

So You Want to Put On a 5K?

A Simple Starting Point for Race Directors

Planning a 5K doesn't have to feel like solving a puzzle with missing pieces. Think of it more like building a race in layers: **location** → **experience** → **logistics** → **growth**.

This guide gives you a clear place to start.

Start With the Purpose

Before permits, shirts, or sponsors... answer this:

- Is this a **fundraiser** or community event?
- Who are you trying to attract? (families, runners, walkers, kids)

Most first-year 5Ks succeed because they are:

- Simple
- Affordable
- Community-focused

💡 A 5K + optional 1 Mile is the sweet spot for participation and accessibility.

Pick the Right Location

Your venue decision shapes everything.

Road vs. Trail

- **Road:** Easier to follow, more beginner-friendly, but requires permits and traffic control
- **Trail:** Lower cost, more scenic, but requires strong course marking and can limit beginners

Public vs. Private

- **Public parks:** Lower cost, more approvals
- **Private venues:** Faster setup, more flexibility, usually higher cost

Must-Have Basics

- Parking plan
- Restrooms
- Water access
- Start/finish space

If runners can't park easily or find the start line... you've already lost points.

Choose Your Date Wisely

Avoid:

- Big local events
- School conflicts
- Major sports weekends

A great race on a bad date will struggle.
A decent race on a clear weekend will thrive.

Keep Pricing Simple

For most first-year 5Ks:

- Early: ~\$25
- Late: ~\$35
- Shirt: optional add-on (+\$10)

This keeps your event accessible while still generating revenue.

- 💡 Lower entry = higher participation
 - 💡 Add-ons = where you protect margins
-

Decide What Runners Get

You don't need to go overboard.

Keep it lean:

- Finish line snacks + water
- Music / atmosphere
- Simple awards (Overall + a few age groups)

Year 1 isn't about perfection... it's about **execution and experience**.

Build a Basic Budget

Think in two buckets:

Fixed Costs

- Permits / venue
- Insurance

- Rentals

Variable Costs

- Food (per runner)
- Shirts (if included)
- Timing (if used)

Typical ranges:

- Small 5K can cost anywhere from **\$500 to \$3,000+** depending on setup



Rule of thumb:

More simplicity = more profit (especially for fundraisers)

Get People to Show Up

You don't need a massive marketing plan... just consistency.

Focus on:

- Email (3 touchpoints: launch, mid, race week)
- Facebook Event + weekly posts
- Local run groups, schools, churches

And most importantly...

👉 Your registration page should:

- Be mobile-friendly
- Include a donation option
- Clearly explain the cause

Your registration platform does more heavy lifting than anything else.

Timing or No Timing?

Here's the reality:

- Untimed events are easier to run
- Timed events attract more runners

In today's race landscape, **timing = credibility**

Options:

- DIY (small races under ~75 participants)
 - Professional timing (best for growth)
-

Build a Small but Mighty Volunteer Team

You don't need an army.

Typical 5K setup:

- 2–3 check-in volunteers
- 2–4 course marshals
- 2 at start/finish
- 1–2 floaters / sweepers

The right people in the right spots = smooth race day.

Safety & Course Basics

At minimum:

- Mark every turn clearly
- Have a basic first aid plan
- Communicate weather policy

If a runner can get lost... assume they will.

Simple Timeline

- **3 months out:** lock location + open registration
- **6 weeks out:** push marketing + confirm permits
- **2 weeks out:** finalize details + order supplies
- **Race week:** confirm volunteers + prep course
- **Race day:** show up early, stay calm, execute

Then...

👉 Post results, thank people, and start planning next year

Where We Come In

If you want support, we can help with:

- Registration setup (**FREE**)
- Marketing exposure (**FREE**)
- Race Day Preparation Consultation (**FREE**)
- Timing services

Think of us as your behind-the-scenes crew so you can focus on the big picture.