

GA / GAMBOLLERS ANONYMOUS

The Gambollers Anonymous Handbook

*A practical guide to responsible restraint and the
ordinary walk*

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION / SERIES 01

HANDBOOK

There is no shame in walking normally.

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PUBLICATION NOTICE

This is a work of fictional institutional comedy. Gambollers Anonymous is not a real support organization and this document is not medical, psychological, or safety advice. Actual gambling and frolicking are generally harmless. Please exercise ordinary judgment around roads, water, heights, and private property.

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Gambollers Anonymous / The Department of Publications

A Foreword from the Office of Controlled Locomotion

A CONFIDENTIAL MESSAGE INTENDED FOR UNRESTRICTED CIRCULATION

If you are reading this document, it is possible that someone has expressed concern about the way you cross an open field. Perhaps a colleague noticed an unexplained spring in your step. Perhaps you were observed humming in the vicinity of a duck pond. Perhaps you have recently returned from a short errand with grass stains on both knees and no satisfactory explanation for the ribbon in your hair.

Whatever the circumstances, the Department asks you to approach this handbook with an open mind and, ideally, a closed gait. You have not been singled out for persecution. You have simply arrived at a point in your life when further bounding may be counterproductive to the maintenance of ordinary public composure.

Gambollers Anonymous was established upon a straightforward principle: a person can appreciate a meadow without behaving as though personally invited by it. We do not condemn pleasure. We merely question its insistence on involving both feet leaving the ground in rapid succession.

There is no shame in walking normally.

This introductory handbook provides terminology, exercises, administrative measures, and paperwork for those seeking a more controlled relationship with outdoor merriment. It is a work of comedy fiction. No one should mistake it for clinical advice, a diagnosis, or a real recovery program. The Department considers this distinction obvious but has been asked to put it in writing.

— THE OFFICE OF CONTROLLED LOCOMOTION

01 | Understanding the Condition

THE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT CONFUSE MOVEMENT WITH MOTIVE

Before corrective action is attempted, it is essential to distinguish a sensible change of location from an episode of unmanaged exuberance. Many perfectly respectable citizens move briskly to catch a train, escape a wasp, or intercept an unattended pastry. None of these acts automatically constitutes gambling.

Ordinary walking

A process by which an individual proceeds from one location to another with no apparent desire to celebrate the existence of the ground between them. The head remains level. The arms perform their appointed duty. An observer might accurately describe the person as 'going somewhere.'

Gambling

Playful, buoyant movement that exceeds the minimum locomotive requirement of the journey. Common features include voluntary hops, unnecessary airborne intervals, and a facial expression incompatible with a routine visit to the post office.

Frolicking

A broader social phenomenon characterized by visible enjoyment, spontaneous changes of direction, and a marked unwillingness to acknowledge that a straight path is available. Frolicking may occur without gambling, although the two are frequently found in one another's company.

Capering

A flamboyant subtype requiring particular vigilance. A caper usually includes a flourish, a turn, or an attempt to communicate something to the surrounding landscape. If witnesses have applauded, the Department recommends documentation.

A single hop is not conclusive evidence. The correct question is whether the hop was necessary. Stepping over a puddle is infrastructure management. Leaping over the same puddle twice because the first leap 'felt lovely' requires review.

02 | Early Warning Indicators

INTERVENE BEFORE THE SECOND SKIP

Uncontrolled gamboling rarely announces itself as such. The first warning may be a feeling that the morning is 'full of possibilities.' This sentiment is especially concerning when accompanied by freshly cut grass, a mild breeze, or an absence of pressing appointments.

- You choose a longer route because it passes an attractive patch of clover.
- A spontaneous little tune becomes synchronized with your footsteps.
- You ask whether there is time to 'run about for a minute' when no running has been requested.
- You begin referring to ordinary terrain as a 'lovely place for a romp.'
- Your account of a walk includes the phrase 'and then I simply couldn't help myself.'

The last indicator merits special attention. An individual's recollection of movement may become selectively vague. 'I must have been carried away by the moment' is not a navigational account. It is a confession disguised as a meteorological observation.

