

NASCC Road Racing tutorial for Race License Applicants



Club road racing is grassroots motorsports, open to anyone, and almost any kind of car, from Chryslers to Toyotas, Porsches and formula cars. There are a large number of classes that accommodate many types of cars, requiring varying levels of preparation. To join in the fun you will need a competition licence, a race car, and the required safety gear. This article provides some of the basic information you will need to start going racing.

Road racing is sanctioned by the Western Canadian Motorsports Association (WCMA), so a WCMA competition license (a race licence) is required. The Alberta races are organized by the Northern Alberta Sports Car Club (NASCC) and run at RAD Torque Raceway, in Nisku, near the Edmonton International Airport. A new venue at Rocky Mountain Motorsports Park (RMM) opened recently, with WCMA races there organized by ARCA. A WCMA Competition License and High Performance Driving School is offered by the NASCC in early April/May. Other schools are also accepted as a route to a license, but you should check with the WCMA license official to determine which schools those are.

The NASCC licensing school is open to all who have a driver's license, or a learner's permit with permission from both parents. It is a required school for those who wish to begin road racing, and for those who have not had a WCMA or equivalent competition license in the past two years. For those taking the school to race this year we recommend you read this NASCC Road Racing Tutorial. It has information about the school event, plus more about racing, race cars, classes, sources of equipment, etc..

The Competition Race Licence School

This year's one day licensing school consists of Zoom classroom sessions on Thursday evening, and several live class sessions on Saturday (or Sunday, depending) covering the fundamentals of going fast, some of the specifics of racing, interspersed with on track exercises and full track lapping. You will be assigned an instructor, who will watch your progress from the corners, and while circulating on the track with you in their own car, then provide specific feedback at the end of each session. The classroom sessions discuss technical aspects of high speed driving including topics such as cornering, weight transfer, tire grip and optimization, aspects of competition including safety, flag recognition, and rolling starts. There is also some discussion on safety gear.

You will drive the full track with an instructor in their own car, performing lead and follow exercises with you, to learn the fastest line around the track, braking points, smoothness, and other essential skills.

The intent of the school is to provide a fundamental understanding of the knowledge and skills required to drive a closed course race track at high speeds safely and with confidence. With the full track lapping, you will be driving your car for at speed for 140 minutes, *so come with a full gas tank.*

The License

A Competition License is acquired when the applicant submits proof of successful completion of a recognized school, such as the NASCC conducted WCMA school, along with a completed application form, a medical form, an annual waiver and the necessary fees to the WCMA. The WCMA governs driver licensing in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba for Amateur Road Racing as the regional FIA sanctioning body. The license fee due to the WCMA is \$100, payable upon application.

Registration

Register for the school through the Motorsport Reg page of the Northern Alberta Sports Car Club (NASCC) at this link: <http://nascc.motorsportreg.com/>

To look at a set of pdf files with valuable information about the school, schedule, how to prepare and what to expect, use the link below.

<https://nascc.ab.ca/roadracing/school/>

If you have any questions, please email: nascc.events@gmail.com .

Vehicle

You will be providing your own car for the school, and there are some requirements. First, you do not need to take the school in a race car. A car with a manual transmission is preferred, but not essential, as shifting is an important part of track driving. Please do not bring an SUV or a pickup truck, as these vehicles are too large and heavy to safely complete the school. Some Porsche and BMW Sport Activity Vehicles can be used, but you must check with the School Registrar, nascc.events@gmail.com

Your car must be in appropriate condition for high speed driving. The car and trunk must be cleared of any loose contents, the tires must be in very good condition, with air pressure checked before arrival, and brakes and other mechanical aspects of the car must also be in good condition. Please check oil, coolant and all other mechanical aspects of your car before arriving.

Further requirements

You require a vehicle, a helmet and warm and cool clothes - you will be standing outside on many occasions and should dress in layers, so you can adapt to conditions. Wear shoes that are comfortable and not “clunky” in order to feel the pedals. Conditions are variable, from thunderstorms to baking hot sun, and everything in between. We run in all conditions, except when lightning is nearby.

