

# LAWS & SAFETY TIPS FOR OHIO'S ROAD RUNNERS

by Elizabeth Mote

*Running USA* reports that U.S. running event finishers have increased 300 percent from 1990 to 2013.<sup>1</sup> and since 1990 there has been more than a 140 percent increase in U.S. marathon finishers (224,000 vs. 541,000).<sup>2</sup> With the popularity of running and the "sweet spot" of event participation between the ages of 25 and 44, there's a good chance you or someone you know regularly runs on Ohio's roadways. But do you know the rules of the road?

It goes without saying you must obey traffic signals.<sup>11</sup> However, when traffic control signals are not in place, not in operation or aren't clearly assigning the right-of-way, drivers are only required to yield, slow down or stop for a pedestrian crossing within a crosswalk when the pedestrian is on the half of the roadway where the vehicle is traveling, or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the other side "as to be in danger."<sup>12</sup>

Although it's tempting to violate these laws to avoid curbs or waiting at intersections, consider running at a park or on a trail if you simply refuse to stop or try stretching so you're not standing still.<sup>15</sup> Plus, if you've read this, you can't say you don't know the rules.

By following these laws and safety tips, we can contribute to safer roads for Ohio drivers and runners.

**1** If you can, use the sidewalk. Runners are considered pedestrians in Ohio.<sup>3</sup> As a result, where a sidewalk is provided and "its use is practicable," it's unlawful to walk or run in the street.<sup>4</sup>

**2** If there's no sidewalk or you can't, use the shoulder. Where there's no sidewalk, you must walk or run only on a shoulder, "as far as practicable" from the roadway.<sup>5</sup>

**3** Face traffic. Where there's no sidewalk or shoulder, you must walk or run "as near as practicable" to the outside edge of the roadway, and if it's a two-way street, only on the left side, i.e. facing oncoming traffic.<sup>6</sup>

**4** Don't run on freeways. Ohio law defines a "freeway" as "a divided multi-lane highway for through traffic with all crossroads separated in grade and with full control of access."<sup>7</sup> Pedestrians are prohibited on freeways except in situations that likely don't apply to going for a run.<sup>8</sup>

**5** If there's a marked crosswalk, use it. Between adjacent intersections with traffic control signals in operation, you can't lawfully cross anywhere except in a marked crosswalk.<sup>9</sup>

**6** Drivers must exercise due care, but you don't always have the right-of-way. Although drivers must yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian on a sidewalk, at any point other than within a marked crosswalk or within an unmarked crosswalk you must yield the right of way to "all vehicles, trackless trolleys, or streetcars."<sup>10</sup>

**7** Don't dart. Don't cut across intersections. Ohio law prohibits pedestrians from suddenly leaving a curb or "other place of safety" to walk or run into the path of a vehicle which is "so close as to constitute an immediate hazard."<sup>13</sup> You're also not allowed to cross an intersection diagonally unless authorized by an official traffic control device.<sup>14</sup>



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**Endnotes**  
<sup>1</sup>2015 State of the Sport — U.S. Race Trends, July 13, 2015 [www.runningusa.org/2015-state-of-sport-us-trends?return-to=annual-reports](http://www.runningusa.org/2015-state-of-sport-us-trends?return-to=annual-reports) (last accessed 07/24/2015).  
<sup>2</sup>Running USA's Annual Marathon Report, March 23, 2014 [www.runningusa.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.details&ArticleId=332](http://www.runningusa.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.details&ArticleId=332) (last accessed 07/24/2015).  
<sup>3</sup>R.C. 4511.01(X) (pedestrian means "any natural person afoot").  
<sup>4</sup>R.C. 4511.50(A).  
<sup>5</sup>R.C. 4511.50(B).  
<sup>6</sup>R.C. 4511.50(C).  
<sup>7</sup>R.C. 4511.50(YY).  
<sup>8</sup>R.C. 4511.051.  
<sup>9</sup>R.C. 4511.48(C).  
<sup>10</sup>R.C. 4511.48(E); R.C. 4511.441; R.C. 4511.48(A).  
<sup>11</sup>R.C. 4511.12.  
<sup>12</sup>R.C. 4511.47(A).  
<sup>13</sup>R.C. 4511.46(B).  
<sup>14</sup>R.C. 4511.48(D).  
<sup>15</sup>Whether it's acceptable to run in place, run in circles or dance around at a stop light/sign is surprisingly a highly debated issue and perhaps a topic for another article or blog post.