

Welcome To Performance Rallying!

To a rally driver it's an all out, day or night race on an unknown dirt road, trying by sheer concentration to blend a high-strung, production based race car and the road into an unbeatable stage time.

To a co-driver it's the thrill of the world's greatest amusement park ride, combined with the challenge of performing with great mental accuracy under the most physically demanding conditions.

For the spectator it's a view of the most exciting and demanding of motor sports. Around the world, rallying is wildly popular, attracting huge crowds that line the roads at every event in the FIA World Rally Championship.

In a performance rally, each team consists of a driver and co-driver (navigator). The cars start at one or two-minute intervals and race at top speed against the clock over competition stages. Connecting the stages are "transits" on public roads where cars must obey the posted speed limits. The teams achieving the fastest combined times on the competition stages win. Drivers stay on existing roads, and never blaze their own trails. Stages can combine into some 100 miles in a two-day rally.

Great news for those who want to participate are rallycross events, basically autocrosses on unpaved surfaces. Entry requirements and entry fees are minimal, making them an excellent place to get started in rallying.

Who Organizes Rallies? What Types Are There?

[National Auto Sport Association](#) (NASA), [Rally America](#) and the United States Auto Club (USAC) are the sanctioning and insuring bodies for the majority of performance rallies in the United States. The California Rally Series (CRS) has regional championships in various classes

and includes events organized by these bodies.

"Stage rally" requirements for cars and trucks are a co-driver and fully prepared vehicle (roll cage, safety harnesses, etc.). Teams use a "routebook" with mileages to follow the course and usually use turn-by-turn stage or pace notes as well. They range from simple "coefficient 1" local events of less than 30 stage miles, to longer "coefficient 2" rallies with 30 miles to under 65 miles, to "coefficient 3" events with at least 65 miles of stage road. Larger rallies such as those in one of the national championships usually include 100-150 miles of stages over two days.

"Rallysprints" are coefficient 1 events that only require a driver and are often held on closed stadium courses. "Rallycross" events also require only a driver and these autocrosses-on-dirt give the other members of a rally team a chance to compete in the team car! In fact, rallycross competition allows almost any vehicle - license, insurance, and roll cage are not required!

What Are The Championships?

At the ***national*** level there are events located across the country, from snowy Michigan terrain to Southwest desert foothills, and on forest roads from Maine to Oregon. The [Rally America Championship](#) series encompasses national events. NASA sanctions the [NASA National Rally Championship](#) (NNRC) which is comprised of two Divisions, Atlantic and Pacific.

At the ***regional*** level, Rally America supports the "Bilstein Southwest RallyCup Series." NASA's local regional championship consists of the CRS rallies it sanctions.

The [Sports Car Club of America](#) (SCCA) sanctions both national and divisional level rallycrosses culminating in its annual RallyCross National Championship event.

The California Rally Series, formed in 1975, has three types of regional-level championships based on events in or near California. The "CRS Rally Championship" consists of pure stage rally events, for fully prepared cars. The "CRS Rallysprint Championship" (held in years where

there are enough ralliesprints) consists of ralliesprint events, also for fully prepared cars. The "CRS Rallycross Championships" include rallycross events only, for both rally prepared and street vehicles.

What Vehicles Run? In What Classes?

For stage rallies and most ralliesprints, vehicles must be street-licensed, and meet certain minimum liability insurance limits. A wide variety of cars and trucks compete, although sports sedans tend to dominate.

[Rally America](#) recognizes six classes. B-Spec Class cars are specific two-wheel drive (normally aspirated) models and conform very closely to stock specifications. Super Production cars are turbocharged and four-wheel drive, but allow certain modifications. In contrast, the four "open" classes allow extensive modifications. There are two open classes for two-wheel drive: Group 2, for smaller engines (normally aspirated), and Group 5, for bigger engines up to 5100 cc adjusted displacement. Open Light is a class for normally aspirated four-wheel drive cars. The fastest class is Open Class, where turbocharged four-wheel drive cars predominate (5100 cc limit).

