

TACH Leading and Attending Runs

TACH currently operates 'Club' and 'Club Plus runs.

A **Club Run** is our staple run. Usually at least Thursday but it may include other days. The runleader will plan the route and others do not need to carry maps or route information. All runners must stay together at all times (with pragmatic exceptions for, say, hill rep sessions). They are suitable for all TACH members, noting the basic pace requirements below. All runners need to be willing to adjust their pace to enable the group to run as a single cohesive group. Names are not usually needed in advance, members can just turn up on the night. These runs will be listed on the TACH spreadsheet and in the weekly email.

A **Club Plus** run allows us to have wider adventures. They are usually longer than a club run and may be further afield. There will be a leader but all runners should be self-sufficient including navigation in case they need to cut the run short or wish to make their own detours. When there are large numbers of runners, the run might split into groups based on pace, but it is important that no-one is left behind. The Club Plus runs might not be suitable for all TACH members owing to pace, distance, terrain, etc, and the runleader should explain this in advance. Sign-up names might be requested in advance to help planning lifts, venue, etc. If you sign-up and are not able to make it you must contact the runleader or someone else that you know is attending so that the group is not waiting for you. These runs will be listed on the TACH spreadsheet and in the weekly email.

The spreadsheet and weekly email can be useful for highlighting other runs, such as races put on by local running clubs. Supporting these in TACH colours is encouraged but these events are run under that company's rules and insurance.

Any TACH member can also post on the TACH Facebook page if they are doing a run and would welcome company. These are not a TACH run although please be mindful of upholding TACH's reputation whilst running in public.

For both runners and leaders always keep in mind that TACH is an inclusive club. If you ever have any concerns before or during a run do communicate this with the run leader so they can make adaptations to the run if needed e.g. drop of pace.

Leading a Run

Within the club there is a huge amount of knowledge about the local terrain which is shared freely, mostly by members volunteering to lead runs. BUT... TACH runs only happen if we have volunteers! If you haven't led a run yet, why not give it a go? Here's some guidance on how to go about it. If you want any additional guidance or advice do approach a more experienced run leader and they will be more than happy to help!

Select a location with or without a pub with adequate parking for the number of pod runners. This has traditionally been anywhere within a 10 mile radius of central Bristol but this could be further afield if there is interest. Decide on a date – you might want to look at the spreadsheet first to see what else is going on. Runs can be held on any day of the week and at any time of the day. Our core Club Runs are held on Thursdays starting at 19:00 sharp and usually offer a long (6.5-8miles) and short (4-5miles) option.

You can stick to home turf or explore somewhere new: as well as picking favourite paths, some people chose themes such as a seasonal bluebell run, a dramatic view, or a run to a monument on an

auspicious date. Sharing your knowledge of dubious historical facts is also welcomed. Get out and recce the course with a buddy if you need to; rights of way can change or be blocked, and the course may be impassable in certain conditions e.g. heavy rain may make streams unfordable or heavy ground a bog.

Add your run to the spreadsheet. Give an estimate of distance, terrain and include any other information you think might help your fellow runners get the most out of the run e.g. very boggy, very hilly, best parking etc. Any information on livestock can help dog owners decide if the run is suitable for their four-legged running partners. Confirm if there is a pub after whether there is food available – it's fine if there isn't but runners like to know, and whether food orders are needed in advance.

Count heads before you set off. Warn runners of any likely hazards particular to that run such as a busy road crossing. For runs of greater than six you might want to consider appointing a backmarker to head of the back of the group to ensure no one drops off the back or pops off to look at a llama and doesn't make it back to the group. Allow for a range of speeds attending your run and encourage sheepdogging where required. Sheepdogging is when faster runners run ahead to the next waypoint and then loop back to the back of the group so the group stays together (and they can show off how fast they are) and everyone keeps moving.

If you have one, talk to your backmarker and do a headcount every time you do a regroup (and when to regroup is your decision). Keep talking. It's your run and people will look to you to do it consistently. If in doubt, halt the run until everyone can safely regroup, and discuss what to do next .

What if something goes wrong? Although it's unlikely (touch wood!), we've had the odd injury over the years: knee injuries, twisted ankles or a dog gone missing. There are sometimes first aiders, GPs or vets on the runs, so ask around. Carrying a mobile phone is a good idea, coverage can't always be guaranteed in rural areas (different networks can be very different, so try someone else's phone if necessary).

Assess the injury and the impact on the group. For example, we had someone turn an ankle on top of the Mendips in cold conditions. One of the group members walked with him to a location where he could get a lift back to the pub and the other runners carried on. You don't want people standing round in the cold. Decide what you think is best for the group, not what the individual wants to do. Ask other experienced run leaders on your run for help if you need support in making a decision.

