



TECHNICAL SIDEBAR

New Mexico Corvette Association

What is a Rally?

(from the Top of the Rockies Corvette Association web site)

A car rally has been described as an extremely large board game: public streets are the board, and your car is the playing piece. Each entrant includes a driver and navigator(s) who carefully follow instructions directing them along a given course. A friendly competition follows at the finish where scores are compared to determine which teams followed the course most accurately.

Rallies come in various shapes and sizes, but most are non-racing events held on open public roads. Rally teams include friends, couples, and entire families, and any type of vehicle can be used.

Gimmick Rallies (Variety Rallies)

In a gimmick rally, you solve puzzles and try to avoid being tricked. The only time constraint is a deadline to be at the finish location.

Timed Rallies

In a timed rally, you try to stay on time, arriving at checkpoint locations neither early nor late.

Performance Rallies (Rally Racing, Stage Rallying)

Performance rallies are racing events held on closed roads.

Gimmick Rallies

A gimmick rally is full of puzzles and tricks. The participants' final score is based on information recorded on their score sheet, which shows how well they solved the puzzles and avoided being tricked. No speed or time is involved, other than a deadline to be at the finish location. Teams may be divided into classes based on previous rally experience.

Registration is normally open over a two-hour period. For weekday events registration usually starts around 4 PM or 5 PM, with a short participants meeting prior to the first entrant beginning the course. For weekend events the rally may be scheduled to start at any time. The rally usually finishes at a local restaurant a few hours (2-3) later.

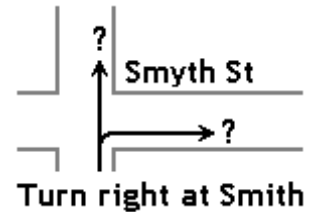
At the start of a gimmick rally, each entrant is given at least two sets of instructions; general instructions and route instructions. The general instructions are the ground rules for the event, containing definitions, priorities, and other information. The route instructions direct you along a course from the start location to the finish location. Entrants will not get lost if they simply follow

the route instructions in an obvious manner; ignoring any gimmicks. Other types of instructions can interact in various ways with the general instructions, with the route instructions, and with each other.

Gimmick rallies often have checkpoints along the course, where entrants stop their car and interact with rally personnel, who might throw some extra gimmicks their way. At the finish, entrants receive an answer sheet (the "Critique") that explains all the gimmicks.

Here's an example of an easy gimmick:

a misspelled street name. Let's say that the current route instruction is "Turn right at Smith." According to the general instructions, the word "Smith" must appear on a sign where the entrant should complete this route instruction; but the word "Smith" does not appear on the "Smyth St" sign. If the entrant continues straight (still looking for "Smith"), then they would get credit via one of the scoring mechanisms described below.

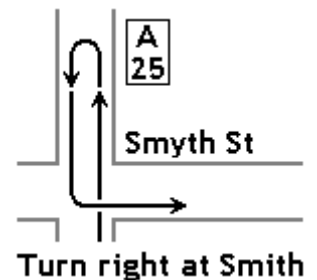


Gimmick rally types differ mainly in the scoring mechanisms used to determine who figured out which gimmicks. A particular rally may use one or more of these scoring mechanisms.

Course marker (CM) Rallies

As you follow the route instructions, you encounter course markers (posted signs with letter–number combinations) and record them on your score sheet. After recording a course marker, you bring into effect a supplemental instruction that corresponds to the number on the course marker. Thus, course markers are both a scoring device and a way to return you to the Route Instructions course after you catch a gimmick.

In the Smith vs. Smyth example, there might be a course marker such as "A 25" on a pole after Smyth Street. You would write "25" next to "A" on your score sheet; then look up "25" on a sheet of supplemental instructions. Instruction 25 would tell you to delete the current route instruction, make a U-turn, and then turn left. Notice that this puts everyone in the same place, working on the same route instruction. However, only those who caught the gimmick would have recorded course marker "A 25" on their score sheets.

