

## How to Organize a Road Race

Courtesy of:  
George Heagerty-Regional Coordinator  
Steve Knight, President Texas Bicycle Racing Assoc

### Before the Race

Organizing a race is not hard if you know the right steps to take. A successful and well-executed race is the result of many hours of planning and work done by dedicated volunteers. Having the right people is key to making your event a success. The steps outlined here are not necessarily all-inclusive and may not be necessary for every race.

#### 1. Pick a location

A good location should be safe to the riders. This is the number one consideration of any promoter. The roads should be free of hazards that would cause riders to crash. It should also be lightly traveled if the road will not be closed to traffic. You should have adequate parking for the amount of people you expect to attend your event. The parking should be very close to where you intend to have registration and the start line. School parking lots usually are an excellent place to park cars and start a race from.

#### 1. Get permission

It's important that you have a conversation with local authorities to get permission before you get too far into your planning. Verbal approval is enough to allow you to continue forward with your race plans, but written permission should be obtained before the day of the race in case there is an issue later. Make sure that you bring the written permission and have it on hand race day. Some of the people you should be sure to contact are:

1. Governmental authorities of the location you intend to use - Mayor, County Commissioner, Forest Service, etc.
2. Business, if you plan on using a business park or parking lot for criterium.
3. Law enforcement offices in all jurisdictions you will pass through.
4. And most importantly, the Department of Transportation for your area. They can kill your race even after all others have given their blessing.

#### 5. Form a plan

6. Decide what categories you will offer.
7. Decide what distances each category will race. A good starting point is looking at the [USAC rulebook on minimum distance requirements](#) for each category race to qualify for upgrade points.

You do the riders a favor when you at least meet the minimum standard.

8. Decide what start times are needed for each group. Generally the faster riders should go before the slower riders. It is best to stagger fields so that they have little chance of overtaking another field during the race. It is also better to get your groups that are racing the longest distances out on the course first so that you aren't taking up the roads any more than necessary. If you are hosting a criterium, run your masters categories first so that those who want to compete in the senior categories held later that day might have a shot at recovering and be able to do so. You might also consider starting with the older masters and working down for the same reason. This equals more revenue for you and better training and bang for the buck for the racer.
9. Study your route closely. Determine where you will need police support (dangerous or high traffic intersections) or whether corner marshals with road guard vests and orange flags will suffice. Plan accordingly.
10. Pick a good location for registration. Having a covered or indoor location is the best in case of rain or high winds on the morning of registration. Trust me. You don't want to chase your paperwork everywhere.
11. Make sure you will have adequate parking and restroom facilities for the amount of people you expect. Avoid grassy parking lots if at all possible. If it rains, this will quickly turn to mud and will become a nightmare for riders at the start line trying to clip in with mud all in their cleats. Another thing to think about is routing your incoming race traffic and outgoing race fields so that they don't interfere with one another.
12. Download the [Competitive Event Permit Checklist](#) from [www.usacycling.org](http://www.usacycling.org) to help facilitate your planning process. Forms can be found by highlighting "Event Organizers" on the left side of the home page.

### 13. Look for Sponsors

Sponsorship of your race will cut down on your costs and help you walk away with a profit. It will also help increase the status of your race by allowing you to offer more prize money. Sponsorship can come in many forms. Sometimes a sponsor willing to offer a product is just as valuable as one offering cash. Be prepared to tell the sponsor what **they** will receive in return for their sponsorship commitment. What type of exposure will they receive at your event? Things such as logos on event flyers, a link to a company website, banners at the registration area, name imprinted on netting along barriers, etc. are worth considering.

1. Make a race flyer

**The official race announcement must be approved by the Regional [Coordinator](#) (RC) or Local Association **before publication**. It may include the USAC emblem and it must include the statement "**Held Under USA Cycling Event Permit**". A race flyer should also contain the following:**

1. Race location and directions
  2. Schedule of events (include Classes, Categories & Distances)
    1. Prize list, include total amount, number of places & pay out for each.
    2. Entry fee, late fee & unattached rider fee if any
    3. Registration time & last day of early registration
    4. Event contact information
- Other good things to include would be:
1. Website link
  2. Hotel accommodations
  3. Course description
10. Any special notes regarding support, what happens in the event of rain, etc.

See below for an example of a flyer.

1. Contact your RC or Local Association to make certain that the date you have in mind is not going to conflict with another event and request a Chief Referee (CR). It's best that you contact the person who will act as your CR before you send in your paperwork to the RC. The CR will go through the [competitive event checklist](#) with you and make sure you have covered everything. He/she will also be an excellent source of information. He/she will likely know whom to contact for barrier material, finish line equipment, porta-potties, cones, PA systems, etc. Again, check with your regional coordinator or local association.

2. Start the paperwork process

By now you have picked a location, gotten permission to use the course, formed a plan, made a race flyer and talked to your CR. You should still be at least 6 weeks away from your event (more is better) when you start the permit process. You should send in the following (make copies for yourself) to your RC or local association:

1. [Competitive Event Permit](#)
2. Race Flyer
3. [Request for Certificate of Insurance](#)

#### 4. [Competitive Event Checklist](#)

5. Check or money order for the permit fee. This will be based on your prize list. See the [competitive event permit](#) for the fee schedule and call your RC/LA if you have any questions.

#### 6. Do the detail work

If you haven't already begun, now is the time to start your detailed planning process. It's the details that will get you, so be sure you take care of them. I'm probably leaving some off, but here's some to get you started:

Determine the exact number of volunteers you'll need and then try to find a few extra. You can never have too many volunteers. It is imperative to have plenty in reserve in case of inclement weather. Many of the positions can be duplicated. Try to organize as efficiently as possible.

You'll need:

- 1) Registration personnel
- 2) Course marshals to control traffic and keep riders headed in the right direction
- 3) Lead and follow vehicle drivers
- 4) People to put up course-marking signs
- 5) Feed zone marshal to control parking and keep people in the designated feed zone area
- 6) People to direct parking at the event if you are tight on parking space
- 7) People to sweep debris off course and mark road hazards
- 8) People to control traffic in the finish line area if you don't have police support there
- 9) Someone dedicated to posting results and handing out prizes as soon as the race is over and results are available - very important
- 10) People to sweep the course, finish line area and parking lot for trash when the event is over. Leave it looking better than you found it and you'll have a better chance of being able to run the race there again.
- 11) Order race numbers. There are specific requirements for them. Rule 1K4. "Figures should be black, and be 12-14 cm high on a light colored background 20 cm or less in height and 20 cm wide. Numbers shall not be handwritten, but printed in block letters using waterproof ink. Numbers shall be constructed from materials sufficiently durable to last the race without tearing or disintegrating, even in adverse weather."

- 12) Order your medals and/or trophies.
- 13) Order barriers if you will need them
- 14) Order barrier material
- 15) Round up plenty of coolers for water, Gatorade, etc
- 16) Locate orange cones – be very careful in their placement as they often cause accidents
- 17) Order porta-potties
- 18) Order any sponsor banners you intend on having printed
- 19) Work with local law enforcement on police support plan
- 20) Notify residents in the area of the impending bike race
- 21) Prepare a press release to be sent to the media at least 30 days in advance.
- 22) List your race on your state's bicycle racing association website as well as the surrounding web sites and [VeloNews](#).
- 23) Reserve any equipment you will need for the finish line. Some things I would consider using:
  - 24) Awning or canopy to keep the officials out of the rain or hot sun
  - 25) Scaffolding if you want the officials' view elevated
  - 26) Lap cards
  - 27) Photo finish equipment
  - 28) Electronic timer devices
  - 29) Tables and chairs for the officials
  - 30) Start/Finish Banner
  - 31) PA system

### 32) Day of the Race

Time to see if all that planning and preparation you did will pay off. If you do it right, you will have a long, hard day ahead of you. Plan to get up early. Think of all of the things that have to happen before the first rider goes off and work backwards from there. Here's an example timeline:

- 8:00 AM** First category starts
- 7:50 AM** Lead vehicles in place
- 7:50 AM** Start list given to officials
- 7:45 AM** Close registration for first starting category. Note: If you keep the registration open to accommodate those late arrivals, you will delay your whole race.
- 7:30 AM** Wheel trucks in place to accept spare wheels. Brief drivers at this time on the procedures they should follow for dropped riders, wheel changes, medical emergencies, accidents, etc. Drivers should also have plenty of gas to get them through the race. They are not allowed to stop off during the race for gas.
- 7:30 AM** All course Marshals and Police support in place (police manning a far side of the course may be allowed to arrive later)
- 7:00 AM** Run a communications check with all key personnel. Give yourself time to fix any potential problems.
- 6:30 AM** Open registration
- 6:00 AM** Set up and organize your Start/Finish area. Allow yourself more time if you have sophisticated equipment that needs to be set up and tested.
- 6:00 AM** Have volunteers sweeping the course and putting out course signs. This can possibly be done the night before. Develop a reference sheet for registration personnel.
- 5:30 AM** Set up registration area and brief personnel on how registration will run. Better to have at least one training session prior to race day.
- 5:00 AM** Arrive at location. Unload any equipment not pre-staged.

