



How to Organize a Road 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 important in making your event a success. The steps outlined here are not necessarily all-inclusive and may not be necessary for every race.

Before the Race

I. Pick a location

A good location should be safe to the riders and therefore be the number one consideration of any promoter. The roads should be free of hazards that could cause riders to crash and should be lightly traveled if the road will not be closed to traffic. Be sure your location has 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 are often an excellent place to park cars and start a race.

II. Obtain 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 race day in case it becomes an issue later. 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. Businesses, if you plan on using a business park or parking lot
3. Law enforcement offices in all jurisdictions you will pass through
4. Most importantly, the Department of Transportation for your area as it can kill your race even after all others have given your event their blessing.

III. Form a plan

1. Decide what categories you will offer. Be sure to take into consideration both the amount of time and the manpower that will be available to you

on race day – more categories generally require more time and manpower.

2. Decide what distances each category will race. A good guide can be found in the section of the [USCF rulebook pertaining to minimum distance requirements](#) for each category race to qualify for upgrade points. You do the riders a favor when your event at least meets these minimum standards.
3. Choose start times for each group. Generally, the faster riders should go before the slower riders in order to avoid races getting mixed. It is best to stagger fields so that they have little chance of overtaking another field during the race. Consider starting the groups that are racing the longest distance first so that you aren't taking up the roads any longer 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. This equals more revenue for you and more bang for the buck for the racer.
4. Study your route closely. Determine where you will need police support (dangerous or high traffic intersections) and where corner marshals with road guard vests and orange flags will suffice. Plan accordingly.
5. Pick a good location for registration. Having a covered or indoor location is preferred in case of rain or high winds on the morning of registration.
6. 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, these will quickly turn to mud and will become a nightmare for riders. Give consideration to routing your incoming race traffic and outgoing race fields so that they don't interfere with one another.
7. Make sure you will have adequate medical support on hand. A dedicated ambulance is best having one close by on call with EMT's onsite will also work. Never put on a race without some sort of medical support plan established. If you are hosting a big event, you might want to notify the local hospital ahead of time. Maps with directions to the nearest Emergency Room are especially helpful to racers who aren't from the local area.
8. Download the [Competitive Event Permit Checklist](#) from [USA Cycling](#) to help facilitate your planning process.



IV. Secure sponsorship

Sponsorship of your race will cut down on your costs and help you avoid losing money on it and possibly even 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 show 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. For some guidance on sports sponsorship pick up "The Athlete's Guide to Sponsorship; How to find an individual, team or event sponsor" by Jennifer Drury and Cheri Elliot (1998, Velo Press, ISBN 1-884737-78-1.)

V. Make a race flyer

The [Regional Coordinator](#) (RC) or your State Racing Association must **approve the official race announcement before publication**. It may include the USCF emblem and it must include the statement "**Held Under USA Cycling Event Permit**". Your race flyer should also contain the following:

1. Race location and directions
2. Schedule of events (including classes, categories and distances)
3. Prize list (including total amount, number of places and payout for each)
4. Entry fee, late fee and unattached rider fee, if any
5. Registration time, last day of early registration, and registration address
6. Event contact information
7. Event website link
8. Available lodging information, including host hotel and host housing
9. Course description
10. Any special notes regarding support, rain date, etc.

(Click [here](#) to download an example of an event flyer.)

VI. Contact your [regional coordinator](#) or State Race Association and ask that a chief referee be assigned

Contact your RC and/or State Racing 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 submit your paperwork to the RC or State Association. The CR will go through the [competitive event checklist](#) with you and make



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sure you have covered everything. He/she will also be an excellent source of information and will likely know whom to contact for barrier material, finish line equipment, porta-potties, cones, PA systems, etc.

VII. 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 chief referee. 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 to either your regional coordinator or to your State Race Association (whoever has been designated to handle the paperwork for your area – be sure to make copies for yourself):

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.

