

# MidnightRun.org

## How to do a Run

### Overview

A successful run requires an attitude of openness and sharing, but it also requires the coordination of a host of details. Here are the basics:

- **Scheduling.** Go to [www.midnightrun.org](http://www.midnightrun.org) to sign up for a run date.
  - **Food.** How to prep and how to serve. Details below.
  - **Clothing.** Sorted, sized and ready to fit. Details below.
  - **Toiletries.** Basic personal care items. Details below.
  - **Vehicles.** What to drive. Details below.
  - **Navigation.** A one-way guide to Manhattan. Details below.
  - **Distribution.** How to deliver the goods. Details below.
  - **Clean up.** Preparing for the next run. Details below.
  - **Volunteers.** Recruiting guidelines. Details below.
  - **Weather.** What to do in snow, sleet and rain. Details below.
- 

### Food

Each volunteer group is responsible for food preparation for its run. You may use the Midnight Run kitchen and containers, but you must leave them as clean as you found them. Here's what you'll need to prepare and bring:

- **Bag meals.** Between 100 and 150. These should include:
    - A **hearty sandwich**; see fuller description in our Sandwich Guide below.
    - **Fruit** – something durable like an orange or banana. Apples are okay in some meals, but hard for those with missing teeth to eat. Individual fruit cups are okay (with spoon).
    - A **hard-boiled egg** or a high protein equivalent.
    - A **juice box**.
    - A **dessert** or two. Granola bars are fine, and sweet things – such as cookies, candy bars and brownies – are much appreciated.
  - **Soup or chili.** Three to five gallons. Should be hearty and hot.
  - **Coffee or cocoa.** Three to five gallons.
  - **Bottled water.** One or two flats.
  - **Lemonade or iced tea** in warm months. Three to five gallons.
  - **Paper cups and spoons** to serve 75. Drink cup lids recommended.
  - A **ladle** for the soup.
-

## Sandwich Guide

There is a great emotional resonance in giving food to someone who needs it. It touches the giver as well as the one who is hungry. And on a Midnight Run it should be part of the message: “We care about you.”

Sometimes that message can get a little garbled. The vast majority of member groups put a lot of care into the food they distribute, but on occasion we see, or hear reports of, a bag containing an apple, one cookie, and a “charity sandwich” (consisting of one thin slice of bologna, or a meager smear of peanut butter, between two pieces of Wonder bread). Those who have lived on the streets can tell you that a really nice bag meal, made with care, sends a message of love. And a skimpy bag meal sends another message. We realize that many groups have limited finances, but we’d much rather have groups make 80 or 90 bountiful bag meals than 150 meager ones.

So here’s our guide to what makes a great sandwich:

- A **substantial sandwich** is what most sets apart a loving bag meal from a less desirable one. We realize that it’s also the most expensive item. But there’s an emotional value in getting a sandwich piled high with turkey, ham, roast beef, chicken salad or meatloaf. It truly says, “Someone is thinking of you.” Variety is nice, so we ask that at least some of the sandwiches not be bologna or peanut butter (you get a lot of those in soup kitchens).
- We realize that many of you have **sandwiches donated** by affiliated groups. Maybe the local elementary school makes sandwiches, and for refrigeration reasons can only do PB&J. In those cases you should try to double up the sandwiches, putting two in a bag (especially if you can add the PB&J to a bag with a tuna sandwich or whatever).
- **Condiments:** Mayonnaise and mustard are certainly welcome. Contrary to popular belief, commercial mayo is NOT a ticking time bomb of botulism or salmonella. It will be good long after the turkey or ham on the sandwich has spoiled. If you’re worried about that, you can always include mayo or mustard in little individual packets (available at some groceries, as well as places like Costco and Sam’s). A little lettuce goes a long way in making a sandwich special. Avoid tomato, however, as it’s too likely to make sandwich soggy.
- **Extras:** Bag decorations may seem trivial, but they have the power to brighten someone’s day. Sometimes small kids decorate the bags used for these portable meals. Some – probably most – guys might ignore the decorations. But we guarantee that someone out there will feel touched by one of those bags. And it can help if you also mark the bags with the kind of sandwich. Life on the street doesn’t have many choices, so it’s nice to be asked, “Would you like a turkey or salami sandwich?”

