How To Plan A Poker Run

What Is A Poker Run

The events actually have little to do with poker, beyond using the hand rankings to score the event. You don't need to know a great deal about poker to take part, other than what beats what in the scoring - and even that should be done for participants by the organizers. Essentially a poker run is an excuse to **meet up, travel, and have a good time** at the stops (usually either five or seven) en route. The most popular poker runs thus far have been motorcycle runs, but the format has spread to boats, planes, bicycles and just about any other form of transport you can think of. There's no reason why you can't make your event a poker walk, rather than a poker run.

Participants meet at a pre-arranged point and pick up details of their route and the stops they need to make. Each participant is given a score card which will be filled in as they progress along the route. At each designated stop, the participants draw a card at random (or are dealt a card, depending on the event rules). The card drawn or dealt is recorded on each participant's score card, and the winner of the event is the participant who makes the best five-card poker hand at the end of the event. Events usually end with some entertainment at the designated "last stop" of the route, along with the awarding of the prizes. The organizers raise their funds by charging a set amount to participate.

**Poker Run Rules**

To avoid confusion and disappointment, it is important that any poker run has clear ground rules which all participants understand:

* The first thing to stress is that although this is a "run", there are no prizes for speed - it does not matter who is first to complete the course. **It is not a race.**

* The winning hand is determined by **standard poker hand rankings.** It should be clear whether five or seven cards can be used to build the winning hand, whether there are any "wild cards" allowed, and whether players are allowed to buy extra cards at any point. Some runs, for example, allow a player to replace one card in their hand by "buying" one more card at the final stop for a fixed fee.

* It needs to be clear how many decks of cards will be used, and whether the participants can draw their own cards, or whether they will be dealt a hand, or passed an envelope with a card in it. Different runs choose to deal the cards in different ways - some prefer to place single cards in envelopes which the participants then select. Some have multiple decks of cards which players can select a card from, some have a single deck which the organizers deal from at each checkpoint.
* There needs to be clear guidance on what happens if a player draws a hand that they already have. This is a situation which never occurs in "real life" poker, and it should not be allowed to happen on any poker run either. The reason is simple - poker hand rankings are based on the likelihood of each hand occurring, and if duplicate cards are allowed the probabilities of a given hand change. It becomes easier to get four of a kind if you are allowed to have two examples of the King of Hearts in your hand for example. The easiest and fairest solution is to have players re-draw any cards that are duplicates. For example, if you draw the seven of clubs and you already have the seven of clubs on your scorecard, then you must put the card back and re-draw another card.

* Each participant must have a poker score sheet/card, and this must be filled in by the organizers, not by the participant. It is unlikely that any participant in a charity event would seek to cheat but in order to ensure there are no disputes about what cards a participant actually drew there needs to be a clear, written record of each card drawn. It is the participants' responsibility to check their score sheet before leaving each checkpoint, to ensure that the card they drew is correctly recorded on their score sheet. Organizers may find it useful to use different colors on the score sheet for each checkpoint.

* A good score sheet will make it easy for both the participants and the organizers to clearly see which is the best hand. If there are large numbers of participants it can take a long time to determine the winning hand when the cards are recorded in an amateurish or casual fashion. Score sheets should be presented as rows and columns, with the rank and suits of cards clearly visible. Organizers can then count across the rows and columns in a matter of seconds to clearly see pairs, flushes, and straights as patterns on the score sheet. This greatly reduces the potential for mistakes.

By keeping to the above rules, a poker run should be a fun and enjoyable event for all concerned. Organizers should also ensure that the route of the run itself is safe, and the checkpoints are suitable establishments for large numbers of people to gather at. If your poker run involves large changes to traffic flow then you should contact your local authorities to advise them in advance of the event.

For organizers, we have put together a printer-friendly poker run score sheet which adheres to the above rules and should help your poker run go smoothly.

[Printable Poker Run Score Sheet](#)