

Walking on two feet

Walking is something most people do every day without thinking about it. But when and why did humans start to walk upright?

Many scientists think the first apes to walk on two feet were 'ape-men' between two and four million years ago. There are several possible reasons why humans started to walk on two legs. Some scientists say it's because it was easier to carry babies and feed at the same time. Others think that it was to watch out for danger. A study with chimpanzees shows that we possibly started to walk on two feet because it was an efficient way to move as it uses only 25% of the energy used by apes that walk on all four feet.

Some scientists think that our ancestors started walking on two feet when they still lived in trees, maybe between 16 and 21 million years ago. They believe walking upright possibly helped them stand on the ground and pick the best fruit from small trees. Another possibility is that it helped them because they could walk on small branches and hold onto branches above them to pick fruit.

Walking isn't as easy as it looks. Small children take several months to learn to walk and when they start they're not very good at it. Making a robot walk well was very difficult for many years and old-style robots took 10 times more energy than a person to walk. Modern robots still can't walk as well as a human.

Walking is easy and there are many ways it can be good for your health. Walking can help you lose weight and keep fit. Walking helps people feel happier and reduces stress. It can also possibly help people live longer and stay mentally fit too.

But in many developed countries people walk very little. For example, in the UK most children live about 20 minutes' walk from school, but fewer than half of them walk to school. The Walk to School campaign started in the UK in 1995. Schools use a 'walking bus', which is a group of children walking to school usually with an adult 'driver' at the front and another adult at the end of the line of children. The first ever International Walk to School Day was in 2000 with about two and a half million walkers and in 2010 there were millions of walkers from more than 40 countries.

1 Which paragraph in the text (2–6) talks about each of the following?

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Walking upright to pick fruit | paragraph _____ |
| 2 | How walking is good for you | paragraph _____ |
| 3 | 'walking buses' | paragraph _____ |
| 4 | Several reasons why we started to walk on two feet | paragraph _____ |
| 5 | Making robots walk | paragraph _____ |

2 Here are some numbers from the article. Match them with the correct information. Then read the article quickly to check your answers.

20 25 2010 40 2000 10 2½ million 1995

- 1 We possibly started to walk on two feet because it uses _____ % of the energy used on four feet.
- 2 Old-style robots used _____ times more energy to walk than a person.
- 3 Most children in the UK live about _____ minutes walk from school.
- 4 The 'walk to school' campaign started in the UK in _____ .
- 5 The first International Walk to School Day was in _____ with _____ walkers.
- 6 In _____ there were millions of walkers from more than _____ countries.

3 Match the words from the box to their partner from the text.

keep	walk	watch out for	reduce	live	lose
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- 1 _____ longer
- 2 _____ weight
- 3 _____ upright
- 4 _____ fit
- 5 _____ stress
- 6 _____ danger

4 Find sentences in the text about walking using the word partnerships from exercise 3.

5 There are several ways to compare things. For example, you can say walking *isn't as easy as* it looks, which means the same as walking *is more difficult than* it looks. Rewrite the sentences below replacing the comparatives with *not as + adjective + as*.

- 1 Humans are *more efficient than* robots at walking. Robots _____ .
- 2 Walking upright is *more efficient than* walking on four feet. Walking on four feet _____ .
- 3 Walking is *healthier* for you than sitting watching TV. Sitting watching TV _____ .
- 4 Adults are *better* at walking than young children. Young children _____ .
- 5 Some scientists say that people who walk a lot are *happier* than people who don't walk. Some scientists say that people who don't walk _____ .

6 Many words in English can have the same sound but a different spelling. In the list of words below find the one word with a different pronunciation of the underlined vowel.

- 1 up^right ouⁿtries ove udy onths _____
- 2 sall odern walk ore forty _____

7 Discuss these questions with your partner(s).

- What did you find interesting or surprising about walking?
- Is walking popular in your country as a hobby? Why / Why not?
- How do children travel to school in your country?
- Is there a Walk to School campaign in your country? If not, do you think it would be a good idea to have one?

Glossary

ancestor (*noun*) – someone who is related to you who lived a long time ago

branch (*noun*) – a part of a tree that grows out of its trunk (= main stem) with leaves, flowers, or fruit growing on it.

campaign (*noun*) – a series of actions intended to produce political or social change

fit (*adj*) – healthy, strong, and able to do physical exercise without getting very tired

efficient (*adj*) – something that is efficient works well and produces good results by using the available time, money, supplies etc in the most effective way

energy (*noun*) – a supply of physical power that you have for doing things that need physical effort

hold onto (*verb*) - to hold something tightly or carefully so that you do not drop it or do not fall

human (*noun*) – a person

upright (*adv*) – standing with a straight back

watch out for (*verb*) – to pay attention so that you will see something when it arrives or happens