

A GUIDE TO
ORGANISING TRAIL RACES
WITH SOME HINTS FOR COMPETITORS

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INTRODUCTION

1. Trail running is rapidly increasing in popularity. This is partly because of the difficulties of organising road races due to the ever increasing volume of traffic, and partly because most people find running in the countryside more enjoyable than in towns.
2. This booklet is intended to help the many people who plan to organise trail races to do so successfully. That means that both officials and competitors should enjoy themselves, and do not come into conflict with other people or organisations.
3. It is not a set of rules that must be obeyed. It simply contains ideas to guide those planning trail races to achieve satisfactory standards of organisation and safety. The reader should adopt only those ideas that suit his/her event. Indeed as every trail race is unique, the precise instructions appropriate for track or road running are impractical, as well as out of keeping with the relaxed ethos of trail running.
4. The size of the booklet may give the impression that organising a trail race is a formidable task. In fact most of the ideas set out here are common sense, many of which you would probably have thought of for yourself. So please do not be put off. just treat the ideas as a check list to help you create a timetable for getting ready.
5. If a surprising amount of the booklet deals with mountains, moors and long distance races, this is because it is there the problems are greatest. In fact the vast majority of trail races are short and take place in safe rural areas. Excellent trail races can also be organised in city parks, along canal towpaths and disused railway lines. The whole object of trail running is to have fun away from traffic.
6. The draft of this Guide was vetted by UK Athletics (UKA) and the Nottinghamshire Rights of Way Officer, who was kind enough to write, "I feel your publication is a responsible move".
7. Many of the ideas the Guide contains came from friends in the Trail Running Association (TRA). I am most grateful for their assistance, which was invaluable in increasing the scope and usefulness of the Guide. I am also grateful to the friends who checked the drafts. Any errors that remain are my responsibility.



Most of the time, trail running is straight forward like this one along the South Downs.

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President, TRA

DEFINITION OF TRAILS & MARKS

8. There are many small differences between trail on one hand and road, fell or cross country running on the other that need to be appreciated if a successful event is to be held. So let us start off by defining trail running.
9. The British Athletic Federation (BAF) authorised the following definition of trails in 1995:
"In the context of athletics, trail races are primarily along footpaths and bridlepaths marked on Ordnance Survey maps as "public rights of way". They are "highways" to which pedestrians have unrestricted access in English law. Towpaths, forest drives, farm cart tracks and paths in parks etc, from which motorised traffic is excluded, are also trails when the owners' permission is obtained. "
10. Trails often include connecting stretches of public road, cross country and/ or fell. Common sense usually indicates which discipline's rules should govern a race. Where this is not the case the rules of the discipline with the greatest total distance should apply.
11. By their very nature trails normally have several types of surface under foot (e.g. grass, gravel, earth, stone etc) are therefore often described as "multi terrain".
12. Trail races may be of any length. In practice the shortest are about 2 miles; the longest over 100 miles.
13. Whilst this booklet is written to help organise races, trails can also be used for non competitive running and walking.
14. Waymarks are official and other permanent signs. Routemarks are the temporary signs placed out by race organisers.

FIRST STEPS

Basic Principle

15. In order to remain free from well meaning interference, bureaucratic restrictions and hostile action, race organisers and competitors should recognise that:



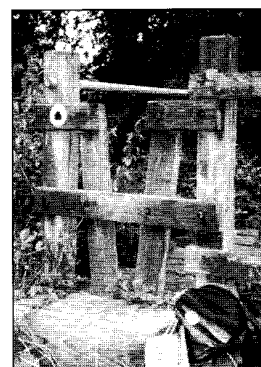
All land belongs to someone or some organisation.



Someone or some organisation has to maintain all "public rights of way", if they are to remain usable without harm to the environment.



Having the right to use a path does not give runners priority over other legal users, any more than it does on roads.



Building and maintaining good quality stiles, like this scissors, is costly.

Choice of Type of Event

16. The first things an organiser needs to decide are:



Distance of race.



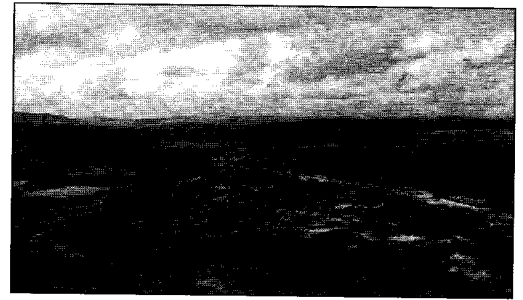
Probable course.



If the race is five miles or more, the extent to which, if any, it is an adventure type challenge.



Whether map reading is part of the challenge.



Stanage Edge, Derbyshire The moors to the right and in front are beautiful but require skillful navigation and route marking.

17. Quite short races in forests or on moors can sometimes require high quality navigation. On the other hand ultra distance races, by using canal towpaths or the long distance trails that are carefully waymarked by county councils, can be organised so that they require no map reading skills. If map reading skills are not being tested, then it is imperative that the routemarking or narrative instructions are excellent.

Health, Safety & Risk Assessment

18. Trail race organisers have a general responsibility to take all reasonable care to prevent injury and to deal with injuries should they nevertheless occur, so a Risk Assessment must be carried out before any race permit can be issued. It is in the best interests of the organisers themselves to make the appraisals conscientiously because, although many competitors enter simply to face the challenge of overcoming risks, and willingly sign indemnity forms to that effect, their next of kin have not signed. After an accident a devastated widow, worried about bringing up children, may seize any chance to commence legal action intended to ease her financial problems. Advice on carrying out an assessment is at Annex A.

19. If any youths under eighteen are permitted to take part, the Health and Safety Executive's "Adventure Activity licensing Regulations" should be consulted.

20. If the route goes over a level railway crossing or swing bridge, it is wise to obtain written confirmation from the railway company no trains will be using that line that day.

It is not sufficient to look at a time table that shows passenger trains only. Goods trains may be using the line.



*High Peak Challenge
Running over moors requires skilled navigation. A route mark on the post would help at this junction of two tracks.*

21. No matter how easy or difficult you intend your event to be, recognise that the buck stops with you. Never be misled into thinking that because you are deliberately planning an adventurous type of event which competitors will enter because it includes an element of risk, that you are absolved from responsibility.

