

Autocross – What It Is and How You Enjoy It!

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1. What is Autocross:

Autocross is a competitive sport that tests a driver's ability to navigate a course defined by cones or pylons usually set up on an airfield or large parking lot. It is a timed event where speeds usually range from 40 mph to 60 mph with a lap generally taking about 40- 60 seconds. Courses are generally run in second gear. It is a test of driver skill and is done in a much safer environment than found at a race track such as Infineon or Thunder Hill. There are no concrete walls to hit or dangerous obstacles, only rubber cones. Unlike a race track that may have up to 15 turns, a typical autocross course will generally have double that amount. Turn inputs come much quicker as well. There is no safer and fun way to test the handling of your Porsche at the limit.

2. Preparing for Your First Event:

A. Getting Started:

- 1) Prepare your Car: Take a few moments to check all of your fluid levels, oil, brake, and coolant fluid prior to the event. Check your tire pressures to make sure they are at factory specs and make sure your tires have plenty of tread, no less than 2/32nd of an inch of tread. You may also want to check with your Porsche service provider to see if they can perform a basic safety inspection prior to the event. Many service providers will provide this at no charge as a courtesy.
- 2) Remove all loose items in your glove box and trunk as these items can get loose on course and present a danger. Loose items would include garage door openers, water bottles, computers and I pads, cell phones, tennis racquets and sporting equipment. Make sure your spare tire (if equipped) and battery are securely fastened.
- 3) Bring some sun screen, a hat, and wear comfortable clothing. Shoes must be closed toe, no sandals. A portable chair is also a great idea as well as an emergency tool kit that could also include an extra quart of oil, coolant and brake fluid.
- 4) Purchase a good tire gauge as your tires will heat up after your first run by 2-5 psi and you will want to adjust pressures following each run.
- 5) If you do not own and approved Schnell-rated helmet, the club has a limited number of loaner helmets that will be issued at the time of registration. Helmets are required safety equipment for all drivers.
- 6) Do some research on what to expect at your first autocross, or contact someone on the club's AX Team for additional information and questions.
- 7) Bring some snacks.
- 8) Water is always provided courtesy of the club.
- 9) Print and complete any pre-registration materials such as waivers and a copy of your registration receipt.
- 10) Get a good night rest.

B. Participants: Any person, 18 years or older and who carries a valid California driver's license may participate.

C. Register for The Event:

- 1) SVR encourages all participants to pre-register. If you register late you may be put on the waiting list. Though our events are open to all enthusiasts, priority is given to SVR and PCA members in good standing. Normally, registration opens 30 days prior to a scheduled event.
- 2) Day of event registration is available at the trailer
- 3) You will be asked to complete the following questions as part of your registration process:
 - a) Are you a SVR or PCA member in good standing
 - b) Will you be able to arrive at 7:30 AM to assist with course set-up.
 - c) Do you have a car number
 - d) What class will you be competing
 - e) Will you be sharing a car with multiple drivers.

D. Fees:

- 1) Registration fees are \$40 for PCA members and \$50 for non-members for advanced registration.
- 2) Registration fees are \$45 for PCA members and \$50 for non-members who register at the event.
- 3) Registration preference is given to PCA members

3. Arriving for the Event:

A. Check-in and Registration:

- 1) Check in an registration will be done at the SVR trailer.
- 2) If you have registered but not paid, our check in personnel will take your payment. Cash or check. No credit cards accepted.
- 3) You will be required to sign up for a run group and course work assignment if not pre-assigned in which case you will be informed.
- 4) If you are in one of the two early run groups, you will be asked to grid your car for tech inspection at either the A or B grid.
- 5) You will complete a tech or score card which will include: name, address, phone number, email address, car number and class, type of car, and color. This completed card will then be placed on your car's windshield for tech inspection.
- 6) If you do not own a helmet the club provides a limited number of approved safety helmets. You will be required to leave your driver's license as a security deposit which will be returned when you return the helmet at the end of the event.

