



Course Planning & Design Official Measurement & Certification

DG Productions Race Director Workshop

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1. WHAT KIND OF COURSE IS RIGHT FOR YOUR EVENT?

Pick a Distance

- 5K, 8K, 10K
- Half Marathon
- Marathon
- Multiple Races

Design Your Course

- Out & Back Route
- Loop Route
- Keyhole Route
- Point to Point Route

2. COURSE PRIORITIES

- Remember simpler is better
- Keep traffic controlled or road closed at all times during the race
- **Ensure all turns are clearly marked** and/or have volunteers directing runners
- Have at least one Water/Aid stop for a 5K course (near the turnaround is best location)
 - If course is 10K or longer, water/aid stops should be approx. every 2 miles
- Mark miles or kilometers along the course
- Make course information available online
- **DISTANCE IS ACCURATE** (See below for more info about Official Course Measurement)

3. PLANNING A COURSE/OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Participant Safety First
- City Traffic or Park Permits
- Neighborhood Permission
- Police Support & Traffic Control
- Crossing Major Intersections, Bridges, Etc.
- Quality of the Road Surface
- Athlete Staging & Access at Start
- Finish Area & Post Race Logistics
- Water/Aid Stop Placement & Logistics
- Timing Company Equipment Requirements
- Sponsor Needs or Requests
- Landmarks or Scenic Areas

4. RESOURCES FOR MAPPING YOUR ROUTE

- www.usatf.org/routes
- www.mapmyrun.com
- www.runningmap.com
- Google Earth

IMPORTANT NOTE: Online mapping, car odometers, and even GPS watches, will not provide an accurate race distance. These methods are usually about 5% short due to tangents, actual vs. satellite road variations, etc. Be prepared to make adjustments. Official Course Measurement is explained in detail on the next page.



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5. OFFICIAL COURSE MEASUREMENT AND USATF CERTIFICATION

The purpose of the USATF course certification program is to produce road race courses of accurately measured distances. For any road running performance to be accepted as a record or be nationally ranked, it must be run on a USATF-certified course.

In addition, the certification program is very important to the average road racer, as well as those of exceptional speed. Most runners like to compare performances run on different courses, and such comparisons are difficult if course distances are not reliable. No one can truly establish a personal best if the course distance is not accurate.

The easiest way to have your course certified is to hire someone who is already skilled at measuring courses for USATF.

6. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CERTIFICATION & SANCTIONING?

- Certification is a USATF official acknowledgment and verification of the course distance and must be completed once every ten years or whenever the route or roadways change.
- Sanctioning is completed annually for each event as an agreement to abide by USATF rules and bylaws, afford access to USATF resources (such as liability insurance), and ensure state and national records of athlete times.

7. WHAT DO MEASUREMENT SERVICES INCLUDE AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

- Calibrated measurement of the course.
- USATF certification application paperwork.
- Mapping of the course, start, finish, and splits.
- Paint marks on the course for start, finish, & splits.
- Certificates are good for 10 years (unless route or roadway change).
- Courses are posted and available online at www.usatf.org.
- Prices depend on distance & complexity but average about \$50 per kilometer.
- A new 5K course certification will be about \$350.

8. HOW IS THE OFFICIAL MEASUREMENT DONE?

- An approved calibration counter is mounted on a bicycle wheel.
- Bicycle is ridden 4 times on a "calibration course" before and after the measurement to account for changes in temperature or barometric pressure.
- Course route is ridden twice using the shortest possible distance over the available roadway. First to mark splits, the second to collect comparative reads for accuracy. Readings must match within .008.
- Data and sketches of the Start, Finish, Splits, and Turnaround (if any), are recorded for the USATF application



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9. HOW LONG DOES THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS TAKE?

- Most measurements are done in one day.
- Scheduling is tight in the spring and summer so book early!
- After the count, the maps are generated and the applications are completed and forwarded to the USATF Regional authority.
- Applications are reviewed for accuracy and forwarded to USATF for approval and posting to the website.
- An official course ID number is issued by USATF for reference and for sanctioning.
- Certificates are returned and forwarded to race director with supporting paperwork.
- Process can take between 2 to 4 weeks.
- Plan ahead and get your course measured and certified early!

10. ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- *USA Track & Field* - www.usatf.org
 - [Course Certifications](#)
 - [Find a Certified Course/Map](#)
 - [Known Course Measurers](#)
- *DG Productions* – www.dgroadracing.com