- **Safety:** Please do everything necessary to ensure that food is kept refrigerated as needed. Pack bags in coolers if they're going to be in car/van for a while in warm temps. We can't take any chances on this. When you have no access to a bathroom at night, there's no such thing as a "mild" case of diarrhea.
- 

### **Clothing**

Each group should supply as much of the men's seasonal clothes as it can, using the Midnight Run supplies as a supplement. All clothing should be thoroughly sorted before the night of the run – first by type and then by size. Best way to size is to staple tags of paper to the garment rather than writing on it directly. All packaging on new clothes should be removed so that there is no temptation for folks to sell what we distribute. Clothes should be arranged in open bins or boxes to ease distribution out of a crowded van in the wee hours.

We try to bring a full range of sizes on each run. But if you meet someone on the street who has an unusual request, see provisions for **Special Order Runs** below.

Here's what you should collect and sort for a typical run, with the most essential items at the top (the priority of items changes with the season; this list applies to winter runs):

- **Warm coats.** Large and extra large sizes, as even small men and women like to layer. Dark colors are preferred.
  - **Durable pants.** Again, large sizes are preferred, but sort into waste sizes between 32 and 40 and above, with inseam size marked. Blue jeans are preferred over khakis. Mostly men's sizes, but bring five or so pairs of women's pants as well.
  - **Socks.** Tube socks, rolled in pairs. White or dark.
  - **Underpants.** Jockey style. Sizes 32 through 42. Bring a few pairs of women's briefs as well.
  - **Sweaters, sweatshirts and long-sleeve shirts.** Large and extra large. Dark colors preferred. Hooded sweatshirts are especially useful.
  - **T-shirts.** Medium through extra large. Any color.
  - **Hats.** Knit and warm for winter. Baseball caps for summer.
  - **Gloves.** Ski gloves clipped in pairs or knit gloves rolled together. Dark colors.
  - **Shoes.** Sizes 9 through 12 and above. Lightly worn sneakers or athletic shoes (no spikes), soft-soled shoes and work boots are preferred.
  - **Long underwear.** Large sizes. Any color.
  - **Belts.**
  - **Backpacks.** Not essential, but coveted by folks on the street.
-

### Special Order Runs

Every Wednesday we have a Special Order Run. A small team (usually from the Bronxville Rotary) delivers orders for unusual items to three set locations. If you are out on a run and meet someone who needs:

- A suit for an interview;
- Pants larger than a 42" waist;
- Shoes bigger than a 12;
- Or other unusual requests,

you can take a Special Order (then call it in or email it to Dale).

Do not take orders for things that you merely ran out of (for example, 32" pants, boots or coats). We can only maintain the Special Order Run if it is manageable. That means restricting it to items that we do not normally have on Midnight Runs. And PLEASE do not make promises to people that the next regular run will have boots or thermals or whatever for them, unless you're going on that run and can deliver yourself.

If you take a Special Order, tell the person to go to one of these three locations on a Wednesday evening:

- 72<sup>nd</sup> & Riverside @ 8 pm;
- 57<sup>th</sup> between 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 pm; or
- 72<sup>nd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> at 9 pm.

Specify which stop they'll be at when you call in or email the order.

---

### Toiletries

Each group should put together toiletry kits in advance of the run. Collect travel sizes of the various items, and assemble into kits using gallon size zip-lock bags. Some drug stores will sell these travel size items in bulk at wholesale if you explain what you're doing. And Midnight Run has some supplies to supplement what you're missing.

If you can't assemble full kits, bring what you can. Individual items are welcomed as well, and are more appropriate for someone who is looking for just a bar of soap, or who has a beard and doesn't need the razor and shaving cream. Try to bring 40 to 60 kits, and some loose items as well.

The small size items are important, as full-size items are cumbersome to carry for people on the street. Toiletry items to bring, in order of importance:

- **Soap.**
- **Toothbrush.**
- **Toothpaste.**
- **Shampoo.**
- **Washcloth.**
- **Razor.**
- **Shaving cream.**
- **Deodorant.**
- **Lip balm** or moisturizer.
- **Feminine hygiene** products (small supply).
- **No candy!** Candy in toiletry kits (it's happened) yields soap-flavored chocolate!

