

How to Plan a Race

By the Findlay Striders

Assemble a Planning Committee

Planning a successful race requires a lot of time, manpower and resources, and can take up to 6 months. To make the whole process more effective, enlist the help of someone with experience who has organized a race or similar event. If this person is willing, make them the Race Director.

One of the first tasks your planning committee should address is getting sponsors. Identify your sponsors early to get their names and logos on all forms, shirts, and advertising so they get the maximum benefit from sponsoring your event. The charity or event you are supporting should be able to provide you with tax id numbers, etc if they are needed for sponsors to make the donations tax deductible. These sponsors will probably also be able to provide freebies for the race bags.

What is the cause you want to support?

Races are usually organized around a specific cause or charity. If you don't already know, decide what cause you want to support. If the charity or organization has a national campaign, you may want to consider coordinating your race with other events being planned/advertised.

Course Selection: Planning and Safety Considerations

There are many things to consider when planning your race. One of the most important is the course selection and how it supports the safety of your participants and spectators. The Road Runners Club of America has put together important information you will want to review and consider during the course planning phase.

ROAD RUNNERS CLUB OF AMERICA

Guidelines for Safe Road and Trail Races <http://www.rrca.org/event---directors/guidelines---for---safe---events/>

Also, check to make sure the course you are considering is not already being used by another organization for another race.

Course Finish Chute

Unless your race is chip timed, you will need to consider and plan for a well-constructed finish chute. As runners finish they will be placed in a single file line and moved through the finish chute. The order of the chute line needs to accurately reflect how they crossed the finish line. Volunteers will need to be on hand to grab

each participant's bib tag and spindle it in order of finish. It's important that your chute is long enough to handle the volume of runners and that you have enough trained volunteers on hand to direct runners, pull and spindle the tags, and keep the chute line moving. The organization that will be providing your timing services should be able to help you determine the length of chute and number of volunteers needed based on the size of your event.

Also, the below online pdf download contains some useful chute diagrams and race planning information:

<https://pprrun.org/docs/PPRR%20Race%20Director%20Handbook.pdf>

Setting a Date/Time/Location for Race

Things to consider:

1. Start early! It's good to get your date on local race calendars at least 3--6 months prior to your race.
2. Check local race calendars to make sure there isn't already a race in or near your location. Some sites to check:
 - a. www.findlaystriders.com
 - b. www.toledoroadrunners.org
 - c. www.active.com
 - d. <http://www.ohiorunner.com>
3. Think about weather, time of day (sunrise/sunset) and time of year.
4. Get your course certified and approved, if you are using city streets. Will you need the police for traffic control, if you have runners on the road?
5. Is there adequate parking for volunteers & participants?
6. Is there shelter for the Race Announcer & Timing Equipment? You want their electrical equipment protected in case it rains. If not, you will need to have tents set up. These can be rented from many local companies and most offer discounts for charity events.
7. What other events (non race) are happening? Are you in a park that will have soccer games? Are you in a church parking lot that's having a bake sale? These seem minor but can turn into logistics and safety nightmares.

How will you time your event and handle race scoring?

There are several timing and race scoring methods available for your race. Chip-timing is ideal, but can be fairly expensive. The Findlay Striders do not offer chip-timing services at this time. We do offer computer---timed services using pull---tags for local charity races. See details and fees below:

A standard fee of \$100 or \$2/runner if over 50 participants. That gives you fast and accurate results in convenient file formats, with many options for data breakdown. This also includes our finish line race clock. If this fee is too expensive, we're happy to discuss lower-tech (but free) timing options you can easily do yourselves.

POINT---OF---CONTACT: If you are interested in having the Striders time your event, please contact Dave Essinger at dbessinger@gmail.com.

NOTE: The Findlay Striders are a non-profit organization. The money collected from our timing services is used by our organization to promote running and racing in the local community.

If you are in need of chip-timing services, we recommend you contact the Toledo Road Runners. Information on their services and fees can be found here: http://www.toledoroadrunners.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=78

Race Form, Online Registration

Your race form should collect essential personal information needed in the event of an emergency. At a minimum, you will want to collect Name, Age, Gender, and Date of Birth. If the participant is a minor, you will need to get the signature of a parent or guardian. In addition, collecting an email will allow you to communicate important race information to registered participants.

For easy data entry and effective record-keeping collect runner information in an Excel spreadsheet with a format as shown in this picture:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
1	SIB#	First Name	Last Name	St Address	City	St	Zip	Sex	Telephone	Birth date	shirt size	e-mail
2	1	Sue	Example	129 S Main St	McComb	OH	45858	F	419-424-9020	9/29/1954	M	sue129@gmail.com

It is particularly important to include birth date and sex. Runners always want age group standings and we can't do age groups without birth date and sex. Shirt size

will make your life easier if you're handing out shirts, and may help you order the right distribution of shirts for your second year or following years.

Include a waiver of liability on your registration form so that you and/or the charity you are supporting is not liable for medical expenses if someone becomes injured. Below is an example we use. Other examples are available online.