ADMINISTRATION BEFORE RACE

Race Permits & Insurance

22. It is imperative that public liability insurance is obtained for the organisers, officials and general public. Normally this is achieved by obtaining a race permit from the TRA or county AAA. Competitors are responsible for their own personal insurance. The TRA has arranged personal insurance cover for all its members.

Country Code

23. Check that you, your officials and competitors comply with the Country Code. It is reprinted at Annex A.

Maps

24. The Ordnance Survey (OS) Pathfinder (scale 1:25,000) series is being replaced by the Explorer series of the same scale. It is much improved, covers a larger area and so is more convenient to use. The Landranger series (scale 1:50,000) is not really suitable for planning trail races as it does not show fields and other important information.
25. All OS maps are copyrighted by the OS. If you make photocopies for competitors you must first ask the OS for permission. They will charge a small fee for each copy.

Reconnaissances

26. Because the countryside changes dramatically with every season, the ideal time to carry out the initial reconnaissance of a new route is exactly one year ahead. Some footpaths will at times be impassable due to weeds, crops or mud churned up by tractors. Whatever obligations the law lays on farmers you cannot expect them to mow paths as often as you might your front lawn.
27. Avoid stiles, gates and foot bridges on all short races, and near the start of long races to prevent bunching.
28. A reconnaissance one year ahead gives plenty of time to write accurate route descriptions and check them.
29. It also pays to do a check within the week before the race to make sure nothing has changed. For example road works could stop access by ambulance. Plank bridges can be washed away. Foresters fell trees across the path. Farmers can put bulls in fields you intend to cross. If part of the course is known to be vulnerable, then obviously plan an alternative way.



*UK Championships
This is the kind of footbridge that needs to be checked
to ensure it is still there and safe.*

30. But in truth the possibilities are endless, and have an unfortunate habit of not appearing until the day before the race! The best remedy is to assume something unexpected will go wrong. Wait for it to happen. And then immediately react before it wrecks the whole event. Flexibility is part of the art of management.



The rape in this field grew over a foot in a week and then began to collapse into the path. It had to be pruned with garden shears!

Choosing the Date

31. In addition to avoiding clashes with other athletic events the trail race organiser should check out the following with a few telephone calls:



Angling competitions. Fishing seasons are different for rivers, lakes or canals. They usually begin 16 June and last until 14 March.



Mountain bike races.



Rural past times. Some dates to be avoided are:

- Fox hunting takes place from 1 November to 15 February. A hunt galloping through a trail race will completely destroy it.
- Shooting seasons vary with type of bird, but in rural England are mostly 1 September to 12 April, however shooting seldom takes place on Sundays.

The General Public

32. Whilst the law allows athletes to use public rights of way in their capacity of pedestrians, this does not give them any form of priority over other users of the paths. Usually there is no problem, but from time to time there can be real conflicts of interest between walkers exercising their right to use a popular but narrow footpath or fishermen with long rods pulled back across a towpath, on one side, and runners who do not wish to slow up on the other. Such problems can be ameliorated by:



Warning angling clubs in advance.



Plating out in advance warning notices to the public along popular paths.



Stationing marshals before or at places of possible confrontation to warn the public and suggest alternative routes to them.

Gates

33. The Country Code requires gates to be closed after the pedestrian has passed through. But common sense tells us that in a race the temptation not to stop to close a gate may

be too great for some competitors. Vaulting by several hundred runners in a race is likely to damage the gates.

34. The only satisfactory solutions are to:



Choose a course without gates.



Post a marshal AT the gate to close it after each runner or group of runners.



If the field has crops, and not livestock, obtain the farmer's permission for the gate to be closed by the sweep up.

Landowners

35. Whilst laws give pedestrians right of way over public footpaths and bridle paths, to send, without warning, several hundred runners charging across' farmers fields is unreasonable. The experience of the TRA is that if landowners are approached beforehand they are almost invariably cooperative. Some have moved livestock from the fields the courses passed through. Others have timed the clearing of paths of undergrowth and crops to a day or two before the race.

36. From time to time organisers may wish to create a suitable course by crossing stretches of land over which there is no right of way and which connect rights of way. Invariably the permission of the owners must first be obtained -preferably in writing. This applies equally to private, company and publicly owned land.



Path kept clear through middle of his field by the farmer:

Path kept clear through middle of his field by the farmer:

37. The new "Right to Roam Act" allows any person:

"to enter on to, roam on and pass over open country on foot for the purposes of open air recreation."

and defines

"open country... [as] any area which consists wholly or predominately of mountain, moor, heath or down, or which is common land..."

Erosion and Use of Paths

38. In the context of trail races over such open country, the courses should normally follow tracks and paths to prevent competitors becoming lost, and, in a big race, causing erosion. Leaving the paths would probably make the race a fell or cross country event.

County Councils

39. Inevitably waymarks, fingersigns, stiles, kissing gates and footbridges etc become degraded over time. Usually it will become obvious during the reconnaissance which items need repair. The TRA's experience is that if the county rights of way officer (the title is not uniform across England) is informed of the race well in advance he will make arrangements for the appropriate repairs to be carried out.

Publicity

40. Because each trail race is unique it is more important than in other athletic disciplines to accurately describe each event in the publicity or joining instructions. It is recommended that the following matters are described, where appropriate:



Yorkshire Moors Ladder stiles over barbed wire fences are dangerous if wet and not in good repair: Report defects.



Distance and climb.



Type of terrain and any obstacles.



Recommended type of shoes.



Whether the event is of an adventurous or risky nature, e.g. the course



involves cliff footpaths, mountain scree, tides etc.



If in mountains, moors etc, list the required clothing, safety equipment and emergency food.



Type of navigation.



Cut off times.



The minimum permitted age for the distance. See Annex B.

41. Unless a qualified measurer using a Jones counter has measured the course the distance should be described as "approximate". Climbs can be calculated by counting the contours on as maps.
42. It is wise to forbid dogs, even on leads, if there is any likelihood of there being farm animals on any of the land to be crossed. This is not a requirement in law, but it saves the organiser having to deal with upset farmers, if a dog has not been properly controlled by its owner.