VIII. 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. While this isn't everything, here's some to get you started:

1. Determine the exact number of volunteers you'll need and then try to find a few extra -- you can never have too many volunteers. You'll need:
 - A. Registration personnel
 - B. Course marshals to control traffic and keep riders headed in the right direction
 - C. Lead and follow vehicle drivers
 - D. People to put up course-marking signs
 - E. Feed zone marshal to control parking and keep people in the designated feed zone area
 - F. People to direct parking at the event if you are tight on parking space
 - G. People to sweep debris off course and mark road hazards
 - H. People to control traffic in the finish line area if you don't have police support there



- I. Someone dedicated to posting results and handing out prizes as soon as the race is over and results are available -- very important
 - J. A cleanup crew 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.
2. Order race numbers. Officials prefer black numbers on a white background.
 3. Order your medals and/or trophies.
 4. Order barriers if you will need them.
 5. Order porta-potties and arrange when they will be picked up as well.
 6. Order barrier material.
 7. Round up plenty of coolers for water, Gatorade, etc.
 8. Locate orange cones – be very careful in their placement as they can cause accidents if improperly placed.
 9. Order any sponsor banners you intend on having printed.
 10. Work with local law enforcement on a police support plan.
 11. Notify residents in the area of your race.
 12. Prepare a press release to be sent to the media at least 30 days before the race.
 13. List your race on your state's bicycle racing association website as well as the other regional websites and [Velonews](#).
 14. Make or order any signs you will use to mark the course (directional signs, feed zone signs, 1000m and 200m signs.)
 15. Reserve any equipment you will need for the finish line. Consider using:
 - A. Awning or canopy to keep the officials out of the rain or hot sun
 - B. Scaffolding if you want the officials' view elevated
 - C. Tables and chairs for the officials
 - D. Photo finish equipment
 - E. Timing devices
 - F. Lap cards
 - G. Start/Finish Banner
 - H. PA system



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. Make sure drivers have been briefed beforehand 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 should not be allowed to stop off during the race for gas. Having signs or shoe polish on the windows so officials and spectators can identify each group is helpful.
- 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 sweep the course and post course signs.
- 5:30 AM** Set up registration area and brief personnel on how registration will run. Even better, 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.

Electronic pre-registration via the internet has become extremely popular and helps speed race day up tremendously. Pre-registration also helps a promoter gauge attendance and secure some funds prior to race day. Two popular pre-registration services are Bikereg.com and Active.com. Both of these sites allow the promoter to download and print pre-filled the release forms needed on race day, reducing the racer's time spent at registration. A pre-registration the night before can also make things go much smoother the morning of the race. If at all possible, request that one of your officials work or is at least available at the registration area, where they are often needed to answer racing category questions, handle riders who have forgotten their licenses, etc. They can often act as the Race Registrar, too.

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

- I. Have entrants complete all forms before they get in line to register.
 1. Provide adequate supplies of each form, pens/pencils, and a table with sufficient writing area to allow a number of racers to fill out their forms simultaneously in a separate area away from registration:
 - A. [Standard Athlete's Entry Blank and Release Form](#)
 - B. [USAC License Applications](#) (Note: USAC will send you copies of all forms in your event packet)
 - C. Miscellaneous forms (3rd party waivers, etc.)
 - D. Course maps, directions to facilities, event schedule, prize list and rules
 2. Create lines for each category, or only do one category at a time (schedule permitting).