4. Tech Inspection: Once on grid with your score card placed on your windshield, your car will be inspected by a volunteer tech inspector. Should you fail the inspection, you will not be allowed to participate in the event until the safety issues are corrected to the satisfaction of the tech inspector. If you pass, the tech inspector will keep your tech card, sign the back of your tech card and turn it into the scoring team. You are good to go!

5. Course Walk: We encourage all novice and experienced drivers to do a course walk prior to the driver's meeting. The course walk allows driver's to preview the course and plan their approach to each turn, apex and slalom. Though a rookie course walk will also be conducted, the more times you walk the course, the better your understanding of the challenges presented and the approach to each turn can be planned.

6. Drivers' Meeting: A mandatory driver's meeting is conducted prior to the start of each event. At the driver's meeting the autocross chair will go over basic safety rules and the general itinerary of the day's competition to include:

- A. Rules governing our site use including restricted areas, access and procedures should an airplane land or taxi near our site.
- B. Safety
- C. Danger zones
- D. Flags
- E. Cone Penalties
- F. Timing, run groups and the number of runs per run group
- G. Course worker safety and the use of radios. Your responsibility
- H. Driver and instructor pairings

7. Rookie Course Walk:

Prior to the start of the event, a rookie course walk will be conducted by the club's chief driving instructor. This is also highly recommended for novices and experienced autocrossers. During the course walk, the instructor will be discussing how to approach the course, breaking zones, apexes, and other challenges presented in the course design. He or she will also point out how apexes are marked, directional versus boundary cones, and the best approach to a slalom segment. *The rookie course walk is a must for the first timer.*

A course map is usually provided and provides an invaluable tool for all drivers to study and to plan their approach to the course. With as many as 15 plus turns, it is a benefit to put to memory the flow of the course.

8. Run Groups: The number of run groups is dependent on the number of cars participating. Usually there are no more than three run groups of 20 cars and no fewer than two run groups per event. The order in which each run group competes, runs and rests is determined by the AX chairperson and announced at the driver's meeting.

9. Hot Lap Format: SVR runs hot laps with no warm-up runs. Each run group will generally participate in 4-5 laps and get approximately 8-10 timed laps per event. Your best time of the day will be recorded for event finishes and count towards points' credit for yearend awards.

10. Once the Competition Starts:

- A. If you are not running in the first group and are working or resting, watch other cars on course. Watch their lines, braking points, where they exit their turns and where/how they apply throttle.
- B. Watch other driver's line and how they are approaching the entry and exit to each turn.

11. It's Now Your Turn:

A. Your run group is on grid and ready for your first run.

- 1) All windows are to be lowered prior to entering the course as per PCA regulations
- 2) If your car is equipped with PSM, it is recommended you turn it off each time you run.
- 3) If your car is equipped with PASM, it is recommended you set it to "sport"

- 4) If your AC is running, it is recommended it be turned off.
- 5) The grid volunteer is the safety and control volunteer who will direct you on grid and onto the start line. Pay attention and follow his or her instructions. They are the traffic cops and control the flow of cars onto the course.
- 6) Once instructed onto the start line, the starter will direct you to your start position.
- 7) You will sit at the start until it is safe to enter the course, at which time the starter will flag you to proceed. You will not proceed onto the course unless flagged and authorized to do so by the starter. Prior to the start, the starter will want you to acknowledge you are ready to enter the course by pointing his finger or flag at you in response to which you will raise your hand to acknowledge.

B. *You are on course:*

If you are a novice or first-timer, you are likely to have an instructor riding along. Listen carefully to his or her instructions. Take your time and don't try to get a fast time out of the gate on your first run. Use moderate throttle. Be smooth versus fast. It is more important to learn the line and the course. Most autocross courses can be quite intimidating to the novice as all they see is a sea of cones. It is more important to get a feel for the course and not receive a "DNF" (Did Not Finish) as a result of missing a turn or getting lost! Be patient and listen to your instructor.