Officials' Instructions

43. It is most unwise to assume that the title of the job they have undertaken to perform, and common sense, will enable officials to do what you expect of them. As it is seldom possible to practise their tasks as a team, give all your helpers, particularly those in charge of road crossings, control points and refreshment points, clear written instructions and make sure they read them.

First Aid

44. Most trail running is quite safe, but there is always the possibility of such injuries as a sprained ankle from slipping on a stile or tripping over tree roots, exhaustion due to hypothermia or dehydration, or competitors having heart attacks etc. Trained first aiders should therefore always be available. The level of first aid needed, including the presence of a doctor, is something the first aiders are better able to judge than most race organisers.
45. In mountains, moorland, forests and similar wild areas the competitor is more at risk. If the first aiders say they cannot reach any part of the course in less than fifteen minutes from being told someone needs their help, this should be brought to the attention of all competitors before the race. It should also be pointed out that this fifteen minutes does not include the time from the accident occurring and the first aiders learning of it, so the total wait could be considerable.
46. It is recommended the first aid leader is taken round the course by the race organiser to plan where the teams will be stationed.



The Grizzly Not many routes are as steep as this. Getting to an injured runner here would take a long time.

Car Parks

47. Care should be taken not only to provide sufficient car parking at the start and finish but often along the route as well. It may be necessary to define where supporters can stop along the route, and to appoint parking marshals to control coming and going in limited spaces. The number of competitors may be limited more by the holding capacity of the car parks than the route itself.

METHODS OF SHOWING COMPETITORS THE COURSE

48. The method used to inform competitors of the route mainly depends on the length of the race.

Short Courses

49. Short races of less than ten miles will be run by the leaders at paces far too fast for maps or narrative instructions to be read. Such races need impeccable waymarking and marshalling. (One TRA race organiser has his route marks placed out and then runs round the course adjusting them if necessary; because he knows they look very different to the fast leading runners than to marshals walking round putting them out.)

Medium Courses

50. Medium length races, say between 10 and 20 miles, should have waymarks or marshals at all difficult points, supported by maps or narrative instruction~. Alternatively competitors can be given the route's grid references and told to mark their own as maps.

Long Courses

51. It is unlikely that courses longer than 20 miles can be carefully route marked on the day. Doing this in advance runs the real risk of marks being vandalised. But the competitors will probably be running slowly enough to read maps and instructions.
52. If an OS Explorer has not yet been published for the area, large scale sketches are helpful in forests, on moors or mountains where there are myriads of sheep tracks indistinguishable from the right of way footpaths.
53. Alternatively long distance trails that have been waymarked by the county councils, canal towpaths or disused railway tracks can be used.

MARKING THE ROUTE

54. Start with the assumption that, except in the cases of events that are navigational challenges, it leads to frustration on the part of runners and embarrassment on the part of organisers, when competitors get lost or take the wrong turning. Everybody gets fed up and irritated. So let's try hard to avoid it.

Official Waymarks

55. Some courses make use of National Trust, county councillor Adidas permanent and special waymarks, e.g. acorns and Viking helmets etc. It is then merely necessary for the competitor to carry a piece of paper telling him where to change from one official trail to another. But beware; over the years these marks become weather-beaten, broken or hidden by vegetation, and so are not always easy to see when running fast.

56. Most public rights of way do not have their own individual waymarks. The standard waymarks put out along public rights of way by county councils can be confusing to a competitor running hard, where a number of paths criss-cross. The waymarks shapes vary, but their colours are standard:



Yellow Arrow. Footpaths should be 1 metre wide and are for those on foot only.



Blue Arrow. Bridlepaths should be 2 metres wide and are for those on foot, horseback and pedal cycle.



Red Arrow. Byways are usually old roads and may be used by motor traffic and are often not marked at all.



The standard arrow type way-mark is on the right hand post. The farmer is legally entitled to put bulls in fields crossed by rights of way, provided he also puts cows in the field.

Temporary Routemarks

57. Other courses are routemarked by race organisers with:



Lengths of boundary tape fluttering from trees etc. The red and white kind shows up best.



Insulating tape stuck on posts etc.



Arrows painted on the ground or made on the ground with sawdust or similar materials. These have the advantage of not usually attracting vandals. But the disadvantage of being obliterated by the fast runners.



Arrows printed or stapled on cardboard, correx etc. Vandals can twist them to point the wrong way, so put a line along the bottom edge and tell the competitors of your precaution.



*UK Championships
No wonder she is happy. The route mark is excellent!*

58. Unfortunately markers can all be vandalised and mountain bikers use similar ones for their courses, which can criss cross the runners' route.
59. The following ideas about people can help organisers when route marking:



Tired runners lose their ability to think clearly or look carefully.



Most courses are planned and described by local residents. Most competitors come from some way off. What is glaringly obvious to locals is not necessarily so to strangers, particularly in poor visibility.



When organisers think to themselves "it is obvious", they are in fact recognising there is a choice, but because they know the district they know the way to go. So mark the "obvious" clearly. A competitor running hard needs plenty of guidance.

60. With the above in mind the following methods will help to make routes clear:



After every turn, or track junction, mark the course ten yards down the right way to confirm the correct route has been taken. This is very important with multi-junctions, which are usually difficult to mark clearly in advance, or at the junction itself.



If possible place arrows etc, at 7 foot height. That is above a car's roof or people's heads. It is also out of cows', sheep and small boys' reach.



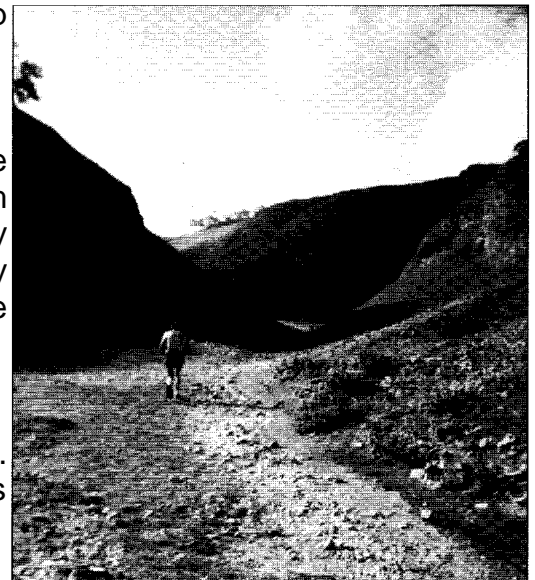
Put the arrows on the outside of a curve so that they can be seen from as far away as possible.



