



The Fell Runners Association: Rule changes for 2021

This document covers the most significant rule changes for FRA events to come into effect from 1st January 2021. Minor amendments and structural changes, technical points and clarifications are not all included. A full set of changes is available from the FRA General Secretary on request.

Note that the 'FRA Rules for Competition' were previously published in the same document as the 'FRA Requirements for Race Organisers'. They are now in a separate document, since they must be read by runners as well as Race Organisers.

There is a new document for 2021 called 'FRA Race Licensing – A Guide for ROs' which summarises the FRA's policy on registering and licensing races. This guide is reproduced at the end of this document.

FRA Principles of Fell Running

Principle	New text	Explanation
Self-sufficiency and self-navigation	"Self-sufficiency and self-navigation (without the assistance of technologies such as GPS) are central to the ethos of fell running and especially fell racing."	These key principles have previously been unwritten. As other disciplines (e.g. trail running) develop and technology moves on, the FRA wishes to ensure that the essential characteristics of fell running are maintained and protected.
Non-commercialism	"Fell running is a non-commercial sport. Races should be run on a not-for-profit or charity/"good cause" basis."	The majority of the FRA calendar already abides by this principle. We are now making it explicit to protect against the risk of monetisation of fell races and a shift from the core values of the sport. See also the note on our race licensing policy.

FRA Rules for Competition

Location in rules	Relates to	Summary of change	Explanation
Intro	Remit of rules (Championship and non-Championship races)	New statement that the rules apply to all FRA races unless otherwise stated (but that ROs of non-Championship races may override certain aspects, as described).	Confusion has previously arisen over which rules apply to all FRA races and which to Championship races only.
1 (a)	Limitations for Juniors	The distance limits for Junior athletes have been moved into this table.	This reduces duplication across our documents and also reflects the fact that these rules are in the UK Athletics Rules of Competition.

Location in rules	Relates to	Summary of change	Explanation
1 (a)	Definition of “Under-23”	Under-23 is now defined as “age at end of year” for Championship races (and all other races unless otherwise stated by the RO).	All FRA Junior and Youth categories now use “age on 31 st December”, for consistency across all disciplines. Per Section 2 (Eligibility Rules), ROs of non-Championship races remain free to use their own definitions and/or add categories if they wish.
1 (a)	Juniors in mountain marathon-style events	It is now permissible for ROs to allow Juniors in paired mountain marathon-style events to be accompanied by an adult (of at least 21 years of age) other than a parent or guardian, provided that the parent/guardian has given consent. Some additional notes are provided for ROs’ guidance.	This was requested by the organiser of a mountain marathon event. It was supported by the FRA Committee, UK Athletics and the FRA’s insurers. This overrides UK Athletics rule T3 (141) S 4.
1 (b)	Advertisement of race entry fees	The race entry price listed on the website and in the FRA Handbook must be the actual (minimum) price payable by an entrant.	Small administration fees (e.g. for online entry) remain permissible; however, some races were excluding the admin fees from their race prices. This is no longer permissible where the admin fee is unavoidable.
1 (b)	Dual entry fees (FRA members / non-members)	Organisers of most Senior races may now implement dual entry fees, with lower prices for FRA members and higher prices for non-members. The maximum permissible difference is £2/3/4 for S/M/L races respectively.	This has been discussed at length with Race Organisers. See in particular the notes circulated to all ROs following January’s RO meetings and subsequent letters in May and July 2020.
1 (b)	Tiered pricing	Tiered pricing (e.g. “late entry fees”) is only permissible for O and MM events (to reflect the additional challenges in organising those events, including e.g. bespoke map production). Standard fell races (using the ABC/SML categories) may distinguish between “pre-entry” and “entry on the day” only.	Some races have been found to advertise in a heavily commercialised manner (e.g. “Only four spots left at this price!”); this is not in the spirit of fell running.
1 (b)	Priority race entry for FRA members	Race organisers may open entries earlier to FRA members. ROs of Championship races (except British Championship races) are obliged to do so (up to 80% of the race limit).	This benefit for FRA members reflects the contribution they make to supporting and funding the sport. It is also in place to allow ROs of certain events with added risks to encourage participants to be FRA members; the FRA cannot communicate with non-members, nor convey the risks in the sport or how to mitigate them.

Location in rules	Relates to	Summary of change	Explanation
1 (c)	Use of GPS	The use of GPS devices (or similar technologies) to assist with navigation or positioning in any way is now completely prohibited in <i>all</i> FRA races. This includes (but is not limited to) display of a map, fixing current position, following a “breadcrumb trail” and any “off-track” visual or audio warnings.	Self-navigation is a key principle of fell running. This has been discussed at length with ROs and runners and has received overwhelming support.
3 (v)	Disciplinary cases involving Juniors	New note stating that the FRA may take action against supervising adults, parents or guardians of Juniors who commit disciplinary offences.	There have been rare cases of parents wilfully encouraging children to cheat in Junior races. Technically the previous rules did not permit the FRA to address this deplorable behaviour through action against (e.g.) parents. We sincerely hope never to have to invoke this rule.

