

# Everything You Need to Know About DE Driving

By Bill Gilbert

*Note: drivers come to Drivers Education (DE) events because we can drive safely, at speed, on famous race tracks. But we also come to see our friends, meet new people and socialize. This article focuses only on the driving. The social part usually takes care of itself!*

Never driven on track? Done a few events? Lots of events? In every case, this outline can be useful, especially if you use it as a roadmap for learning.

Driving at speed on a racetrack is obviously not a casual event. And it most assuredly is very different than driving on the street. But, despite what may look like a complex sport, there are only a few things to learn. This means a driver can progress rapidly during their first day on track. And it means that experienced drivers must continually refine their technique in these few areas to improve.

Without further ado, here are the fundamentals for every driver. There is plenty of information elsewhere explaining these items; hence the outline format. If you are new to DE, check out "[What's DE?](#)" and "[New to DE](#)" on the NNJR website.

## Before Coming to the Track

- Prepare the car: it has to be safe.
- Prepare yourself
  - Required: you must know the basic rules and procedures spelled out in the Track Pack(s).
  - Recommended: review track map, notes, turn by turn, etc. Set your goal(s) for the event.

## At the Track

- Proper attitude and focus
  - A learning mindset
  - Safety
  - Courtesy
  - Drive within your limits: intense is good, scary is not
- Learn/practice/improve
  1. The Line
  2. Vision
  3. Safety: flags, traffic, situational awareness
  4. Use of controls
  5. Braking
  6. Consistency
  7. Car Control



That's all there is to it! Arrive at the track with the right attitude and learn/refine these seven skills; novice drivers will do fine working on the first four or five.

## **How to Learn/Improve?**

The “what to learn” list above is short: seven skills. But there are many ways to improve since each driver learns in their own unique way. Here is an incomplete list.

Before you get in the car and after you get out:

- Books.
- Classes: lots of tips.
- Video: your own and others (if the others are driving well).
- Data.
- Visualization (mental imagery).

In the car:

- On track “seat time.” Beginners always have an instructor in the right seat to accelerate the learning process.
- Sensory input sessions.
- Riding with good drivers.
- Deliberate practice.
- Autocross and car control clinics.

Both (in car, out of car):

- Instructors and coaches.
- Written goals for each session.
- Notes. Written debrief notes immediately after each session (usually on a track map) help most drivers, at all experience levels from beginner to pro.

To improve your DE driving, pick the approaches that work for you.

*Note: if any of these terms are unfamiliar, learning about them is a good place to start! (e.g. for sensory input sessions or mental imagery, see Ross Bentley's Speed Secrets books, NNJR classroom presentations, etc.)*



### Skill Levels

“In theory, theory and practice are the same. In practice, they are not.”

--Yogi Berra

“It is not always possible to be the best, but it is always possible to improve your performance.”

--Jackie Stewart

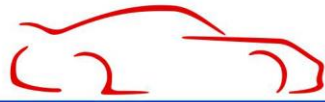
“The advanced stuff is just doing the basics better.”

--Ross Bentley

*Note: the following is meant to be illustrative; it is in no way complete!*

	<b>Beginner</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Solo/Advanced</b>	<b>Pro</b>
<b>Line</b>	Knows basic Reference Points (RP's): Turn In, Apex, Track Out; Uses most/all of the track	Has mental image of each corner; Knows Early, Late and how to respond; Adjusts for traffic and conditions (e.g. wet); Finds own RP's (not cones)	Knows and uses EOB, TAP, FTP/WOT; Experiments with small variations; Learns a new track quickly	Makes real time adjustments based on pace (near/at the limit); On the pace at a new track in first few laps
<b>Vision</b>	Learns to look ahead: “eyes up”; Looks one to two RP's ahead	Has mental image of line, flags, etc.; Looks through cars ahead; Looks where they want to go; Sees flag stations as soon as possible; Eyes 3+ seconds ahead	Has mental image of car attitude; Sees all other cars and situations on and off track; Sees changing track conditions; Eyes 20 seconds ahead	Eyes and brain 30 seconds ahead; Anticipates traffic, track conditions, etc.
<b>Safety</b>	Learns/knows flag meanings and flag stations; Observes flags; Aware of cars close behind; Gives and takes passes safely	Checks mirrors in pass zones; Gives prompt pass signals; Takes efficient passes; responds to all flags	Anticipates passes, gives early passes; Comfortable driving close to other cars, driving off line; Has an “out” for every corner; Never misses a flag	Penalized for going off track or for missing a flag





<b>Use of Controls</b> (gas, brake, steering, shifting)	Avoids jerky motions and rough use of controls	Uses controls in smooth, progressive manner	Uses controls appropriately for each corner, and to assist pace	Balances car at the limit using all controls
<b>Braking</b>	Overcomes street braking habits and applies substantial brake force	Learns/knows how to threshold brake and the importance of brake release	Practices smooth brake release; Avoids too much trail brake; Adjusts car attitude with brake	Imperceptible brake release at full pace
<b>Consistency</b>		Learns to identify consistent corners and techniques	Has a consistent baseline; Uses it to identify areas for improvement	Nearly identical sector and lap times for an entire session
<b>Car Control</b>		Develops "seat of the pants" feel; Learns emergency procedures (2 off, etc.); Learns throttle steer	Knows and applies/avoids under and oversteer; Keeps car safely under the limit; Knows emergency procedures	Drives at the limit as second nature; Senses and adjusts for car/tire changes, etc.

*Note: For more detailed information, see [NNJR Run Group Advancement Criteria](#) and the [Advanced Driver Checklist](#) on the DE page of the NNJR website.*