

A Novice Primer...What to Expect during the Rally, chronologically speaking

Arrival: Arrive at the place specified for registration as early as you can. This will allow you the most time to complete paperwork, look over things, and ask questions. Don't be afraid to do this. Rallyists are friendly people and won't mind answering questions for beginners. A clipboard, clock (digital is best), calculator, a pen or pencils, and some sort of reading light if it's a night rally are good supplies to have with you.

Registration: There is an entry form to fill out if you haven't already done so. (It helps the rallymaster tremendously when people pre-register for the event.) Liability waivers must be signed by all adults, and minor waivers filled out for those under 18 years of age. You will need to complete a self-inspection of your vehicle to make sure it's safe and in working order. Once the paperwork is done, you will be issued a competitors packet with all your necessary rally papers. At the registration desk, there will be a clock with official rally time. Be sure to set your watch to this time.

The Competitors Packet: At a minimum, the packet will contain: a number to be placed on your vehicle, your rally route instructions, a police letter, and a scorecard. The number should be stuck to your vehicle, either with tape or the adhesive backing, in the specified location. The police letter is to be shown as necessary to prove that the authorities have been previously notified of the event and that you're not just a bunch of hooligans out raising hell. The scorecard will be used during the rally; don't lose it. The rally route instructions are your roadmap to fun for the event. These are your instructions of what speed to drive, when and where to turn, and when take a break; definitely don't lose these. There are two kinds of instructions commonly used, written, and tulip (drawings of intersections).

Preparing the route instructions: Highlighting markers are a good idea to have on hand for this. The purpose of this is to make certain instructions stand out as important. Teams develop their own system as they become more experienced, but here are some starting points of what to highlight. Use one color to highlight speed changes, another for pauses. A third color can be used for Free Zones, Transit Zones, short deltas, and odometer resets. This is the navigator's job as they will be the one who will be reading the instructions to the driver.

Rally Start: Your instructions will tell you when to start the rally. Usually, they will say begin at X:00 plus your car number in minutes. Add your car number to the time given and that's when you should leave the start. The first section of a rally is called the "odo check".

Odo Check: This portion of the rally is to allow you to figure out how close your odometer is to the rallymaster's. At the beginning, you will be instructed to "zero odo". Push the button on your dash to set the odometer to zero. The odo check usually ends as close to an even mile as possible. For your first rally, note how far off you are at the end of the odo check. If you are at 10.2 miles at the end, and the routes say it should be 10.00, you need to keep in mind that every 10 miles, you are gaining 0.2 miles. Usually at the end of the odo check, you are told to zero odo again. The odo check is also usually a "transit zone", which means you are given a set amount of time to complete it. You will most likely get to the end before your time is up. Do not leave early; wait for the remaining time to expire before you leave.

Time to rally now: Once the transit zone time has expired, it's time to begin the real rallying. Leave at your calculated time, at the speed that it tells you in your route instructions. Turn as instructed in the routes. Pauses of 15 hundredths or less at intersections can be ignored. Your first goal should be to stay on course; your second goal to stay on time. Eventually, you will come across a car parked on the side of the road with an orange sign with a checkmark and a dot on it. Congratulations!! You have found your first checkpoint.

Checkpoint, now what?: When you see a checkpoint sign, the navigator should write down the exact time you passed the sign. Continue driving past the checkpoint vehicle, and then carefully pull over to the side of the road and stop. There may be an air hose across the road at the checkpoint sign. If there is, you are supposed to run it over to stop the clock. Once you're safely parked, usually the driver takes the scorecard back to the checkpoint vehicle. Go to the driver's side which will keep your butt from being in the middle of the road when the next rally car comes along. The checkpoint crew will fill in your card and give you a checkpoint slip. Go back to your vehicle.

A leg ends at the checkpoint sign, and you will be starting a new leg with a clean slate. What you need to take note of before you continue on is your new start time, or "out time" written on the scorecard. Do not leave before this time. Also, look at the bottom of the checkpoint slip and see what CAS (speed) you will be doing, and also what the "next NRI" is. NRI is the "numbered route instruction". This is given to make sure you're in the right place in your instructions. When your out time comes, leave at the speed you were instructed to do on the checkpoint slip and continue following instructions until you reach the next checkpoint.

Rally on: You will continue on from checkpoint to checkpoint, repeating this process. Congratulations! You've completed your first rally. At the end, ask someone how to do your scoring. It's simple math to find out how well you did. Enjoy the social get together at the end of the rally and revel in the stories of the adventure called Rally.