



## Autocross Novice Checklist

*Welcome to the Ozark Mountain Region SCCA Solo program.*

*New here? Follow this list, and you'll be a natural.*

- 1. Sign the waiver at the gate and get an armband**

Everyone on site must sign the liability waiver, competitor or not. Also, everyone under age 18 needs parental consent on a minor waiver. This gets the legal part out of the way so that we can have fun.
- 2. Park in paddock and empty your car**

Look for a parking spot not occupied by someone's gear. Take out the floor mats or anything else that can move. Empty the trunk of the spare tire, jack, and so forth.
- 3. Tech Inspection**

There will be a tech line where a volunteer checks your car for obvious dangers. We will look for loose wheel bearings, steering wheel play, or anything that looks unsafe for autocross conditions.
- 4. Get registered**

Go to the white trailer, and have your driver's license and entry fee handy. If you're not a SCCA member, we have you covered. Fill out a weekend membership, which will make you an official, insured SCCA member for the next five days. Keep your copy of the form to turn in for a \$15 discount on annual SCCA membership.
- 5. Get a work assignment**

SCCA Solo is completely staffed by the same people competing in the event, which is how we keep this safe and affordable. There will be two heats, and you will drive in one of them and work the other. If you're a first-timer, make sure to mention this at registration and we'll try to pair you with an experienced course worker.
- 6. Put number and class letters on each side of your car**

Your car needs to have visible numbers and class lettering on each side so we know who's under the helmet during competition. Ask someone experienced about your class before registration if you have any questions, but we'll help you if all else fails. Don't focus too hard on this "class" thing now. You're here to have fun.
- 7. Walk the course**

Everyone is allowed to look at the course on foot before competition time. Find the start line, and get an idea where the course goes. We'll announce a guided novice walkthrough before the driver's meeting to give you some pointers.
- 8. Attend the driver's meeting**

This is mandatory. Since you're new, actually pay attention, too. We'll go over safety, cone penalties, and all the other basics about how this whole thing will happen.
- 9. Get ready to either run or work**

You either signed up to work the first heat and run the second heat, or the opposite. If you are running in the first heat, bring your car to grid and pick a spot. There will be spots at the front of the line for two-driver cars. If you are working, come to the back of the trailer and get checked off.
- 10. Lunch break**

We will usually have a break between the two heats of around 30-45 minutes. Listen for the announcement, and watch the clock. Don't be "that guy" who holds up the entire event while we look for you. If you're late for a work assignment, we may politely recommend that you try a different hobby.
- 11. Second heat**

Workers and drivers flip-flop from the first heat. Simple enough.



## 12. Help clean up

After the runs are complete, all the cones and equipment have to get packed into the trailer. The more people help, the faster this gets done.

## 13. Awards

The results will be tabulated while the course is getting stacked up and loaded. Stick around and see where everyone placed. Maybe you got a trophy?

## 14. Drive home safe

No burnouts, donuts, speeding, or anything dumb while leaving. That is a good way for us to lose an autocross venue, and those are hard to come by.

## Novice Tips

- **Prepare the car.** Most regular street tires need more air than prescribed by the sticker in the door jam. Also, some drivers find better control by moving the seat forward a notch closer than their relaxed road driving position.
- **Prepare yourself.** Stay hydrated (water, not sugary stuff) and eat light snacks to keep your focus and energy. Dress and prepare for changing conditions. If you're comfortable and alert, your driving will be sharper.
- **Smart course walks.** If you can't remember where the course goes, walk it again. This may mean getting in a course walk not distracted by friends. If you're intimidated by the amount of cones, know that most of them are "filler" that just define boundaries. Experienced drivers pick out the select cones that actually define vehicle maneuvers, and mentally note those.
- **Smart corner working.** Look behind the car for downed cones, not just at the car itself. Staying focused also helps learn from differences in driving styles. What are the quick drivers doing compared to the slower-looking drivers?
- **Look ahead.** This is the number one driving tip. Cars cover ground quickly, and watching only the cones right in front of your vision will not leave you any time to anticipate maneuvers. Knowing what's next will help dial in the right steering and speed inputs, and sooner. Practice looking further down the course and your brain will process the rest.
- **Second gear.** Get to second gear and leave it. Most cars will go autocross speeds without having to up-shift to third or return to first. Not only does staying in second keep your focus on driving, but it's faster in most cases. Shifting eats time.
- **Stay ahead of the car.** If the front end of the car is washing out or the back end is sliding everywhere, dial it back. Staying in control will regain some space and grip for negotiating the course efficiently. Overworked tires and exaggerated driving can slow you down.
- **Talk to new people.** Autocross is half competition, half social event. You will have time to chat with fellow gearheads all day long, and you will see many of them at every event. Before long, you'll make a lot of friends and learn a lot of new things.
- **Experienced drivers are resources.** Take rides with the faster people to see what they are doing, and take a passenger who can offer constructive criticism. Most people will help if asked.
- **Lowest time wins.** Having the highest MPH isn't always the fastest. A good rule of thumb is to drive the shortest distance using the smoothest steering arc. A tidy line tight on the cones can often quicken your pace.
- **Baby steps.** After an autocross run, think about one thing you might change on your next run, how you might counter a mistake made, or apply a tip from someone else. The fastest drivers got that way from incremental improvement over time, and started out just like you.
- **Have fun.** Don't lose sight of why you're here, even if you get frustrated or lost. Your goals should be improving and enjoying yourself. Being the most "competitive" can come later. Keep coming back and getting that seat time!

