



# HOW TO APPLY THE DEFAULT ROUTE INSTRUCTIONS

PREPARED BY  
REID TRUMMEL

## INTRODUCTION

The first rule of rallying is to stay on course. The second rule of rallying is to stay on time. But staying on time is meaningless if you are not on course. Maybe you remember the old one-liner, “I may be lost, but I’m making great time!” This was undoubtedly coined by an off-course rallyist.

Therefore, as the most basic skill of rallying, staying on course must be given top priority for study and practice. And in any given rally, there will be many – *maybe hundreds* – of intersections – “turn opportunities” – and at each of these there is a choice of staying on-course or going off-course. In the course of a typical rally, you must make literally hundreds of correct decisions to stay on course. Most of these decisions are easy, even automatic. But some are downright tricky, and many of those are made that way intentionally by a tricky Rally Master. The Rally Master will test your knowledge of the rules – the General Instructions and the Numbered Route Instructions – many times, and if you go off-course, you expose yourself to penalty, and even if no one knows you went off-course, you still suffer a penalty because you are falling behind the correct time when you are driving around “elsewhere.” As the saying goes, “Don’t be that guy.”

The information presented here should help you to avoid being “that guy.”

## RALLY TERMINOLOGY

The course of the rally – the “Rally Route” – is dictated primarily by two things: the Numbered Route Instructions (NRIs) that you will receive shortly before the beginning of the rally, and the General Instructions (GIs) that include the Default Route Instructions (DRIs). The GIs are available well before the event, and therefore, unlike the NRIs, we can study the GIs/DRIs in advance. The DRIs are found in APPENDIX A to the GIs.

The DRIs are pretty straight-forward, and designed to be that way, but there are a couple of things worth highlighting: First, you must understand the terminology in them, and second, you must understand not just what they say, but how to apply them. That is not always so straight-forward.

Rallying has its own language, and if you are to stay on course, you will need to understand the special terminology included in the route instructions. The terms used in the DRIs and NRIs are defined in APPENDIX B to the General Instructions, and among those terms, two that

cause much confusion for beginners are ONTO and TOWARD. These are specialized terms with very specific meanings. Learning what they mean *and how to apply them* is crucial to staying on-course. First let's look at ONTO:

### **ONTO**

An instruction of ONTO is used to direct participants to follow a named or numbered road, as indicated by signs, when a sign designating the road is visible at the point where the instruction is given. If you are ONTO a road, the Rally Route follows the road you were placed ONTO, as identified by signs. If, while you are ONTO a road, an unmarked intersection is encountered or the road designation changes or ends, continue your progress using the remaining Default Route Instructions. If the named or numbered road is reencountered, return to the named or numbered road by turning ONTO (or remaining on) it. You remain ONTO a road until you execute a subsequent Numbered Route Instruction.

Hopefully that definition is clear, but what isn't said is that Rally Masters use this term as a way of adding to your workload, increasing the possibility that you will make a mistake, go off-course, and lose time. When you see the term ONTO, it is time for special vigilance.

When you encounter an instruction including the word ONTO, essentially you now have two (at least) things to do to stay on course: First, you must continue to look for signs with the name or number of the route that you have been directed ONTO (that is, the route you have been directed to stay on by use of the term ONTO), and second, you must look for the place to execute the next Numbered Route Instruction. Using the term ONTO is the Rally Master's way making you "multi-task" – of giving you more than one thing to do at a time – and the more things you have to do at one time, the more likely it is that you will make a mistake. A big part of the game of rallying is simply to avoid making mistakes. Not that it is always exactly "simple"...

It is also important to know when you are "no longer ONTO" a road or route; in other words, when does this multi-tasking status end? When placed ONTO a road, you must continue to stay on that road until you execute a subsequent NRI.

Now let's look at ONTO's sibling, TOWARD:

### **TOWARD**

An instruction of TOWARD is used to direct participants to follow a named or numbered road, or to follow the route toward a geographical feature or object, as indicated by signs. Participants will continue to follow the Rally Route using the Default Route

Instructions until encountering a sign labeled with the designated road/geographical feature/object, and then continue to follow signs TOWARD the designated road/geographical feature/object until executing a subsequent Numbered Route Instruction.

