



TECHNICAL SIDEBAR

New Mexico Corvette Association

Autocross Handbook for Novices

Adapted from the **SOLO II Novice Handbook**
by Kate Hughes, Glen Region, SCCA © May, 1996-1998
Edited for 2007 NCCC/RMR Rules and Expanded by Mike Konshak.

What is Low-Speed Autocross?

Low-Speed **Autocross** events are all forward motion driving skill contests. Each driver is individually timed to the thousandth of a second, over a short, miniature road course clearly defined using traffic cones. Cars compete one at a time, hence the name "Solo", in a class with similar cars. An event can be held on any flat paved surface, usually a parking lot, or airport apron or runway.

Autocross emphasizes driver skill and vehicle handling rather than speed. The corners are tight, and there are lots of them, so the driving is exciting and challenging. Autocross speeds do not exceed those normally encountered in highway driving. This is the main difference between Autocross and Time Trials, where much higher speeds are attained and require a high speed license. High Speed licenses are granted by the Regional Competition Director after you have participated in at least 10 autocrosses or driving schools (NCCC or SCCA) during the past 24 months.

The skills you learn and practice here; smooth transitions, enhanced braking, and skid correction, will have an immediate impact on improving the safety and skill of your street driving. Autocross is an excellent way to teach car control to young drivers in a safe environment.

Autocross is also a very social sport, filled with some of the friendliest people you'll ever meet. The camaraderie of the drivers, male and female, young and old, is a special part of auto-crossing that is profoundly satisfying.

Cars are divided into classes based on the Corvette year and model and customization (as of 2007). The complete descriptions of classes and preparation allowances are spelled out in the NCCC and RMR rule book.

- **Factory Class** - No changes or modifications, tires must have a minimum tread depth of 2/32" in all major grooves, a tread wear rating of 160, tires and wheels must be stock size.
- **Street Class** - modifications allowed to air intake, intake manifold and related parts, exhaust, suspension, computer, minor body changes, DOT approved race tires, any size tire and wheel combination that fit without touching frame or body at any time.
- **Modified Class** - Cars with non-DOT tires (race slicks), superchargers, or turbocharged, or if the car is severely modified) Modified class is not broke down by years, all modified cars run in the same class. Any Corvette that does not have a full interior must meet NCCC rulebook safety tech for Group 3 cars.

The costs of Autocross competition are reasonable because you can compete in the Corvette you drive on the street every day. Entry fees vary by the host club usually \$20 to \$35 per driver, per event, and two

drivers can share a car. Registration fees may be higher (or lower) depending on your desire to leave an event with a trophy. You will be assigned a competition number in the range of 16 to 99. Numbers 1 through 15 are generally reserved for the previous year's Men's and Lady's champions.

National Conference of Corvette Clubs (NCCC) sanctioned events are insured through the NCCC, and are conducted under the watchful eyes of Regional NCCC Safety Stewards. The rules and guidelines, established by the NCCC and Regional Clubs, are what make this one of the safest motorsports. A day of auto-crossing is far safer for both car and driver than most people's daily commute to work. You can't hurt your car if you follow the rules and Corvettes are famous for forgiving the sins of sloppy and inexperienced drivers.

Most NCCC clubs may run two separate sanctioned autocross events in one day or weekend, to maximize the experience (and competition points) of traveling to their region. Additionally, the Autocross may be bundled on a weekend with other events which include rallies, fun-khanas, car shows and banquets.

There are many events in the schedule for you and your family to have fun with your Corvette all over the country. The events you want to attend are the Driver's Schools followed with an autocross the same day.

On Being a Novice

You'll remember your first autocross event for a long time. You'll recall the butterflies that made you shake at the start-line before your first run, and the even bigger surge of adrenaline you felt when you finished. That excitement is part of the sport, and it's why so many people do this.

