

"A Good Trail"

A good trail is one that everyone enjoys: the hare; the pack; everyone.

A good trail is also a battle of wits between the hare (who sets the trail as a puzzle to be solved) and the pack (who try to solve the puzzle while covering as little distance as possible).

There are no rules, but there are some traps for the unwary which we would like you to avoid.

Here are some pearls of wisdom from experienced hares you may find it useful to read before you set your first trail --- and to re-read before you set every trail thereafter.

Key Points Summary

Trailmasters should give this summary to each hare.

- Leave lots of blobs (one every 10 paces)
- Time: Run should be 1 hour plus or minus 10 minutes plus beer stop
- Beer Stop should be about 2/3 of the way through the run.
- Setting the run at a brisk walk should take not more than 2 hours.
- Distance: Basic trail of about 5km so walkers can complete the distance. Add extra distance for runners (false trails, checkbacks, rambo loops) to make it up to 8km
- Back Mark your trail at the start and at every check and change of direction.
- Have 2 or 3 holds before the beer stop.
- Website address for the complete guide is www.hugo.net/~hhh/

Watch the Time

Evening Runs

Evening runs should last for about one hour running time, plus 10 minutes for the beer stop.

Typical timings in Geneva:

Assemble before 7pm
 Circle up 7:10 (warm-up & hare s briefing)
 Move off 7:15
 Beer stop 8-ish
 Finish run by 8:30
 Circle 8:30-8:50
 On-on 9pm

Typical walking pace is 4-6 Kilometres per hour.

Typical running pace on a hash is 6-10 kilometres per hour.

Your basic circuit should therefore be about 5Km, so the wa*kers can finish in time.

This should be extended to about 8Km with rambo loops , false trails and check-backs for the benefit of the FRBs.

There should be a beer stop about 2/3 of the way through the run. Don t leave it until just before the finish we need time after the beer stop to work up another thirst.

As a rough guide, it should take the hare not more than 2 hours to set the trail, at a brisk walking pace.

Weekend Runs

For a weekend run, people expect a longer run of one and a half to two hours, so increase the distance in proportion and consider a second beer stop.

Walkers & Runners

Hashing is a social activity, so we try to keep everybody moving together at about the same average speed.

The best way to achieve this is to set the same basic trail for everybody, but make sure that the most enthusiastic runners cover a lot of extra distance, checking out false trails and check backs.

It is acceptable to use an occasional runners loop (or walkers shortcut), but try to avoid thinking of two separate groups. We come in all speeds from a slow walk to a fast run.

Back-Marking

The hare **MUST** mark the true trail at the start, after each hold and at each check and check-back, if the FRBs have not already done so (we call this back-marking). The hare should therefore carry something with which to do this (flour, chalk &). This helps anyone who started late, went for a pee or got lost checking out a false trail, to catch up with the pack.

Holds

Holds have two main functions:

- To keep the pack together, by holding back the FRBs until the slower ones catch up.
- To make sure we have not lost anyone on emerging from difficult terrain (woods, river crossings, back alleys, bars).

It is good to have 2-3 holds before the beer stop (most Geneva hashers find continuous running for more than 10 minutes a strain). We don't usually have a hold after the beer stop.

Trail Marking

You may use any material that is easily seen against the background, and that will not be anti-social (poison, litter, permanent marks such as paint &). In practice ordinary white flour works well, as does plasterboard or thick chalk. See below for some special cases where you may need something different.

The basic trail mark is a blob or an arrow. Marks should be big enough to be easily identified (bigger than pigeon droppings). With flour you can bounce a flour-covered tennis ball to make a neat round blob, tap a flour-filled tamper to leave a pattern or simply drop a handful of flour. With chalk make nice big arrows and keep to one colour of chalk.

Bear in mind that you know where the marks are; the pack does not. You can never have too many marks; you can easily have too few, especially if some have been erased by wind or weather, eaten by natural forces or cleaned away by human beings.

Place marks on the ground, on trees, on walls. They should be easy to see, even if you don't know in advance where they are. The first marks after a check or check-back may be partly hidden by lamp-posts, bins, trees and so on, so that the hounds need to get close to see them.

The placing of marks should be reasonably consistent, so that a hound who has seen one mark can easily find the next. For example, if you start out marking the left side of a road, continue along the left side of the road, rather than jump about from left to right and back.

Direction marks should be in a generally continuous direction (a straight line or along a road or path). Where there is a sharp change of direction, mark it with a check (a circle), an arrow or a closely-spaced series of marks leading round the corner.

It is important to make plenty of marks. A rule of thumb is that the pack should be able to see one mark from the next. At night, away from streetlights, this may mean a mark every 10 paces (a pace is left-right as you walk along laying the trail). For a daytime hash on roads you could space out to 20-50 paces. Across country you can't have too many.

Make an arrow from time to time to indicate the direction of travel, so that hounds don't run the trail the wrong way. It is particularly important to mark the out trail and the in trail within about 100 metres of the start / finish point so that latecomers don't set off in the wrong direction.