Whilst it may seem unnecessary, have repeater marks to reassure runners they are still going the correct way. The ideal is strips of tape fluttering in the breeze, with each strip visible from the previous one. If the next cannot be seen when walking the course to put them out, the competitors have no chance. Do not tie boundary tape tightly round lamp posts. It will not be noticed amongst all the other signs often attached to such posts unless it has a tail flapping in the breeze.



Be consistent with your routemarks and method of placing them out. Changes can cause the competitors to worry that they are following the wrong route.



Castleton Dale Obvious and difficult to route mark, but it goes on for two miles and several paths made by livestock cross it.

It takes at least an hour to routemark two miles on foot, even when equipment is dumped ahead by a vehicle. On bridle paths it can be quicker to use mountain bikes.

If you are using arrows on Correx boards attached to stakes, it is NOT a good idea to nail them on beforehand. That way they are more awkward to carry and the arrows often come off when the stake is being hammered into the ground. First hammer the stake in, and then attach the arrow with a rubber band or section of tyre inner tube.

As wind and practical jokers can spoil your efforts if the course is routemarked the day before, it may be necessary to give the job of way marking to marshals. Ideally they should have been taken round their sector and shown exactly where to place the routemarks. (Because this could not be done, at least one organiser takes photos of every single routemark in its proper position to give to his marshals.)



UK Championships

Route mark at stile supports correx notice warning of a road crossing ahead. Note second route mark on pole 20 yards further back.

61. It is a good idea to explain your waymarking system in any instructions given to competitors.

REMEMBER. No matter whose fault it is, when a competitor loses his or her way the event's reputation suffers. (But keep a sense of balance and cheer up. At the Rome Olympics marathon marshals sent runners the wrong way if)

WRITING NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

62. Recognise that runners get frustrated if they have to stop and puzzle out where to go, especially if someone they have spent a lot of energy getting in front of, is catching up while they read.
63. Instructions should be crystal clear, particularly towards the end of the route when the runners will be very tired and less able to think logically.
64. Solid blocks of typing are very difficult for a runner to read, particularly in the wind. See examples at Annexes C and D.
65. Small typefaces like this to save pages are also difficult to read. See examples at Annexes C and D.
66. It helps runners to remember which line they have got to if each one is numbered.
67. Abbreviations save a lot of space, but they can reduce instructions to gobbledygook and their variety and meaning is infinite. So use as few as possible, and always give a legend explaining the meaning of abbreviations and symbols you are employing. (You might think all participants are familiar with the ones you use. But the following, meaning "keep on going the same way", have been seen: A, SO, SA, SLA & SLT: See Examples A and B.)

68. Always include grid references of check points and critical changes of direction, plus the names of villages. Otherwise a runner who misses a change of direction might go a long way before realising it. He could then have absolutely no idea where he is and so cannot find his way back to where the mistake was made. The organiser then has to find him !!
69. Have the grid references checked by at least two other persons.
70. Most runners like to know how far they have gone when they reach check points, so mention the distances in the instructions.
71. **Check the draft instructions on the run with a novice.** If he hesitates at any point the instructions should be improved. If he makes a mistake the instructions **MUST** be improved. Don't simply think to your self, "What a silly so and so".
72. A walking check is not good enough. Probably anyone stopping and comparing a map with the instructions can work out the correct route.
73. If part of the course may be covered at night, get the instructions checked by a novice at night, when things look totally different.
74. An instruction to aim at a lone bush or brown gate two hundred yards away is quite reasonable in daytime, but useless at night or in mist. Instead tell the competitor to go on a compass bearing for 100 yards when he will reach a lone bush or gate. Do not overlook telling him how far to go on the bearing.
75. Compass bearings should always be given on moors and mountains as a back up in case of poor weather. State whether you are using magnetic or grid bearings.
76. When compass bearings are necessary -and recognise many people cannot use them - say so clearly in the advertising. If they are not needed do not mention them.

WAINWRIGHT DIRECTIONS

77. Wainwright directions are a series of specially prepared sketches of the route. They should show every possible change of direction in the form of a strip. They are useful for people who cannot map read,. But when they do not show North, topographical features or the distance on the ground between sketches, they can be most confusing. Moreover if the competitor makes a mistake he may not have the faintest idea where he is and how to get back on course, unless the names of villages are also given. See example at Annex F.

ADMINISTRATION ON RACE DAY

Marked Map Display & Weather Forecast

78. Display marked maps and the weather forecast at registration. Allow at least one map per fifty competitors. (It is hopeless having one map at waist height and 700 competitors trying to read it, as sometimes happens.).

Course Changes

79. If you have to make alterations to the course don't rely on announcing them at the start. (An organiser has been known to stand up and shout at 500 people that anyone running down three roads he mentioned would be disqualified. He then immediately started the race. Most competitors had not the faintest idea where the roads were and no time to look at their maps.)
80. Ideally the organiser should give every competitor a slip of paper as he registers telling him of unavoidable changes so that he can amend his map and/ or course instructions. Otherwise put up a great big notice or, better still, display marked maps and draw the runners' attention to them by frequent announcements over the public address system.

Communications

81. To be effective first aid and search and rescue need good communications. These can best be provided by such voluntary organisations as Raynet. Although not a duty Raynet are formed to perform, they will usually be prepared to tick off competitors on a list as part of their role in providing safety and finding missing competitors.
82. Ideally every marshal should be in contact by wireless or mobile telephone. In practice using such equipment by inexperienced people leads to confusion, frustration, or, worse still, a false sense that everything is going well when it is not. Fortunately this is likely to change as more and more people become familiar with the use of mobile telephones.
83. The location of the communicators (Raynet, police, first aid, rescue and mobile telephones) needs to be known by all marshals and other officials.

Roads & Police

84. Road crossings are potentially the most dangerous element of trail running. There are two quite separate tasks at road crossings: controlling traffic and guiding competitors.
85. The Police should be invited to control traffic at any crossings. Normally they will not guide competitors. This means contacting them well before the date is finally decided.
86. Only the Police have the authority to stop traffic. Marshals stationed at road crossings are there only help the competitors safely across. This means stopping the competitors until the traffic is clear.

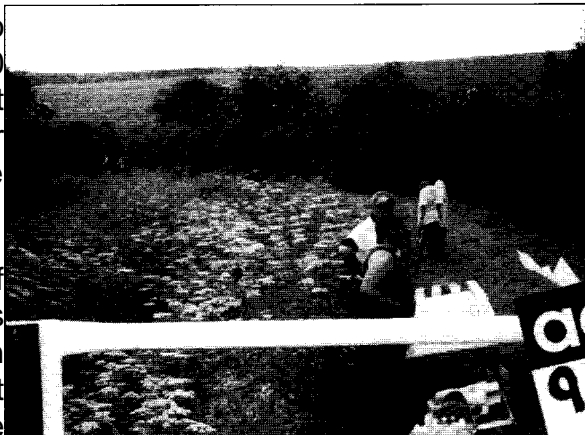


Marshal telling runner to stay on grass verge until he reaches the policeman round the corner:

87. If the Police decline to assist, marshals and notices to motorists must be arranged by the organiser in the same way as at a road race. It is strongly recommended that marshals at **such crossings are given written instructions pointing out they have no legal right to stop traffic**. It is also recommended that one or two marshals watch out for traffic, and a separate marshal guides competitors. Marshals at road crossings should be at least 16 years of age. At cross roads and difficult places marshals should be 18.

Refreshment Stations

88. Refreshment stations need to be closer to each other than six miles in races up to 20 miles. At longer distances the refreshment stations should get progressively closer towards the end to allow for the slowing of the runners.



Finding a wide enough space for refreshment stations at trail races can be difficult.

89. In races of up to 20 miles only a selection of drinks need be offered, but in longer races food ought to be offered as well. What is on offer should be set out in the same order at every station, so that competitors do not waste time hunting for what they need. Experience has shown that up to a third of the competitors in these events can be vegetarian.
90. Because the terrain of trail races forces refreshment stations to be further apart than in road races, and the stations cannot be at regular intervals, the runners will drink a great deal at each. A problem to be studied from the start of planning is how to get all the needed drinks and water out along the course, and restock refreshment stations if this becomes necessary.
91. Refreshment stations should not close until all competitors have been accounted for. Normally refreshment stations are also control/ check points.
92. Invariably refreshment station helpers will be asked "How much further is it ?" or "How far have I gone ?" Make sure they can give accurate answers. *(In one race officials said it was "13k to go" three times over a distance of ten kms.)*
93. Inform local people beforehand when refreshment stations are near private houses. This is particularly important if they will be used at night. Vehicle horns are forbidden in built up areas after 11 pm.
94. The start, finish and refreshment stations ought to have adequate toilet facilities.



Barns and village halls make good refreshment stations on longer routes. Most have toilet facilities.

Illuminating Refreshment Stations etc. at Night

95. If the race continues at night ensure that none of the lights are shining down the course into the

competitors' eyes. Lights in their eyes will certainly make the runners slow up and can cause them to trip on any unevenness in the ground. Lights should invariably face the way competitors are running and only be moderately strong.

Retired Competitors

96. Normally the first aiders (St John or Red Cross) will evacuate injured and sick competitors. However they will be reluctant to evacuate retiring competitors who are simply tired or running so slowly they do not make cut off times. Arrangements need to be made to transport such competitors to the finish.

Lost Competitors

97. Whilst it is unlikely that competitors will become seriously lost in races of less than five miles, this does become an increasing possibility for longer races. Also the bigger the area the more difficult it is to find lost competitors, particularly if there is rain or fog.
98. Therefore there needs to be a system for knowing who has started. The simplest, and also the best way to know where to begin searching, is to:



Send out race instructions to competitors who enter in advance. In the instructions tell them numbers will be given out when they register on the day, and that registration will cease half an hour before the race starts. If entries on the day are accepted state in the advertisements that registration ceases half an hour before the start.



Give lists of all numbers to the registrars.



Immediately registration stops cross out on the lists those numbers remaining at registration.



Then distribute the amended lists to check points round the course.



The officials at the check points should tick off each competitor as he/she passes.



Any numbers not ticked when the sweep up comes round represent lost or retired competitors who now have to be accounted for.

99. If a competitor comes to you saying a routemark or narrative is misleading and so he got lost: keep cool. At the first opportunity go out and look at the problem on the ground. Then even if you are convinced the competitor, not you, made a mistake, consider if a repositioning of the route mark or different wording would have prevented the error. You do not want someone else to go the wrong way next year.

Search & Rescue

100. Even in flat rural areas it is possible for people to get hopelessly lost. Therefore thought as to how they will be found needs to be given beforehand. Much worry can be avoided by including on every piece of paper given to competitors the telephone number of the Race HQ, and the request that no competitors go straight home before reporting their intention to a marshal or Race HQ.

101. In mountainous country, coastal cliff areas and forests the support of search and rescue teams should to be considered. If they are going to be asked to help do not confirm the date until they say they can be present on it.



*UK Championships No need for search and rescue here?
One competitor on joining the Grantham Canal towpath
headed off to Grantham instead of Cotgrave and finished
at 10pm.*

Sweep Up

102. It is not possible to have sweep up vehicles in trail races. On bridle paths an alternative is to have pairs of mountain cyclists with mobile telephones following the last competitor. If they find an injured or exhausted runner, one can stay with him whilst the other goes to guide the first aiders.

103. It is illegal to use bicycles on footpaths. The best solution there is for each marshal to follow the last competitor to the next marshal along the route.

104. Marshals should not leave their posts until the sweep up cyclist or the previous marshal down the course has reached them.

