

Regularity Rallying

A rally is a fun event to be enjoyed, especially if you're up for a bit of a challenge. Rallying is not difficult if approached in a logical fashion. In order to finish and ideally do well, what follows is aimed to help you get there, basic steps and then for those that want to go the extra mile, more techniques that can be applied. I do not profess to have all the answers but hopefully what is shared will empower you.

What you will need- A timer/stopwatch or two, highlighters, post it stickers, pen and paper.

Rally tables and a calculator, but please don't be put off by these later needs, but they will help. For the last Hoew Hoek rally neither a calculator or rally tables were used, just a time distance chart.

The Rally schedule

At first glance the rally schedule is quite a daunting set of numeric details and instructions aimed to instill near panic, but if tackled logically by the applying logical steps the schedule can be translated into your guide.

Basic rules

1. Stay on the right road
2. Trust your clock
3. Appreciate your speed

1. Stay on the right road

Ignore all the numbers and focus on the route instructions. Being on the right road is the most important thing, it will also give you the confidence that where you are heading is correct and those rallyist going in a different direction have either been instructed to do so, or they have not applied rule 1 and are now in panic mode, you're right, do not falter.

Highlight all the turning instructions, turn left (TL) and turn right (TR).

Carry straight on (CSO) is important but as you will not be turning, just carry on.

Take two contrasting highlighters, yellow and orange for example and highlight in yellow each TL and in orange each TR.

If you want to mark each of the CSO in a further colour then by all means do so, but I personally don't as it can result in a rather busy schedule.

KMS	SPEED Km	ROUTE INSTRUCTION	TIME H,M,S
0.0	20	STOP. Turn Left.	0:00:00
1.2	20	Traffic lights. Turn Right. R44 into DORP St.	0:03:36
1.5	20	Traffic lights. Carry Straight On	
2.7	20	Turn Left into DROSTDY, the last road on left before bend to the right ahead.	0:08:06

Next highlight the STC instructions; these are key points along the way that you do not want to overlook.

2. Trust your clock

I was first introduced to rallying as a navigator by the late Barry Morton, Barry and his TC were regular contenders, Barry was a true gentleman and liked noting more than for me as his navigator to make a mistake, which could only be resolved by him having to drive his TC flat out until he was satisfied that we were back on track. I learnt a lot from Barry, in particular this rule.

Your clock is the only reliable means you have of knowing where you should be, if the schedule defines that at time 00:13:55 you should be at a 100 warning sign then that is where you need to be, if following your previous instruction at which you were roughly on time and you now come across a 100 warning sign at say 00:12:55 do not panic, you're not wrong, at 60km/h the correct 100 sign will be 1 km ahead, just over the next little rise, Trust your clock.

However if after doing a further km and there is no 100 sign, then you will know you were going too fast and now need to lose 60 second in order to get back on track.

At that 100 sign write down the time you passed (12:55), then when your clock displays the time you should be at the sign (13:55) and there is nothing to be seen, you know exactly how much time needs to be lost. Likewise if the clock displays that you should be at some point and you're not, start a stopwatch, then when you get to where you should have been you will know how many seconds need to be caught up.

As you start off the rally the first instruction might read exit the location and join the highway, you're first given speed being 30 km/h or so, but you're not moving yet, how long does it take to get to 30 km/h, you're already late. So think about how you're going to compensate, drive off a little faster, or head off a few seconds ahead of time, as long as that is not going to result in a penalty.

The same applies when you come to a STOP street or a RED traffic light, your speed prior was defined, your speed after is defined, yet in between you came to stop and then had to get back up to speed. You lost time doing this, the speeds given are the average speeds to be done to cover the distances to which they refer, stopping unless extra time is given is losing time, compensate. Being a little bit early (seconds) at a point is far better than being late, losing time is easy, catching it up is far more difficult.

An example, prior to a STOP you're traveling at 60 Km/h, you get to the STOP spot on time, well done, however at the stop you're held up by other traffic, 15 seconds is lost. After the STOP your rally speed is again defined as 60 km/h, to make up the lost 15 seconds you would have to cover the next km at 80 km/h, not 60. This example doesn't account for the time it's going to take to get from 0 km/h at the STOP to the 80 km/h you need to achieve, but hopefully you can appreciate that doing the speed defined is not always going to be right thing to do. Starting a stop watch as you stop can be a big help in appreciating what has to be made up once you get moving again. Use the

time recoded to reduce the time per kl you will now need to apply, thus the speed to aim for – those tables.

Consider carefully the speed group you are going to enter, the car maybe fast but is the driver and navigator, as has been stated losing time is far easier than gaining it, the faster the speed group entered the less opportunities there are for making up time and the quicker each of the rally instructions occur, a rally is not a race.

Your Rally timer should not be a stop watch that you trigger at your allotted start time, this is frat with danger. Your timer has a clock function, learn how to set it. When you get to the start venue locate the master clock and set your first clock so that it reads exactly the same time. Now take a second clock and set it so that at your allotted start time it will display 00:00:00. If done an hour before your start time, set the clock to 23:00:00. Do a couple of checks as time passes to ensure that the clock will be displaying 00:00:00 at your start time. This clock is now your rally timer.