Note that this term differs from ONTO in two ways:

First, you may or may not see a sign for the road, geographical feature or object that you have been directed “toward” *at the point where you are directed toward it*. For example, an NRI may read **R @ JONES RD TOWARD SALEM**, and at the point where you execute this right turn (Jones Road), there may not be a sign saying anything about Salem. But what you must do now is keep an eye out for any signs along your route that *do* say SALEM, and then turn in the direction they indicate.

Second, while you may be directed ONTO only a road (named or numbered), you may be directed TOWARD a road, geographical feature or object, so you may see an instruction such as **L @ JONES RD TOWARD COUNTY COURTHOUSE**, or **L @ JONES RD TOWARD MT HOOD**. These instructions would not refer to a road named County Courthouse or Mt Hood; rather, they would refer to *signs indicating the route* towards the actual physical objects of a building and a mountain.

Like the term ONTO, using the term TOWARD is the Rally Master’s way of making you “multi-task” – of giving you more than one thing to do at a time. When you are TOWARD a road, geographical feature or object, you must follow signs directing you toward it, even while you continue to look for the place to execute the next following NRI.

And how do you know when you are no longer TOWARD something and can stop looking for signs for it and turning to stay TOWARD it? The answer is, the same way that you cancel a status of ONTO: when you execute a subsequent NRI.

Note that failure to understand and correctly apply the terms ONTO and TOWARD constitutes a large share of the problems encountered by rally novices. If you can grasp and practice these terms before the rally, you will be far ahead in your efforts to remain on the Rally Route, and not to be “that guy.”

## DEFAULT ROUTE INSTRUCTIONS

The Default Route Instructions (DRIs) are another frequent source of confusion and error among beginning rallyists. (Note that what we call the DRIs are called the “Main Road Rules” (MRRs) or “Order of Precedence” (OPs) in other organizations’ General Instructions.) However, understanding and correctly executing the DRIs is every bit as important to staying on course as understanding and correctly executing the Numbered Route Instructions (NRIs).

In fact, in a real sense it is even more important to understand the DRIs because you will execute them many, many more times than you will execute NRIs. This is because at every intersection with a paved, public, through road (a rally-legal road) along your route, you have the option to turn. Therefore, at every one of these intersections or “turn opportunities,” you must make a conscious decision whether or not to turn, and it is the DRIs that tell you where, and in which direction, to turn, or whether to proceed straight ahead. These are the DRIs:

At any turn possibility (intersection) for which there is no Numbered Route Instruction, competitors are to proceed via:

### **1. ONTO / TOWARD**

The single route (named or numbered road) that they have been directed ONTO, or the single route that takes them TOWARD a route, geographical feature or other object that they have been directed TOWARD. See also ONTO and TOWARD in APPENDIX B.

### **2. PROTECTION**

The single route without a STOP or YIELD sign on it at the intersection.

### **3. CENTERLINE**

The single route with a painted centerline.

### **4. STRAIGHTEST**

The straightest route.

The DRIs consist of a list of four instructions. At each intersection with a paved, public, through road along your route, you will apply these instructions, in ascending numerical order, until you arrive at the first one that indicates *a single correct route*. The best way to grasp what this means is by use of examples, and several follow on succeeding pages. However, the important points to emphasize are these: (1) you must apply the DRIs at every intersection – every turn opportunity along your route – at which the next unexecuted NRI cannot be executed; (2) you must apply the DRIs, in order, until arriving at the first one that indicates a *single correct route* leaving the intersection; and (3) you must apply the DRIs one at a time, individually, and when arriving at the first one that indicates a single correct route leaving the intersection, you stop applying them and turn (or continue without turning) as instructed.

It is natural to be a bit confused by this. Almost all beginning rallyists are. But by studying the attached examples, by asking questions of experienced rallyists, and by practice, they will soon fall into place and seem natural.