Difficult Courses & Winter Conditions

105. All the year round courses over mountains and moors do contain elements of risk, which is why many runners like them. Courses in flat rural areas can also become risky in winter. In these circumstances organisers are well advised to insist competitors carry minimum survival kit, list it in their instructions and inspect it if the weather forecast is bad. What is needed will vary with the venue and weather. A possible list to consider is as follows:



Sufficient emergency food for twelve hours



Waterproof plasters



Waterproof anorak and trousers



Moonblanket or survival bag



*She thought dodging round puddles
great fun, but really she is not
wearing good trail running kit.*



Spare pair of socks



Torch and spare batteries



Compass and whistle



Pint of drink

Support Crews

106. The longer the race the more likely it is that competitors will have their own support crews. Organisers need to consider very carefully beforehand how to manage this aspect of their event.
107. The easiest way is to ban support crews on the basis that they give some competitors an advantage. But this is seldom done in races over 20 miles.
108. Often in ultra distance races (i.e. longer than a marathon) support crews are encouraged because of the special diets of some competitors and the need to change clothing. When support crews are allowed it is advisable to state in the race rules where they may support their runners, with particular reference to how their cars may be parked in order to avoid traffic jams.
109. Passing drink or food to a competitor from a moving vehicle should always be banned and lead to automatic disqualification of the competitor.

Unsupported Competitors' Own Refreshments & Clothing Changes

110. In ultra distance races it is normal for many (but not all) competitors without support crews, to bring their own refreshments and/or changes of clothing. Arrangements need to be made to position these at the refreshment points.

Finishes

111. The finish organisation of trail races is usually the same as for road or cross country races, which is dealt with in UK:A rules. It needs to be decided well in advance whether to employ the disc system for the finish. This will largely depend on the type of team scoring if any.

Course Closure

112. In races of up to 12 miles it is unlikely that the slowest competitors will take more than two hours, so asking officials to wait for the last finisher is not unreasonable. Beyond that distance cut off times at check points become increasingly necessary in order not to make unreasonable demands on your voluntary officials. If only one cut off time is set it ought to be near the half way point. To state that the course



Mark Kinch wins the UK Championships.

will close after five hours (for example) is useless, as it means that slow competitors are left out and unaccounted for.

113. The use of cut off times should be clearly stated in the publicity and arrangements made to transport eliminated competitors to the finish.
114. Experience has shown that allowing competitors, who fail to meet a cut off time, to continue on their own responsibility is very inadvisable. Problems such as keeping open kit deposits, and worrying whether the competitors are lost if they do not turn up before the last of the clearing up is finished, will haunt the lenient race organiser.

Clearing Up

115. After the race be careful to clear up all litter, some of which will be strewn right up to the next refreshment point. Also bring in any notices and routemarks you may have put out; but leave other peoples' notices and routemarks alone.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Introduction

1. A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of in what ways your proposed race could lead to people being harmed, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should take more. The important things you need to decide are whether a hazard is significant, and whether you have put in place satisfactory precautions so that any remaining risk is small.
2. The following notes are an outline guide for carrying out the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) and UK Athletics' requirement that a risk assessment is made before any event. If more information is needed you ought to approach your local HSE office for help. The examples mentioned are only samples of people and circumstances to be taken into consideration: not comprehensive lists.

Types of Trail Races

3. There are two types of trail races as far as risk assessment is concerned. Those which are intended to be risk free like those along canal towpaths and in parks etc, and the many where some risk, like clambering over stiles In all weathers is considered part of the sport.

Step One - Hazards

4. Look only for hazards which you could reasonably expect to result in significant harm. The following are only examples. The potential list is infinite:



Points where the course crosses roads.



Stiles that would be slippery when wet or muddy.



Paths in woods where roots stick above the ground.



Very steep grass covered hills that are slippery when wet.



Exposed mountains, moorlands, coastal cliffs and boggy paths can lead to hypothermia, which is particularly dangerous if the runner becomes lost.

Step Two - Who Might Get Harmed

5. Normally at a trail race the following four categories of people might get harmed in descending order of likelihood:



Competitors.



Members of public who are unaware of race and stand on a path where they can get knocked over.



Officials.



Spectators.

Step Three - Is More Needed to Control Risk?

6. If the race is meant to be essentially risk free but nevertheless does contain a hazard, consider controlling it by:



Changing the course.



Preventing access to the hazard, or marking it with a very obvious warning.



Always ask yourself if the precautions taken represent good practice and reduce the risk as far as is reasonably practical?



Where the risk is not adequately controlled, decide what more you need to do to achieve this.

7. In many trail races an element of risk is part of the challenge that attracts competitors. In these cases:



The risk must never be such as to knowingly make loss of life or serious injury a reasonable possibility.



Tell your first aiders and rescue personnel where the risks are located so that they are prepared and any injury is rapidly dealt with.



Ask yourself are more precautions needed?



If you genuinely believe the risks are adequately monitored, have you provided adequate information to forewarn the competitors? The entry form of the UK Trail Running Championships has listed the race's risks for several years to ensure that every competitor knows what is involved before he or she pays the fee.

Step Four - Recording Your Findings

8. Risk assessments should be suitable and sufficient. They may be demanded before a race permit is issued. The following is a guide to what could be recorded. You can reduce the length of your assessment by referring to other documents.
9. **Event Summary.** A short overview of the event stating the date and who will be involved.
10. **Locations.** Give the location of the venue. Attach a course map showing the positions of all hazards, police, first aid and rescue stations and any other matters mentioned in the risk assessment's narrative.
11. **Liaison With Authorities & Landowners.** List the names of the officials and dates they were contacted when planning your event. The list will depend on local circumstances:



Police






First aid organisation.



Coastguards, mountain or other rescuers as appropriate.



Local authority. Private and public owners of land.

12. **Organising Team.** Give the names, outline of duties, location, and if appropriate telephone number, of such executive officials as the race director, safety officer, course manager, marshals, senior police officer, head of the first aiders, head of rescue, head of communications, refreshment stations and sweep-up etc. An organisational chart is helpful.
13. **Communications.** Provide a chart showing the communication arrangements.
14. **List the Hazards.** List the hazards you have identified, stating their map grid references and indicating how they will be dealt with.
15. **Briefing.** Explain how your helpers will be briefed and, if necessary, trained.
16. **Public Safety.** There may be a need for crowd barriers at the start and finish. In longer events when the competitors' own support teams motor round the course, their vehicles can be the cause of traffic accidents.
17. **Emergency & Accident Management.** Here detail how you would:
 -  Know someone was lost.
 -  Set about finding lost competitors.
 -  Recover injured people.