FRA Requirements for Runners (the “Runners’ Rules”)

Location in rules	Relates to	Summary of change	Explanation
Intro	Relevance of FRA Rules for Competition	Addition of a note that the Rules for Competition must also be read.	Some key information which runners should know is present in the FRA Rules for Competition, which were not previously referred to in the Runners’ Rules.
1 and Table 1 (Note 2)	Use of GPS	The use of GPS devices (or similar technologies) to assist with navigation or positioning in any way is now completely prohibited in <i>all</i> FRA races. This includes (but is not limited to) display of a map, fixing current position, following a “breadcrumb trail” and any “off-track” visual or audio warnings. Runners who use such a device – even momentarily for repositioning – must retire and declare themselves non-competitive to the Race Organiser.	See under ‘Rules for Competition’ above. There is also a safety angle, which is that overreliance on GPS is dangerous and we do not wish to encourage this in fell running. Additionally, getting lost in a race should not (in itself) be considered an emergency: it is part and parcel of fell running, and runners should possess sufficient mountain skills and awareness to address the situation without external assistance. However, runners who are seriously and irrecoverably lost may retire and use a GPS device to assist in returning to race registration.
1	Prohibited equipment	New note that runners must comply with any race-specific rules regarding prohibited equipment.	ROs are free to ban, for example, walking poles or headphones in their races, and runners must comply with this.

Location in rules	Relates to	Summary of change	Explanation
8	“Absolute no-nos” of fell running	Two additions to the “absolute no-nos” of fell running: (i) using someone else’s FRA number or membership card; (ii) using GPS (or equivalent) for navigation or fixing position.	Part (i) applies mainly to races which allow priority entry to FRA members and/or apply dual entry prices, with entry fees being lower for FRA members. Part (ii) has been added because this is a difficult rule to “police”; however, it is deliberate cheating and so transgressions will be treated very seriously.
Table 1 (Note 3)	Map and compass types	Clarification that maps and compasses must be physical (not electronic), and that the use of electronic compasses is prohibited.	This aligns with the rules above on the use of GPS. Electronic compasses provide additional benefits for following bearings compared with traditional-type compasses and are therefore not permitted, even if a physical compass is also carried.

FRA Requirements for Race Organisers

Location in rules	Relates to	Summary of change	Explanation
Intro	References to other documents	Addition of a note that the FRA Rules for Competition and the FRA’s guidance documents for ROs (Senior and Junior) should also be read.	The FRA Rules for Competition were previously in the same document as the Requirements for ROs. They are now published separately, since they are essential for runners as well as ROs. Reference to the guidance documents has been added since some ROs were previously unaware of their existence.
1, 2 and 3	Structure	The list of requirements has been broken down into ‘Pre-race’, ‘On race day’ and ‘After the race’; the list has been re-ordered slightly.	This is to make the document more easily readable and chronological.
1 (b)	G and NG categories	The G and NG categories have been removed.	These are no longer necessary since GPS usage is now prohibited in all FRA races.

Location in rules	Relates to	Summary of change	Explanation
1 (h) and 1 (i)	Conveyance of nature of race to participants	ROs must emphasise, especially at the point of entry, that the race is run under FRA rules, that it is a <i>fell</i> race (not a trail race) and that principles such as self-sufficiency and self-navigation are paramount. The FRA logo should be displayed; for online publicity, a link to the FRA's website and rules should be conspicuous.	We have found that many runners in FRA races do not adequately understand the nature of the race; many have not even heard of the FRA. Additionally, some race websites and entry pages do not mention the FRA or even the word "fell". It is absolutely essential that ROs convey to runners the nature of the race and potential risks (i.e. what they are "letting themselves in for").
1 (j)	Race details	Race publicity must include any prohibited kit (e.g. walking poles or headphones) and (for non-Championship races) any changes to categories or eligibility requirements (e.g. special prizes).	This is intended to be a clarification rather than a change.
1 (k)	Route description	ROs must describe the route fully, including checkpoints and any special requirements (e.g. mandatory sections, uncrossable boundaries or out of bounds areas); however, electronic (GPX) traces should <i>not</i> be provided.	Although this requirement may seem obvious, there have been relatively recent instances of it not being met to an acceptable standard, in some cases costing Championship medals. It is vital that ROs provide all necessary information to allow a fair competition.
1 (k)	On-sight navigation	Maps for on-sight navigation races or legs should follow standard marking conventions and provide necessary explanatory details.	On-sight navigation was not previously covered in this document. This is important to ensure fair competition, especially since not all mountain navigators have an orienteering background.
2 (f)	Checkpoint placement and course markings	Checkpoints must be exactly where advertised; mandatory crossings must be clearly marked and any flagged sections must be easy to follow (etc).	This is all essential to ensure fair competition.
3 (b)	Provision of results	Race organisers must publish race results in a timely manner, containing a certain minimum level of detail.	Whilst almost all ROs already do this, some do not. There a number of reasons why this is a problem: (i) Runners have a reasonable expectation that the results will be available soon after the race. (ii) Some unofficial competitions (e.g. club championships) rely upon race results. (iii) Lack of results can make it difficult or impossible for the FRA to investigate protests or disciplinary matters.