The [NNRC](#) recognizes two classes. The NNRC All Wheel Drive (AWD) class includes all four-wheel drive vehicles. The NNRC Two Wheel Drive (2WD) class contains all two-wheel drive vehicles.

California Rally Series classes overlap with the classes above since CRS points are earned at events sanctioned by both USAC and NASA. However, there are some important differences, especially in the "stock" class. The three "open" classes in CRS ([CRS Open](#), [CRS-2](#) and [CRS Open Lite](#)) have few limitations and are similar to the open classes in the RA and NASA rules.

CRS also has a "stock" class which restricts vehicle preparation thereby limiting the cost of vehicle preparation. [Performance Stock Class](#) is self-policing and self-governing. Performance Stock Class requires cars to be two-wheel drive, with normally aspirated four cylinder engines and a maximum value of \$4000.

In the CRS Rallycross Championship, two [Rally car classes](#) (4WD and 2WD, with rally tires) are recognized. In addition there are two

["stock" car classes](#)

, for cars with limited performance modifications that, in addition, are not running rally tires. These classes are Stock 4wd and Stock 2wd. Some rallycross events may also add "custom" classes based on the local entry.

What Are The Expenses? What Are The Awards And Prize Funds?

Racing is expensive - there's no getting around it! Given that fact, it is still possible to get more seat time for your dollar behind the wheel of a rally car than in most other forms of motorsport. It's real racing, but in a car you could actually drive to work (and some people do!). You can get in a lot of "sideways time" just taking an afternoon off to go testing or practicing - something you certainly can't do in a regular "race car" (just be sure to block the practice road from civilian traffic!). And you may find that having two people on a team means two people are splitting the costs, which can be a big help. So what are the expenses?

The best way to go rallying cheaply and immediately is to buy someone else's rally car! You will pay 50 cents on the dollar for all of the modifications and you will have a ready vehicle, logbook and all, at the next event. You should seriously consider this option before deciding to go to the trouble and expense of building a car - even if it's just for your first year or two while you "learn the ropes."

To prepare a basic rally car or truck yourself for rallies and ralliesprints, you can expect to spend a certain amount on vehicle preparation and additional money on purchasing equipment for both the car and its occupants. Basic safety equipment for the car includes a roll cage (typically \$800 to \$1500 - these come prefabricated for bolting or welding in, or can be fully custom-built). Some reinforcing of suspension parts is a good idea, for a tough suspension is essential. Expect to spend \$200 to \$800 for springs, and \$400 to \$1500 (or more) for shocks. The car will need two or more fire extinguishers (around \$50 unless you opt for a full fire system), and racing seats (begin at \$150 each). Racing harnesses, five to seven point, start at \$70 per person and must be replaced or rewired every two years to meet safety requirements. A hundredths-reading odometer can often be bought used for \$200 or less; new models usually run \$250 - \$500.

A top-end navigator light costs around \$40 although cheaper substitutes can be found. Driving lights are another item you may be able to find used. New driving lights start at around \$100 each and may require special wiring or prefabricated harnesses (\$40-\$80 for two lights, typically).

Two other items generally considered indispensable are a skid plate or plates, which may be fabricated for \$80 to \$150, and rally tires, which generally cost at least \$130 each. You may need to upgrade wheels if you are bending or breaking them. There are a variety of small items that need to be added to your car as well (tool box, battery box, tire tie-down method, D.O.T. triangles, etc) - but these can cost a little or a lot depending on your ingenuity and "connections" with other rallyists!

These are the basic items to build a beginner car; you then may choose to add performance modifications such as computer chips or other engine upgrades, a limited slip differential, brake bias control, etc. depending on what is allowed in your class.

Sometimes you can find used equipment for driver and co-driver as well - or borrow these items until you can afford them. Helmets have certain certification requirements shown by their label and start at about \$180. Driving suits start at \$90 and run the gamut from a plain color to completely custom designed, and from treated cotton single-layer suits requiring fire-retardant underwear, to double or triple layer in various materials. Again, certification labels show the capabilities of these suits in protecting you from fire. You may choose to add driving gloves and shoes and other personal equipment, although they are not required. Head and neck restraints such as HANS devices are required and start at about \$700. It is important to check the current certification requirements for the sanctioning bodies.