## **Vehicles**

Midnight Run owns three vans, and assigns them to volunteer groups as appropriate. These vans are loaned out for the evening clean and full of gas, and should be returned CLEAN and FULL OF GAS. (This particular policy is sometimes overlooked. Hence the emphasis here.) Since there are five runs most weekend nights, Midnight Run cannot lend vans to every group.

The vans can be picked up from the parking lot of South Presbyterian Church in Dobbs Ferry anytime after 1 pm on the day of the run. Dale will coordinate with you in email the pick-up of keys. Friday groups should return vans by noon on Saturday. Saturday groups should try to avoid returning vans between 9:30 am and noon on Sunday, as that is when South Presbyterian has services. Afternoon return on Sunday is generally fine.

Did we mention that they should be returned clean and full of gas?

Please print out our Vehicle Checklist below, fill it out, and leave it on the dashboard of the van when you return it.

The three vans are:

- **Green van** – Basic Econoline model with three bench seats and cargo space through both the rear and side doors. Seating capacity is 8, though it can be rigged for 11 if you give up cargo space through the side door.
- **Red van** – High-top van with built-in shelving for easy sorting and storage of clothes. Seating capacity is 8. When loading this van, do not put anything heavy on the top two shelves in back.
- **Excursion** – The large model Ford SUV. Best vehicle for bad weather. Max seating capacity is 9. To carry a full load of cargo – all the food, for instance – you need to take out the rear bench seat, shrinking seating capacity to 6.

Other notes:

- Take **two vehicles**, if at all possible. More than that and you have difficulty navigating together through lights and city streets, and parking becomes problematic at some stops. And crowding everyone into one vehicle results in little room for cargo, and creates chaos distributing goods at the large stops.
  - **Drivers** must be over 21 and have clean driving records. See Volunteers.
-

### Vehicle Checklist

If you use a Midnight Run vehicle, you are responsible for the gas that you use. Failure to gas a borrowed vehicle means no vehicle for your next run.

Vehicle should be returned empty. If you use Midnight Run soup or coffee containers, they should be left clean in the office at 97 Main. Clothing bins should be returned to shelves. Cell phones should be left on Dale's desk unless he instructed you otherwise. Blankets & toiletries may be left in the vehicles. **DO NOT LEAVE CLOTHING YOU COULD NOT GIVE AWAY IN THE VEHICLE** unless you made specific arrangements with Dale. If you couldn't give it away, there's probably a reason; so don't try to make it someone else's responsibility.

Please fill out the attached sheet and leave it in the vehicle or on Dale's desk. If you use a vehicle and do not gas it, you will NOT be assigned a vehicle for next Run.

Name of Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Run: \_\_\_\_\_

Which Vehicle (circle one) Green Van Red Van White 4WD

Mileage at pickup \_\_\_\_\_

Gas gauge at pickup: Full 7/8 \_ 5/8 Half-tank or less

Amount of gas put in \_\_\_\_\_ (circle) Before Run | After Run

Mileage at return \_\_\_\_\_

Gas gauge at return (circle) Full 7/8 \_ 5/8 Half-tank or less

Did you clean out and empty van of clothing, containers and trash? Yes No

Any vehicle problems? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

### Navigation

If you know Manhattan like the back of your hand, then you don't need the maps we've attached here. But you still need to read this section.

- The **stop list** provided to you (in email, approximately two days before the run) is very specific. Please stick to it. That means go to each of the stops on the list in the order in which they're given. That order may not always be the most logical way to navigate the streets of Manhattan, but it is set in order to be fair to all those receiving goods on the street. (So, for instance, someone at a stop at the end of a list on Friday is the first one on a list on Saturday.)
- Regarding **timing**, we generally arrive at our first stop in the city at about 10:30 pm and continue until the food runs out (typically around 1 am). Earlier arrival is certainly possible on weekdays, but much earlier and you'll get to the stops before the street folks have settled down for the night. And after about 2 am, most of the folks are hunkered down and less interested in being woken up to try on clothes, though leaving lunches is still appropriate on late stops.
- Please obey **traffic directives** and avoid parking near private residences. See **Neighborliness** below.
- Here are a series of **maps** that can be useful for navigating the streets. We've divided the relevant regions of Manhattan into six overlapping sections. Most stop lists will be covered by one or possibly two of these maps:
  - Uptown west
  - Midtown west
  - Downtown west
  - Uptown east
  - Midtown east
  - Downtown east

Below are Directions to the Midnight Run office in Dobbs Ferry.