The twenty-second pause

Upon noticing unusual buoyancy, stop. Identify three nearby objects that do not invite a leap: a drainpipe, a parked car, and a utility bill will generally suffice. Resume at an even pace. If the urge remains, select a route with fewer daisies.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADVISORY 02-B: Feeling cheerful is not reportable. Somersaulting through a municipal flower bed is.

03 | The Twelve Administrative Measures

A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK OF ESCALATING RESTRAINT

These are administrative measures rather than universal moral laws. They may be adopted in order, out of order, or whenever a particular hedge begins looking inviting. Participants are reminded that successful completion does not confer authority to supervise strangers.

1. Recognize the hop. Admit that the movement was more decorative than necessary.
2. Describe the terrain. Name the meadow, dell, promenade, or other instigating location without euphemism.
3. Inventory the urge. Was there music, sunshine, a breeze, or an especially cooperative slope?
4. Consult a level-headed companion. Ideally one who does not own a tambourine.
5. Commit to a practical destination. Wandering 'wherever the wind takes me' is not a destination.
6. Keep the soles accountable. At least one foot should maintain contact with the earth during ordinary travel.
7. Respect the lawn. An inviting surface does not constitute an invitation from its owner.
8. Rehearse composure. Practice passing a flower bed without acknowledging it theatrically.
9. Report unplanned capering accurately. Replace 'a little stretch' with the actual sequence of events.
10. Offer support without recruitment. Do not persuade others to join your spontaneous skipping.
11. Revisit difficult routes gradually. Start with a car park before attempting the botanical gardens.
12. Continue at a sensible pace. Recovery is measured in ordinary steps, not triumphant leaps.

The Department recognizes that Measure Six is particularly contentious among stair users. Stair climbing, hopping to avoid injury, and involuntary jolts on public transport are expressly outside its scope. So are the movements of anyone performing an emergency evacuation.

NOTICE: No candidate should celebrate completion of Measure Twelve by jumping for joy. This has occurred more often than the Department cares to disclose.

04 | The Meadow Incident

CASE FILE GA-041: AN INSTRUCTIVE EXCURSION

At 09:12 on an otherwise uneventful Saturday, an individual identified in the records as M. approached the western edge of a public meadow. M. had left home intending to purchase envelopes. A direct route to the stationer's shop was available. M. instead entered the meadow on the grounds that the grass 'looked springy.'

At 09:14, M. made one unnecessary lateral movement. At 09:15, a second. By 09:17, a witness described the subject as 'sort of bounding along with the wind.' At 09:19, M. was observed raising both arms toward the sky. The envelopes were not purchased.

Findings

The reviewing committee found that the episode had been enabled by three circumstances: unusually favorable weather, absence of a time-sensitive errand, and the subject's insistence that the field was 'practically asking for it.' No evidence was found that the field had communicated verbally or in writing.

Corrective measures

M. was advised to carry a written shopping list, use the paved footpath, and avoid looking directly at the meadow until the next scheduled review. Upon receiving the recommendations, M. sighed, nodded, and skipped once on the spot. The committee recorded the incident without further comment.

A meadow has no authority to alter your itinerary.

This case reminds us that most excursions begin respectably. The problem is not departure. It is what happens when the walker encounters a perfectly satisfactory patch of sunlit grass.

05 | Sponsorship and Peer Support

SELECTING A PERSON WHO WALKS NORMALLY

A sponsor is not a superior officer, a personal trainer, or someone empowered to confiscate your picnic blanket. A sponsor is simply a steady companion who can be contacted when circumstances become suspiciously picturesque.

Choose a person who can cross a village green without making airplane noises; who understands the difference between encouraging you and challenging you to a race; and who is unlikely to respond to a confession of skipping by saying, 'That sounds fun. Where?'

A suggested first conversation

I may have been taking liberties with the public footpath. I am seeking a person capable of accompanying me past a duck pond without incident.

The sponsor's duties are deliberately modest. Listen without mockery. Suggest an alternate route where appropriate. Ask whether the movement was intentional. Help the participant distinguish a genuine emergency from an allegedly irresistible desire to leap over a log.