I hereby for myself or my executors in consideration of the acceptance of this entry, waive for myself and my heirs any and all claims for damages against the sponsors, their representatives, and all race officials, for all claims of injury growing out of participation in this event. I attest and verify that I am physically fit to participate and am aware of the possible hazard of running in this event.

If you are interested in allowing your participants to register online, services like Active.com are available to host your race information and forms.

Advertising Your Race

For no fee, the Findlay Striders will list your race on our website. You can also advertise through the Toledo Road Runners (TRR). For more information on advertising services and fees for TRR, please visit this link and download their advertising services brochure:

http://www.toledoroadrunners.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=78 Other ways to advertise include distributing flyers and registration forms to businesses, schools, and other local establishments. The newspaper is another option, as well as social networks, online websites, and taking flyers to local races.

Restrooms

If the starting location of the race doesn't have facilities, you will need to arrange for portables toilets. Restrooms are a must, even for shorter races. A good rule of thumb is one per every 75 runners. Remember people are hydrating, so more is always better.

Determine Volunteer Needs

The number of volunteers you will need depends on the length and size of the event. As a rule, it's better to have too many volunteers than not enough. Friendly, helpful, and well-trained volunteers will help to make your event a successful one and ensure returning participants. Have a volunteer coordinator and make sure all volunteers are well versed on the duties required prior to race day. Below is a list of areas that will require volunteer help.

Pre-Race Bag Stuffing

Place all donated items, advertisements, and race shirt in bags. Place race bib and safety pins in bags and mark them with participant information.

Same---Day Registration

Staff of people set up and prepared to take same---day registration forms, collect fees, register participants, distribute bibs & safety pins. Have plenty of pens, forms & safety pins on hand. Typically more people register race day than pre---register so several volunteers will be needed.

Race Bag Distributors

Individuals who will distribute the race bags to registered runners. Typically, bags are in alphabetical order by last name. Bags/Letter groupings are split up between the volunteers and distributed prior to the race.

Race Announcer

You will need a good race day announcer (for larger races, with a sound system) able to direct runners to the start and provide guidance on how to line up. This person may also announce race results and distribute prizes. If you have not identified an announcer, we recommend Rich Fowler. Rich has a lot of experience announcing for local races and can provide his own sound system.

Rich Fowler

Mobile: +1 419 205 2700

reffowler@hotmail.com

Commented [JM1]: Contact updated 1/18/16

Water Stop Workers

You'll need pre---filled small Dixie cups of water and/or Gatorade and workers at each water stop to hand out drinks. Volunteers will need to pick up trash and insure the area stays safe and free of debris. Several trash cans will be required.

Start & Finish Line/Course Volunteers

You'll need at least 3 or 4 people at the start/finish (assuming those are fairly close together). Ideally, 6---10 volunteers is even better. You'll need something to mark and construct a finish chute, too. Chairs or stakes, and caution tape or rope, can work.

Normally you need volunteers at every turn to direct runners. If your course is well--marked with an easily remembered route, you may not need volunteers at turns, but it is better to have them if you have enough people. In high traffic areas or with a large number of runners you should probably have course marshals at every intersection to direct vehicular traffic away from the runners.

The miles should be marked. Runners appreciate a volunteer shouting times at the one-mile mark.

Timing and Race Scoring Team

The timing team will enter the results into the timing/scoring system and calculate winners in various divisions. Once all participants have finished and the results are known, winners will need to be announced and overall finish times posted locally and/or online. Make sure participants know how to see results online.

NOTE: Some things to know if the Striders are timing your event:

- We will publish the results for you on our website. This is covered in the timing fee.
- You will need the kind of bib numbers with tear-off tags on the bottom.
- We'll need to know what exists in terms of shelter and electricity near the start/finish.
- The Findlay Striders have a spreadsheet that you will need to download and complete prior to the race. In it, you will be providing participant information for all of your pre-registered runners. This will allow us to pre-load these records into our timing system. This document, titled "Race Registration Template for Timing Services", is available for download on our website. If you have any questions on how to complete this template, please contact Dave Essinger at dbessinger@gmail.com.

Finish Line Refreshments

The amount of refreshments and volunteers needed varies based on the length and size of the race. Generally speaking, fruit, bagels, muffins, and easy to grab items are a hit. You will also want to have plenty of water and/or Gatorade for the finishing runners.

Set Up/Tear Down Crew

You will need volunteers to set up tables, tents, traffic cones, start/finish line, refreshment area, and other logistics prior to the race. A teardown crew will be needed to make sure all items are disassembled and returned. **References**

Toledo Road Runners, Prerace Planning Guide. Revision 2, 2/6/09.

<http://www.toledoroadrunners.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=78>.

Toledo Road Runners, Race Volunteer Job Descriptions. Revision 2, 2/6/09.

<http://www.toledoroadrunners.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=78>.

Road Runners Club of America. Copyright 2012 RRCA. <
<http://www.rrca.org/event---directors/guidelines---for---safe---events/>>

Pikes Peak Road Runners Race Director's Guide. Issued: 31 January, 2007.
<https://pprun.org/docs/PPRR%20Race%20Director%20Handbook.pdf>