---

### **Directions**

Directions to the Midnight Run office at 97 Main Street in Dobbs Ferry.

From CT, or Eastern Westchester: Take Route 287 west to Route 87 south (sign to New York City). Immediately after joining 87, take exit for Saw Mill Parkway south. Take Saw Mill south to exit 17 (Ashford Avenue – Dobbs Ferry/Ardsley). Go right on Ashford one mile. Continue straight at intersection with three service stations and a church onto Route 9 south. Go one short block and turn right onto Cedar Street (opposite Stop & Shop). Go one block, then left on Main Street (by library). 97 Main is on the right side 2/3's of the way to first traffic light (past Village Hall/fire station).

From NYC: Take Westside Highway north. Becomes Henry Hudson Parkway in Bronx, and then Saw Mill Parkway in Westchester. Take exit 17 (Ashford Avenue – Dobbs Ferry/Ardsley). Go left at top of ramp onto Ashford, and follow the directions above.

Lower Westchester: Take Saw Mill Parkway north, and follow directions above.

Northern Westchester: Saw Mill Parkway south, and follow directions above.

Rockland and upstate: Take Route 87 South. Cross the Tappan Zee Bridge. About one mile after the Tappan Zee take exit for Saw Mill Parkway south, and follow directions above.

From NJ: Cross Tappan Zee Bridge and follow directions from Rockland, or cross George Washington Bridge and take 9A (Henry Hudson) north and follow directions from NYC

---

### **Distribution**

The Midnight Run goal is to establish a forum for meaningful exchange between the housed and the homeless. One element of that exchange is to deliver to people on the street what they need to survive, and to do it effectively and fairly. In that effort, we've established some guidelines for distribution of goods:

- Stick to the **stop list** in the prescribed order, as noted in **Navigation**. The stop lists are designed to give everyone on the street an equal chance at the best selection of clothes and other goods.
  - Form **teams** to organize your volunteer crew. Clothes distribution is the most intensive work, and demands the most people. Generally three people can distribute food, and two or more can handle blankets and toiletries. In order to give everyone a chance to mingle on the sidewalks, try to trade off jobs in the middle of the run.
  - Midnight Run offers the homeless poor an extremely rare opportunity to be **selective** about what they wear and what they eat. One of the joys of Midnight Run is providing that selection. So if someone on the street wants a dark-colored jacket rather than a light one, we work to accommodate that request. If you meet with requests for dress clothes or unusual sizes, see **Special Order Runs**.
  - We try to be **equitable** in our distribution of goods. Once clothing is donated to Midnight Run, it belongs to the homeless poor. It is, however, the responsibility of the volunteers to make sure that clothing is distributed equitably. In general, each person gets one of anything we have available (the exception is bag meals, where we give each person two or three, and soup and coffee, where we serve as much as anyone wants). Certain items, particularly coats and pants, are typically in short supply, and we want to make sure that as many people as possible get one of whatever they need.
  - The folks on the street should respect an **orderly distribution** of goods, particularly at the big stops, and they generally do. But if someone is being too aggressive, volunteers should ask for order and civility. If civility proves elusive, then pack up and move to the next stop.
  - Be considerate of the **privacy** and relative quiet of folks on the street (who have precious little of both). We do not wake people up by rapping on boxes. If someone is sleeping, we stand far enough away that they won't be startled and say "Midnight Run." If there's no response, we recite some of the things we have to offer. If still no response, we may leave a couple of bag meals. Some people will tell us that they don't want anything, and we should respect that.
-

### **Clean-up**

The general rule on clean-up is to leave everything cleaner than the way you found it. That rule pertains to each of the following:

- **Stops.** As cited in Neighborliness, bring garbage bags with you and clean up a stop as you prepare to leave.
  - **Vans.** In general, vans borrowed from Midnight Run should be empty (and full of gas!) when you return them. That means that clothes that weren't given away should be returned to appropriate shelves and extra bag meals should be distributed to one of the shelters (see list on website).
  - **Midnight Run Office.** If you use Midnight Run soup/coffee containers, they should be left clean in 97 Main. Clothing bins should be returned to shelves. Since we have neighbors upstairs, you should be very quiet if you return to the office after a run. If you want to dump leftover soup, do it in the toilet, not the garbage. If you want to save soup, put it in thin plastic or metal containers, and in the refrigerator.
- 
- 

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers for each run are the responsibility of the group organizer. Here are a few guidelines:

- At least two **adult leaders** must be present on a run. Those leaders can train for the role by going on at least two runs as crew. If you're interested in becoming a run leader, contact Midnight Run or check the **Schedule** and contact an appropriate member group directly.
  - **New run leaders** are generally sent out with an experienced leader the first time to make sure that things run smoothly.
  - **Groups** have anywhere from six to eighteen volunteers. The most common number is twelve, which we recommend because the participation level diminishes as the group approaches twenty, and small groups can have a difficult time handling the big stops.
  - The organizer can decide the appropriate **minimum age** for volunteers. We generally recommend high school age (fourteen) and older. There should be appropriate adult supervision for groups that include kids under eighteen.
  - All **drivers** must be twenty-one and over, with a clean driving record.
- 
- 

### **Weather**

Bad weather doesn't negate the needs of the homeless poor for food, blankets and clothes. In fact, those needs tend to intensify. Here are some guidelines regarding weather:

- If conditions are too **hazardous** to drive a van, then find a four-wheel-drive vehicle and load whatever you can.
- You'll likely need to reduce the **size** of your group, and in most cases will want to leave the teenagers at home and take adults only.

- Pare down your **supplies** to the items that take up less space. Bring bag meals, hats, gloves, socks, t-shirts and underwear, and try to include a few coats and blankets for the most urgent cases.
- 

### **Breakfast Runs**

Breakfast runs are a good opportunity to involve younger kids, generally fourth grade and above, in serving the homeless poor. On most Sundays (the preferred day due to ease of parking), we send one or two crews out to serve breakfast and distribute other essential items.

The key elements of a breakfast run are:

- Group does only **one stop**, assigned by Dale earlier in the week. One breakfast run will see about 40 to 50 people (fewer in winter or right after the first of the month). If there are two runs, each will see 25 to 30 people.
- **Flyers** are distributed during the runs on Friday and Saturday nights, announcing the time and place of breakfast on Sunday.
- The **food** is anything you want. Groups have carried scrambled eggs, ham, hash browns, pancakes and oatmeal, all pre-cooked and put in appropriate containers to keep warm. Some groups bring a variety of quiches, which are easy to prepare in advance and fine served cold. Other meats are popular, like sausage and bacon. Guys like pastries, everything from donuts to coffee cake to danish. Cold cereal is okay, particularly in single serve boxes, but only as an adjunct. Fruit salad is popular, as well as bananas and oranges. And of course coffee and juice, or hot chocolate in winter. Use your imagination, within reason. But do think through the mechanics of transportation and serving. Cold eggs are not popular. You can get by with cold food in summer, but in winter plan on having something hot.
- Bring some **clothing**, but not the full range of what you bring on a Midnight Run. Since you're making only one big stop, make sure you have enough of whatever you bring to serve everyone. Take 50 or so of a couple of seasonally appropriate items – hats, gloves and sweaters in winter; t-shirts in summer; socks and underwear any time. And of course toiletries (and maybe blankets in winter).
- You should **arrive** sometime between 8 and 9 am. Let Dale know by the Tuesday before so that the arrival time can be reflected on the flyers. Set up two or three card tables to serve the food. After everyone has a first serving, give out the clothing. You should plan on staying about an hour, as some people will tend to wander in late.
- It is best to use your own **vehicle(s)**. If Midnight Run vehicles are available, you can take one (gassing it of course!), but breakfast run use is secondary to Midnight Runs.
- Contact Dale to schedule.