

1. California Motor Vehicle Code - Obey the law.
2. Rallye Personnel - Do what they tell you to do.
3. Special Instructions
4. General Instructions - The ground rules for the rallye.
5. Bonus - Turn on each road named after an internationally known university.
6. Notes
7. Route Instructions
8. Left at otherwise uninstructed T
9. Go as straight as possible
10. U

Two of our teams got the pop quiz right. Another rallyeist counted the rules backwards, and still got the correct answer.

At the checkpoint, teams also receive the correct answers for the first half of the course. They can see where they're gone wrong, so hopefully they'll do better in the second half.

The darker it gets, the easier it is to miss things. But eventually, everyone makes it to the final destination - Jake's pizza parlor.

Jimmy's teammate Beth Riggs says, "We got nervous because of how fast some of the first things went. And we started to overanalyze everything. And we actually missed a couple of points because we overthought them."

Abigail has her regrets, too: "On the instructions they switched 29 with 30. I missed that, and I am kicking myself for it."

Though they didn't win, the teams we followed actually did very well. And more importantly, they all had a great time... and plan to rallye again. Christy gives her dad an A Plus.

Different rallyes are held all over the Bay Area, usually once or twice a month. For more information, log on to

<http://therallyeclub.org/>

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What Is a Car Rallye?

A Car Rallye is a car competition in which teams vie for points by deciphering clues and following directions that lead them through a specific route. The directions can be very tricky, and participants need to be very focused.

Rallyeist Adam Riggs says, "It's an odd sort of mental challenge, really. It's combining scavenger hunt and logic puzzles." His teammate Brian Underwood adds, "It feels like driving through a crossword, almost."

Car Rallyes have been going on for decades. They attract all different kinds of people... and all different kinds of cars.

"You could stick twelve people in a Volkswagen back in the seventies for five bucks, and everybody would have a great time," says Debi Farani. "Things have gotten a little bit more expensive, and we can't put so many people in a car anymore, but it's still a lot of fun."

Debi just resumed rallying after a thirty year absence. She's here with her granddaughter Juliana and her daughter Abigail, who's heard about these rallyes all her life.

Abigail recalls, "Every single anecdote was, 'And then I went to a car rallye! I went to prom, oh and then I went to a car rallye!!' And I'm like, 'Okay, I guess I gotta do this.'"

Bob and Christy Cunningham have been rallying together for several years.

Bob explains, "I just enjoy the time with my daughter, and I like the challenge."

Christy says, "I like being with him, too, but I like getting out of school and doing something else for a change."

Jimmy Lin has rounded up three of his friends to form a very cozy team. When asked if four brains are as good as two, he answers, "They're better than two. Sometimes! It depends on the brains!"

Altogether about 25 teams have gathered to test their navigational and problem-solving skills.

Rallye Club Treasurer Cris Wendt explains, "There are several types of rallyes, but in this rallye, you're gonna be given a choice when you come to a particular intersection. Do you do the A choice or the B choice? On the surface, they're both gonna seem like they're appropriate, but the reality is only one of them is the right answer."

Before the Rallye begins, Rallye Club Treasurer Cris Wendt lets me try my hand at the first part of the course, in a residential Sunnyvale neighborhood. The first choice is "left at stop or left at Yorktown." There is no stop sign at Yorktown, only a Yield sign, that happens to be red and white.

"But," says Cris, "Let's look at our definition of stop. It says, 'A red and white sign which controls your progress at an intersection.'"

There's a lot to pay attention to... and a lot to remember... such as a bonus rule that says we should turn onto any streets named for famous universities. And, sure enough, we soon find Oxford Street. It's easy to miss. In fact, when I later ride with Bob and Christy Cunningham, they drive right past it.

Meanwhile, Debi and Abigail get lost before they even reach the first clue... but soon they're back on track.

Abigail exclaims, "Oxford! Oxford! Turn, turn, turn!! Bonus! Oxford!!"

And on Jimmy's team, four brains are better.

Jimmy says, "Beth caught it and the rest of us did not."

A rallye is not a race. There is no advantage to finishing early, and most cars travel very slowly... to make sure they don't miss something.

Jimmy thinks it may not be slow enough, "You know, we're whipping through these so quickly, I'm actually worried."

Brian agrees, "Yeah. Can we go back and just do it all again? Maybe they're just trying to psyche us out with reverse reverse psychology!"

"Oh, those little devils! Oh, I'm so glad I caught it!" shouts Abigail as she finds one of the tricks in the answer sheet. "Check this out. Right here, they all go A,B,C, A,B,C, A,B,C, but on 7 it goes B,A,C! And I was just gonna sit there and mark A, but A was B. Whoah!"

Rallyes are usually full of gimmicks. Things can be out of order. Names can be spelled wrong. Left can become right... and vice versa. One instruction says, "Right at Lexington or right at Fig, sign on left." When we approach this intersection, the sign is on our right.

"So what if we make that turn here," suggests Cris. "And guess what? As we make the turn, the sign is on our left."

There's a checkpoint halfway through the course, complete with its own password, and a chance to earn more points. The checkpoint monitor gives arriving teams a pop quiz: "Without looking at your general instructions, what is the fifth rule in order of precedence?"

It turns out that the general instructions give the following order of precedence for rules: