

TRIALING

How does a club start running trials events

Initially you need to register your club with the MSA as a competitive club, to do so your club needs to have 25 members. The MSA will then supply at a modest cost a permit for each trials event you run and third party insurance for the drivers competing.

What is a trial?

A trial is a competitive event governed by the Motor Sports Association (MSA) based on your ability to drive a number of pre defined sections to the best of your ability, 4x4 trials come under a range of titles most commonly

CCV = Cross Country Vehicle

RTV = Road Taxed Vehicle

FVT = Family Vehicle Trial

TYRO = The daughter of Salmeoneus and the niece of Athamas (Also a trial for beginners and junior drivers.)

Cross Country Vehicle Trial

The serious end of trialing. Vehicles do not need to be road legal but do have to meet the clubs vehicle regulations which will have very specific requirements relating to roll cages and safety. The trial sections will be very demanding with strong possibilities of damage to the vehicle.

Road Taxed Vehicle Trials

In most clubs these are the most common sort of trial, they are open to any road legal 4x4. In the majority of clubs the vehicle regs, you are unlikely to be able to compete in an event if there is no bodywork above the bonnet line to protect you from those vicious branches or the rare but occasional roll, and elements like suitable recovery points are important. If you are a member of an ALRC club you will also find a plethora of regulations concentrating on whether your vehicle is genuinely a Land Rover. RTV trials should be set out to be challenging but non damaging in the spirit of being confident in driving the competing vehicle to the event, and being confident you will be able to drive it home again.

Family Vehicle Trial

Similar vehicle requirements to an RTV but the trial sections should be set out so that a Range Rover sport could compete and go home perhaps muddy but with its bodywork unblemished.

Tyro Trial

Similar to a family vehicle trial but designed with the absolute beginner in mind even younger non licensed drivers can compete. Tyro's have strict rules about approach, departure and side slope angles often making them tougher to set out than a ccv.

What is a trials section?

A trial section is a route defined by a number of gates (normally 12 gates) generally made from a pair of bamboo canes. The gates will be numbered in descending order with the final gate being number 1. To clear a section you need to drive without hitting a gate or stopping, although in most clubs longer wheelbase vehicles are allowed one 'shunt' where they can stop reverse then continue. Points are awarded for how many gates have been cleared. Clearing a gate being defined as getting a leading hub through an imaginary line between the gate markers without hitting the gate. So if you get a hub through the 1 gate you score a 0 if you hit the 5 gate you get a 5. At the end of the day the driver with the lowest score wins the event or his class in the event depending on how the club defines its vehicle classes, some go for long and short wheelbase classes, others divide by coil or leaf, at BHCLRC we do both.

Setting out a trial

This is not rocket science, but you generally find at club level there is always a shortage of competing members who are prepared to set out an event. Having said that I had half a

dozen people helping me at Heath and Reach. (Possibly because they heard that the lovely Laura was going to be there).

I follow the following ground rules (excuse the pun).

1. Wherever possible use the terrain rather than the marker canes as obstacles, for instance if you have a tough ascent that a lot of people will fail you don't need a tight gate at the top of it, the canes should be there to guide you around the section.
2. Try to make your sections get progressively tougher, it is very frustrating for new drivers to be getting high points on every section and just a few minutes competitive driving in a days event.
3. Start the day off with your easiest section, even if it is so easy that everyone clears it, so the drivers can get in the mood and mind frame for a good competitive day, again it is very disheartening to get 10 or more points on your first section.
4. Don't make the gates ridiculously tight, with a bit of imagination you can make a physically wide gate have a narrow driven line.
5. Leave latitude for changing weather conditions, there is no point making your sections so tough that if it rains overnight no-one will be able to drive them.
6. If you are going to have a long section, plan it so you can get two vehicles running at a time and plan how you can stop a vehicle with no competitive disadvantage if there is a hold up with the leading vehicle.

Running the trial on the day

There is nothing more satisfying than watching 15 to 20 drivers drive your sections the following day and ending up with a range of scores from single figures to 50 or more, but with all the drivers going home with big grins on their faces. With a little planning and preparation this is not too difficult to achieve.

Turn up really early on the day of your trial to give yourself plenty of time to tweak sections that might have been affected by overnight weather, no one wants to get an 11 on a section, if the start of a section has got so slippery overnight that everyone is going to get double figures change the start.

Get as many sections as possible numbered up so you are not running round like a headless chicken later in the day. Show your marshals where you can stop competitors if there is a problem on section, work out the best place to have a recovery vehicle, in short plan your day. If a competent person is standing around with nothing to do slap a fluorescent jacket on them and sign them up as a marshal.

Once everyone is through scrutineering keep the event moving, two minutes extra unnecessarily given over to walking each section adds up to a lost section at the end of the day, the more driving that your competitors can get in the happier they will be.

Keep good communication between your marshals and make sure the next driver is on the start line and is set off as soon as it is safe to do so, again 15 seconds lost at each start starting 20 vehicles over 8 sections. Is 40 minutes lost over the day another section that you made a lot of effort to set up does not get driven.

Despite all the comments above about saving time, try to let your competitors drive the whole section even if they did get their points early on, driving is what they come to do, and try to squeeze a short lunch break in, it is the most social part of the day.

Last but not least try to enjoy your trial and don't get stressed by the odd moan, you will never quite please everyone.