This guide is intended to cover the main points of what is involved in the role of tail running in a group. It doesn’t cover every eventuality or the entirety of the role.

**Why be a tail runner?**

Many people find tail running a rewarding experience as it gives an opportunity to encourage and support other runners, engage in conversation and get to know other runners in a group. Many people find tail running as way of giving something back to the club and helping their fellow runners.

The role of tail runner is an important one in a group. Leaders and experienced runners will be familiar with much of the role of the tail runner. Volunteering to be a tail runner is also an excellent way to build up some of the skills that will benefit runners who might want to become a leader.

**Before the run**

Leaders will often have agreed in advance with another runner to act as tail runner. Often they will ask another leader running with the group or someone they deem an experienced runner in the group. If you are asked don’t be afraid to say yes – you will have the support of the leader and the group.

If a leader hasn’t arranged a tail runner in advance they may ask for a volunteer during the briefing. Don’t be afraid to volunteer – you will have the support of the leader and the group.

The leader will introduce the tail runner during the briefing and say that if anyone has any problems during the run to speak with the leader or the tail runner.

**During the run**

Leaders, by their job title, are often at the front of the group setting the pace, setting the route and looking out for obstacles. Because they are looking ahead so often, they cant see so much of what is happening behind them. As the tail runner you will have the entire group in front of you putting you in a better position to see what’s going on in the group.

Communicating with the leader during the run is important. So too is encouraging the runners around you especially if they are struggling. Lastly you may be called on by the leader to assist in the infrequent event that there is a problem.

**Communication with the leader**

The leader and tail should be able to see each other all of the time with the exception of running round corners. Distances between the leader and tail may vary during a run but the principle of being within sight of each other remains unless some specific arrangement is made.

The leader will look around frequently often looking for the tail runner to check things are ok at the back. If things are ok give a big thumbs up.

Leaders will call out instructions like “single left” and raise their left arm. Keep your eyes and ears open for these instructions and repeat then for the benefit of those at the rear of the group.

Keep an eye behind you for other runners, cyclists or traffic. If you see something take the initiative. For example, if another group of runners is approaching shout “single left/right” to let them past.

If there are any problems you can:

* wait until the next convenient time to talk with the leader eg at a road crossing or when they drop back to check in with you
* sprint forward to the leader
* signal to the leader
* shout “Stop” eg if someone has fallen.

If some runners are struggling for any reason it’s usually appropriate, if possible, to be discrete with the leader about any problems.

**Encouraging people**

Encouraging people at the back of a group can be an important part of tail running. This is especially the case during step up week or with a cosy sofa group. It can apply to an individual or a number of people. If you notice a number of people having a problem eg if it’s a hot summer day or the pace is to quick speak with the leader. Always remember it’s a training run not a race.

**If there is a problem**

If anyone reports a problem to you, or if you notice a problem or have a concern, let the leader know as soon as is practically possible. Remember to exercise appropriate discretion.

The leader has the responsibility to determine the course of action though this may involve discussion and agreement with the tail runner / injured person.

As a tail runner you may be asked to accompany an injured person back to the start either on foot or using the Emergency Taxi Service.

**Shadowing a leader**

If you have enjoyed the role of tail running you might want to find out what its like to lead a group. We can arrange for you to shadow a leader during a run to give you an idea of what’s involved.

If you are thinking about becoming a leader have a chat with any of the leaders. The club will support you throughout the process and all your training costs will be met by the club.