#### Registration Guidelines

A successful race often hinges on how successful your registration process is. Racers don't want to spend a lot of time standing in line to register. They need time to get their gear ready and get warmed up prior to the start of the race. The Event Director can't possibly do it all, so it is best that the Event Director doesn't work registration. He/she will have officials, racers, vendors, volunteers, police, etc. all vying for his/her time prior to the start. The Event Director should appoint someone they trust to act as Race Registrar. The Race Registrar will oversee the registration process and train all the registration personnel.

A "Pre-registration" the night before can make things go much smoother the morning of the race.

One of the best ways to run registration is in an assembly line process. Races go through steps and registration personnel have specific duties. Below are some tips that will help registration run smoother:

1. Have entrants complete all forms before they get in line to register.
  2. Provide adequate supplies of each form plus pens/pencils in a separate area away from registration:
    3. Current year Standard Athlete's Entry Blank and Release Form
    4. USAC License Applications (Note: USAC will send you copies of all forms in your event packet)
    5. Miscellaneous forms (3rd party waivers, etc.)
    6. Course maps, directions to facilities, event schedule, prize list and rules
  7. Create lines for each category, or only do one category at a time (schedule permitting).
  8. Have a separate "express line" for pre-registered riders to pick up entry packets.
  9. Get the rider to fill out as much of the race information on his or her own as possible. Make sure that it is legible.
  
1. Have someone checking licenses prior to racers going to the cashier
  2. Make sure their license is up-to-date and shows the racer belongs to the category that he/she is signing up for.
  3. If the license is expired they will have to fill out a new [USAC License Application](#) or a one-day license application.
  4. One-day licenses are only valid for Cat 5 men's, Cat 4 women's, or master's events that are not specifically categorized (i.e. 1-4).
  5. Make sure rider resides in state if the race is a state championship. I would stamp the **state name** on the registration form so that sign-in personnel know the person is eligible for the state champ medals.
  6. When license has been checked and is valid, stamp or mark "**License**" on the registration form so that the cashier knows the racer has had his/her license checked.
  
1. Collect race entry fee

It's easiest to collect the fee for each race from the racer before he/she goes to sign in for the category. Have one or two people to act as cashiers. They will work from the same cash box that is situated between them. Also, make sure they:

  1. Know what the fee is for each category, and what additional fees may apply.
    1. Late fees
    2. License fees
    3. Discounts for multiple entries, if applicable
    4. USAC unattached rider fees do not apply to cat 5 or cat 4 women.

2. If a team pays for member's entry, be certain to put team contact, with their phone number clearly written for each individual entry the team is responsible for. Get the fees ASAP after the start of the race, and do not mark "PAID" until all fees are reconciled.
  3. Mark "PAID" on each entry form, as the fee is received, not before.
  4. Give a receipt if requested by the rider.
  5. Have enough change (\$1s, \$5s) in your cashbox to get through the entire day's event.
  6. Know who race entry checks are to be made payable to (organizer? sponsoring club?).
1. Get USAC license information and enter racer data
    2. From the cashier the racer moves to his category sign-in. They must present their entry form marked "PAID" on it or go back to the cashier. Their entry form must also have "License" marked on it or they go back to license check.
    3. Know who goes into which category. Don't assume riders will know or be honest with you.
    4. No USAC license = no race. No exceptions!
    5. Make sure entry on Chief Official's roster is **clearly legible**. Keep rosters separate for each event. Use roster forms that are carbon copied. That way you don't have to transfer the data onto another form for the official.
    6. Know when the deadline is to submit each roster to the start line and send a runner to do so.
    7. Know whether promoters will split/combine, cancel/deny entry to categories due to field limits.

When using any kind of electronic database software for registration and/or statistics, always program and run reference lookups based on the racer's license number, not their name. License numbers are unique, names aren't, and creative spelling by registrars or officials can be confusing in any case.

1. Give rider his or her race number(s)
  2. Know what numbers go to which category and the sequence to hand them out.
  3. Know which side of the jersey the officials want the numbers on for each category.
  4. If the riders are entering in more than one category, mark the category names on the back of each number to avoid confusion.
  5. Make sure you write the rider's number on the registration form. It will make the identification process easier if the officials can't read the roster later on.
1. Be prepared for all questions or contingencies
  2. Know the event schedule cold - even if it differs from the advance notice flyer.

3. Know the event rules, along with whom to ask or where to go for other resources (bathrooms, first aid, etc.).
4. Know what awards go to which categories and when results/awards will be made available.
5. If you can't answer a question involving rules or safety, refer rider to the CR. Never let organizers refute your decision if doing so infringes on USAC rules and/or common sense.

