortable, increase **either** distance **or** weight.
- Don't increase everything at once. Bring hills in later.
- Allow recovery. There's no need for a heavy pack every day.
- If you've done this before: the load you carried years ago isn't necessarily the right starting point today.

A simple six-week start

WEEK	DISTANCE	LOAD
1	2–3 km 	No added weight, or a very light pack.
2	2–3 km 	Same distance. Light pack if comfortable.
3	3–4 km 	Same load.
4	3–4 km 	Repeat and consolidate.
5	4–5 km 	A manageable load.
6	4–5 km 	Repeat, or make one small increase.

**Repeating a week is fine.
There's no required weight.
There's no required distance.**

The aim is gradual improvement.

STRONG LEGS HELP

This isn't a gym programme. But ordinary walking, hills, calf raises, step-ups and squats, or similar basic strength work, all help prepare your legs for carrying weight.

Get moving

FIND YOUR RHYTHM

Don't rush the first kilometre. Give yourself time to settle into the pack. Use a natural stride, keep your breathing under control and pick a pace you could hold for a while. On easier sessions you should generally be able to talk. There's no need to force a marching speed.

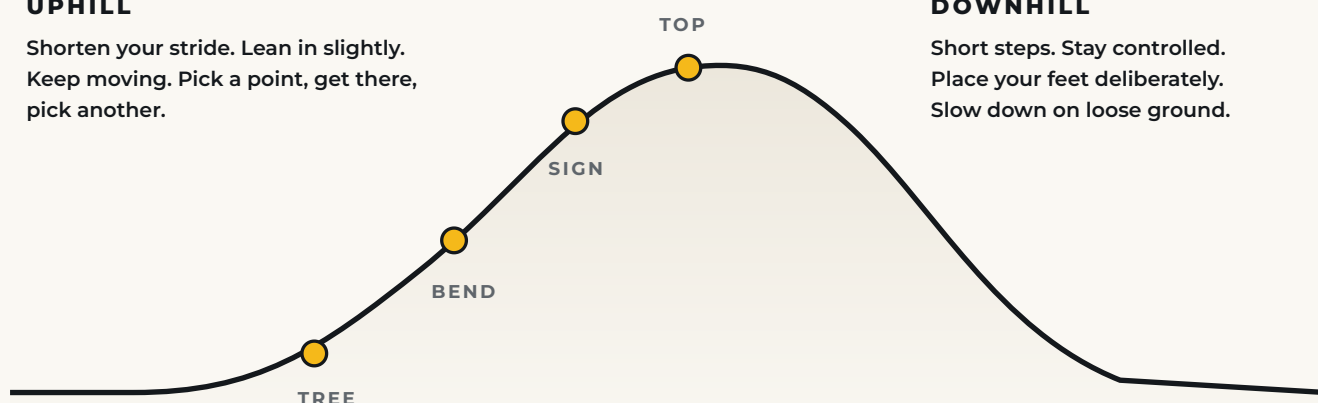
You're building the ability to keep moving, not trying to win the first kilometre.

UPHILL

Shorten your stride. Lean in slightly. Keep moving. Pick a point, get there, pick another.

DOWNHILL

Short steps. Stay controlled. Place your feet deliberately. Slow down on loose ground.



GOING UP

Shorten your stride, lean into the hill slightly and keep moving. You might need to slow down, but a steady rhythm is usually easier than repeatedly stopping and starting. Stay balanced and avoid bending heavily at the waist. There's no need to race to the top.

COMING DOWN

Keep your stride short and stay in control. Don't lean back too far, and don't let the pack pull you down the slope. Going downhill loaded puts more stress through the knees.

Don't let your pack take you for a ride.

PICK YOUR NEXT TARGET

When a longer route starts to drag, break it up. A tree, the next bend, the top of the hill, a sign, a checkpoint. Get there. Reassess. Pick another. On a harder group session, the person a little way ahead can be the next target too, but normal group rucks aren't races. It's just a practical way of handling distance. **It isn't a way of ignoring an injury.**

A few things worth knowing

SHIN PAIN (SHIN SPLINTS)

Doing too much too soon can overload the lower legs, especially if weight, distance and hills all go up quickly. Calf strength helps, and so does recovery.

Watch your laces. If they're too tight across the ankle or top of the foot they can create pressure and discomfort. If something starts hurting, stop, loosen them and see if that sorts it.

Persistent pain in one spot should be properly assessed. Don't push through pain that changes the way you walk.

EARLY MORNINGS AND AFTER DARK

Head torch, reflective belt or vest, clip-on light, charged phone. Wear something visible near roads.

Being visible is more useful than trying to look tactical in black clothing.

HEAT

Check the forecast and adjust your start time. Carry enough water. Hat, sunscreen, sunglasses and sensible clothing. In excessive heat, shorten the session or cancel it. The route will still be there tomorrow.

FIRST AID

A small first aid kit, blister supplies, basic dressings, gloves and any personal medication. Know how to use what you carry. A proper first aid course is time well spent.

Snakebite

For Australian bush routes, carry pressure-immobilisation bandages and know how to apply them.

DO

- Keep the casualty still
- Call 000
- Apply a pressure-immobilisation bandage and immobilise the limb

DON'T

- Let them walk out
- Cut or wash the bite
- Use a tourniquet
- Try to catch the snake

This page isn't a substitute for first aid training. Do a recognised course.



09 THE GROUP

Look out for others

People walk at different speeds. Some carry more than others. Group rucks aren't races.

- Check on people.
- Adjust the pace.
- Help someone sort their pack.
- If somebody needs a break, stop.
- If someone is injured or unwell, deal with it.

Talk to someone you haven't met.

If you're fitter, carry more weight rather than making everyone else walk faster.

Same route, same time, different load. That's how mixed ages and fitness levels end up on the same walk.

Before you head out

☐ **PACK**

Suitable load. Secure. Comfortable.

☐ **FEET**

Footwear, socks and tape if required.

☐ **SUN**

Hat, sunscreen and sunglasses.

☐ **PHONE**

Charged. Route available.

☐ **GROUP**

Meeting point and route understood.

☐ **WATER**

Enough for the route and conditions.

☐ **WEATHER**

Forecast checked.

☐ **FIRST AID**

Packed and accessible.

☐ **LIGHT**

Head torch and reflective kit if needed.

☐ **FINAL CHECK**

Nothing digging into your back. Straps secured.
Buckles working.

When you get back

Ten minutes now saves a problem next time.

- Ease off for the last few minutes
- Drink some water
- Check your feet
- Dry wet kit
- Restock anything you used
- Note the distance and load
- Change something next time if needed

A final word

I've spent a fair bit of my working life around risk in one form or another.

Some of it was obvious. Later on, it became less obvious. Pressure, responsibility, people carrying too much, and sometimes not having enough people around them.

That's probably part of why I still care about veteran communities, good networks and getting people together.

Rucking doesn't need to be more complicated than walking with a bit of weight on your back.

But getting outside, moving, having a decent conversation and spending time around good people is rarely a bad thing.

That's really what Ruck Club Australia is about.

No pressure. No requirement to carry a certain weight. Anyone is welcome.



Danny Hines

FOUNDER, EYESTAR & RUCK
CLUB AUSTRALIA

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Find upcoming rucks, our starting-weight guide and more at
eyestar.com.au



Come along for a walk.

Carry some weight.
Or don't.

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