Entry fees generally run from \$30 to \$50 for rallycross events. Coefficient 1 rallies and ralliesprints may cost \$200 to \$400. Coefficient 2 and 3 rally entry fees range from \$275 to \$600. [NASA](#) events require an annual membership (\$45) and a rally license (\$50). [Rally America](#) regional events do not require an annual membership, but do require a Rally License (\$150). [CRS membership](#) (\$30) is not required at events unless you wish to earn CRS championship points.

Other expenses you must anticipate include racing gas for higher performance engines, and possibly a bit higher insurance fees to meet liability minimums for both the rally car and designated service vehicle. Most rallyists choose to buy or borrow a trailer to tow their car to

events. Motels and food are part of a rally weekend's expenses, and can vary widely according to your budget and tastes.

After adding up these expenses, can you expect to cover them by winning money or getting sponsors?

The simple answer is: NO! Very few rallies have any money left in their budgets for prize funds, as they try to keep entry fees as low as possible. You can expect a trophy to the top third of the starters of any CRS rally in each class, however. In addition, the year-end Awards Banquet presents up to five of the top finishers in each class with top-quality photo award plaques for the Rally and Rallycross Championships. The Rallysprint winners are also honored if that championship takes place in a given year. There are several other year-end awards given, including Rookie of the Year, Outstanding Worker, and Rallycross Supporter.

Sponsors are difficult to obtain, but not impossible. The best chance for sponsorship is in your own community. You may find businesses that are willing to give you services, such as tire changing and balancing, in trade for placing their name on the side of your car. While many rallyists manage to find a bit more sponsorship, even some cash, it is important not to enter the sport with this expectation (alas, this isn't Britain or Europe in that respect!). Better to plan your rally season within your budget and run what you can afford. Any prize money or sponsor help will get you to more events or allow you to move up to the next level.

How Do I Get Involved?

Rallycross is the easiest way to get involved as a driver. Many people are happy to make a rallycross championship their ultimate goal as it fits their time and budget better than full-scale rallying.

Often prospective rallyists get into the sport by volunteering to help at a rally as a control worker. The advantage of this is that you gain an understanding of the timing system, get to know the organizers and competitors, and may find a rally car or bike for sale sooner. You will also begin to appreciate what works and what doesn't in car and bike preparation, and may even learn from others' mistakes in driving/riding and co-driving!

Watch for the rally schools held several times a year. They cover all aspects of the sport. Most even give you hands-on driving or co-driving experience and help you move out of the novice category. Plus, they're a lot of fun!

A beginning point for many drivers, surprising as it may seem, is co-driving. Although it's not easy, it is worth learning at a rally school or by running with an experienced driver who gives you pointers. Especially if you run with a fast driver, you will be far better prepared when it's your turn to drive. Rally driving techniques are unlike those in other motorsports. Co-driving is also a cheaper way to get into competition!

Of course, nearly half the competitors in the sport are co-drivers by choice! They enjoy the challenges of "the hot seat" and the fact that they can rally much more frequently than driver/car-owners. A good co-driver will be sought after and can move up to national-level competition more easily than a driver.

Before you tackle working, driving or co-driving, you may also choose to volunteer to help on a team's service crew. This is an excellent way to get to various events and learn about the sport.

It is important to develop friends and mentors in rallying. The great news is: rallyists are extraordinarily helpful to each other and especially to newcomers. They are truly "impassioned enthusiasts" eager to share the excitement and rewards of their sport, and you will have no trouble getting information whenever you need it. Check the list of CRS organizers on the calendar and the CRS officers in the back of this rulebook for a starting point. You will also find a lot of helpful information on the web - events have their own websites - or you can go to one of the excellent general rally websites. These include:

- [California Rally Series](#)
- [Special Stage](#)
- [Rally Racing News](#)

So make your plans and join the fun! Good luck in your rally career!