Don't let being a novice overwhelm you! Every driver, including National Champions, had a first day and a novice season. Auto-crossing is a skill that requires instruction and practice to see improvements. If it was easy, it wouldn't be so competitive, or so much fun. The great thing about the autocross sport is that even when you're going "slow", you're still having tons of fun driving.

An autocross course may seem "busy" at first; because it's tighter than what you see on the street, and you're trying to attack it faster than you could in regular traffic. You'll have fun progressing in the sport and learning to keep your car in control as you get faster and better with more seat-time.

Generally speaking, the veteran drivers like to help the novices; the magic words "I am a novice" will get you extra instruction from other competitors, who can critique your run. Depending on club rules, Novice drivers typically can ride with more experienced drivers to help learn the course. Novices are also able to have an "experienced" auto-crosser as a passenger as long as the driver has already completed his or her first run (it's a big advantage to a competitor to see the course at speed).

Here are some tips to give you the right novice attitude; so you don't become discouraged:

- Your goal is to have fun! That's why everyone is here.
- Your goal for the first run is to avoid getting lost on course (see course-walking tips)
- Your goal for the rest of the day is to improve your time on each run
- Your goal for the second event is the same as the first.
- Your goal for the rest of the season is to beat somebody (anybody!) and continue to make each run faster than the last.

At this point, you are learning a lot on each run, and you may be 10 seconds behind the class leader. That's not unusual! You're still doing OK. Your times will be compared only with other novices in your class and you'll soon be winning trophies.

And be careful not to interrupt a driver on a course walk, or while he or she is concentrating on going over the course in his or her head.

What to Bring to an Event

This list covers everything from sunscreen to snacks to tires pressure gauges. You will probably come up with your own list of things you need at an autocross event, but this will get you started.

You must have:

- Your car (although you may share a car with someone else)
- Your entry fee
- A valid driver's license
- NCCC membership card (You'll automatically get one when you join the NMCA club)
- A safety helmet (Snell approved less than 10 years old) or someone to loan you one.
- Competition Numbers and Tape to Identify your car

You may want to bring:

- Suitable shoes for driving. The best are light-soled, with a narrow sole which does not stick out past the side of the shoe
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Clothes appropriate for the weather forecast, plus a change for when the forecast is wrong.
- Rain gear/ umbrella
- A hat
- Folding chair(s)
- Water bottles or other *non alcoholic* beverage
- Cooler for lunch or snacks
- Windex and paper towels
- A pad and pencil to write down all the advice you'll get
- A good tire pressure gauge
- A portable air tank or compressor
- Chalk or white shoe polish to mark the tires

Yes, you can fit this all in the back of a C5. It's also a good idea to put extra air in your tires. Stop at a gas station and fill your tires to approximately 40psi all around.

What Happens at an Autocross Event

People begin arriving before registration opens, so they can unpack their car and get ready for the day before registration begins. Generally, because the events may not attract more than 30-60 Corvettes, refreshments will not be provided. Many participants scope out where the Starbucks or McDonald's are the night before and hit them on the way from their motel to where the track will be setup. It is best to arrive at or before the beginning of registration so you will have time to register, tech your car, walk the course, and have ample time to talk to the organizers from the hosting club.

Registration

To register you must have a valid driver's license and entry fee (usually \$20 to \$35). Fill out the information card at the registration area if you have not pre-registered earlier in the week. The organizers will help choose the class for your car if you don't know what it is. You will also be assigned a car number for the day if you did not **Submit a Competition Number**.

At registration, you will be asked to sign two waivers. You *must* do this to compete, and any guests you bring must sign the waivers also.

Once you know your class and car number, mark your car using white shoe polish on the window (it comes off with Windex), tape paper numbers inside the window, or use vinyl numbers if you have them.