18. **Weather.** State the likely weather for the time of year, and its effect on the terrain.
19. **Personal Protective Equipment.** List any personal protective equipment you advise or insist the competitors wear or carry with them.

Step Five - Review

20. Review your risk assessment as part of your debriefing task and up date it each year before the following event.



This stony path on a steep mountain is hazardous even in beautiful summer weather:

COUNTRYSIDE CODE

1. Fasten all gates.
2. Keep to public paths across farmland.
3. Guard against all fire risks.
4. Use gates and stiles to cross fences hedges and walls.
5. Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.
6. Take your litter home.
7. Help keep water clean.
8. Protect wildlife, plants and trees.
9. Take special care on country roads.
10. Make no unnecessary noise.

For latest information about the Countryside Code, visit:

<http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/>



UK ATHLETICS AGE LIMITS

Age on Day of Race	Distances	
	Male	Fem
11 to 12	5 kms	3km
13	6.5 kms	3.5 k
14	8 kms	3.5 k
15	10 kms	10 k
16	16 kms	16 k
17	25 kms	25 k
18 to 19	45 kms	45 k
20 and over	No limit	No li

Although not a UK Athletics limitation, the TRA recommends that when the course includes mountains and moors the above distances should be sensibly reduced. We also recommend that competitors be over 21 before being allowed to enter any ultra distance trail events because they are ultra races. Ultra distance is defined as running further than a marathon, i.e. 42.2 kms or more.

ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES LICENSING REGULATIONS

These relate to persons under the age of 18 years in respect of events over moorland and more than 600 metres above sea level. They require, amongst other things, that the travelling time to an accessible road is less than 30 minutes.



The High Peak and not a route mark in sight. just hopefully following the leader could easily land juniors in difficulty in rain or fog.

EXAMPLE OF UNSATISFACTORY NARRATIVE

Section 1 -Rutland Water to Greetham

Start at Rutland Water Nature Reserve. TR to Whitwell. Where rd bends L carry SO on FP. TR then L to A606 and cross carefully. TR along FP and then L beside Noel Arms. Through patio & up steps to play area. Over st! & keep hdg on R. Over broken st!, still keeping hdg on R. Over third st!. After 300 yds hdg changes to L. On reaching field in front TL at wmk. 50 yards later TR and keep hdg on R. Go through 2 hdgs and over 2 plank FBs over drains. TR, then L to rd. Take rd ahead to village of Exton. North past telephone kiosk up Top St & then West End. Over cattle grid to L of farm and immediately TR. Follow private rd to notice saying Greetham 11/4 miles. After 200 yds TR over st!. Cross field with 2 FBs over drains. Over st! to farm tk, then up rise with copse on L. SO past wmk. TR at twin trees by T junc where farm tk turns L. Hedge now on L. After 50 yds TL through hdg. Follow pt with hdg on L. Pt changes to farm tk. Just before Greetham where tk turns L keep SO down narrow pt. At end descend steps onto B668 and into Greetham. TR for Check Point in Village Hall.

This example is true of some narratives. They are probably satisfactory for walkers but not for runners, particularly in winds.

The errors are:

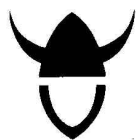


No explanation of abbreviations (all are taken from real narratives). You can discover meaning from Example B.



Solid block of small typing (11 points) making it difficult to find your place.

EXAMPLE OF SATISFACTORY NARRATIVE



Emergency Telephone 0115-989 2916

If you retire phone in or tell an official

OS Maps 130 & 141

Section 1- Rutland Water to Greetham - 4.3 miles

- 1 Start at RUTLAND WATER Nature Reserve (GR 924.082).
- 2 Turn Right to WHITWELL.
- 3 Where road bends Left carry straight on, on path.
- 4 Turn Right then Left to A606 and cross carefully.
- 5 Turn Right along foot path and then Left beside NOEL ARMS.
Here you join the VIKING WAY.
- 6 Through patio & up steps to play area.
- 7 Over stile & keep hedge on right.
- 8 Over broken stile, still keeping hedge on right.
- 9 Over third stile. After 300 yards hedge changes to left.
- 10 On reaching field in front turn Left (Bearing 3250) at waymark.
- 11 50 yards later turn Right and keep hedge on right.
- 12 Go through 2 hedges and over 2 plank footbridges over drains.
- 13 Turn Right, then Left to road.
- 14 Take road ahead to village of EXTON (GR 925.114).
- 15 North past telephone kiosk up TOP STREET & then WEST END.
- 16 Over cattle grid to Left of farm and immediately turn Right.
- 17 Follow private road to notice GREETHAM 1 1/4 miles.
- 18 After 200 yards turn Right over stile.
- 19 Cross field (Bearing 150) with 2 plank footbridges over drains.

- 20 Over stile to farm track, then up rise with copse on left.
- 21 Straight on past waymark.
- 22 Turn Right at twin trees by T junction where farm track turns left. 23 Hedge now on left.
- 24 After 50 yards turn Left through hedge.
- 25 Follow path with hedge on left.
- 26 Path changes to farm track.
- 27 Just before GREETHAM where track turns left keep straight on down narrow path.
- 28 At end descend steps onto B668 and into GREETHAM (GR 927.114). Turn Right for check point in Village Hall.

The above, in addition to avoiding the errors in unsatisfactory example:



Uses capitals for names.



Has larger than normal print (14 points).



OS map number and grid references.



Emergency Telephone number.