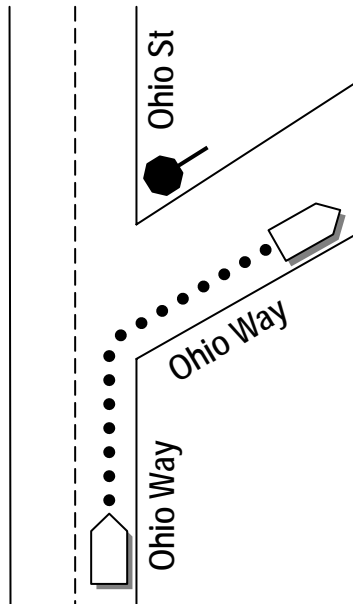
Study, inquiry, and practice. That's the formula. Please review this material, don't be afraid to ask questions, and then run some rallies. There is no teacher like experience!

*You may wish to clip the list below and tape it to your dashboard or clipboard*

---

1. ONTO / TOWARD.
2. PROTECTION.
3. CENTERLINE.
4. STRAIGHTEST.

# I. ONTO / TOWARD.

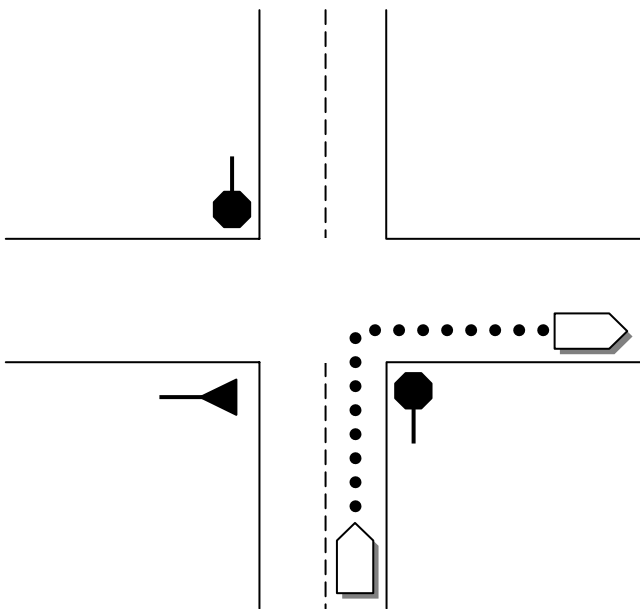


Approaching this intersection, at which, we will say, the next unexecuted Numbered Route Instruction (NRI) cannot be executed, the rallyists realize that they must exercise the Default Route Instructions (DRI) to determine the correct route. For the purposes of this example, we will say that they had been directed ONTO Ohio Way before they approached this intersection.

Exercising the DRIs, the rallyists first note DRI#1, which states that they continue on the route that they have been directed ONTO or TOWARD. Since only one qualifying route leaves the intersection (remember, do not consider the route upon which you approach the intersection), they will turn right to remain on ("ONTO") Ohio Way.

Note that under rally conditions where you are trying to maintain an assigned speed and avoid losing time, it would be easy to go straight through this intersection, assuming that Ohio Way continued straight through. This highlights the importance of carefully reading all rally-legal signs, *especially* when you are in a status of ONTO or TOWARD.

# 2. PROTECTION.

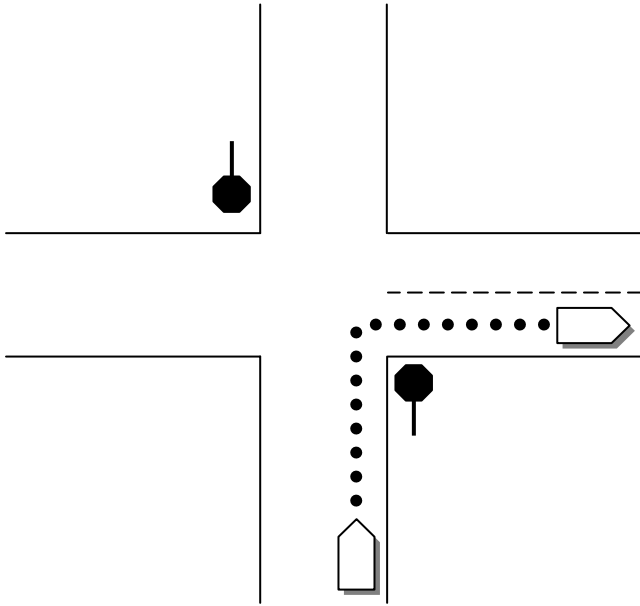


Approaching this intersection, at which, we will say, the next unexecuted Numbered Route Instruction (NRI) cannot be executed, the rallyists realize that they must exercise the Default Route Instructions (DRI) to determine the correct route. For the purposes of this example, we will say that they are not currently ONTO or TOWARD anything.