Tech Inspection

Your car must pass tech inspection before you can compete. You may have to park in a separate area, the 'pit', to unload your car prior to registration before being eligible for tech inspection. Find some shade for your folding chairs. After you have registered, put on your numbers and have moved your car to where the 'grid' is, open the hood, leaving the keys in the ignition and your helmets on the roof/seat/trunk. Most of the time, the official tech inspector(s) will come to your car and put a sticker on your windshield once you have passed the safety inspection. You may be asked about suspect parts that might place you in a different class than 'Factory Stock'. Read the tech inspection chapter and the NCCC/RMR rules beforehand so there are no surprises on race day. The tech inspector will sign your card if you pass, or recommend changes to make the car pass, such as additional tie-downs for the battery or removal of loose items or hub caps if you've forgotten.

Course Walking

After tech, you will have time to walk the course. Before you go, read the chapter on course-walking tips. Course maps are sometimes available at registration, and the organizers may take you on a guided walk before or after the drivers' meeting. Try to have the course memorized before you go on the guided walk. The more circuits you make around the course, the less chance you'll get lost or confused during your first **run**.

Drivers' Meeting

The drivers' meeting is *mandatory for all drivers*. The event chair will hold the meeting approximately one half hour before the first car starts. Be sure to attend. This is where you will find out information you'll need to know about the course conditions, number of runs, particular safety concerns, how penalties are assessed, and how work assignments will be handled.

Your Runs

You will have a minimum of three timed runs, weather permitting. Find out who is running before you and after you, so you know when to line up. Running in order makes the timing people's job easier, and keeps the event running smoothly, but if someone gets in front of you, or you are running a little behind, don't worry too much about it. The event chair will call out which classes are to come to the grid (line of 4-5 cars waiting to run)

Once you are in grid, you will wait for the cars in front of you to launch, and you will move up until you are on the start line. A starter will wave a green flag when it is OK for you to start. The green flag means go as soon as you are ready, the timer will not start until you pass through the lights. Don't take too long if we are running two cars on course at once, because your start is timed to make sure you do not get too near the car already on course.

If you do get "lost" on course, take the time to orient yourself and continue. Don't head back to the start line, because you may be pointed toward another car. Just take the time to get back on course, and continue the run as a practice! If the next driver catches up, they will be red-flagged and be granted a re-run (which they'll use to its fullest potential).

Times are posted after each run. Your fastest run of the day is used to determine your finishing position. Read the Driving Tips section for more detail about your runs.

Your Work Assignments

Autocrosses are volunteer events and most of the technical and organizing functions will be performed by members of the host club. There are assignments, such as 'cone chasing' that can only be performed by the participants, volunteer early on and readily accept assignments if asked. It's best to report for your work assignment as quickly as possible when it is time for you to work. Otherwise, some people end up working longer than others, which is no fun. The place to get work assignments will be announced in the drivers' meeting.

We try to put a novice with an experienced driver on a station if we have enough people. For a little bonus

instruction, ask your co-worker to talk about the techniques of the cars on course.

Fun Runs

If time permits, fun runs are held at the completion of the event while trophies are being readied. This is your opportunity to ride with other drivers and have them ride with you. You may have to reset your own cones if you knock them over.

Course Clean-up

Once all the timed runs and fun runs, if any, are complete, everyone helps clean up the course. This involves bringing in the fire extinguishers and flags, cones and timing equipment, and storing them in the club trailer. Scoreboards need to be cleaned off and the pit area needs to be checked for trash. When everyone helps, this can be completed in fifteen to twenty minutes.

The Awards

After the event, following course clean-up, everyone meets for the trophy presentation. The location for the presentation is usually announced at the drivers' meeting. The event chair and his/her assistants will give out results and present trophies (if available or requested). Accumulation of championship points is the most critically sought amongst the more serious competitors, rather than trophies.

Tech Inspection Requirements

Safety Helmet: All helmets must meet NCCC rulebook guidelines (Snell approved no older than 10 years from date of manufacture, if helmet does not have a date then must be SA2000 or M2000 and newer)

Safety Belts: Seat belts need to be equal to factory belts or better and in good condition. Race harness belts can be no older than 5 years from date of manufacture.

