



Walking sticks have certainly been used since the dawn of man. You can imagine that it didn't take long for an early homo sapien to pick up a stick and use it to help him through some rough terrain. In today's modern world, the mention of a walking stick can conjure up images of a cane for the infirm.

But throughout history they have been used as walking aides, weapons, and symbols of wealth and authority. Ancient Egyptian pharaohs, shepherds, merchants, priests, common folk, and of course, Moses used staffs of various ornateness and were many times even buried with them. European monarchs often posed for paintings with their hand resting on elegant sticks and sometimes even restricted their use to only the aristocracy.

But besides their long history of many uses and symbolism, there remains their undeniable practicality.

Some very practical benefits include:

- support for your knees, hip, and spine while walking
- extra lift when climbing hills
- clear briars, spider webs, or limbs from your path
- alleviate strain from your lower body when descending hills
- lean against pole during short breaks for more comfortable rest
- help you establish and maintain a consistent rhythm during your walk
- probe ahead of you when crossing streams, mud, or ice of unknown depth or when walking in the dark
- reach things floating in water or stuck in trees
- lift objects above you to place up high
- fend off snakes, dogs, or other bothersome animals
- tap on rocks to alert wildlife that you are coming
- wave above your head to make large predators think you're a bigger foe
- reduce impact on your legs, knees, ankles, and feet
- gain extra balance and traction in rough or slippery terrain

As an avid walker / hiker from Illinois so elegantly put it:

“I use a stick to focus my body on the rhythm of walking. I find that if I use a stick matched to my height and grip lined up with the point of my pelvic bone works for me --- the swing of the stick in my hand, the roll of my feet while I step, and the sound of the tip tapping on the pavement create a kind of music. I am no longer trudging along. I am dancing with the earth beneath my feet. Time ceases.... there is only the now. Without a stick, I resent walking to the mailbox. With the right stick, I could walk the world.”