Different hashes have different conventions for marking checks, holds, false trails and so on. When setting trails in Geneva it is a good idea to use the Geneva Convention (now where did I hear that name before) since most of the pack will understand your trail. The Geneva Convention is shown in the handy reference sheet at the end.

If you want to do something different, that's fine, as long as you explain it to everyone at the start.

Trail Marking Problems

Long Grass

Flour is useless in long grass. Even if you can see the mark when you first lay it, the slightest wind or rain will erase it. There are a number of things you can do - mix and match to ensure that the trail is clear:

- Big arrow before the grass to show where to pick up the trail at the far side (this is a good general-purpose solution for crossing difficult terrain such as rivers, deep mud, busy roads &).
- Mark vertical surfaces such as fence posts, trees.
- Mark patches of bare earth such as molehills.
- Use strips of bio-degradable material (for example toilet paper) tied to the top of grass stems. Keep to a consistent colour, and warn the pack at the briefing.

Woods

People can very easily lose the trail in woods, so it is vital to have plenty of marks. What happens is someone checks out a false trail, hears on-on and cuts through the trees towards the sound. It is then VERY easy to run right across the trail without ever seeing a mark. Mark on trees every few metres, so that you can always see two marks ahead or behind. If following a clear trail, you can also mark the ground, but be aware that marks will disappear very quickly:

- Slugs eat flour and a bunch of slugs can shift a mark amazingly quickly.
- Birds and other hungry creatures also appreciate a free meal.
- Horses, trail bikes and people tread the marks into the ground.
- The dreaded mark-sucking shiggy.

Weather

Light rain or even light snow will leave the trail still visible.

Heavy rain, high winds or more than a couple of centimetres of snow will make the trail unusable, so if this sort of weather is forecast, there is no point in laying the trail the day before.

Possible solutions include:

- Walk or cycle round the trail and work out where you will go, then lay the trail a couple of hours before the run. Two experienced hashers can lay a trail in about one hour.
- Lay a live hare trail, starting 10 minutes before the pack (see below).
- Mark on vertical surfaces so your trail gets some protection.
- Place marks on the ground in protected corners, and under the overhang of bushes, trees, roofs... They still need to be visible though.

Live Hare

Usually, the hare will lay the trail before the run, and then the hare runs with the pack. As an alternative, the hare can run live ahead of the pack. The hare lays a trail as he or she runs, and the pack tries to catch the hare. This calls for some special measures.

- Live hares usually run in pairs, who work together to lay the trail.
- The live hares start before the pack. Traditionally this is 10 minutes for a 1-hour run, but can be longer if a hare is inexperienced or not a strong runner.
- If the hares make it as far as the beer stop, they get another 10-minute start.
- The hares should use chalk (or a piece of plasterboard used as chalk) rather than flour it is lighter to carry and quicker to use.
- The hares must lay a clear trail, using checks and check-backs to slow the pack. They should not use holds to make the front-runners wait for slower members of the pack, unless they are caught (see below).
- The hares should keep it simple and avoid looping back close to the trail they have already laid the pack may see them, at which point they will leave the trail and chase by sight!

If some hounds catch a hare, this must not be the end of the trail there is still the rest of the pack to guide back to the start point. The hare who is caught should mark a Hold, to make the next hounds wait for the rest of the pack, then the hounds who have caught up join the hare to continue laying the trail.

Street Cleaners

In Switzerland trail marks on the pavement get swept up remarkably quickly, particularly in the centre of Geneva. Try to combat this by:

- Lots of marks.
- Place marks where machinery can't easily reach them, such as against the wall alongside a drainpipe.
- Place marks on the boundary between two properties, so the sweepers can't decide who is responsible.
- Mark vertical surfaces.
- Use chalk arrows rather than flour.
- If possible run or cycle round the trail just before the hash and repair any serious damage.

Short circuits

It is a disaster if some or all of the pack cut across from the out-trail to the in-trail and miss most of the run (not to mention the beer stop). The ideal trail is a nice fat shape such as a circle or square, so that there is no danger of hounds accidentally finding the wrong part of the trail. In practice, you will often have to compromise and have parts of the trail close to each other. To minimise the risk of short-circuit:

- Mark the out-trail very clearly. Hounds who can see the next couple of marks ahead stay on the trail.
- If your trail turns a corner, mark it very clearly with one or more big arrows.
- Avoid checks while the trails are close together. If you must have a check, put a very clear F (false trail) on any direction which could lead to a short-circuit.

One special case of the short-circuit is a figure-of-eight trail. It can be done but you have to be very careful. Mark the out-trail very clearly for a hundred metres or so each side of the crossing, and have no checks. On the in-trail make no marks within sight of the out-trail. Treat the out-trail as an obstacle to be crossed and use a big arrow to show where to pick up the trail on the far side.

Previous Trail

Sometimes there are two or more hashes in succession in the same area, and by Murphy's Law, the marks of the previous hashes will still be clearly visible. What you need to do is mark the new trail with a different kind of mark, for example:

- Coloured chalk instead of flour.
- Coloured flour (you can buy small packs of intense colour from builders merchants which will colour several kilos of flour).