Solidly Mounted Battery: The battery must be held down properly. If it can be moved at all, it will not pass. There are some additional battery requirements which may affect you if you have modified your car. The Tech Inspector will help you out with them.

Legal Tires: In Factory Stock categories, the tires must have measurable tread 2/32 inch in all major grooves and a tread wear rating no lower than 160. Excessive weather checks or visible cord/plies will fail inspection. Street class may use DOT approved race tires. Tire pressures should be higher than used for the street, usually 38-40 psi on all tires.

Brakes: The brake pedal must be firm, with no loss of pressure when held down.

Steering / Suspension: The steering must be tight, with no excessive play. Wheel bearings cannot have excessive play.

Loose Items in Car: All loose items must be removed from the passenger compartment and trunk. This may include the floor-mats. You may remove the spare tire and jack, but you are not required to if they are properly secured.

Fluid Leaks: Excessive fluid leaks will not pass inspection.

Numbers and Class Markings: The car numbers (+L for Ladies) should be prominently displayed on both sides of the car in colors that contrast with the paint, and should be large enough (minimum 6") to be seen easily from the timing table. White shoe polish for marking windows (comes off with Windex) may be used but its use is discouraged in favor of stick-on or paper numbers.

Adequate Muffler: Your car must be quieter than 95dbA measured 50 feet from the course at a place where you are under full throttle. Due to the possibility of losing sites for noise problems, this rule is strictly enforced. (If your car is quiet enough to avoid attracting Police attention, it will most likely pass the noise

requirement)

Throttle: Accelerator pedal must have a return spring and operate freely.

You are not required to have your car registered for street use, but it must pass tech inspection.

Working Rules and Safety

Do's

- Report to work promptly.
- Know your area of responsibility and station location.
- Make sure cones are in their proper place when you get to your station, and check them periodically during your shift.
- Pay attention to cars on course for accurate cone counts and your safety. It is best to watch the *back* of the car and the cones themselves to see the wobbling cone which may have left the box.

A penalty is given if:

- If the cone is knocked over and is out of the box.
- If the cone is knocked over and is in the box.
- If the cone remains standing but is out of the box.



Penalty Assessed

A penalty is NOT given if:

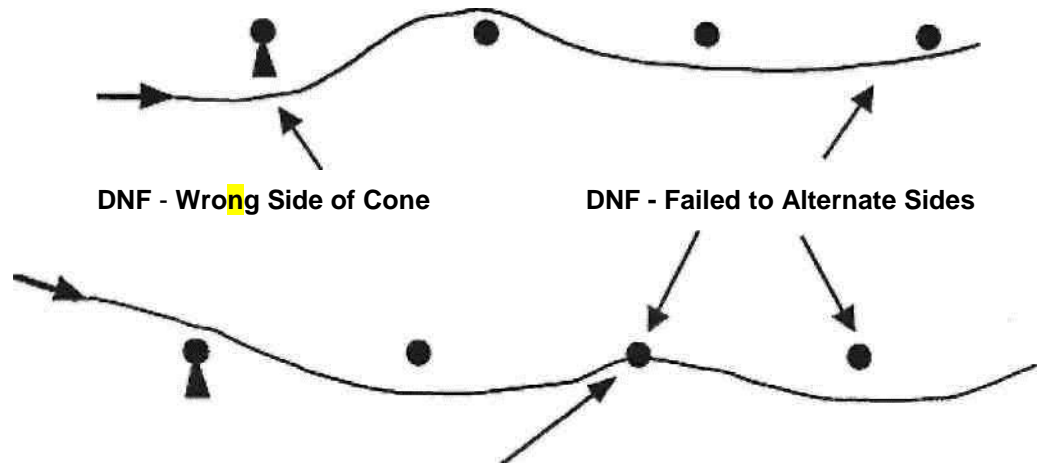
- The cone remains standing and is touching the box
- The cone remains standing and is partially in the box.
- And of course, if the cone remains standing within the box.