What if you lose someone? In the unlikely instance of this happening, don't panic - you need to consider the facts. Does the person know the area well? What are conditions like? When were they seen last? You will need to make a decision based on the facts: do some people go back and everyone else waits, or does the group go on and a couple of people go back to find them? As above, do ask other experienced run leaders on your run for help if you need support in making a decision. As a runner - if you are going to pop away from the group always let another runner know. If you do end up lost and suddenly can't see the group, stop and wait!

Once back at the finish location, do a final headcount to make sure everyone is back then you can sign-off for the night, have a well-deserved drink if you are ending in a pub and soak in the plaudits of your fellow runners and pick your next location for the run list.

Attending a Run

Where do you run? How long are the runs?

TACH covers a wide area, centred on Bristol, with a mix of runs in the "town" and the "country". Runs are typically within a 10-mile radius of the centre, although the pubs have been as far north as Dursley, as far east as Marshfield, as far south as Chewton Mendip, and as far west as Clevedon. The main runs are typically 6.5 to 8 miles and there is normally a short run option, typically 4 to 5 miles.

What time do you start? What time do you finish?

Unless otherwise noted on the website and weekly e-mail, runs start at 19:00 sharp. It's a good idea to try to arrive by 18:50, as parking can be a challenge at some pubs. If you are new to TACH, then it also gives you time to introduce yourself to the run leaders. Short runs normally finish by 20:15, with long runs back by around 20:30.

How much does it cost?

There is a modest annual fee to join TACH, but there is no charge for the our weekly runs.

Why do you normally meet at pubs? Is there food?

Because they sell beer and cider. Next question...

Where possible, the run leaders try to plan the route from a pub. Not all pubs will offer food. Some pubs might need pre-orders. Details are normally posted in the e-mail announcing the weekly run. Staying at the pub after the run is a great way to meet the other members and by supporting the pubs they will hopefully continue to be there for our runs.

Do I need a map?

Maps are not needed on the Club runs. The run leader will have tested the route and we run as a group, sheepdogging as necessary to keep everyone together. Mapping and a mobile phone can be beneficial for safety if you are able to carry them. Our longer ClubPlus runs require you to have your own navigation as backup.

What do I need to bring?

Normal trail running kit, plus a headtorch with decent batteries when it will be dark before 9pm, is all that's needed. Hi-visibility clothing, such as a reflective vest or tabard, is encouraged in the darker months. For the feet, a decent pair of trail shoes is pretty much essential. If you are new to trail running and only have road shoes, bring your shiniest, newest shoes, rather than an old pair with worn-out soles. Most TACH members will be only too keen to engage in a pub-debate about the best shoes.

Remember that conditions out on the trail, especially on higher and more-exposed ground, can be noticeably colder, wetter and windier than in the city, so a hat or buff, gloves and a decent microfibre windproof (which is easy to carry if not needed) are a really good idea. Waterproofs are worn in the worst weather, although overtrousers are a very rare sight. Packs are not needed for our shorter Club runs- the people sporting them are normally super-keenies training for mountain marathons.

Our ClubPlus runs tend to be much longer and so you will likely need a pack to have food, drink, additional clothing, and safety kit (first aid, foil blanket, etc) with you. You need to be able to look after yourself in all the likely conditions.

Except on the balmiest of summer evenings, you are unlikely to need to carry water, but if you do, a waist-mounted bottle is much better than a held-held bottle, which can unbalance you on tricky sections. Most runners prefer to run without water and to work-up a decent thirst for the pub.

Post-run, apart from beer money, it's a good idea to have a small towel to wipe-off the inevitable mud and sweat, and to have a fleece/sweatshirt to wear as you cool down. Please respect the pubs hosting us and, as a minimum, take some clean footwear. Bear in mind that the changing facilities will often be behind a car at the side of a road, although this doesn't stop some people slipping into a full change of clothes. The most common post-run outfit is a TACH hoodie, jeans and trainers.

Can I bring my dog?

Dog-compatibility is dependent on the route (stiles, fences, livestock, local byelaws) and how well behaved your dog is. It's always best to check with the run leader in advance.

I've not run off-road in the dark before. How hard is it?

All of the runs vary, so it's difficult to define "hard". If in doubt, consider a trial night run, on a route you know very well, with a friend, before joining a TACH run. This will also shake out any headtorch problems. For your first TACH run, pick the shorter option.

I'm trying to get fit. Can I join the runs?

TACH has a broad mix of members ranging from "elites" through to slower runners, or people recovering from injury, but is primarily a club for experienced and enthusiastic trail runners. Whilst we always ensure that non-one gets left behind, it's not fair on your fellow runners if they have long periods of waiting at each regroup. If you want to start running, we'd recommend attending a beginner's course or doing some training until you can run continuously for an hour and have tried some daylight trail running.

Do I have to lead runs?

Everyone is encouraged to do their bit and to lead runs, and it is great fun introducing people to your favourite run (and pub). If you need more information, chat to the RunMeister or some recent run leaders in the pub. Someone else might be wavering about leading a run, so why not buddy-up and plan a route together?

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