

# **A Quick Reference Guide to Prepping your Miata for AutoX**

Prepping your Miata for autocross, for some newbie competitors means buying wheels, tires, new shocks & springs, brakes, wings, spoilers, seats, doing all sorts of engine work.....and yeah, generally going nuts, spending a fortune & then finding themselves unable to drive the beast they've built. This is a highly unrealistic plan and completely unnecessary too.

What is really the way to get started, is to start in a stock class & learn to drive what you have now. Stock Miatas are a blast to drive as-is from the factory and are perfect autocross toys. Simply stated, for your first couple of times trying autocross, do the very least that you have to do to make your car safe. Being safe is always at the top of the list and should never be ignored.

For the stock classes the basic prep is pretty much limited to making sure that your car is up to snuff mechanically, good tires, brakes & all fluids in good shape, all mechanical parts (battery, spare tire, jack) are bolted in tight & everything that will not be removed from your car before a race is bolted in tight and will not come loose.

Often overlooked is tire pressure. You'll generally want to raise the pressure a bit, the idea being to reduce tire roll over when cornering. How much you'll raise the pressure depends on what you're normally setting the tire pressure at, what type and size tires you have and how much roll over you get on the course. Many racers mark the sidewall of their tires with chalk or tire crayons so they can see how far the tires are rolling. But figure on 32 - 34 lbs all around & bring a pressure gauge, so that you can experiment by dropping pressures if you're not happy with the higher pressures. Also, be sure that your wheel lug nuts are properly torqued, for Miatas this means 85-90 lb. ft.

Going one step farther into the autocross prep will have you getting a custom alignment, the alignment specs from the factory are so wide that you could probably have tires pointing in different directions & still be "in spec". Join Miata.net & read about alignments in the appropriate forum for your model (NA, NB, NC or ND) Miata. A good custom alignment costs about \$100. For example, I paid Parrish McIntyre \$85 for an alignment & was able to work with the tech out in the shop as he did the alignment. This is the best investment that you can make, don't settle for an alignment that is "in spec".

As you start to get comfortable on the autocross track & are going faster, you'll find that you *might* want to upgrade your tires, anti-sway bars and brakes. The key word is "might". Tom, as a good example is competitive & having fun with a perfectly stock ND with tires, suspension and brakes right from Mazda.

You, as the driver, are the most important prep item in successful autocross driving. A good driver can make a "bad" car faster than a "good" car with a so-so driver. The Akron Sports Car Club does beginning of the year driver's clinics each year & it's a great place for a newbie to start. After some driver education, it's seat time, go autocrossing as often as possible and talk to experienced drivers. Follow experienced drivers around during the course walk & ask questions. You're also encouraged to ride along with experienced drivers, just ask any of us, you're welcome to ride along...just don't barf in our car. ;~)