This little exercise is for me one of the trickiest tasks, but the most critical, so practice.

3. Appreciate your speed

How do you know how fast you're actually going, well its time over distance, simple sums, but what is the distance. There are markers if they can be spotted, kilometer stones, and on most of our more major roads distance signs every 100 meters. Then for the very determined there are white lines that can be counted.

Once a distance marker is found, reference to a table of speeds and distances can be used to appreciate when the next maker will be passed, if the markers are a km apart and we need to average 60 km/h, 60 seconds will elapse. A major aid is to have a sheet of timings for a given speed and distances, I use such a chart that details each km for a series of 15km. So now while the navigator concentrates on the next instructions the driver concentrates on hitting each kl marker on time. To do this at the first marker start a stop watch going, then just read off the chart when you should pass the next, if one is missed then just carry on and hope the next will be found, your stopwatch aiding you as to when to start looking more carefully, below is a typical series for 67Km/h covering 8km. This aids keeping your speed on track over what could be many kilometers. You might have a speed change along the way, hopefully this occurs at a marker rather than some non-descript point in the middle of nowhere, whatever, head for the next marker, and start the process over for the new speed. Sometimes the speed changes are minor, 64 to 67, a difference of 2 seconds/km not a lot in reality.

Speed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
67	0.54	1.47	2.41	3.35	4.29	5.22	6.16	7.10

Know your car, what speed it achieves in various gears and the feedback received when doing a given speed. Getting to know your car and an appreciation of speed in that car is a major bonus.

A further aid to lower the burden on the navigator is to write the required speeds on successive post-it sheets, if time allows do this before starting the rally, now all the navigator needs to do at a speed change is rip off the next slip and stick it in where it can be seen, the navigator doesn't have to keep answering questions re the required speed and has time to focus on the schedule.

The driver's main task is keeping the speed correct and watching the road whilst tracking distance indicators, the navigator can focus on the instructions and not doing lots of tasks that distract from keeping you both on the right route and finding those all-important rally points.

What else can we done?

Now that the basics are covered study the rally schedule to gain an appreciation of the other information provided. Are there details missing such as an instruction with no time given, is the distance given, if so then a speed and distance calculation can be applied to calculate that missing, or use speed and distance tables.

Likewise are distances missing yet there is a time, will filling the blank distance help to reveal a further missing time, time is what we need to know, look carefully. You can do this following the schedule from the top down, but there instances when going from the bottom up aids in filling in the blanks.

Review the schedule to see if there are any open sections, sections during which errors will not be recorded, or there's a rest stop, if so then concentrate on that part of the schedule that gets to that point, then apply more effort during the break.

Rally organizers specifically leave out information so you can't work out the missing detail, this usually occurs when there is a self-timed control (STC). Sometimes having studied the schedule carefully you can gain sufficient information to work out the time for the STC.

An STC is a point along the route at which there a specific instruction to record your displayed rally time as you pass, usually a sign or a distinctive object. Record the time seconds first, this is the most important, then the minutes and hour. Do not enter it as your final record yet.

As you proceed you will get to the next defined point at which a time is given, if you get there early and you're confident that your speed from the STC was correct, then you could consider if you were early at the STC, alternatively if late, were you late at the STC, remember seconds count. So there is an opportunity to consider what time is going to be recorded as your STC. But be aware that at the STC there may have been a hidden marshal that recorded your passing, if a discrepancy is found you could land up with additional penalty points.

Marshals on the side of the road record your time as you pass, sadly they never seem to be on a section when you know you are doing well, but that's rallying.

Speed changes seem to occur at randomly selected points, but they are rarely random, there will be something that has been used as a reference point so it can be checked as the rally is developed. Next comes the allocation of speed for a each section, how is this done, on the flat its easier for most to do a selected speed, but when going uphill speeds need to selected with a little more consideration, usually slower, so when climbing a hill or a long pass it is seldom that an increase in speed will be given until you have crested the incline. So if there is an increase in speed, yet you're still climbing, it's a fair bet you have been traveling too slowly.

The most difficult rally sections are those for which the speed has been set slow and there is quite of bit of distance to cover with no km markers to guide you, this is when counting white lines can help, otherwise you have to have a good appreciation of your car as well as appreciating the road conditions, or just drive by the seat or your pants.

Have a careful look at the schedule to see if there are sets of instructions that do not result in covering a lot of distance, you might just be heading into a section of round the houses, or being steered through a layby, look very carefully at the distances between instructions, they will be short, they may not even be stated, so look at the speeds and the times, slow speeds will be make the times appear apart. If the distances are not given try and work them out. In a confined area a difference measured in meters can make the all the difference between the next turning and the one just beyond. Focus on the turnings and be less concerned about the speeds defined, in all likelihood there will be a couple of STOP Streets thrown into the mix, stopping losses you time. Stop however means Stop, a marshal maybe nearby dying to give you some penalty points.

A rally would not happen if it were not for those dedicated, applying all the time and effort to setup the schedule as well as all those that do the marshalling, quite a bit of work, so make their day, come and take part.

Roger Lewis.