



RALLY PLANNING

for beginners

By Greg Rice

With some work and determination, anyone is capable of joining the big dogs and be competitive in long-distance rallies and consistently finish near the top. Along with the work it also requires a little luck, but the dividends are obvious.

By adhering to a strict preparation regimen and being organized, your chances of successfully finishing safely and high in the standings will improve. Every successful long-distance rally rider has a method that works best for him or her. I've developed an approach that's carried me to a top-10 finish in every rally I've entered in the last seven years. I hope, my tips will help you achieve the same results.

1 COMMIT

Taking the time to plan, prepare and be organized is part of the commitment to rallying. This process includes taking the time to learn the tools you use, like how to create a route using your mapping software, upload routes to your GPS, and learn about all the functions of your camera. If you do not know how to use the tools you plan to use, your results won't be very good.

Staying committed can get tough when you encounter bad weather, road construction, mechanical gremlins, and other negative things that can happen during a rally. However, it's best to view these occasions as character building exercises, rather than morale-draining events that can undermine your game plan. Focusing on the positive instead of dwelling on the any obstacles you're facing will help you maintain your momentum.

Committing yourself to this sport also means taking a dedicated approach to scoring bonuses, which includes everything from reading the rally book's bonus instructions and taking photos, to properly recording bonus information and logging gas stops.

2 PREPARE

Being prepared and ready for unforeseen circumstances that arise during the rally translates into confidence, which reduces stress. Reduced stress means you are more likely to be relaxed, will not fatigue as quickly, and that you'll be able to ride longer and, score more bonuses.

Make sure your motorcycle is in rally-ready condition, bring the right gear to wear for all types of weather conditions, and obtain all of the things you need during the rally before the rally starts. These include, but are not limited to, often overlooked sundries like clipboards, pens, markers, flashlights, and clips or mini-bungies to attach your rally flag to your bike or to the bonus. It's also a

good idea to pack backups of the essential items that might fail in a rally like flashlights, GPS, cameras.

3 ORGANIZE

Organization contributes to efficiency, which leads to faster bonus stops. That means you have more riding time to score more bonuses. Being organized can be as simple as having your camera, rally flag, rally book and pens in a convenient, easy-to-reach place. Always store frequently used items in the same place so you don't lose time trying to find them.

Also, lay out the items you plan to carry on the bike before the rally and find a secure, dry, easily accessible place to store them. Develop a routine that works for you and follow this approach even when you are not in a rally — it will help you become more efficient in the heat of battle.

4 TRIPLE CHECK YOUR EQUIPMENT



Be sure your laptop is in good working order and that the software you plan to use for the rally is installed and has been tested — repeatedly. One way to test it is by creating waypoints using bonuses from previous rallies and uploading them to your GPS.

Make sure your GPS is also in good working order and that you can quickly and easily navigate through the menus to add, modify or delete waypoints in case you need to make changes to your planned route on the fly.

Finally, ensure that any other items you are going to use in the rally are in good working order and you know how to use them. Do not buy a new camera, for example, the week before the rally and expect to know how to use all its features. »



PHOTO BY RON OREM

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5 CHECK YOUR MOTORCYCLE

To help prevent mechanical failures during the rally, ensure your motorcycle is completely serviced and is safe. This especially includes any farkles you installed, like additional lighting or an auxiliary fuel cell.

Checking everything does not mean something won't happen since, by definition, competing in a rally is demanding for the bike and rider. But inspecting your motorcycle thoroughly and knowing how to perform basic repairs will minimize the chances of a DNF. Be sure you have the correct tools to work on your bike.

6 YOU SIGNED UP FOR A RALLY. NOW WHAT?

After signing up for a particular rally, do as much research as you can to find out about the previous running of that rally. For instance, I try to find an old rally book to get a feel for how the rallymasters list bonuses and how they want information recorded. Understanding the rallymaster's approach to putting together the rally will help you be prepared when you do get the rally book for the rally. It is also one less thing you have to figure out, which gives you more time to plan a route. Since most rallymasters produce their rally book in electronic format, finding an older rally book should not too difficult.

Once you know the length of the rally, you can create a rally planning spreadsheet (below) to estimate how many hours you will have for riding. This will provide you with an estimate of how many miles you can ride within the time frame of the rally. I use this approach when planning my route to be sure I do not get too aggressive or plan a route with too many miles.

2013 IBR Rally Planning Worksheet

Rally Planning Worksheet													
2013 Iron Butt Rally													
Rider - Greg Rice													
Day	Start	End	Hours	Rest	Break	Meal	Other	Total	Miles	MPG	Time	Notes	Actual
1	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
2	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
3	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
4	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
5	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
6	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
7	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
8	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
9	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
10	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
11	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
12	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
13	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
14	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
15	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
16	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
17	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
18	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
19	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
20	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
21	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
22	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
23	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
24	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
25	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
26	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
27	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
28	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
29	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
30	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
31	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
32	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
33	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
34	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
35	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
36	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
37	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
38	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
39	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
40	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
41	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
42	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
43	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
44	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
45	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
46	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
47	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
48	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
49	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120
50	08:00	18:00	10:00	1:00	0:30	0:30	0:00	1:30	120	120	1:00		120

7 READING A RALLY BOOK

The first thing to do upon receiving the rally book is to ensure it is complete. I have had a few times where there were problems with the rally book — both printed and electronic versions. Once you are sure the rally book is accurate, make two copies; keep one as a backup and use the other one for writing notes. Note that some rallies do not allow copying the rally book, so check before you make copies.



8 RIDING YOUR PLAN

When the rally starts, try to ride your planned route to the extent possible. However, be flexible enough to adjust your plan if it has the potential for improving your position or for reasons of safety.

I always approach my route planning as if I am trying to win. I fine-tune my route right up to the start and even during the rally as I sometimes make changes on the fly as required. Being flexible with your route is fairly easy to do if you are well-prepared and organized.

I use multiple GPSs in order to do *what if* analyses between bonuses. On a long rally there is usually plenty of time between bonuses to see if adding or dropping bonus locations improves your plan.

It's also a good idea to keep track of the time and how it relates to your planned route. This will help keep you moving and your mind occupied so negative thoughts don't intrude. Having a positive and confident mindset really helps in long rallies. Minimize distractions at bonus, rest and gas stops by not talking with other competitors. The best course of action is to always keep moving.



CONCLUSION

The key takeaways are to be prepared and organized. In addition to reducing stress and fatigue, it will make a big difference when something goes wrong — and it will. The more rallies you enter, the more you learn. The more you learn, the more fun you'll have.