

RULES OF THE ROAD, TRAIL, AND TRACK: MIND YOUR MANNERS... WHEREVER YOU RUN

*By Miss Road Manners
Freddi Carlip*

In the interest of promoting running enjoyment for everyone, the Road Runners Club of America sought the advice and counsel of their own running-etiquette maven, Miss Road Manners. "Rules of the Road, Trail, and Track" promote running etiquette in nonrace situations and is the perfect companion to Miss RM's "Rules of the Race."

RULES OF THE ROAD

1. Running with friends gives us a chance to connect with others, but hopefully not with automobiles be respectful of the rights of motorists.. There are stories to share, jokes to swap, and shoulders on which to cry. Miss RM has many marvelous memories tucked away from those shared-on-the-road experiences. When running on the roads, always be mindful of oncoming traffic. Quickly get into single file. If someone is in mid-joke or mid-story, consider it the pause that keeps you safe and out of harm's way. Better a punch line delivered later than never. And it's so thoughtful to allow the person running on the inside to lead the way instead of scrambling to be alpha runner.
2. It's bad form, when running in a group, to leave a slower runner behind. It's not a race. Miss RM frowns on runners who turn an easy run with others into a race, with slower runners getting left in the dust. Running with a group is not for showing off. If some runners in the group want to pick up the pace, please make sure the other runners are not an afterthought. Save the race pace for the proper place.
3. Be prepared for the call of nature. On familiar routes, make sure to scope out places ahead of time where you can do whatever you need to do with a minimum of fuss, be it at a gas station or behind a well-concealed clump of bushes. Calls of nature happen. Be prepared.
4. Please don't litter. The roads are not your personal trashcan. Hold on to any litter until you find the proper receptacle. And, if you want to get a gold star on your road-manners report card, plan a run where you clean the litter along the route.
5. Smile at other runners as you wend your way along your route. And don't forget to give a friendly wave to motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. Miss RM wants to put the kibosh on the rumor that runners aren't friendly. Do your part. It will put a smile on Miss RM's face.

MISS RM ON SAFETY

1. Be mindful of the road -- watch for potholes, fallen or low-hanging branches, debris of any kind -- a pair of Miss RM's white gloves, for example. Being aware of your surroundings will keep you safe and unhurt.
2. Run with I.D. Anonymity is fine when you go to the mall. Anonymity is not fine when you go out for a run. Miss RM urges you, nay, she beseeches you, to have I.D. with you whenever and wherever you run, even close to home.

The RRCA has safety guidelines available. For more information on running safely, Miss RM suggests contacting the RRCA office. Miss RM's guidelines go hand in [white-gloved] hand

with the RRCA's safety information.

RULES OF THE TRAIL

1. Ah...the majesty of the wooded glen...the pristine beauty of the trail; it's no wonder that runners take to the trails to immerse themselves in the natural splendor that awaits. Take heed: Trails are narrow. If you are running with friends, make sure you move into single file and move to the right side if other runners or walkers want to pass your group.
2. Don't spoil the beauty you are experiencing by dropping assorted pieces of trash along the trail. Miss RM admonishes: Don't be a Trail Trasher.
3. Use the "natural facilities" with care. There will be bushes aplenty. Be prudent and pay attention to exactly what plants provide the facilities. Don't subject your tush to the torture of poison ivy, or its cousins, sumac and oak.
4. "Lions and tigers and bears...oh my." Miss RM doubts you'll meet up with any of those critters, but trail running means being mindful of all sorts of obstacles, ranging from rutted paths to overturned trees to wicked witches. Oops! Cross off the wicked witches unless you're running in the woods near Burkittsville, MD. Watch for animals. Remember that you are a visitor in their habitat. Be respectful of the surroundings.
5. A gentle reminder: Wear that I.D. and that smile on the trail as well as on the road.

RULES OF THE TRACK

1. The inside lanes are for the faster runners. These speed demons are training; they're doing repeat miles, or running quarters or halves. They are focused and concentrating on their performance. Don't get in their way. It's not proper track etiquette and it's not safe. You and the aforementioned speed demon could collide. Run in the outer lanes unless you are doing a similar workout. If you hear someone coming up behind you yelling, "Track," move to the right...and move quickly. A group run on the track requires even more mindfulness since there are more of you occupying the track. Stay in the outer lanes, keep your ears open for "Track," and move to the right for faster runners.
2. Leave your extra running gear and water in the bleachers or off to the side. Don't put them on the edge of the track. They belong out of the way. Miss RM will be peeved if she trips at track's edge, soiling her white gloves and lousing up her speed workout in the process.
3. Miss RM advises against using any part of the track for stretching or standing. Move off the track to chat and to stretch. Heed Miss RM's advice: Tracks are for running.
4. Miss RM reminds you not to dare use the track if there's an official school practice taking place. Encourage the kids by applauding their efforts as they practice. It will make them feel good. And you'll feel good doing it.

A FINAL REMINDER FROM MISS ROAD MANNERS:

WHEREVER YOU RUN, PLAN TO HAVE FUN, AND ALWAYS REMEMBER -- RUNNING ETIQUETTE MATTERS!