

Rules of the Race, Road, Trail and Track: Race Etiquette for Runners

By Miss Road Manners
Freddi Carlip
Road Runners Club of America

In the interest of promoting an enjoyable race experience for everyone, the Road Runners Club of America sought the advice and counsel of their own race etiquette maven Miss Road Manners. Whatever the pace, wherever the race, race manners matter.

At the Starting Line

1. Line up according to how fast you plan to run or walk. Slower runners and walkers should move to the back of the group.
2. Pay attention to the pre-race instructions. What you hear will not only help guide you through the course but will also keep you safe. Examples are: stay on the right side of the road, or stay inside the traffic cones, or watch the course marshals (they control traffic to make your race a safe experience) for which way to go at major intersections.
3. Pin your race number on the front of your shirt. This is where it is most visible for race officials. It will also make it easier to pull the tag off at the end of the race.
4. If you drop something just as the race starts, don't stop and pick it up. You'll endanger yourself and others. Trust that a race official will get it, or move to the side and wait until everyone has crossed the starting line and then retrieve it.

You're Off!

1. Run or walk no more than two abreast. Other runners will want to get by you. If you are walking in a group, stay in the back of the pack.
2. If you are stopping at an aid station, move all the way over to the table, grab water, and move away from the table so others may get water too. If you want to stop and drink, move to the side of the road, out of the way of other runners. If there's a trash receptacle, by all means use it. If not, don't go too far with your cup. The race volunteers will be collecting the cups and will appreciate not having to go on an extended "litter patrol."
3. Even those of us who perspire instead of sweat may have to deal with bodily functions during the race. If you need to spit, move to the side of the road and do it there; same goes for throwing up. If nature calls, pull off the course and check for a port-a-potty or kind homeowner, or, as a last resort, a discreet clump of bushes.
4. Move to the side if someone behind you says, "Excuse me" or "Coming through." Yes, you are about to be passed and the person behind you is giving you a heads up. It's proper race etiquette to let that person through.
5. If you need to tie your shoe, or stop for any reason, please move to the side of the road. People coming up behind you are still moving and if you stop in front of them, the scene is set for a collision.
6. Feel free to shout words of encouragement to other runners. The other runners will appreciate your cheers. Miss Road Manners is confident you will hear encouraging words in return.
7. Pay attention to what is going on around you during the race. Just as in real life, expect the unexpected. Think loose dogs, lost kids, low branches, and looming potholes.

Approaching The Finish

1. Follow the instructions of the race officials at the finish. You may be told to stay to the right or to the left.
2. Most races don't allow your **nonregistered** friends and relatives to run with you in a race. If, even though Miss Road Manners frowns on it, a friend is running the last few miles with you, and hasn't officially entered the race, tell your friend **NOT** to cross the finish line. He/she should move off the race course before the finish.
3. Once you have crossed the finish line, don't stop. Keep moving to the end of the chute; stay in the exact order in which you finished. Please don't get ahead of anyone in the finish chutes. This is very important for accurate scoring.
4. Enjoy the post-race refreshments, but remember others want to enjoy the goodies too. Moderation is the key so there will be food for the last people finishing the race. Be fair to the runners who have been patiently waiting in line.
5. Don't forget to turn in the stub on your race bib if there are random prize drawings. You've got to enter to win. Listen for the announcements.

Rules Of the Road and Trail

1. Running with friends gives us a chance to connect with others, but hopefully not with automobiles. When running on the roads or trails, be mindful of oncoming traffic, and get into single file. Allow the person running on the inside to lead the way.
2. It's bad form, when running in a group, to leave a slower runner behind. It's not a race. Miss RM frowns on runners who turn an easy run with others into a race, with slower runners getting left in the dust. Save the race pace for the proper place.
3. Be prepared for the call of nature. On familiar routes, scope out places ahead of time where you can do whatever you need to do with a minimum of fuss, be it at a gas station or behind a well-concealed clump of bushes. Be sure the bushes aren't poisonous!
4. Please don't litter. Hold on to any litter until you find the proper receptacle. Plan a run where you clean the litter along the route.
5. Smile at other runners as you wend your way along your route. And don't forget to give a friendly wave to motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Rules of the Track

1. The inside lanes are for the faster runners. Don't get in their way. It's not proper track etiquette and it's not safe. Run in the outer lanes unless you are doing a similar work-out. If someone behind you Yells "Track," move quickly to the right.
2. Leave your extra running gear and water in the bleachers or off to the side. Don't put them on the edge of the track.
3. Miss RM advises that you move off the track to chat and to stretch.

4. Miss RM reminds you not to use the track if there's an official school practice taking place. Encourage the kids by applauding as they practice.

The RRCA has safety guidelines available. For more information on running safety, Miss RM suggests contacting the RRCA office at 703.836.0558 or office@rrca.org or missroadmanners@rrca.org. On the Web: www.rrca.org, or write: RRCA, 1150 S Washington Street, Suite 250 Alexandria, Virginia 22314

A final reminder from Miss Road Manners:

Enjoy the race and have fun! And don't forget to mind your race manners!

In an effort to improve road racing etiquette at all levels The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Team In Training program proudly sponsors the Race Etiquette brochure from which this document was produced. For more information on training for a marathon please call 1.800.482.TEAM or visit their website at: www.teamintraining.org