

Risk assessment tips

Doing a risk assessment isn't about doing lots of paperwork! It's just a way of protecting everyone involved from any harm that could potentially arise from the event or activities you're organising. You'll need to look at anything that may cause harm and check that you've taken the necessary precautions.

A **hazard** is anything that may cause harm such as excessive noise, some equipment or chemicals. A **risk** is the chance, high, medium or low, that somebody could be harmed from a hazard, with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) lists five steps to risk assessment:

Step 1 – Identify the hazards

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how

Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Step 4 – Record your findings

Step 5 – Review your risk assessment and update if necessary

Step 1 – Identify the hazards

You'll need to work out how people may be harmed:

- ✓ The HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk> provides practical guidance on hazards
- ✓ What around your event venue and note what may cause harm
- ✓ Ask advice of other organisers and the venue owner as their previous experience may help you
- ✓ Check the manufacturer's instructions for any equipment you're using
- ✓ Remember those long term hazards e.g. high noise levels

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Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed; it will help you identify the best way of controlling the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people (e.g. marshals on 5k run route' or 'children in activity area').

- ✓ Think about how each group may be harmed e.g. children may get lost
- ✓ Remember that some groups may have specific requirements e.g. , the elderly, disabled people or pregnant women
- ✓ Make sure you think about people that may not attend the event all the time such as suppliers
- ✓ You'll also need to think about anyone sharing the event venue
- ✓ Remember to think about any hazards when setting up or clearing up the event

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Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide on

Having identified the hazards, you then have to decide how likely it is that harm will occur; i.e. the level of risk and what to do about it. Risk is a part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks. What you must do is make sure you know about the main risks and the things you need to do to manage them responsibly.

- ✓ Look at what you're already doing
- ✓ Decide whether you need to remove the hazard altogether or how you can control the risk to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring
- ✓ When controlling risks, the principles below will help you
- ✓ Eliminate the risk altogether
- ✓ Try a less risky option
- ✓ Restrict access to the area concerned
- ✓ Issue protective equipment
- ✓ Provide welfare facilities

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Step 4 – Record your findings

Make a record of your significant findings - the hazards, how people might be harmed by them and what you have in place to control the risks. Any record produced should be simple and focused on controls.

An easy way to record your findings is to use our risk assessment template. When writing down your results keep it simple, for example 'Tripping over rubbish, Control = bins provided and emptied regularly, regular checks to be made'.

A risk assessment must be 'suitable and sufficient', i.e. it should show that:

- ✓ a proper check was made
- ✓ you asked who might be affected
- ✓ you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved
- ✓ the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
- ✓ you involved anyone relevant in the process

Make sure you keep a record of all your actions, make regular checks, allocate clear responsibilities and prioritise the most important things first.

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Step 5 – Review your risk assessment and update if necessary

Venues and activities may change during the course of planning as well as on the day itself. New hazards may present themselves. So it makes sense to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis, look at your risk assessment again and ask yourself:

- ✓ Have there been any significant changes?
- ✓ Are there improvements you still need to make?
- ✓ Has anyone else spotted a problem?
- ✓ Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses?

Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.