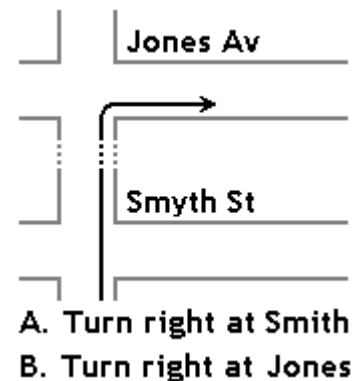


Don't be tempted to just drive up and down every street looking for course markers though. Some course markers are worth minus points. Some gimmicks have multiple course markers (full credit and partial credit), and recording more than one may be worth zero or minus points. Entrants should have a valid reason to encounter each course marker that they record.

A/B (Dual Part Route Instruction) Rallies

Each route instruction has two parts: A and B. Entrants do only the part that can be done correctly first. On their score sheet, they record which part they did (A or B), or whether both parts could be done at the same place (C).

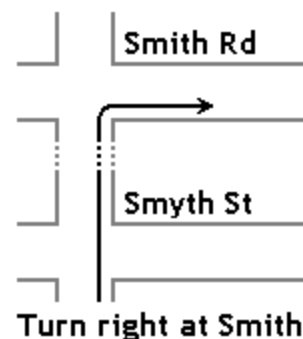
In the Smith vs. Smyth example, part A might be "Turn right at Smith" and part B might be "Turn right at Jones". Those who missed the gimmick would turn right on Smyth Street. Those who caught the gimmick would continue to the next intersection, where they could turn right on Jones Avenue, which is parallel to Smyth Street. Notice that this puts everyone on one of two parallel streets, working on the same route instruction (which would work on either Smyth Street or Jones Avenue, and could bring the two routes back together). However, those who missed the gimmick recorded "A" on their score sheets, and those who caught it recorded "B" instead.



Q&A (Question and Answer) Rallies

Various questions are interspersed among the route instructions. At the appropriate points in the rally, entrants record their answers on the score sheet.

In the Smith vs. Smyth example, the question "What streets meet at the first intersection you encounter?" might appear after the "Turn right at Smith" instruction. Assuming that Smith Road exists somewhere past Smyth Street, waiting for "Smith" would give entrants a different (and correct) answer to the question than turning right at Smyth would.



In practice, street names are rarely similar enough for a Q&A rally to use misspelled street names in route instructions like this. Instead, a misspelled street name might be used in a question, such as; "What streets meet at the first intersection past Smith?"

If the entrant encounters Smyth Street (but not Smith Street) while trying to answer the question, then they would be unable to answer the question, and would fill in their score sheet accordingly.

Photo Rallies

At the start, each entrant receives a number of photos. As they follow the route instructions, they identify photos that depict the view from their car and record on their score sheet the mileage along the route at which they occurred. A working odometer is needed.

Hare and Hound Rallies

Each entrant follows the route by finding markings (generally mounds of flour/lime) at intersections. If a mound is found, then the correct course may have turned. If so, then a confirming mound will be located a short distance (less than ¼ mile) down the correct course. A working odometer is needed; the adjusted mileage closest to that of the rally master wins.

Treasure Hunts (Map Clue Rallies)

Entrants use clues and riddles to find streets or landmarks on the provided map. Then they lay out their own course to travel to these locations to gather the requested information for their score sheet.

Gimmick Rally Resources

Timed Rallies

A timed rally requires entrants to stay on time. Their score is based on whether they arrive at checkpoints at the correct time, with equal penalties for arriving either early or late. The route and checkpoint locations may be known or unknown, and the route instructions may or may not include traps (gimmicks) that make entrants early or late if they do them wrong.

Timed rallies are written taking into account speed limits and traffic. Departure times are staggered at the start, usually one minute apart. Each leg of the rally is scored separately, so entrants cannot make up for being late at one checkpoint by being early at another. There is a maximum penalty per leg, typically between ½ minute and 5 minutes.

Like gimmick rallies, timed rallies may be divided into classes based on experience. However, awards classes in timed rallies may also be based on the use of computational equipment. For some timed rallies, such equipment (e.g., a more accurate odometer, a GPS receiver, or a rally computer) can help entrants get a better score. Therefore, entrants compete only against others who are similarly equipped.