No Penalty Assessed

Understand the pylon rules e.g., pointer cones **do not count** if hit (see below), and a car is off-course (DNF for Did Not Finish) if they pass on the wrong side of a cone.

A DNF occurs in the slalom zone if the car enters the slalom on the wrong side of a "non-optional" slalom or fails to alternate sides correctly.



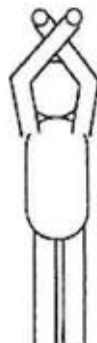
If cone is hit, even though most of the car may have been on the "wrong" side, the cone penalty applies, not the DNF.

**Cone penalty.**

Hold the cone up for the Comer Captain to see and report

**No penalty.**

Make the 'safe' sign. Cone may have been brushed, but stays within the box. Be sure Comer Captain

**A DNF.**

Make an "X" with your upraised arms. Ensure the Comer Captain sees the signal.

**Red Flag**

If you need to "red flag" a car, wave the flag vigorously to get the driver's attention.

- Hold up both arms above your head, crossing your wrists, if a car goes on the wrong side of a designated cone. This is a DNF. Lower your arms once you get a wave of acknowledgement from the official.
- Hold up a dislodged cone (time penalty) above your head so the timing official can see you. Put it back in place once you get a wave of acknowledgement from the official.
- Another corner worker or official may shout to you about a cone they saw move in your area. If it is not a penalty, reset the cone and signal by waving your lowered arms back and forth (safe signal)
- Get back to your station as soon as possible, another car will be coming through in as soon as 30 seconds
- Be prepared for exposure to sun/rain, wind, heat/cold while on station
- Stay alert for unexpected pedestrians and vehicles

Don'ts

- Do not use cameras while on station.
- Do not sit down and do not wander away from your post.
- Do not turn your back on cars on course. Safety First!
- Do not red flag a car unless instructed to do so by the radio person **or** if it is an emergency. However, *if in doubt, err on the side of safety!*
- Do not litter
- Do not pick up hot parts dropped on course because of risk of burns.

Car set-up Tips

Keeping things inexpensive, we'll only talk about things you can do for free, or under \$50. After a while, you may want to put more go-fast goodies on your car, but make sure to read the rule book, and stay legal for your category.

But keep this in mind; at this point you will go faster sooner by working on the driver instead of the car.

What you can do Today

Tires:

You've already read that you should put an extra 10 to 15 psi in your tires. The reason for this is to keep your tires from rolling under during hard cornering. But how much is too much? Put chalk on the edges of your tire, in three places around the diameter, and you can see how far over the tire was going during your runs. Bleed out a little if the chalk is still showing on the tread, or add a little more if the chalk has been worn off down the sidewall. The line of worn chalk to remaining chalk should be right at the corner of the tread and sidewall. Keep notes on how many psi you ran, and where the chalk line was, for your next event.

Remember that as you get better and corner harder, you'll need more air to compensate, so keep using the chalk at every event.

Driver Restraint:

In order to have good control in driving, you, the driver, have got to stay put. So make sure your seat belt is tight and firm. Some people like to tug hard (fast) on the shoulder strap to engage the lock on the reel.

Driver Location:

Most experienced drivers will agree that the best place for your seat - to give you the best control - is seat forward far enough to have your leg slightly bent when the clutch is all the way to the floor, and seat-back reclined or upright to a position that allows you to rest your wrists on the steering wheel when your shoulders are firmly against the seat.

This position allows you to run the full range of steering inputs and foot motion without stretching or moving in your seat, and can have a huge impact on your driving skill.

Course Walking Tips

"You must be able to keep track of the course in your head. If you can't, then you can't drive it to its fullest potential".

Josh Sirotta

That quote is worth five seconds to a novice. Knowing how to walk the course is the most important step in being competitive and staying "ahead" of the course. Usually, you'll want to walk the course *at least* three times.

Step 1)

Walk the course.

