

How to Set a Successful Hash Trail



RCH3

What follows is just one man's impression gained over several years of hashing. Experienced trail-layers may want to ignore much of the advice contained herein, but novices are advised to pay close attention.

First, some axioms:

1. The hare's number-one objective should be to CONTROL the pack through the use of judicious marking.
2. The pack does not want to be controlled. Through malice or happenstance they will screw you up if they can.
3. Keep the pack together by being mean to the FRBs and kind to the plodders at the back of the pack.

Axiom number 1 is the key to a successful hash run. KEEP CONTROL OF THE PACK! As long as the pack is where you want it to be, you can play them like puppets on a string, and they'll come back for more. But if they're scattered or off course, all your efforts will be in vain.

And the biggest element of keeping control is making clear marks. Once hounds get the idea that a trail is poorly marked, they will go for km's in [directions](#) you really didn't want them to go. When the pack is on flour, it should be obvious to everyone. Make your marks clearly visible. On a city hash, there should be two or three marks per block. On a clear footpath, every 25 metres should do it. When the path gets less obvious, like onto grass or forest, you need to put the marks closer together & if the trail changes direction make sure it is marked as such.

At a checkpoint, consider which ways the hounds are likely to check first. Try [to choose](#) the obvious directions for your falses, the unlikely ones for the true trail. How far should the first mark be from a check? That is a matter of controversy. I like to keep them within 75 metres of (and within sight of) the check. Any longer than that, and the pack is likely to go off in unexpected directions. In any case, establish a pattern at the beginning of the trail, and the hounds will instinctively operate within that pattern.

I prefer using falses and fish hooks (see below) rather than checks because they catch all the FRB. Falses need to be especially clear. Make your "FT" [in the middle](#) of the trail, where the hounds can't help stepping on it. If you hide it off to the side, they'll overrun it and you'll lose control of the pack. Always follow a check with a false trail or fish hook.

Fish hooks are "U" turns in the trail with a number attached, usually between 1&8 so that when the FRB get there, the number indicates the number of FRB that go

to the back around the last runner. Fish hooks are good in places where it is not feasible to have a FT.

Anticipate where the pack will need to be brought together. Put your toughest checks and your longest falses where you can expect the pack to be most strung out. Steep ascents and descents, obstacles that require climbing over or under, and long straightaways generally separate the fast runners from the slow ones. Use plenty of falses: some of them may never be discovered. And remember that the surest way to bring the pack together is with a drink stop.

The worst place for a tough check is right at the start. The pack is together already. The plodders will end up standing around while the aggressive checkers go off in different directions. Let the run build up some momentum before you start getting mean. And don't try anything tricky near the end of the run, either. Once hounds smell beer, they'll ignore all your marks and head straight in.

Shortcutting can be good or bad, depending on who's doing it. If the FRBs short cut, they can lead the whole pack astray. But if the plodders can short cut a nasty loop, you can bring the pack together.

The best way to keep the front of the pack from shortcutting is to not give them any opportunities. NEVER loop an outgoing trail segment near an incoming one: if they're within a quarter km of each other someone is likely to get off on the wrong trail. And once they hit that other trail, it's anyone's guess whether they'll follow it in the forward direction or the reverse.

You CAN set up short cuts for the plodders, but ONLY where the trail is well marked. When the trail is well marked the FRBs will become complacent, and will go anywhere you lead them. The plodders will short cut when they see the opportunity. With unclear marking, the front of the pack will spread out sideways, and the short cut will be discovered by the wrong hounds!

In planning a hash trail, start several weeks early. Schedule a couple of exploratory runs just to get the lay of the land and search out unusual terrain. Then put together a first-cut course and run it, thinking about where the checks and falses should go. Then run it backwards, which will give you an entirely different perspective on things. When you actually lay the trail, you should be thoroughly familiar with the territory, and all the alternative routes. When you're done, the trail should be an organic whole, not just a bunch of checks and falses linked up haphazardly. <http://www.mapmyrun.com/> is an extremely useful tool and I use it always. A good map is indispensable in planning a hash trail.

The ideal length of a hash run is 6km for runners and 4km for walkers. When including a walk trail, it is best to have it as part of the run trail, that way those more energetic walkers are able to run part way with the runners. Don't forget also to set checks etc for them as there are FWB also.

I might add that when running the streets at night time it is a good idea to place the arrows under or adjacent to street lights, that way they can be easily seen and if there is no arrow there then chances are you are not on trail.

There is no such thing as a perfect trail. There are too many possible things to go wrong. Even if you do set up a run where everyone enjoys themselves, no self-respecting hound will ever let a compliment pass his lips. However, if you follow these simple rules, you CAN avoid taunts like, "Shitty trail," and even get people to eagerly anticipate your next turn as hare.

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