Your helmet – a Snell approved helmet, with an SA rating, such as SA 2015, 2020 or 2025 (if available) is preferred, but for purposes of the school only, a Snell SA 2005, 2010, or Snell rated motorcycle helmet (M) is acceptable. If you are planning on racing, you will need a SA 2015, or more recent, approved helmet for competition.

Cost

2025 School registration: \$365.00

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Signing up for the school grants you membership in the NASCC for the year you take the school. If you already are a member, you need to indicate this when signing up for the school. You must be a member of NASCC or another WCMA affiliated club to get a race license. The License fee is \$100.00 and is paid only when you submit your license application to WCMA after passing the school. This will be explained during the school classroom sessions; only the School registration fee is payable at this time.

Find Out More

If you are undecided about racing consider coming out to watch the races on a weekend, or better, to work as a corner marshal. As a Corner Marshall you get a great view of what wheel to wheel racing is all about. If you want advice about what you are getting into contact the NASCC Club through our email, nascc.events@gmail.com. In normal times, we meet on the first Wednesday of every month, and the club members always welcome new attendees. Through email, or at the meetings, you can also connect with an experienced racer to help you learn the ropes, and anticipate the challenges of going racing.

The Ride:

Once you have made the decision to race, the next step is to acquire a race car. This is a big step, and needs to be done with a lot of thought.

The first step is to read both of the
WCMA TECHNICAL REGULATIONS
WCMA SPORTING REGULATIONS
found here <https://www.wcma.ca/racing/>

These regulations define all class rules, safety requirements and define what you can and cannot do to your car, as well as explaining the structure of racing, codes of conduct, and general race organization. Reading and understanding these rules BEFORE you either build or buy a race car will help you avoid a lot of problems down the road. It is far easier and cheaper to build or buy a race car that fits into a recognized class, than to build a car and try and fit it into a class after it is completed. Class rules are clear, but strict, in order to have even and level competition in each class. *Read first*, then build. After reading the rules, you may wish to attend a club meeting or come out to the race track to discuss the rules with others who have some insight into questions you may have.

Building a car often begins with stripping the interior, adding a roll-cage and making whatever other modifications allowed by the rules of the class you have chosen to run in. Buying a race car is somewhat easier, but the car will still have to fit WCMA Class preparation rules. Race cars from different regions are often built to different rules, so, once again, *read the rules first*. One thing to keep in mind is that race cars do not sell fast, and so whatever you choose, you will want to be happy with it, or be able to modify it until you are happy.

Race cars for sale may be found locally, through WCMA, NASCC or other web sites, as well as through many other clubs and groups in Canada and the U.S. Race cars even show up on eBay Motors (other/race car), Facebook Market Place, Kijiji and Craigslist.

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Race Classes

Choosing a racing class is important in terms of who your competitors are, and the way your car will handle and accelerate. There are Vintage (V) and Open Wheel (OW) groups, as well as various Closed Wheel (CW) classes. Closed Wheel simply means cars with fenders, while Open Wheel classes are Formula type cars. Vintage Cars are as the name suggests, older race cars whose drivers prefer to race with other older cars.

In CW, you can choose between several Grand Touring (GT) or Improved Touring (IT) classes. The classes are based upon the power to weight ratio of your car, but the faster that ratio, the more modifications allowed. These are described in the WCMA Technical Regulations. Power to weight measurements are described in the WCMA Technical regulations.

There is also a Spec Miata class currently included by WCMA. A Spec class is one in which all the cars are of the same make and model, and all prepared to the same specifications. Spec classes limit the amount of modification, and therefore limit cost, and create racing that is more dependant on driver skill. Spec Miata (SM) follows the tried and true formula used in the US, and is now our largest race class. We follow the SCCA Spec Miata class preparation rules, with modifications for tire choice.