**Smile!! Be fair, firm and polite with everybody. The better you know your job the less stress you'll encounter.**

## **After the Race**

Once the race is over there are still tasks that have to be carried out. Running a smooth registration and a safe race is only part of the process. Listed below are the steps to take as soon as the race is over:

1. Post results - The quicker you get results posted, the more organized you will look. Don't wait until all categories are finished to start posting. Some people don't care to hang around or must start a long drive back.
2. Award prizes - Same rules as above apply. Make sure you have cleared with the Chief Referee that the protest period is over. Putting the cash prizes in sealed and labeled envelopes is a nice touch.
3. Sweep the course for any stragglers - Make sure you don't have anyone out on the course that needs medical attention.
4. Send volunteers out to police up course signs, feed zone, start/finish area, parking lot, etc. Remember: leave it in better shape than you found it.
5. Get with the CR and fill out the [Chief Referee's Report](#).
6. Pay your officials.
7. Pay any help or service you might have hired.
8. Arrange to have porta-potties picked up.
9. Return all rented or borrowed equipment.
10. Make sure you send in your [Post-Event Payment form](#) within 15 days of the event to avoid late filing fees.
11. Send results to USAC in approved format according to the [National Ranking System](#)
12. Be sure to get post-race information to any available press. This would include local newspapers, regional sports magazines and national publications (VeloNews, USA Cycling). The chances of having your race published are pretty good if you provide a good post race report. Post race report should include results, general overview of race with special attention to highlights. Mention of riders, by name with their team/sponsors is important. Include photos, if possible. The more information you provide, the more likely it will be picked up by the publication. The report should be timely, that is, as soon as possible after the race. Old news is no news.

## Supply List

### Registration:

1. Spare cash for change box
2. Tables
3. Chairs
4. Lights if registration starts in the dark
5. Generator to power the lights
6. Lanterns in case lights and generator go out
7. Flashlights
8. Power cord
9. Box of pens
10. Safety pins to pin numbers on
11. Course maps
12. One day license applications
13. Annual license applications
14. Release forms
15. Race numbers
16. Signs to mark category signup locations
17. Paper weights
18. Receipt book
19. Carbon copy roster sheets
20. Trash bags
21. Awnings so racers can fill out paperwork in case of rain

### Start/Finish Line:

1. Table and chairs for officials
2. Awning and/or scaffolding for the officials
3. Cones or barrier material (orange netting)

4. Paper
5. Pens
6. Ice chest with drinks and snacks for officials
7. Paper weights
8. Roster
9. Trash bags
10. Photo-finish equipment
11. PA system
12. Bell to signal last lap
13. Lap cards if needed
14. Radio or cell phone to keep in touch with officials
15. Start/finish banner
16. Electronic timing device

**Corner Marshals:**

1. Road guard vests
2. Signal flags- you can make them out of bright orange material from a fabric store and dowels from Home Depot
3. Radios or cell phones for everyone
4. Water coolers for corner marshals

**Drivers:**

1. Full tank of gas!
2. Water and food to hand out to bonked riders
3. First aid kit
4. Instructions
5. Course Map
6. Cell phone

USACYCLING ROAD RACE  
SUNDAY JULY 4<sup>TH</sup>  
HELD UNDER USACYCLING PERMIT

RACE HELD RAIN OR SHINE  
 SPONSORED BY MASTERS VELO CLUB  
 COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

Category	Distance	Start Time	Prize /places	Payout 1,2,3,4,5	Entry
M45 1/2/3/4	51 miles	0930	\$200/5	\$65, 45,35,30,25	\$25
M35 1/2/3/4	64 miles	0910	\$400/5	\$130,90,70,60,50	\$25
Women 1/2/3/4	51 miles	0940	\$200/5	\$65,45,35,30,25	\$25
Elite Men 3	64 miles	0920	\$400/5	\$130,90,70,60,50	\$25
Elite Men 1/2	90 miles	0900	\$800/5	\$260,180,140,120,100	\$30

Pre registration is encouraged. Entries received after 1July 04 will add a \$5 late fee. Unattached riders will have an additional \$5 fee. Registration opens at 0730 and closes 15 min prior to posted start times.

Course: Course is a 12.7 mile loop on the United State Air Force Academy campus. It has several rolling hills as well as one 3-mile climb and a similar descent. Course will be closed to traffic. Start and finish will be at the b-52. Registration will be there as well. Campagnolo will provide neutral support for each race

Directions: Off of I-25, take exit 156, Northgate, and follow signs to AFA. Registration and start/finish will be at the B-52. It will be the first left after entering the Academy

More info can be obtained at [www.usacycling.org](http://www.usacycling.org).

Pre-registration can be sent to:

Tom Vinson  
 1 Olympic Plaza  
 Colorado Springs, CO 80909  
 719.866.4626  
[tvinson@usacycling.org](mailto:tvinson@usacycling.org)

Hotels:

Red roof inn, Bijou St, 719.555.4628  
 Holiday inn, Research Blvd, 719.555.3296