Your first walk will be to get the general layout, and is often a social walk. Now get away from friends and walk the course alone, concentrating on memorizing the layout. Think of it in sections, with key cones marking the turns, such **as**:

- start straight
- slalom (enter on right)
- decreasing sweeper to the left
- "little snake" then "big snake"
- right-hand curve (look for three pointers)
- "thread the needle section"
- tight right, then tight left
- finish

Stop every now and then and run through the course in your head, from the beginning to where you are. Get down - the course looks different from a seated position. This will give you a better picture of what the course will look like at speed.

Pace off the distance between cones in a slalom zone. Some course designers vary the distance, and it's good to know before you arrive whether you will have to vary your speed in a slalom zone. Take a note-pad if you like, and make notes such as pavement changes, camber change, bumps, sand, etc.

Make a mental note of how far you will be looking ahead. When you will walk the course, tell yourself, "OK, when I am *here* I will be looking *there*" (This will help you to remember to look ahead while you are driving) "*Repeat this step over and over until the picture is perfect.*" Andy Hollis - Four-time SCCA Pro Solo and Solo II National Champ.

How do you know if the picture is perfect? Sit down by your car and try to draw the course on a blank piece of paper. Include the key cones you want to recognize while you drive. If you can't draw the course, you will want to walk it again. Once you leave the start line in your car, you should not be spending any time figuring out where the course is.

Step 2)

Plan the course.

Plan *while* walking the course again. Now decide exactly how you want to drive the course. Driving the course perfectly involves two things; coming up with the correct plan, and executing the plan correctly. If you don't have a plan, you can't possibly know where you didn't execute it correctly. It's hard to know if you did this step correctly, but step 4 is something you can work on.

The plan involves the line you will take through the cones - the quickest way through. Note, I didn't say shortest. Think about the characteristics of your car; does it corner better than it accelerates, or the other way around? That will tell you whether to slow down so you can get through the corner in control and get on the throttle as soon as possible, or try to carry speed through to keep up the revs.

Don't forget to plan where you will be looking. There is no need to memorize every cone on the course, only the ones you plan to be near, the "important" ones. Look from one important cone to the next in your plan.

Step 3)

In Grid.

Before you run, while you are in grid, go over the course again several times in your head, executing the plan you made before

Step 4)

After the run.

Sit in your car and go over your run. Figure out where you didn't execute the plan. If the plan was to be near a particular cone, and you were five feet from it, then you didn't execute the plan correctly, and a red light should have gone off in your head. Maybe you need to adjust the plan because you were going too fast in the slow parts. Decide at this point whether your next run needs to be a better execution of the plan, or a modification of the plan

Basically, don't use the car as an excuse, you will see a big difference in your times when you drive a course that never surprised you.

Driving Tips

Seat time, seat time, seat time

That's the best way to go faster. They say, "Before you fix the car, fix the driver". That's because there are so many techniques to improve your driving, it takes seat time to learn them all, but once you do, someone without those skills would have to spend a lot of money on their car to beat you, and probably still couldn't.

Here are a few techniques to get you started. Don't try to apply them all in your first run, you'll be too busy. But read through the whole list, and then work at gaining these skills one at a time.

Launching

You've got several feet before you break the lights so you want to be accelerating as you pass through them. Avoid wheel spin. It wastes time and the novice staged directly behind you will be annoyed if you pepper her Corvette with road debris (She'll give you more room next time).

Look Ahead

I can't emphasize this enough. I repeat it out loud while I am driving. It's so easy to forget, but makes such a big impact on my driving. It all relates to hand-eye (and eye-foot) coordination. *Look* where you want your hands to drive you, and look far enough ahead to take advantage of the feedback. If you're looking at that outside cone that you're afraid you'll hit, well, you'll hit it. If you're looking ten feet in front of the bumper, the turns will keep surprising you. Imagine looking at your feet while you are running on foot! You won't be very coordinated, and you won't have a good sense of distance or speed. Same goes for driving hard corners as you do in autocross. Look ahead. You will be *astounded* at your performance the first time you remember to do this all the way through a course.