Location in rules	Relates to	Summary of change	Explanation
4	Championship races	New section specific to Championship races.	Some requirements are specific to Championship races, so a dedicated section has been introduced.
4 (a)	Guaranteed entry lists	Runners on the English and British ‘guaranteed entry lists’ must be given a window of at least one week to claim their guaranteed place in Championship races.	The English and British Championships operate ‘guaranteed entry lists’ for likely Championship contenders, managed respectively by the FRA and UK Athletics. The system was trialled successfully in 2019 and is now permanent.
4 (b)	Priority entry for FRA members to English Championship races	FRA members must be given a window of at least one week to apply for entry to English Championship races, with the number of places available equivalent to 80% of the total race capacity. (This does not apply to the English race in the British Championship.)	See above – this is a member benefit of joining the FRA to reflect members’ support for the sport and ensure they have a fair opportunity to gain a place in Championship races.
6	Fell race criteria	(i) Clarification that all FRA races must contain genuine fell terrain. (ii) New note referring to the FRA’s race licensing guide for ROs <i>[see next page]</i> .	(i) This note was previously included in the ‘C Category’ column when in fact it should apply to all FRA races. (ii) The document “FRA Race Licensing – A Guide for ROs” is new for 2021. It is aimed primarily at organisers of new races or races not previously registered with the FRA, but it applies equally to existing races (with some leeway as described in the document).
6	Race categories	Addition of an explanation of the O, MM and Relay categories.	Previously these categories were not covered in our documentation, which was an unintentional omission.
Table 2	Use of GPS	GPS is now prohibited in all FRA races. A note has been added to confirm that ROs may require that competitors do not wear e.g. GPS watches even for tracking or distance display.	This applies mainly to organisers of mountain navigation events such as mountain marathons but may be applied by ROs of any FRA race. ROs may supply sealable bags (for inspection after the race or at an overnight camp) to allow competitors to record their tracks for post-race analysis.

FRA Race Registration and Licensing Policy

A guide for Race Organisers

Introduction

The FRA licenses fell races in England and the Isle of Man (and occasionally other home nations). Insurance for FRA-licensed races is provided via UK Athletics. The FRA also lists (in its Handbook and on its website) races outside England which align with the policy below and which may be of interest to FRA members.

Licensing policy

The FRA only licenses fell races which are in keeping with the FRA's "Principles of Fell Running"¹. In particular, core principles include the following:

1. **Unique character.** Key words are "fell", "runners" and "race"! The FRA does not license trail races, cross-country races, "challenge"-style events or walks.
2. **Non-commercialism.** Fell running is a non-commercial, low cost sport. Races should be run on a "break even" basis or to raise a modest amount for a stated good cause. Entry fees are expected to be priced at levels in line with what is "normal" for the sport, though the FRA recognises that all races are different and that some races have hidden costs. Guidance is available on request.
3. **Self-navigation.** The use of electronic aids (such as GPS devices) for navigation is strictly prohibited in all FRA races. Use of such devices both is contrary to the ethos of the sport and may bring seriously increased risk in cases of overreliance. ROs must make this principle clear to entrants and in particular should not provide electronic "GPX files" (or equivalent) of the route.
4. **Self-sufficiency.** Aid stations are not expected in fell races. Provision of fluids at road crossings on very dry courses may be acceptable.

Races should meet the criteria in the FRA Requirements for ROs and FRA Rules for Competition² and in particular must include **genuine fell terrain**; races entirely on trails will rarely be licensed. (It is accepted that some leeway may be afforded in certain geographical areas and for historical FRA races.)

Flagging should usually be minimised, and in particular the "open fell" parts of a fell race should be unflagged except where essential because of landowner demands or other access restrictions. (Short sections may occasionally be flagged, e.g. to guide runners into a checkpoint or to avoid a dangerous area.)

There is no charge for an FRA race licence. However, in return for a licence we ask the following of ROs:

1. Races should be organised, promoted and run in a manner commensurate with the FRA's "Principles of Fell Running"¹.
2. ROs must read and carefully adhere to the FRA's Requirements for ROs² and other supporting documentation.
3. ROs must ensure that participants are made aware, especially at the point of entry, that the race is a fell race (not a trail race) run under FRA licence. The FRA logo should be displayed with a link to the FRA's website, and the FRA's key rules and "absolute no-nos" must be highlighted to entrants. In other words, **entrants must be absolutely clear what they are "letting themselves in for"**.

Further information and guidance are available from the FRA Fixtures Secretary or General Secretary.

The Fell Runners Association
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¹ available towards the front of the FRA Handbook and on the FRA website

² available on the FRA website