A Run Group is a group of cars that go out on track together. In sports car road racing there are often several classes on the track at the same time during a race, and the drivers are not racing for position and scoring with every other car, only with the cars in their class. Cars in the Vintage class usually run in their own group, as do Open Wheel cars. Closed Wheel cars may all run together, or they may be broken into smaller groups, depending on attendance on any given race weekend. Examples include running most GT1-3 cars in one run group, GT4 and IT1 & IT2 in another, and Spec Miata in a third. There are races in which all cars on the track are competing with each other, such as King of the Road Endurance races, which are longer races. The grouping of cars on the track will depend on race entries and other factors.

Safety Equipment

A variety of safety items are required on the race car, and these are outlined in the WCMA TECHNICAL REGULATIONS. The information below is a guideline only and is not comprehensive, you need to READ the Regulations to have accurate information.

The vehicle items: include, but are not limited to a roll cage, a 5 or 6 point approved race harness, a fire extinguisher, window netting, easily accessible tow points, competition numbers and class designations, amongst others.

The Driver requires: a fire retardant *one-piece* fire retardant race suit, that is SFI or FIA approved. Approved gloves and boots or race shoes and a Nomex balaclava are required as well. No polyester, rayon or similar highly flammable synthetic should be worn as any part of your attire. A helmet specifically for automotive Motorsports is required, a motorcycle helmet (an M class helmet) is not satisfactory and will not pass technical inspection. Currently (Feb 2025) Snell Foundation approved SA 2015 and SA 2020 helmets are accepted, but the 2010 SA or earlier have expired and are not acceptable. Helmets with a 2025 rating are accepted, but may not be available yet.

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Motorsports Supplies (Colin Leigh-Spencer) in Edmonton runs a racing supply operation, as does Shawn Bishop of Rallysport.ca in Calgary. Racing Safety gear such as suits, gloves, helmets, shoes, etc are also sometimes available at several locations, including JB Automotive and Mopac.

Getting to the track.

If your car is still roadworthy, licensed and insured, you can drive it to the race track. If it does not survive the weekend you can always get help getting home from the other competitors. You can flat tow the car, with all four wheels on the ground, using an A-frame tow bar available from places like ABC Muffler and Hitch or Princess Auto. However, if all four wheels are on the ground the car must be licensed for the road, even though you are towing it. You can use a tow dolly, which puts two wheels on the dolly, in which case the car does not need to be licensed. You can also use a car hauling trailer, either open or enclosed. A tow dolly can be rented from U-Haul or Budget, and trailers are rented by trailer companies listed in the on-line yellow pages. Used trailers are always available. Tow dollies are more easily stored, but are not that great a bargain compared to the price of a trailer.

Racing

A TYPICAL RACE SCHEDULE: Often drivers will bring their cars to the track the evening before the race weekend, while the events actually start on Saturday morning with registration and technical inspection cars and safety equipment. (If you fail tech and do not enter the race track, a refund on registration is possible, once you enter the race track there is no refund for any reason.) There is a mandatory Drivers Meeting before the first practice of the weekend, then race qualifying sessions, followed by a lunch break. The Driver's Meeting will cover safety issues, pertinent driver information, and changes in run groups. Around 1 pm, a cycle of race events starts, with each run group taking their turn on track. Then the cycle is repeated one or two more times, depending on weather and race scheduling. The following day is similar, with podium presentations at the end of racing on Sunday.

GRIDS: Cars are usually gridded on the basis of the fastest lap they set in the qualifying session, and this typically sets the grid for the entire race weekend, regardless of finishing position in any given heat. The Grid Marshal will tell drivers where to line up.

RACE CLASSES: Cars run in the classes they have declared, although it is sometimes possible to race a car in more than one class, as long as the classes are in different run groups. A single car may be shared among two drivers in different classes, but you must declare this to the Registrar when you go through registration, so that Timing is aware of who is driving the car.

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