

Rules of the Road for Runners

By George Estes

1. The biggest danger to runners comes from our fellow human beings who happen to be driving cars. Some of them may feel some degree of affection for runners, while others hate them, but all drivers would rather avoid a collision with a runner, since it would represent a major inconvenience in their day.
2. When we run, we are likely to encounter dozens of cars for every mile we travel, while drivers will cover dozens of miles for every runner they see. We cannot expect drivers to be on the lookout for runners, so the onus is on us to avoid such an inconvenience, which would probably be more serious for us than for the driver.
3. Make sure you are aware of cars both ahead of and behind you. Keep your eyes up, rather than on your fancy running watch, with distance covered, average pace, heart rate, cadence, performance condition, vertical ratio, et cetera.
4. Have you ever seen a group of middle school students on a field trip? They walk four abreast, intent only on their classmates and oblivious to everyone and everything else around them, including the sights they are supposedly seeing. When you run in a group, don't be those kids, no matter how fondly you remember your middle school days.
5. Don't wear headphones. You need all your senses to detect the presence of cars.
6. **No matter what, the driver always has the right of way.** (See point 2.) At any time, we have to be ready to stop or jump onto the shoulder, sidewalk, yard or snowbank to let the driver pass easily.
7. When you have to run on the road itself, run facing traffic (on the left in the U.S.). Give a friendly wave to every oncoming driver and look into the windshield as if recognizing your next-door neighbor. The driver may slow down for a closer look to see who it is. Stay in a single file when you see oncoming cars.
8. When the narrow road ahead takes a sharp left curve with no visibility, always assume there is an oncoming car just out of sight. This may sound paradoxical, but you should move toward the middle of the road to lengthen

the sight-line. As soon as you see that car you are expecting, make a big wave with your right arm and jump as far back to the left-hand side as you can. In a group, you should always maintain single file on blind curves.

9. If the left-hand blind curve is especially hairy, you may want to change sides and run on the right for better visibility. Before changing, check over your right shoulder for cars passing from behind, signal with your hand as you would when riding a bike (you do use hand signals when riding your bike, don't you?) and cross. Once you have made it around the curve, you will have to do the same thing to cross back to the left. The worst position you can be in is on the right side of the road on a right-hand blind curve. **IMPORTANT FOR GROUPS: EVERYONE MUST CROSS THE ROAD AT THE SAME TIME.** If some of us are on the right and others are on the left, there is even less room for cars to pass without causing a major inconvenience. The simplest rule is for everyone to follow the leader
10. Make sure drivers can see you. Wear bright clothing during the day and white if you have to run in low light. Reflective vests, headlights, et cetera are essential for nighttime running. Early in the morning or late in the afternoon, be aware of the position of the sun and whether overtaking or oncoming drivers will be blinded by it.