

When you show up for your first autoX, what will you find? If you're expecting a well-organized arrival, with helpful people directing your every move, you'd best think again. What you'll do is arrive, sign in at the gate, get your wrist-band and follow the car that was in front of you past the drag strip to the parking area. This is the "paddock" (1) where you'll park your car when you're not racing. There could easily be 130 cars parked here, with any luck you'll be close to other club members. Once parked you'll empty everything that's not bolted down out of your car, put the numbers on it and get your car ready for tech inspection (2). These are Tom's & Rich's Miatas in the Paddock, we're all set & ready to get inspected.



Once you're parked in the paddock, you can hang out with the rest of the racers & drool over all of the fun cars (3) but you should turn around & head to the trailer to get signed in (4). It's a good walk to the trailer, some of us use bikes or scooters to get around.

(4) You're looking through the now empty grid area out towards the course and no, those golf carts are not available for our use. Tech inspection will soon be set up in this area. The autoX course winds around through the grass in the distance.

The trailer that you'll need to sign in at is out in the grass, past the green trailer that you see in the picture, we really do have a huge area to play in.

Some of us like to have our cars tech inspected first & then sign in, others will sign in first & then tech the car. Doesn't matter which is done first, as long as both are done.

You'll have to allow time to walk the course as well, but as long as you don't spend too much time hanging out in the paddock you'll be fine. Feel free to stop anyone & ask if you have questions, everyone is friendly & helpful.

Next you can either get your car tech inspected, or go check in at the trailer. We usually try to get the inspection out of the way first, then check in. (5) You'll need to have your car prepped to race, no loose items in the cockpit or trunk, floor mats out & your helmet ready to inspect as well. Your car numbers will be on the doors as per the rules...the white car will be sent away since he does not have numbers on his car.

When your Miata has passed inspection, you'll get a sticker on the windshield and on your helmet.

If you do not have a helmet there are loaner helmets (with free liners for you to use) available. (6) Some of us have extra helmets that you can borrow too and if you want your own you can get a nice one for under \$200 from Summit Racing.

All tech inspected & legal to race? Great, now go park your car in the paddock where you've left the pile of everything that you took out of it. (nobody will bother your pile)

Time to get signed in at the trailer & then do the course walk. After a nice healthy walk you'll arrive at "The Trailer", (7) check in with the helpful people in the trailer and then head out to walk the track...but don't forget that if you still need to get your car inspected to do that, or you won't be able to race it.

After the course walk, you'll be back at the trailer for the driver's meeting where you'll learn when you are running.

Rookies get a special tour guided by experienced racers who'll give you clues about how to drive the course. (8) Rookies gathered together at the staging line to drink in the wisdom of the experienced autocrossers. There's much more to this than just mashing the throttle to the floor & this is the first lesson.

As soon as the Rookie tour is over, it's time to gather back at the trailer for the driver's meeting. (9) This is when you'll be told all that you need to know about the day's event, most importantly you'll find out when you're actually racing. You'll also find a diagram of the course (10) If you're racing in the first heat, you'll need to go get your car to grid, otherwise it's time to relax & watch the other racers.





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At this stage you are signed in and your car is inspected, you've done the course walk and attended the drivers meeting. You should also know what run group you're in...if you've missed any of these, you need to get to the trailer & talk to an official ASAP.

With everything done, it's time to either get your car to grid or to relax & watch the action. All rookies will be running at the same time, so be sure to report to grid (don't forget your car & helmet) when the rookies are scheduled to race. (11 & 12)



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There will be someone to guide you at the grid, watch for the crazy man waving his arms...he's really trying to line up the cars for an organized grid. From here you'll be sent up to the starting line. Watch where you're parked & try to get back in the same position when you're done with your run, but don't worry if you don't.



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The person who is directing traffic at the grid will help you get parked correctly and then will direct you to the starting line when it's your turn to move up. Don't hesitate to ask questions of the grid person or other competitors. Everyone is helpful.

Once directed by the grid person to move up to the starting line (13), you'll follow the car in front of you, you will normally be in a line of several cars and will wait a short while for your turn to start. Now is the time to double check your seat belt & helmet, making sure that both are secure.

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The starting line is actually short of the timer so you'll have a few feet to build momentum before tripping the actual timer for your run. The starter will hold you until there is a safe distance between the car in front of you and your car, watch him closely and be ready to go when he gives you the "go" signal.

Remember that your time does not start until you cross the timer several feet in front of you. If you're a bit slow to "go" when given the signal, no harm done.

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You may actually be on the course with several other cars, but there will be a considerable distance between those cars and yours, so the chance of contact with them is just about zero. Still, things can go wrong, cars can spin out & stall or just stop for no reason....be sure to watch the corner workers & if you see a red flag being held out STOP, once any problem is cleared you'll be waved on. Once you've stopped & been waved on, drive quickly & exit the track through the finish line.

Of course, the object is to drive around the cones as fast as you can, stay close to the cones as you go around them and have fun! If you hit a cone that'll add 2 seconds to your time...you want the lowest time possible so don't hit any cones. Your time will be displayed on the display board (15) that will be set up near the trailer, you can read it after you pass the finish line, but don't stop to admire your time, since there will be a car coming in behind you. Times are also broadcast live on FM radio and via a smart phone app that'll show all results for the day.

So, what could go wrong???? Despite what can often go wrong when those words are used, out here the answer is...."not much".

- 1) You can be as slow as the rest of us are.
- 2) You might hit a cone (or as many as 6 or 7, depends on how bad your aim is).
- 2) You might spin, but as the old racing adage goes, "If you're not spinning, you won't be winning"...meaning that you're not trying hard enough if you don't occasionally try a little to hard & lose it. This would be a "whee, Daddy....do it again" moment.
- 3) You might slide off the track into the grass for another "whee, Daddy....do it again" moment.
- 4) You might get addicted & want to keep coming back.

## Below....how not to approach the last turn to the finish line



Two problems here; 1, our Subaru driver has too much speed, in order to be fast on the autocross course, you sometimes have to slow down & keep your car under control. He's turned to the right, trying to clear the cone on the right. 2, Notice that his passenger has an arm out the window...this is an immediate disqualification and the run is not counted. If you are a passenger, keep all of your appendages in the car!



So with locked brakes he flattens some cones and slides off the track coming to a stop in the grass, the worst damage is to his ego...but that happens to all of us.



After a few carefully chosen words of "wisdom" he's back for his next run & does a much better job with this corner.