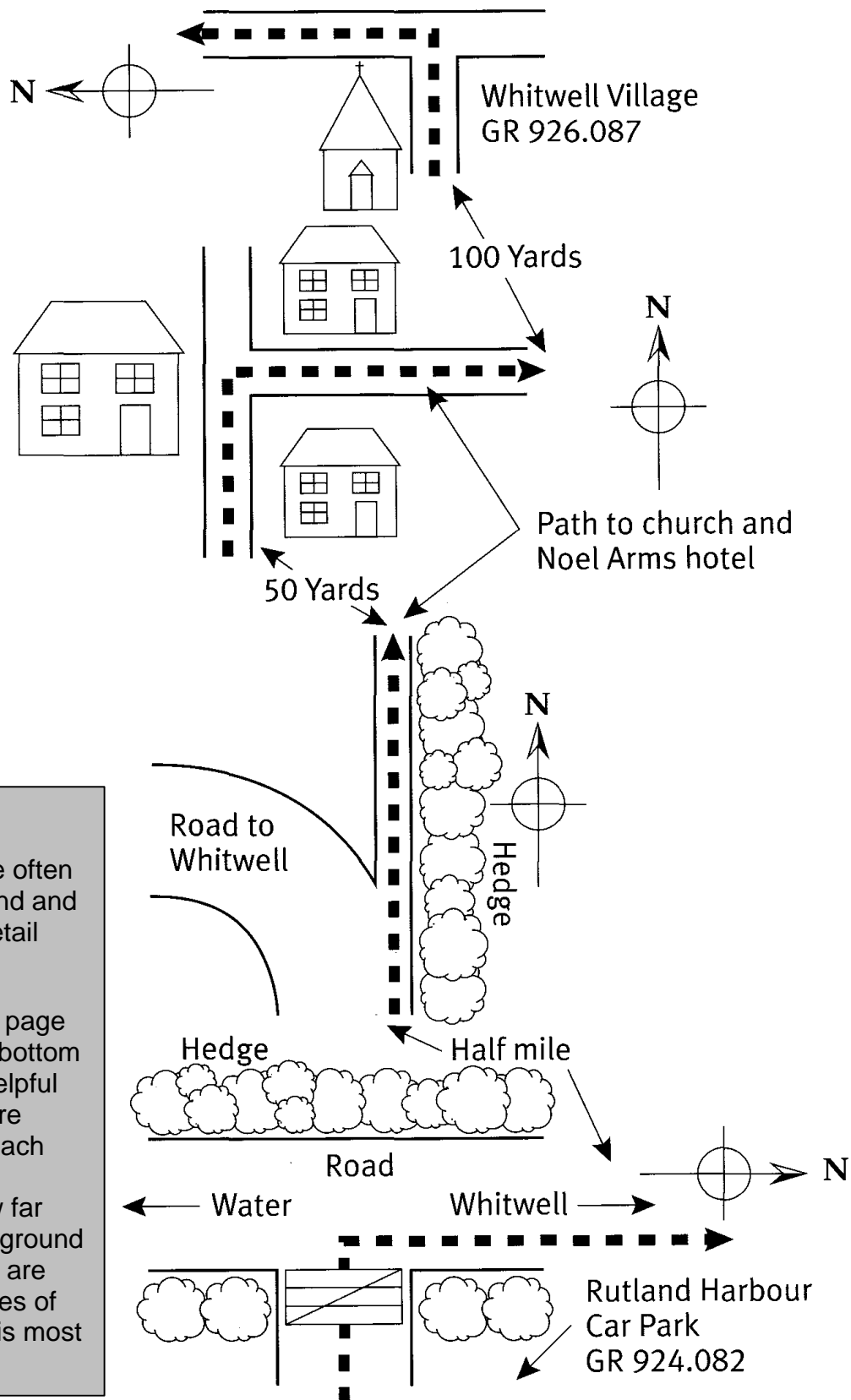


Compass bearings to help in rain, fog or early morning mist.



Trails in the High Peak, or other mountains, can be very difficult even with satisfactory narrative.

EXAMPLE OF WAINWRIGHT STRIP SKETCHES



SOME HINTS FOR COMPETITORS

When I started trail running I naively thought all I had to do was run down a track like I would have run along a road in a well organised marathon. I now know better.

The following comments may help both runners and organisers. Though I emphasise I am only offering a personal point of view; not introducing a code of rules that would inevitably reduce the sense of adventure that is so attractive about trail running. Indeed if you like learning from your own mistakes stop reading now.



Don't mark the route on your map with a solid line of highlight ink (or worse still ordinary ink). Inevitably you will obliterate the very details you will want to see clearly during the run. just put a few dabs of ink to show where the route is.



Don't buy those apparently useful map cases to hang round your neck on a cord. They may be great for walkers and soldiers. For runners they are a damn nuisance. Even without a wind they flap about. In a wind they behave like maniacal sails.



It may seem a good idea to photocopy the part of the OS map containing the course because a smaller piece of paper is easier to handle and the map remains good for another day. But the maps are copyright; so first obtain OS permission. If possible enlarge that part of the map showing the course until it only just fits on an A4 sheet and so makes the map easier to read.



It is essential to put the copy and narrative instructions in a transparent plastic bag to carry. Otherwise, even if it does not rain, constant handling soon makes them dilapidated.



To help you find your place quickly, place your thumb beside the point you last identified and run holding the map that way.



If you have to carry an OS map, again put it in a plastic bag. It will be awkward to carry in your hand, but that is better than shoving: it in your waist band where it is certain to slip down. If you have a rucksack the best way to carry maps is under the shoulder strap. Easy to get at, won't flap about in the wind and unlikely to slip.



Carry a pencil on a string round your neck. Then if you do get instructions that are solid blocks of verbiage like a legal document, you can tick or cross out each item as you come to it. Pencil is better than pen as you can still read the instruction if you make a mistake.



If you get such narrative instructions through the post by applying early, have them enlarged on a photocopier and highlight difficult sections in different colours to make them easier to read. Numbering each line can also help you to find your place in long narratives. Anything to help you read on the run.



If you don't understand the instructions, telephone the organiser for clarification.



If the instructions don't come in the post, arrive at the start early and carry out the same drill.



If you buy a compass get one that incorporates a magnifying glass. This can be very useful.



As soon as you pass a marker, start looking for the next one. If you relax you may miss it.

Final Thought. Don't take these hints too seriously. Go out with a sense of adventure and have fun. If you get lost, try to laugh, even if the organiser has made a mistake. He will have done well if there is only one. Remember he like you is an amateur sportsman; not someone to be taken to court for criminal negligence.



A few trail races really hurt...



...But they all lead to a finish.