What a sponsor should not do

- Invent disciplinary penalties involving treadmills.
- Demand photographic proof that both shoes remained grounded.
- Use the participant's history of frolicking to secure preferential access to park benches.

The Department further advises against scheduling sponsorship meetings at spring festivals, outdoor concerts, or anywhere that distributes flower crowns.

06 | Conducting a Sensible Walk

THE FIVE-STAGE APPROVED PROCEDURE

STAGE A — State your destination. A shop, library, or bus stop is sufficient.

STAGE B — Inspect the route. Note meadows, fountains, scenic footbridges, and unusually festive paving.

STAGE C — Select an appropriate pace. One at which a companion can still discuss the weather without panting.

STAGE D — Maintain purpose. If your feet begin adding flourishes, consult the destination stated in Stage A.

STAGE E — Arrive. The walk is complete when the destination has been reached; it is not necessary to mark the occasion with a cartwheel.

Participants may be tempted to overcorrect, adopting a pace so stern that passersby assume a disciplinary inspection is underway. This is unnecessary. The aim is not to make all walking miserable. The aim is to ensure that movement remains proportionate to the task.

Acceptable joy

Smiling at a dog is acceptable. Smiling at a dog while leaping over a hedge to accompany it is not recommended. Buying yourself a bun at the bakery is acceptable. Doing a celebratory jig outside the bakery is a matter for personal reflection, although the baker may enjoy it.

ROUTE NOTICE 06-C: A scenic detour is not a breach if it was intentionally planned before leaving home. Retroactive planning is not recognized.

07 | Setbacks, Exceptions, and the Weather

AN INCIDENT IS NOT AN IDENTITY

It is entirely possible to pass three consecutive meadows without incident and then find oneself capering before an ordinary patch of daisies. The Department discourages melodrama. Record what happened, identify what was different, and resume regular walking when practical. Do not declare your entire week a failure because of a brief outbreak of merriment.

Conditions requiring no special explanation

Leaping out of the path of a moving bicycle, stepping briskly around a broken pavement slab, and making an emergency dash for a departing train are not evidence of recreational indulgence. Nor is hopping under medical instruction or participating in an occupation that plainly requires jumping.

Conditions meriting additional scrutiny

The sudden appearance of a rainbow; a song with a pronounced bounce; a delightful new pair of shoes; and the first warm afternoon after a long rainy season. The Department maintains no official stance on confetti, which remains a divisive matter.

Weather presents special complications. Sunlight does not excuse cartwheels. Wind is not, in itself, a call to prance. A light drizzle may make a puddle visually irresistible, but a puddle's attractiveness is irrelevant to whether jumping into it is necessary.

A difficult Tuesday does not revoke the sensible steps you took on Monday.

A useful question after any incident is not 'What sort of person am I?' but 'How did I end up in the gazebo?' The second question is answerable and may improve future navigation.

08 | Family and Friends

SUPPORT WITHOUT NEEDLESS ALARM

If someone you know is prone to gamboling, resist the urge to deliver elaborate speeches each time they encounter a patch of grass. A quiet invitation to continue along the pavement is often more useful than an accusatory reference to last year's embarrassing episode at the arboretum.

Loved ones may feel tempted to remove all sources of pleasure from the environment. This is neither possible nor desirable. You cannot reasonably ban springtime, fence every meadow, or require a loved one to avert their eyes when a butterfly passes. You can, however, agree on what constitutes a sensible outing and what counts as a spontaneous expedition into undergrowth.

Helpful phrases

- 'We're heading to the café. The café is in this direction.'
- 'You seem unusually pleased by that incline. Would you like to take the paved path?'
- 'You can admire the daffodils without auditioning for a pastoral ballet.'

Phrases to avoid

- 'Do it again. That was hilarious.'
- 'I bet you can't clear that stream.'
- 'You've been so sensible lately. Surely one little frolic wouldn't hurt.'

Above all, maintain proportion. The Department exists within a fictional comedy premise; no actual person needs to feel ashamed for finding pleasure in movement. Real households are advised to retain their sense of humor.