Exercising the DRIs, the rallyists note that the second DRI is "Protection," and so they look for a single route that benefits from a right-of-way over the other routes due to the presence of STOP signs and/or YIELD signs controlling traffic at the intersection. They note that traffic approaching from straight ahead is controlled by a STOP sign, and they note that traffic approaching from the left is controlled by a YIELD sign (you must be able to identify these signs from the rear, based upon their distinctive shapes).

Therefore, only the traffic approaching from the right is not controlled by a STOP or YIELD sign, making it the single "protected route," and the rallyists must turn right at this intersection to remain on course.

### 3. CENTERLINE.

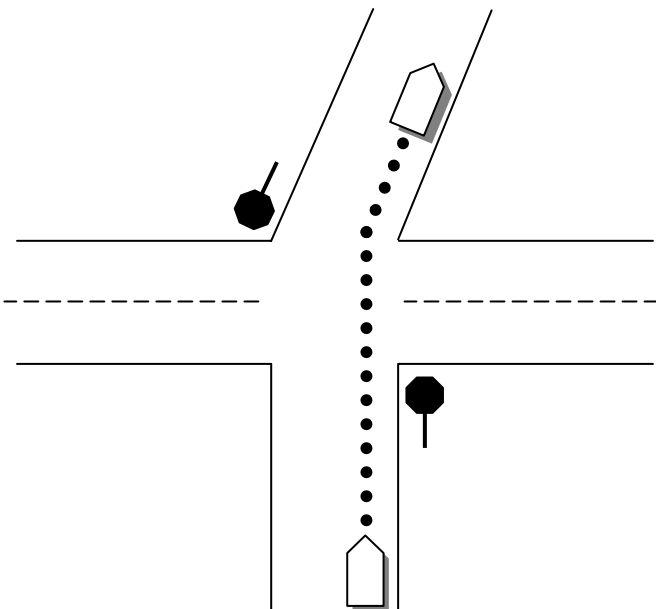


Approaching this intersection, at which, we will say, the next unexecuted Numbered Route Instruction (NRI) cannot be executed, the rallyists realize that they must exercise the Default Route Instructions (DRI) to determine the correct route. For the purposes of this example, we will say that they are not currently ONTO or TOWARD anything.

Exercising the DRIs, the rallyists note that after ONTO / TOWARD, the next DRI is "Protection." However, there are two routes leaving this intersection that are "protected." Both the route to the left and the route to the right lack a STOP or YIELD sign, meaning that considering "protection" does not reveal a single "protected route" leaving the intersection.

Therefore, the rallyists go to the next DRI, "Centerline." In this case, there is a single route leaving the intersection with a painted centerline. It is the route to the right, and so the correct action at this intersection is a right turn.

### 4. STRAIGHTEST.



Approaching this intersection, at which, we will say, the next unexecuted Numbered Route Instruction (NRI) cannot be executed, the rallyists realize that they must exercise the Default Route Instructions (DRI) to determine the correct route. For the purposes of this example, we will say that they are not currently ONTO or TOWARD anything.

They first note that two routes leaving the intersection are "protected": neither the route to the left nor the right has a STOP or YIELD sign, and therefore considering "protection" does not reveal a single protected route leaving the intersection.

The rallyists then note Centerline. But again, there are two routes leaving the intersection that have a painted centerline, and so considering "centerline" does not reveal a single qualifying route leaving the intersection.

Therefore the rallyists then consider the next (and final) DRI, "Straightest." There is a route leaving the intersection that is clearly more straight than the others, and that is the correct route to take at this intersection.