C. *Exiting the Course:*

At the exit, a volunteer will be seated at the finish line and will give you a "timing slip" which will indicate the time it took you to complete the course and any penalties you may have incurred. You must receive a timing slip and stop at this check point or you will receive a DNF. You will then place your car on grid at the exact location you gridded to start the run until you are called upon for your next run.

12. Course Worker Stations:

- A. Scoring – Two person station with responsibility of recording lap times on driver score sheets
- B. Timing – Responsible for calling out lap times, re-setting timer, and notifying chair of any issues related to failures of the timing system.
- C. Starter – Responsible for flagging or starting cars on course when safe. Generally when a car is half way through a course when doing a hot lap format.
- D. Timing Slips – Responsible for recording driver lap time on timing slip and presenting to driver before leaving course
- E. Course Worker – Responsible for reporting cone penalties and resetting of cones on course. It is critical that you watch the cars from the moment they enter your corner to the moment they exit. Failure to pay attention leads to inaccurate cone penalties or lack of reporting.
- F. Course Worker Communication – Responsible for recording cone penalties and notifying scoring, initiating red flags, and notifying course workers of downed cones not re-set
- G. Announcer – Responsible for announcing lap times with driver names and commentary
- H. Grid – Controls traffic in grid allowing no more than one car at the start and up to two cars in grid ready. All other cars will remain in the grid parked positions

13. Cleanup: All participants are asked to stay until the end of the event to assist with course breakdown and loading the trailer.

14. Driving Techniques:

- A. Hand position on steering wheel: Grip the steering wheel at the 9 and 3 o'clock position for the best control
- B. Your seating position should be close enough that when you stretch your arms over the steering wheel, your wrists are touching the wheel. In competitive driving, your seating position is generally closer to the steering wheel than street settings.
- C. Secure your seat belts snugly to prevent you from shifting in your seat during high speed turning.
- D. Look ahead and not at your bumper. At speeds of 40-60 mph you are actually moving at 36 feet per second and in the sport of autocross, this is just a blink of the eye.
- E. Learn to feather your throttle as well as how to hit the pedal to the metal.
- F. Learn to modulate your breaking as well as when to maximize your stoppers and initiate your ABS.
- G. Hit the apexes whether late or early.
- H. Hit your braking points and always attempt to brake in a straight line.
- I. Get on the throttle at exit, but not until your car is pointed straight ahead.
- J. Don't over grip the steering wheel with the "death grip" as your steering wheel is the conduit for feeling what your front tires are doing
- K. Be smooth!

15. Competition, PAX and Year End Awards:

SVR hosts an annual competition for all SVR only members, based on an index called PAX. PAX is a handicap system which seeks to equalize competition among competitors based on the modifications made to their cars and to provide a handicap system which seeks to equalize drivers running on R compound tires, have highly modified cars and other criteria. SVR uses the Golden Gate Regions classification system for classifying cars and to determine the PAX index assigned to each vehicle. Use this link to classify your car: http://classification.pca-ggr.org/classification_2010/web/index.php.

Year-end awards will be presented to those competitors who have competed in at least 4 events during the season in both men's and women's classes.

16. Guests and Passengers: Guests are welcome to come to our events to observe the activities but will be required to pre-register and sign a releases waiver. Only qualified instructors, approved by SVR staff will be allowed to be passengers in cars which are participating in the day's event.

17. Safety: Safety is the top priority of all SVR Autocross events and is as important as the fun you are having at the event. Therefore it is paramount to our mission to not only provide a fun event but one that is safe for participants as well as their vehicles. You are required to abide by all safety rules set forth by the guidelines provided by PCA national as well as to adhere to all guidelines required by Mather Field and our use permit.

18. More Information: Check out PCA National's Autocross Information by [clicking here](#).