Slow Down to Go Fast

A common problem when you're starting out is trying to take the tight sections too fast, and not staying in control. I still remember finishing a run and saying, "Well, I didn't go very fast, but it sure was smooth," only to find out I'd gone faster by a full second! Just be patient in the slow spots. They're slow spots, after all.

Brake hard in corners

Go ahead, squeeze the brakes *hard*. There's no morning coffee on your dashboard, or eggs in the front seat. Once you decide to slow down for the corner, don't waste any time. If you find yourself at a crawl and you're not at the corner yet, why, you've just found out that you can brake later. Locking up your tires will not make you stop faster, so squeeze the brakes and let them do the work, not your tires.

Adhesion

Don't ask too much of your tires. For any tire/pavement pair, there's only a certain amount of traction. We'll call that 100% traction. You can use up that traction with your throttle, your brakes or your steering wheel. So if you're going into a corner, using 100% of your traction to make the turn, what happens when you ask for more traction by applying the brakes? Either you won't brake or you won't turn. Or both. Same goes for accelerating out of a corner. Ease in the throttle as you ease out of the turn. *So use full throttle and full braking only in a straight line*. This goes back to slowing down to go faster, and brings us **to...**

Smooth Inputs

You may have noticed that I used the phrases "squeeze the brakes" and "ease in the throttle". This is where you have to change your mindset about inputs to controlling your car. You need to convince yourself that you can make your car respond better by squeezing the brakes hard instead of standing on the brakes, by rolling in the throttle rapidly instead of stomping on the gas, by turning the wheel quickly instead of cranking it around. Subtle, but it will show up in how often your car is in control instead of scrubbing off speed pushing around a corner. And it will take a lot of practice to become second nature.

Shift near redline

On the street, we don't usually shift near redline (high rpms). But in autocross, you want to be making the most of the power available to you. You'll learn to hear the motor as you drive and stay in a low gear longer. Most courses will be in second gear for stock cars. If you're shifting to third, you're shifting too soon, and giving up power (ask local drivers if this is true in your region).

Launch at 4000 rpm

Each car varies, but try to start at higher rpms than you're used to. Don't "dump" the clutch, or you'll find your wheels spinning. Let it **out** rapidly and find the right rpms to maintain traction. Higher horsepower cars (Z06's and stick shifts) will want to use lower rpms than less powerful cars or ones with automatic transmissions.

Squealing Tires

Bottom line... If your tires are **YELLING** at you, its because you are adding to much power, braking too hard, and turning too late trying to make a corner. On TV it makes cars sound like they are going fast, but in your case, you are going too slow because you are trying to go too fast, and scrubbing off your momentum. Slow it down, set the turns up earlier, smooth the drive out of the corners and you'll decrease your times (plus add a lot more life to your Goodyear Eagle F1 Supercar tires).

Don't worry about the blinkers, wipers or horn. You're bound to hit them as you drive. Don't let it throw you. We've all done it!

There are many more techniques for getting better times, but start with the ones listed above. After you've learned them, you'll be ready to buy a book on auto-crossing (see Recommended Reading), or attend a driver's school and learn the advanced techniques of heel/toe, shuffle steer, late apex, and more. Go to as many events as you can. Go to the ones with the toughest competition - winning something local is fun, but losing to someone fast will probably teach you more. Attend drivers' schools in your area, or travel to another region. On off weekends, you might try an SCCA Solo2 event or show up at a non-Corvette club event. You won't get their points but you'll gain experience and you might surprise your buddies with a quicker time at the next NCCC/RMR autocross.

Always remember to have fun, even when you are being stomped by some national hot-shoe. You'll never stop learning - the best drivers will tell you this still applies after ten or twenty years! Remember, *seat-time, seat-time, seat-time*. Nothing will make you go faster sooner, and nothing is less expensive in improving your times.

