

Guide to Cross Country (XC)

Hello! We are here to say something about XC an important part of the running season.

For any new or present club runners, we hope this will be helpful. The cross-country season traditionally runs from mid-October until late February and we see it as an important part of life at Striders of Croydon. We love cross-country because it's a real team effort, it's cheap, it's fun, great for strength and stamina, often leads to a bar visit after and the men have just made it to the First Division of the Men's Surrey League for the very first time!

There are various competitions, over differing distances, courses and with various entry procedures. It can be a rather confusing prospect, even for the seasoned cross-country runner. However, we're here to help. Spend a few minutes reading through this guide, and you'll be ready to get stuck into the best and most sociable running you are likely to do all year!

What is cross-country?

As the name suggests, these are off-road events, usually with several hundred competitors from various running clubs and they tend to take place at our green spaces. No need for tough mudders, it's all there in XC! There's plenty of cross-country to be found, often in lovely settings, away from the pounding of the roads.

Organised cross-country races take place most Saturday afternoons. There are various different cross-country leagues and championship races (see fixture details below). The women's races tend to be between 6 and 8km in length, whilst the men typically run between 8 and 12km. Some courses are hilly, some flat. If it rains a lot, the courses can get very muddy. But that's half the fun! Above all, cross-country is a sociable team event. No sponsors, no burning bales of hay or camouflage nets to crawl through. Just you and a few hundred others together, stampede through woods and fields. A list of regular dates and competitions is included at the end of this guide. Feel free to get the dates in your diary!

Who runs cross-country?

EVERYONE CAN! Cross-country is very much a team sport, it is not about PBs or stopwatches. It is about running alongside your fellow Striders for the joy of being part of our great club. Cross-Country is open to all adults, all ages, all abilities.

Cross-country is sociable, inclusive, and fun, so long as you don't mind getting dirty. No one at SoC should think that cross-country is beyond them. We have a proud tradition of having runners in the yellow and green club colours near the front and back end of every race, and we value them all the same. You will undoubtedly be encouraged to take part and you do not need to be selected by the club to run. It is all about representing the club and team; if you want to run, we want you on the team!

Why run cross-country?

Cross-country is an ideal way to build endurance and fitness over the autumn and winter, ideal focus for your 'off-season'. If you are training for a spring marathon, cross-country will give you a fantastic base of fitness, strength and endurance to build on. And if you just like to run socially, cross-country is the most popular mass-participation running we do. So, let's be clear: run cross-country because it's good for you and good fun.

What do I need to run cross-country?

Not much. You must wear the club vest for the cross-country races, and have appropriate footwear too. Otherwise it's pretty much up to you. If you need a club vest (everyone does!) please speak with John O'Mahony with any kit queries.

For footwear, if it's dry, your standard road shoes should get you round or you can run in trail shoes if you prefer. For the muddier, slippery conditions, spiked shoes are a worthwhile

investment at around £40-£50, often less on sale. You can change spikes according to running conditions: short 9mm for dry course, 12mm average British conditions and 15mm for mud-bath conditions. If in doubt, speak to the Spikers (Lee Flanagan or Peter Mills can advise!). Spikes are light, cheap, and you can clean them under a tap when you get home.

Apart from that, you should bring the following to races: some safety pins to attach your running number to your vest, warm clothing for before and after (there is no bag drop, so please don't bring your crown jewels!), some water, and even a small snack for afterwards. Other considerations can be a hot thermos flask and a change of footwear and some dry socks for travelling home in.

What are the various cross-country competitions all about?

Cross-country races divide into two categories: League and Championship. All races involve us competing (in a spirit of friendship and a shared passion for running) against other running clubs in the region for bragging rights!

We have a long tradition in the Surrey League for both men and women. The league holds 4 races, from October to February. These are always on a Saturday, and are usually 6km for Women and 8km for Men. Every SoC member is invited to take part in any one or all of these races. Doing one doesn't mean that you are obliged to do others, but these being the most important races of the season, as they represent a league standing; it is fantastic if you can run all four.

Championship races are one-off events each season. The main Championship races are the London Champs, Southern England Champs, and the National Champs. These last two races are the biggest, bursting with a multitude of club flags and age group races with a real buzz, often with over a thousand runners taking part; it's something really special to be a part of!

How do I enter a cross-country race?

1 – Surrey League:

How do I enter? Our XC captain needs to register you as part of the team. For this reason, please RSVP to the email inviting you to take part in each event and they will contact you with all the details required for entry. You will be assigned a race number which your XC captain will distribute at each race.

More specific details (maps, travel, parking, race times) will be confirmed closer to the race dates, so keep your eyes peeled!

How much does it cost? For SoC England Athletics (EA) registered runners, it's free! If you need EA annual membership, please contact Simon Webster. This costs **£20** for the year.

On the day, please aim to arrive at least 45 mins before the race starts. This will allow our XC Captain time to get you and themselves sorted before the race! You'll find the team underneath one of our club flags – which marks our meeting point.

2 – Championship Races:

You will need to be EA affiliated to take part in these races. The XC Captain will enter you online. The club pays but please be sure you can run on the day as these add up to a considerable cost to the team to enter.

How do the team competitions work?

If you're interested, this is how cross-country competition generally tends to work.

1 – Surrey League:

An A and a B team will score points across the leagues. For both teams, the top 10 Men and top 5 Women to finish for SoC will score on the day. This essentially means that we have 20 men and 10 women whose efforts all contribute to team scoring (A team and B team)! These runners are awarded points based on their finishing order. So, if 100 runners take part in a race, the first runner to finish scores 1 point and the last, 100 points. The points for our first 10 men (or 5 women) are added together and compared to those of other clubs in their division. Of course there are bragging rights to be had for individuals too, according to where they finish on the day,

relative to both their club mates and runners from other clubs, and there is personal silverware at stake. However, this is all of secondary importance. The main thing is taking part for the club, and enjoying it. The team with the lowest total wins on the day, and the team with the smallest running total over all four races in a season will win their division. Two Club teams get promoted and relegated between the divisions each season.

2 – Championship Races:

These races are also scored according to the finishing place of each club's runners as a team. A slight difference will be number of runners to score, which varies from race to race.

Training for cross-country

So long as you are able to run around 6-8km (women) and 8-12km (men) then you're good to go! However, if you'd like to focus your training in order to get quicker, then joining in on our Tuesday interval or track sessions are a great start.

Any questions?

Contact: Team Captain - Krzysztof at kkglide26@gmail.com

Main Cross-country fixtures (Usually Saturday- * Denotes Sunday)

September 2018

*Switchback - Our very own XC Race
Sparrows Den Relays

October 2018

Surrey League Women Round 1
Surrey League Men Round 1
East Surrey League Round 1
Surrey Masters Champs (Vets)

November 2018

Surrey League Women Round 2
Surrey League Men Round 2
London XC Champs
South of Thames Race 1
Reigate Relays

December 2017

East Surrey League 2 - Wimbledon Common
South of Thames Champs

January 2019

Surrey League Women Round 3
Surrey League Men Round 3
Southern XC Champs
Surrey XC Champs

February 2019

Surrey League Women Round 4
Surrey League Men Round 4
National Cross Country Champs

March 2019

Croydon Harriers Invitational XC Race Lloyd Park