

Attending Your First Practice Event.

Disclaimer:

This article is meant to serve as a general rule of thumb, and merely suggest some of the actions one may take in preparing for their first USD practice event. As each venue is different, please use your best judgment and follow all rules pertaining to safety.

Pre-Registration:

Most practice events are announced several months in advance, however, certain events may be announced with shorter notice due to an opening at a venue. The registration for practice events is generally available at least one month in advance. Majority of the practice events are scheduled on weekends, however, during summer months, we have been known to hold weekday events, so be sure to check the date before registering. For specific details regarding registration, please visit or contact the USD chapter for the event you are planning on attending.

Supplies:

Most of the items you will need you can most likely can think of off the top of your head. But no matter how hard you try to think of everything, you will most likely forget something simple. That's where we try to help by giving you some common items we recommend you bring to every event.

- Water or any other liquids that will hydrate you (i.e. Gatorade).
- Meals and snacks; generally there are places to eat nearby, but sometimes we hold events in the middle of nowhere.
- Extra clothes to accommodate changes in weather throughout the day. We hold events in the snow, rain, and sun, so be sure to plan accordingly.
- Sun block, even during the cold months the asphalt can still act as a mirror.
- Tents/canopies will aid in blocking the elements (don't forget anchors).
- Helmet with a rating of at least M-95 or SA-95 is ok for parking lot events. However, for track events, only a SA-2000 will pass tech.
- Tires, lots and lots of tires. You don't want to go home early because you didn't bring enough tires to the event. And make sure to leave one set aside to drive home on.
- Tools, you never know when something may come loose, broken, or need to be adjusted.
- Jack and tire iron, you'd be surprised how many people forget one.
- AAA membership in case your car needs a tow, plus the other discounts offered by being member has its benefits.

Before the Event:

Pack all of your equipment in advance, this way in case you overlook something you forgot to buy or replace, you have ample time to correct the problem. Pre-tech your car and make sure everything on your car will pass prior to the event. You don't want to drive all that way only to find out your car is not allowed on track. You can download a copy of our technical inspection guidelines from the USD website and review the list on your own. If you have questions concerning the condition of your car or the technical inspection guidelines, feel free to contact the event director for the event you plan on attending in advance.

Day before the Event:

Be sure to get lots of sleep. A day outside in the sun (or other elements) can be tiring. You want to make sure you are alert and at 100% of your abilities.

Arriving at the Event:

Be on time. Certain venues have specific gate times, so be sure to check the event details concerning when you can arrive. There are 40+ other drivers at most events; and as much as you mean to us, the show must go on, even in your absence.

At each event, there will be a designated area for participant parking called the paddock. Once there, you should unload your car and prepare it for technical inspection. Do not leave valuables or any other important items unattended. Even though theft is virtually unheard of at our events, there is a first time for everything and we'd hate for it to be you.

Registration/Tech:

The registration booth will be located in the paddock and is usually set up with a tent. You must check in here first. Be sure to bring your valid driver's license to verify your name, age, and entry. If you are pre-registered, they will have your information on file and all you need to do is check in, sign the waiver, get a wristband, and obtain your tech sheet. If you need to register, you will have to fill out an event entry form and then check in, sign the waiver, get a wristband, and obtain your tech sheet.

Depending on the venue, there will either be a designated tech location or a walking technical inspection. At designated locations, drivers will simply drive their cars to the tech spot similar to a drive through and the tech inspectors will perform the inspection. A walking tech is where tech inspectors will walk around the paddock and tech all cars with their tech sheets pinned under their windshield wipers (designating their car is ready to be inspected). It is your responsibility to make sure your car is ready to be tech'ed at an event and is done so prior to the driver's meeting.

Course Walk:

Course walks are highly recommended. You will have plenty of time to drift once you learn the course. Many times drivers just assume they know the course or can learn it on their own. Although a select few may be able to do this, it is in everyone's best interest for every driver to be prepared. If drivers do not take the time to walk the course and learn it prior to their first run, they may end up off course or knocking over cones using up valuable track time that could have been prevented with a course walk.

Driver's Meeting:

Driver's meetings are MANDATORY. Driver meetings will discuss the format of the event, issues that must be addressed, rules, etc... You must attend them, even if you have been to every event we have ever held. If you have questions, don't be afraid to ask them. Other drivers may have the same questions as you and this way they can all be addressed together. If you would like an instructor to assist you or ride with you, this is also the perfect opportunity to request one, as during the course of the day they may be preoccupied with other drivers or duties.

Lining Up:

When your group is called to the starting grid, be sure that you have your helmet with you. Make sure you have your wristband on and your tech sticker on your windshield. When you are approximately 2 to 3 cars back from the starting grid worker, be sure to have your seatbelt/harness and helmet securely fastened.

On Course:

Once on course, stay on course. If you find yourself out of control or off course, come to a safe and controlled stop. Once you have regained control of the car, if you went slightly off track simply return to the course or look for direction from an official if you are lost. If you hit a cone, do not stop to fix it, we have course workers for this. Please do not aim for the cones on purpose either.

Flags:

The most common two flags you will see at practice events are yellow and red flags. Yellow flags alert you of a potential hazard ahead and to stay alert and take caution. It may be ok by the time you get there, however, if not a red flag will be waved. Red flags alert you to come to a safe and controlled stop. There is either a car in front of you that has spun or some other hazard that may affect your run. Once the official that waved the red flag gives you the ok, you may continue your run.

End of the Day:

At the end of the day, we ask you to please clean up after yourself. Just like you, we too are tired from a long day of fun, and the last thing we want to do is stay late and clean up. Besides, if we do not leave the venue in the same condition as we found it, we may not be asked to return for another event.

We hope that you will enjoy your first event and that you will return for many more. As with anything, practice makes perfect. So if you didn't do as well as you thought you would, don't give up. We are always willing to help you progress, so don't hesitate to ask for assistance. We also welcome your comments and suggestions on how we can make each event better.

Regards,

U.S.Drift