

KS3 Geography. Maps and navigation.

Public rights of way

JOE CROWLEY: Maps detail all kinds of routes criss-crossing the page. There's footpaths, bridleways, all different types of roads. But what exactly do they all mean and where are you allowed to walk? On the 1:25 000 scale map typically used by walkers the most obvious paths people are allowed to use are marked as green lines. These are public rights of way. They're open to everyone. They can be roads, paths, or tracks and can run through towns, countryside or even through private property. That means you could walk through someone's back yard if there's a public right of way.

There are a number of different types of public rights of way apart from roads. *Footpaths* are marked by a closely dashed line and these let you go by foot only. *Bridleways* are marked by longer dashes. On these you can travel by foot, horse, or bike. And *restricted byways* let you travel by any form of transport that doesn't have a motor.

But just because a path isn't marked in green doesn't mean you're forbidden to walk on it. Paths marked in orange are what's called *permissive rights of way*. There's no automatic right to walk on them but a landowner has granted access voluntarily. This access can be withdrawn though at any time. Other paths are marked in black and typically run through private land but again that doesn't always mean you can't walk on them or that you have to seek special permission.

Now this is an interesting example. This route here is a bridleway and it's marked on the map with a green dotted line meaning it's a public right of way. But this footpath over here is only marked on the map with a black dotted line. So can I walk along it? Well, the answer in this case is 'yes', because this area is all *access land*, which means the public by law has a right to roam here, and these areas are marked clearly on the map. You'll find access land is marked with an orange boundary and it has a yellow tint. There may be restrictions to the right to roam at certain times of the year. These can be for a variety of reasons - such as protecting nesting birds, or avoiding bird shoots. At these times walkers should stick to the paths.

So don't be baffled by all the different routes and lines drawn on a map. It is actually very straightforward and if you do get confused just take a look at the key.