

RULES OF THE RACE: RACE ETIQUETTE FOR RUNNERS

By Miss Road Manners, Freddi Carlip

In the interest of promoting an enjoyable race experience for everyone, the Road Runners Club of America sought the advice and counsel of their own race-etiquette maven Miss Road Manners. Whatever the pace, wherever the race, race manners matter.

AT THE STARTING LINE

1. Line up according to how fast you plan to run or walk. Slower runners and walkers should move to the back of the group.
2. Pay attention to the pre-race instructions. What you hear will not only help guide you through the course but will also keep you safe. Examples are: stay on the right side of the road, or stay inside the traffic cones, or watch the course marshals (they control traffic to make your race a safe experience) for which way to go at major intersections.
3. Pin your race number on the front of your shirt. This is where it is most visible for race officials. It will also make it easier to pull the tag off at the end of the race. Miss Road Manners has been tempted to pull off errant race numbers. You don't want to feel the pull of her white-gloved hand on your derriere, do you?
4. If you drop something just as the race starts, don't stop and pick it up. You'll endanger yourself and others. Trust that a race official will get it, or move to the side and wait until everyone has crossed the starting line and then retrieve it. Miss Road Manners waits till all of the runners have passed before she picks up the white glove she's dropped at the start (after hordes of runners have left their footprints on said glove, it no longer qualifies as white*let's call it grimy gray).

YOU'RE OFF!

1. Run or walk no more than two abreast. Other runners will want to get by you. If you are walking in a group, stay in the back of the pack.
2. If you are stopping at an aid station, move all the way over to the table, grab water, and move away from the table so others may get water too. If you want to stop and drink, move to the side of the road, out of the way of other runners. If there's a trash receptacle, by all means use it. If not, don't go too far with your cup. The race volunteers will be collecting the cups and will appreciate not having to go on an extended "litter patrol."
3. Even those of us who perspire instead of sweat may have to deal with bodily functions during the race. If you need to spit, move to the side of the road and do it there; same goes for throwing up. If nature calls, pull off the course and check for a port-a-potty or kind homeowner, or, as a last resort, a discreet clump of bushes. Even Miss Road Manners, who admits to sweating, has been known to spit, hurl, and heed the call of nature during a race.
4. Move to the side if someone behind you says, "Excuse me" or "Coming through." Yes, you are about to be passed and the person behind you is giving you a heads up. It's proper race etiquette to let that person through.
5. If you need to tie your shoe, or stop for any reason, please move to the side of the road. People coming up behind you are still moving and if you stop in front of them, the scene is set for a collision. Miss Road Manners almost took a header in a race when someone abruptly stopped in front of her. In addition to the bruises to her dignity, just think of what the fall would have done to her white gloves!

6. Feel free to shout words of encouragement to other runners. The other runners will appreciate your cheers. Miss Road Manners is confident you will hear encouraging words in return.

7. Pay attention to what is going on around you during the race. Just as in real life, expect the unexpected. Think loose dogs, lost kids, low branches, and looming potholes.

APPROACHING THE FINISH

1. Follow the instructions of the race officials at the finish. You may be told to stay to the right or to the left.

2. Most races don't allow your nonregistered friends and relatives to run with you in a race. If, even though Miss Road Manners frowns on it, a friend is running the last few miles with you, and hasn't officially entered the race, tell your friend NOT to cross the finish line. He/she should move off the race course before the finish.

3. Once you have crossed the finish line, don't stop. Keep moving to the end of the chute; stay in the exact order in which you finished. Please don't get ahead of anyone in the finish chutes. This is very important for accurate scoring.

4. Enjoy the post-race refreshments, but remember others want to enjoy the goodies too. Moderation is the key so there's food for the last people finishing the race. Miss Road Manners asks that you not cut in front of her in the food line. She's as hungry as you are and she has a temper that flares up mightily when she is starving. Be fair to the runners who have been patiently waiting in line.

5. Don't forget to turn in the stub on your race bib if there are random prize drawings. You've got to enter to win. Listen for the announcements.

ENJOY THE RACE AND HAVE FUN! AND DON'T FORGET TO MIND YOUR RACE MANNERS!