

## **Driver Education – What Can I Expect**

This write up contains information about driver education. It's not presented in any particular order of importance or significance. The information should be helpful to those considering participation in driver ed for the first time.

### **What to always remember?**

This is a driver education event....it isn't timed, it isn't racing. The mission and purpose of the Porsche Club of America's driver ed program is to provide a safe, structured and controlled teaching environment. It is designed so that participants can learn to improve their driving skills and acquire a better understanding of vehicle dynamics and driving safety. Participants will experience first-hand the capabilities of their cars performance under a controlled, closed-circuit environment and acquire skills that will enhance their operation of a vehicle under various driving conditions and situations.

### **What are run groups and which am I in?**

Porsche Club of America (PCA) driver ed (DE) events place the participants into Run Groups. Depending on the region and the size of the event, there can be a different number of run groups. Generally there are five run groups; red, black, white, yellow and green. You're placed in a run group depending on; your on-track / DE experience, your experience on a particular track, and yes even your car.

**Red** - Most advanced and very experienced, generally mostly instructors

**Black**- Advanced and experienced

**White**- Experienced (getting there)

**Yellow**- Some experience, still with an instructor at least initially, will likely get signed off to run solo for some of the event

**Green**- First timers, novice, some experience but less than yellow, with an instructor, may get signed off to run some of the event

Note: In green and yellow, there's no hard and fast rules about getting signed off to run solo. It's up to the instructor to decide if the participant is ready. You might not get signed off at some point during an event. This is

especially true for first timers, those with only little experience, and particularly if it's your first time on a new track. It's ok. You're there to learn, be safe and have fun.

## **Do I need an instructor?**

If you're in yellow or green run groups, yes you will need to have an instructor. Remember there's always much that can be learned, and one of the best ways is with an instructor. If you're in the other run groups, an instructor can be made available to you if you have questions, or feel like you need some pointers.

## **What will the instructor teach me?**

The instructor does many things, starting with trying to quickly learn about you and your car. When you're assigned an instructor, you and the instructor should meet for a few minutes prior to going out on the track. The instructor will likely ask you some questions such as; how long have you been driving the car, what if anything have you done to the car, and about your DE experiences if any. If you've done DEs before, what do you feel you need to work on while on-track. It's important for you and the instructor to feel comfortable with each other, as only then can he or she teach you.

Your instructor will usually drive your car for the first couple of laps in the first run session. They'll show you the proper driving line around the track, including; braking zones, turn-in points, turn apexes, track out points, and where to position the car on each part of the track. This will also give you an opportunity to make sure you know where the corner worker (flag) stations are located around the track. Afterwards, you'll pit and change places. Now it's your turn to drive.

While you're driving, the instructor will initially talk to you each step of the way around the track, helping you learn the line and how to be smooth while doing so. As you progress, the instructor will provide you with periodic input and suggestions on how to improve while on-track. Remember, speed is not the most important thing when learning. It's about learning to be precise, consistent, and learn each turn (they're all different). You will go at

the pace that best fits your experience and your car. Speed will come with time, practice and being smooth.

After each run, you and the instructor will talk about how you did, what you did and where you could improve. Generally the next time out on track the instructor will have you focus initially on something that needs work. Maybe it's a particular turn or your braking etc. It's important to not get overwhelmed by it, so work on things one step at a time.

Between the on track sessions with the instructor and the classroom sessions, you will have the opportunity to learn the following:

- How to drive the proper line of the road course
- How to utilize turn-in, apex, and track-out points for driving the course
- Proper braking, shifting and cornering car control techniques
- Proper seating, hand position on the steering wheel, use of mirrors
- Use of your vision (ocular driving), looking ahead, behind
- Passing zones and no-passing zones on the road course
- Use of proper passing signals and your responsibility in both passing another car, as well as when being passed after giving a passing signal

## **How long will I be on track?**

Generally the run sessions last between 25 to 30 minutes, depending on the event and how the DE day is arranged timing wise. There are usually four run sessions in a DE day. While you aren't on track, you will be attending some classroom instruction, talking with your instructor, checking over your car before the next run, and importantly keeping yourself hydrated. Also, it is not necessary that you stay on-track for the full time. If you feel tired or are losing focus, or just feel like you've done enough, let your instructor know and come into the pit area. If you're by yourself, remember to do the same. Sometimes, especially if it's a very hot day or towards the end of the day, it can get very fatiguing. Be smart, be safe and come in.

## **What's the importance of classroom instruction?**

Classroom instruction is provided for green and yellow run group drivers to first and foremost reinforce what will be going on both on and off track

during the DE. You'll have a classroom session before going out on the track for the first run session. You'll be advised of what you should do and when. You'll be instructed regarding the many aspects of driving the track, including such things as; car dynamics and control, driving the track and its driving line, where are the braking zones, the passing zones and how / where to give passing signals, corner worker stations and the various flags used by the corner workers to control the cars on-track. You'll be given a chance to ask questions and talk about how each run session went and if there are things that should be done differently during the next run.

At some DEs, classroom sessions are also given for the advanced run groups. Such sessions, offer instruction into specific aspects of driving, which giving the drivers an opportunity to share their thoughts about the run session, the track and how best to drive it.

That brings up an important point, learn from one another. Talk to the other drivers, ask questions, and learn. Have fun, share the experience. That's what it's about.

## **What do I do when I arrive at the track?**

At the entrance (main gate) to the track facility, you will sign the track's waiver form. You then proceed to the road course track infield area, where all drivers are to park their cars. Each track facility is different, in that some have garages for your use (first come first served) and others don't. Once you decide on where you want to park, go to registration (usually the track side building near the pit area) and sign in. You will need to sign the PCA waiver form, get the final run group assignments, find out who's your instructor, and signup for any work assignments (sometimes required). Return to your car and spread your tarp on the ground close to the car and empty all loose items out of the car. This includes floor mates, etc. Look under the seats for loss objects. Place your car numbers on the car. Do a final self check of the car, regarding items on the tech inspection form. Next is to take you car to final tech inspection. Be sure to bring your signed/stamped tech form and helmet with you in the car to the tech line. After tech inspection, park your car and try to locate your instructor to introduce yourself and make sure he knows where you're parked. Soon there will be the drivers meeting and then your first classroom session before going out on track. Be sure to carefully check the schedule to know when

you're to be in class and when you're to be getting ready, staging and on track.

### **Fuel and air?**

It is best if you fill up on gas before going to the track. Try to do it the night before, as you will want up and out and to the track early in the morning. There is fuel sold at most tracks, but it is very expensive. There is usually an air hose available should you need to adjust tire pressures.

### **Food / drinks?**

There is food facilities at most tracks. You should try to have a some breakfast before coming to the track. Bring snacks and lots of water or juice drinks with you for throughout the day. It is very important to keep yourself well hydrated. Driving takes a lot out of you, especially in the hot weather. No alcoholic beverages are allowed. For lunch you can either eat at the tracks facilities, bring something for lunch or go into town for lunch. These options all work for DEs where there are professional flaggers and the track is shutdown for an hour at 12 noon, which is the case at New Jersey Motorsports Park.

### **What to bring to the track?**

This subject is covered in a separate write up. By all means bring yourself with a mindset ready to learn, be safe and have fun. Bring a safe car that you're thoroughly familiar with its operation. Please leave all issues, attitudes or problems at the main gate.