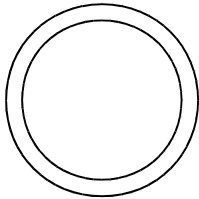
Beer

There should be a beer stop.

The beer stop is a traditional part of the hash and an opportunity to socialize. It should come half to two-thirds through the run (after about 40 minutes for a 1-hour run) so that there is time to work up another thirst before the circle.

You should continue to use false trails and check-backs after the beer stop, so your faster runners arrive at the end about the same time as the slower people.

Appendix 1: The Geneva Convention



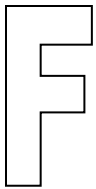
A Check: Mark a circle with flour or chalk where it is impossible for the pack to miss. Any size between a foot and a stride.

On arriving, call Checkpoint

From this point there can be one, two or many trails leading off, only one of which is a true trail.

Every trail except the true trail must be terminated by a false trail mark.

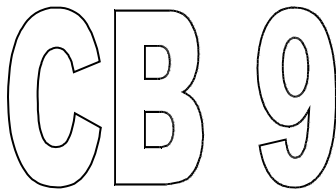
In the interests of keeping the pack together, the false trails should be reasonably short, say 50-100 paces. There is no limit to the number of blobs before a False Trail mark.



A False Trail: Mark a big F where an approaching hound can't miss it, but won't see it until he or she gets close.

This means, Return to the last check .

On seeing it, call False Trail .



A Check-Back:

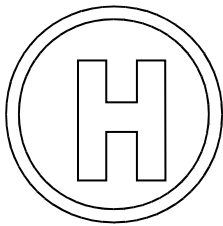
This one means, Count back 9 marks (blobs or arrows) and look sideways for the true trail .

On seeing it, call Check Back Nine

The number can be anything from 1-99, but anything above 10 is likely to result in severe down-downs for the hare.

A CB with no number means Go back until you see a likely route

The first mark you find should be the true trail, whether or not there is a number.



A hold: Mark a check with an H in the middle.

This means, Wait until every member of the pack has arrived, then check for the true trail .

On arriving, call Hash Hold

Variations:

S in the middle: Song stop, so sing until everyone arrives.

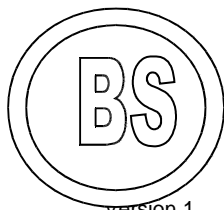
V in the middle: View stop. Enjoy the view.



Beer Near: Mark BN to encourage the pack as they approach the beer stop.

This sign should be no more than half a kilometre from the beer stop!

Call Beer near



Beer Stop: Mark BS in a circle alongside the beer car or outside the bar or house where the beer is to be found. Make it BIG and obvious so not even a hasher can miss it.

Call Beer Stop

ON IN

On In: Mark ON IN near the end, where hashers should be able to find their own way back. No more than half a kilometre from the end. You can continue with trail marks to the end, but there should be no false trails or check-backs.

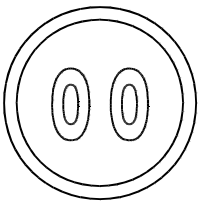
Call On in

NI NO

You are running the trail backwards!

Checkpoint Variations

You are welcome to invent further variations, as long as you explain them to the pack before the hash.

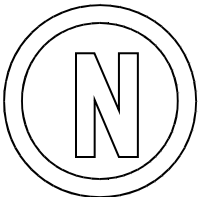


Ladies Check: Mark a check with two circles inside it.

Means Hold until one or more ladies arrive, then let them find the true trail

Call Boob Check

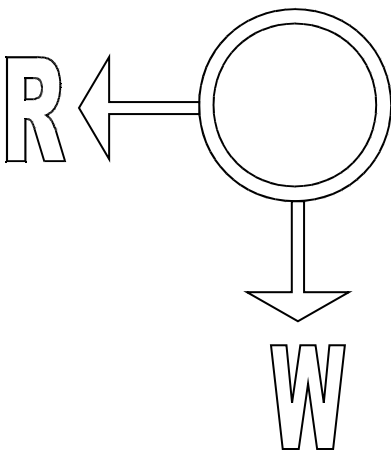
Ladies, I'm sure you didn't miss the sexist assumption that the men will arrive first. It's up to you to prove us wrong.



Naughty Check: Mark a check with an N inside.

Means Each person to arrive must bend over and wait until the next person slaps him or her on the bottom, before moving on.

Call Naughty Check and bend over.



Rambos and Wa*kers split: Mark a check with arrows for R and W when you want to send the runners and walkers on separate routes.

The R and W should each be a true trail.

Common reasons include a Rambo loop where runners get a 10-minute non-stop run or a particularly challenging piece of terrain, or a Wa*ker's shortcut where those who move slowly, hash in their best clothes or spend all their energy yakking have the option of missing out a chunk of the trail.

The runner's route must be marked.

The walker's route will usually be straight along a road or path to a check or hold where it rejoins the main trail. This can be left unmarked as long as there is no possibility of the walkers getting lost.