T&D (Time and Distance, TSD, Time–Speed–Distance) Rallies

Entrants follow route instructions that direct them on a course at assigned speeds. They are timed when they arrive at checkpoints, which are usually at undisclosed locations. The correct time of arrival is based on the distance traveled and the speeds assigned. Upon arrival at a checkpoint, entrants are assigned an out time, the time at which they are to start the next leg.

Some rallies use do-it-yourself checkpoints in addition to timed checkpoints. When entrants arrive at a do-it-yourself checkpoint, they record the time they arrived (or wanted to arrive) on their scorecard. Their out time at a do-it-yourself checkpoint is a fixed interval (typically 2 or 3 minutes) after their arrival time.

The first section of every T&D rally is an odometer check, where you are given a fixed amount of time to follow instructions to a specific place, and are told the official distance to that point. Entrants can use this information to adjust their speeds or odometer readings to compensate for differences between their odometer and that of the organizers.

Some T&D rallies include course-following or timing traps. These traps are similar to the tricks found in gimmick rallies, and might cause entrants to take a longer or shorter route, or to drive at a different speed. Missing a trap would cause entrants to arrive either early or late at the next checkpoint.

T&D rallies are common throughout the United States, and range in length from an hour or two to multiple-day events covering many hundreds of miles.

Monte Carlo (Tulip) Rallies

A Monte Carlo rally is like a T&D Rally, but there are usually no traps, and the course is typically faster (but still safe and legal, of course), longer, and windier than one for a T&D. The instructions for some Monte Carlo rallies use line drawings of intersections when they tell entrants to turn. Some of these drawings resemble tulips, and hence the nickname for this type of rally.

Each leg of a Monte Carlo rally specifies a minimum distance point (generally $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ of the leg), and the checkpoint is guaranteed to occur after that point. Thus, entrants need to maintain the assigned average speed only after reaching the minimum distance point. Typically, each leg of a Monte Carlo rally has no more than two assigned speeds: one before the minimum distance, and one after the minimum distance.

Pan Am (Map-Type Monte Carlo, Known-True-Time Monte Carlo) Rallies

Despite its nicknames, a Pan Am rally is quite different from a Monte Carlo rally. In a Pan Am Rally, entrants are told in advance exactly when they are due at every checkpoint, but not where they are. Rather than instructions that tell them where to turn, they receive a set of maps and descriptions of the checkpoint locations. Each description usually tells them something about the checkpoint location (such as what road or roads it is or is not on) and from what direction to approach.

The instructions typically tell entrants the exact location and direction of entry for a standoff for each checkpoint. At the standoff, you will be able to see the checkpoint, or will get more information about its location. After entrants leave a standoff, they can drive at whatever speed they want (even creeping very slowly), but they are not allowed to stop until reaching the checkpoint.

This rally type was named for an annual event called Pan Am which ran from the late 1950s through about 1980. Pan Am rallies tend to be major events, often taking 8–14 hours on course and including a banquet/hotel package.

Pan Carlo Rallies

This is a hybrid between Pan Am and Monte Carlo rallies. In the first part of each leg, entrants navigate to a minimum distance location using maps (like a Pan Am rally). Then they proceed to the checkpoint while maintaining an assigned average speed (like a Monte Carlo rally). Traps are possible, and some checkpoints may be of the do-it-yourself variety.

Regularity Rallies

In a regularity rally, entrants set their own speed while following the route instructions, and are timed at unknown locations. Then they re-run the course one or more times and attempt to match those times.

Performance Rallies

Performance rallies involve racing against the clock in dirt/gravel/mud/snow/ice on closed roads. Safety equipment (roll-cage, harnesses, helmets, fire extinguisher, etc.), a competition license, and a co-driver are required.

Pro Rally

National championship caliber events, usually run over 2 to 3 days, with at least 100 miles of stage legs where the roads are closed for competition.

Club Rally

Divisional level area championship events that generally run a single day, with 30 to 100 stage miles.

Rally Sprint

Short events with multiple runs over a single closed course, such as off-road recreation park or hill climb.

Rally Cross (Rally-X)

Low speed autocross-like events on unpaved field/lot.