3. Get the rider to fill out as much of the race information on his or her own as possible.
 4. Have a separate "express line" for pre-registered riders to pick up entry packets. If you used an online pre-registration service, have the pre-filled release forms printed with racer numbers attached to each. All the racer has to do is sign on the release form, tear off his number and go.
- II. Have someone checking licenses prior to racers going to the cashier
1. Make sure their license is up-to-date and shows the racer belongs to the category that he/she is signing up for.
 2. If the license is expired, they will have to fill out a new [USAC License Application](#) or a one-day license application.
 3. One-day licenses are only valid for Cat 5 men's, Cat 4 women's and junior's categories.
 4. Make sure rider resides in state if the race is a state championship. Stamp or write the **state name** on the registration form so that sign-in personnel know the person is eligible for the state champ medals and can annotate it on the start roster.
 5. When license has been checked and is valid, stamp or mark "**License**" or some other distinguishing mark on the registration form so that the cashier knows the racer has had his/her license checked.
- III. 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:
 - A. Late fees
 - B. License fees
 - C. Discounts for multiple entries, if applicable
 - D. USCF unattached rider fees (USCF 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 to whom race entry checks are to be made payable to (organizer? sponsoring club?).
- IV. Get USAC license information and enter racer data
1. 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.
 2. Know who goes into which category. Don't assume riders will know or be honest with you.
 3. No USCF license = no race. No exceptions unless the promoter has downloaded the current USCF rider database right before the race and has it handy to verify that a racer is indeed licensed.
 4. Make sure entry on Chief Referee'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. If your race is computerized and you can print out a start roster, that is even better. 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.
 5. Know the deadline for submitting each roster to the start line and send a runner to do so.
 6. Know whether promoters will split/combine, cancel/deny entry to categories due to field limits.
- V. Give rider his or her race number(s)
1. Know what numbers go to which category and the sequence to hand them out.
 2. As mentioned before, having the race number attached to the pre-printed registration form is a nice touch.
 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 aid the riders in avoiding confusion.



5. Make sure you write the riders' numbers on the registration form. This will make the identification process easier if the officials can't read the roster later on.

VI. Be prepared for all questions or contingencies

1. Know the event schedule cold - even if it differs from the advance notice flyer.
2. Know the event rules, along with whom to ask or where to go for other resources (bathrooms, first aid, etc.)
3. Per rule 1F1 the complete prize list, with values for each place, must be posted at registration for the racers to view. Know when results/awards will be made available.
4. If you can't answer a question involving rules or safety, refer rider to the chief official. Never let organizers refute your decision if doing so infringes on USCF 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 and the happier your racers will be. 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 home.
2. Award prizes - Same rules as above apply unless you have a bang-up award ceremony organized. 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 pick up course signs, feed zone, start/finish area, parking lot, etc. Remember: leave the race venue in better shape than you found it.
5. Get with the Chief Referee and fill out the [Chief Referee's Report](#).
6. Pay your officials.
7. Pay any help or service you might have hired.
8. Make sure porta-potties have been picked up.
9. Return all rented or borrowed equipment.
10. Make sure you send your [Post-Event Payment form](#) in to the USCF within 15 days of the event to avoid late filing fees.
11. Send results to USAC and your State Racing Association in the approved format according to the [National Ranking System](#).
12. Write thank you notes to all volunteers, local officials, http://www.usacycling.org/membership/forms/insurance_request.pdf and any others who helped make your race a success.



Supply Check Lists

Registration:

- Spare cash for change box
- Tables
- Chairs
- Lights if registration starts in the dark
- Generator to power the lights
- Lanterns in case lights and generator go out
- Flashlights
- Power cord
- Box of pens
- Safety pins for racer numbers
- Course maps
- One day license applications
- Annual license applications
- Release forms
- Race numbers
- Signs to mark category signup locations
- Paper weights
- Receipt book
- Carbon copy roster sheets
- Trash bags
- Awnings so racers can fill out paperwork in case of rain
- Cell phones or two-way radio

Start/Finish Line:

- Table and chairs for officials
- Awning and/or scaffolding for the officials
- Cones or barrier material (orange netting)
- Paper
- Pens
- Ice chest with drinks and snacks for officials
- Paper weights
- Roster
- Trash bags
- Photo-finish equipment
- PA system
- Bell to signal last lap
- Lap cards, if needed
- Cell phone or two-way radio
- Start/finish banner
- Electronic timing device



Corner Marshals:

- Road guard vests
- Signal flags -- you can make them out of bright orange material from a fabric store and dowels from a hardware store
- Cell phones or two way radios for everyone
- Water coolers for corner marshals

Drivers:

- Full tank of gas!
- Water and food to hand out to bonked riders
- First aid kit
- Instructions
- Course Map
- Cell phones or two-way radios

Course:

- Course marking signs
- 1000m and 200m signs
- Orange paint to mark hazards on pavement

