



How can I make going uphill easier?

Ascent requires effort, but perhaps not as much as you think. It's not just down to fitness, it's also about technique. Here are 10 tips from expert **Neville Shortt**...

Smaller paces

1 Don't be tempted to stride out when you get to an uphill, as those big steps will really take it out of your thighs. You will use your energy more efficiently by taking smaller paces, even though you have to make more of them.

Smaller steps

2 Don't worry, we haven't repeated tip number one! If the path you are on takes in a series of steps, whether natural or man-made, choose a route that makes every step-up small (for the same reasons that you should keep your paces small). There's a reason why we build steps with a height difference of less than nine inches – that's the least tiring size for most of us. So, look for a route like that up the mountains.

Zig-zag

3 If there is room to manoeuvre on the uphill, try 'zig-zagging' instead of going up in a straight line. You will end up walking further, but on less steep a gradient.

Get rhythm!

4 Your tendons and ligaments have a built-in elasticity, and walking at the right rhythm exploits that to give you energy for free.

Climb like a rock climber

5 If you are forced to physically make a big step up, do like the rock climbers do and turn your body to the side. This allows you both to make a bigger step and to use a different, fresher, set of muscles.

Heels down!

6 Make sure you are placing your heel on the ground with every new step. Otherwise you will find it much harder to balance, and the muscles of that foot and lower leg will have to work a lot harder.

Don't look down... much

7 It's tempting on uneven ground to keep looking at what your feet are doing. But keeping your head tilted down will put you a little off-balance and add a lot of strain to your neck and back. Instead, allow your head to be poised and use your eyes to scan the ground ahead of you.

Don't forget to breathe

8 Most of us are brought to a halt on the hills either by our legs or our lungs. If you are struggling to get enough air in, remember to breathe in time with your paces. However, do your best to avoid struggling for breath in the first place, and bear in mind that the key to getting a full in-breath is to allow a full out-breath.

After putting your back into it, take your back out of it

9 Good walking is a full-body exercise, and that includes exercising your back (especially if you are carrying a load on your shoulders).



GUEST EXPERT

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When it comes to lunch breaks, have a lie down! Otherwise, between the driving, walking and sitting your back won't have had any recovery time all day.

Instead of straining, take the training

10 How well you walk uphill is a reflection of how well you walk on the level, and stand, and sit and how you perform a variety of other activities. Yoga and Tai Chi are among the better-known ways of learning how to use your body differently. Alexander Technique teachers can directly help you change your habits of mind and body, leaving you with more energy to enjoy the hills.



On the (potentially) lung-busting north ridge ascent of Stob a' Ghlais Choire, Buachaille Etive Mòr beyond.