09 | The Meeting That Remained Seated

SAMPLE MINUTES FROM A LOCAL CHAPTER

Meeting of the North Meadow Chapter, convened at 18:00 in a room with no direct view of the municipal gardens. Seven members present. One arrived slightly out of breath and stated that the staircase was steeper than expected. The secretary accepted this explanation provisionally.

Item 1 — Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes approved without objection. The prior week's suggestion to relocate meetings to the bandstand was withdrawn after the Risk Subcommittee indicated the presence of open lawn on three sides.

Item 2 — Reports from the field

A member reported passing a row of cherry trees without accelerating. This was received with measured approval. Another member described 'a little hop to greet the morning.' The chair asked that the minutes record the description verbatim pending clarification of 'little.'

Item 3 — New business

The group debated whether whistling ought to count as preliminary frolicking. No resolution was reached. The proposal to ban whistling was tabled after two members pointed out that the caretaker whistles while locking up and appears otherwise composed.

Item 4 — Adjournment

Meeting closed at 18:47. Members departed singly, except for two who walked together in a manner the secretary described as 'reassuringly pedestrian.'

RECORDS NOTE: Minutes are a record of proceedings, not evidence that the proceedings were sensible.

10 | Forms for the Responsible Gamboller

PHOTOCOPYING IS PERMITTED; FLOURISHES ARE NOT REQUIRED

Daily Composure Register

DATE: _____

PLANNED DESTINATION: _____

ACTUAL DESTINATION: _____

NUMBER OF UNNECESSARY HOPS: _____

MEADOWS ENCOUNTERED: _____

WAS A TUNE INVOLVED? YES / NO / PREFER NOT TO SAY

REMEDIAL ACTION (IF ANY): _____

Incident report — GA-IR/01

LOCATION OF ALLEGED FROLICKING: _____

WEATHER AT TIME OF INCIDENT: _____

TYPE OF MOVEMENT: SKIP / CAPER / ROMP / OTHER _____

DID BOTH FEET LEAVE THE GROUND VOLUNTARILY? YES / NO

EXPLANATION GIVEN BY SUBJECT: _____

RECOMMENDATION: _____

Forms are intended as comic props for voluntary use. Neither completion nor non-completion has any consequences. The Department reserves the right to stamp a completed form APPROVED FOR NORMAL WALKING, provided it can locate the stamp.

11 | A Short Dictionary of Departmental Terms

TERMINOLOGY IS THE FOUNDATION OF A RESPECTABLE INSTITUTION

AIRBORNE INTERVAL — A period during which both shoes are needlessly free of the ground.

CAPER, AD HOC — An improvised flourish not previously approved by the route planner.

DELL EXPOSURE — Prolonged contact with a small sheltered valley of exaggerated charm.

GAIT COMPOSURE — The capacity to move without appearing to conduct a personal parade.

MEADOW PROXIMITY EVENT — A documented encounter with open grass judged liable to provoke romping.

SENSIBLE PACE — A speed consistent with reaching a stated destination and retaining one's dignity.

SPONSOR — A calm companion, not a person who buys one lunch.

THE LITTLE HOP DEFENSE — Claim that a movement was too small to merit classification; historically unsuccessful.

UNLICENSED EXUBERANCE — A playful exaggeration; there is, of course, no actual gamboling license.

This terminology remains under review. Suggestions should be submitted in writing. The Department asks that they not be delivered by singing telegram.

12 | The Ordinary Road Ahead

CLOSING GUIDANCE FOR A LIFETIME OF MEASURED ADVENTURES

There will be gardens you have yet to see, beautiful paths not yet walked, and hillsides that insist on looking like the opening scene of a musical. We make no claim that ordinary walking will cease to be tested. Indeed, the whole world seems, from time to time, designed to encourage an unnecessary spring in the step.

Should you choose to practice restraint, do so lightly. No one has ever made a better world by issuing a stern memorandum against delight. The purpose of this document is to afford the reader a little comic dignity while contemplating the very grave question of what, exactly, a meadow expects from us.

Proceed at your own pace. Keep your itinerary reasonably clear. If a flower nods encouragingly in your direction, you are under no obligation to reciprocate with interpretive movement.

One meadow at a time.

OFFICE OF CONTROLLED LOCOMOTION — END OF INTRODUCTORY HANDBOOK