Autocross Etiquette

Autocross is a social sport, and most drivers are happy to give you advice and critique your runs. Ask someone with a similar car if you may follow them through a course walk. Maybe they'll even think aloud for you (don't do too much talking yourself, or you will be making them walk again). Ask if you can ride with them. If you're not sure when to line up, go ahead and ask. Ask someone to look at the chalk on your tires to see whether you need more air. Ask someone to watch your run if they have time, and tell you what needs changing. They'll be glad to.

There are a few **bad times to ask for advice**, though. Here's a quick list:

- When they are walking the course. (They're trying to memorize it.)
- When they are staring into space or have their eyes closed, they're probably going over their run or plan.
- When they are in grid. They are only thinking about the course.

Sometimes events will conspire to keep a good driver from competing; it may be a broken car; it may be an injury that prevents them from being able to change tires. *This is your chance!* Offer that driver a ride as a co-driver in your car. You'll get a second opinion on how to run your car, see how fast it will really go (giving you a target and a lack of an excuse of why you were slow), and the co-driver will be able to stay in the points race for his or her class. So what if they use up \$20 worth of tires; not a bad price for a private instructor all day!

It's OK to borrow someone's helmet or use their battery powered compressor your first time out, but don't abuse your fellow competitors helpfulness in helping you get started in the sport. Try to get your **Snell M and SA2005 helmet on order** and your own tools as soon as possible. You'll then be repaying the favor to the next novice.

Try to help out. There is more work to be done than the mandatory course-work. This is an all-volunteer organization, so help is always appreciated. Luckily, this also puts you in a position to talk to other drivers, because the veterans are helping out, too. If you share the work, they'll have more time to talk to you.

Likewise, showing up early will help out the registration and tech crew, and give you more time to walk the course. Read the next section on how to help, if you're looking for ideas to lend a hand.

Everyone stays to help clean up the course and pit areas. Keeping the sites is important to everyone, so leave your **pit** area cleaner than you found it.

The trophy presentation is a continuation of the event, and people talk about the course or their cars or runs. It's nice to have everyone show up, to cheer the winners, even if you didn't get a trophy yourself.

Corvette Competition Classes

ALL CLASSES HAVE MEN'S (M) CLASS AND LADIES* (L) CLASS

FACTORY (F) CLASS - (pure stock no changes)

- CLASSIC - 53 TO 62 (all run in one class)
- CLASS A - 63 TO 82 (all run in one class)
- CLASS E-84 TO 91 (except ZR1)
- CLASS G - 92 TO 96 and all years of ZR1 's
- CLASS H - 97 TO 04 (except Z06)
- CLASS J - 01 TO 04 Z06's
- CLASS K - 05 and Newer (except Z06)
- CLASS M - 06 and Newer Z06's

STREET (S) CLASS - (limited changes allowed)

- CLASSIC - 53 TO 62 (all run in one class)
- CLASS A - 63 TO 82 (all run in one class)
- CLASS E-84 TO 91 (except ZR1)
- CLASS G - 92 TO 96 and all years of ZR1 's
- CLASS H - 97 TO 04 (except Z06)
- CLASS J - 01 TO 04 Z06's
- CLASS K - 05 and Newer (except Z06)
- CLASS M - 06 and Newer Z06's

MODIFIED (M) CLASS - 53 TO 07 (all years run in same class)

NOVICE (N) CLASS - 53 TO 07 (all years run in same class)

Back to Reality

You've had a blast driving in the Autocross. The adrenaline was high; you're ready for another event. You can't wait to start improving your skills. Before you leave, lower your tire pressures to recommended levels for street driving. Stop by a local gas station to top off your tank. You might find other competitors that you can caravan with and have dinner on the way home. Bench racing is typically the theme at the table. Don't forget to check when and where the next Autocross will be held!

Driving in Autocross is a real thrill. But don't forget when you leave the course, you're back in regular traffic again; not on the autocross course. Take your new car control skills with you for emergencies, and obey all road laws. Save your spirited driving for Autocross, where it's legal!