

What to Expect at Your First NNJR Concours Event as a Novice

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For many Porsche owners, the idea of entering a local Concours event can feel both exciting and intimidating. The word “Concours” often brings images of immaculate paintwork, perfectly detailed engine bays, and highly experienced competitors who seem to know every inch of their cars. A first-time participant may wonder if their Porsche is clean enough, original enough, or even worthy of being displayed alongside more seasoned entrants. Fortunately, NNJR events are much more welcoming and approachable than many newcomers expect.

At its heart, an NNJR Concours is not simply about competition. It is about appreciation for the cars, attention to detail, and the shared enthusiasm among Porsche owners. While there are certainly participants who take the judging very seriously, local events are often designed to encourage newcomers and celebrate owners who genuinely care for and enjoy their cars. As a novice, you are far more likely to encounter encouragement, advice, and camaraderie than harsh criticism.

One of the first things you will notice at the club level is that all cars are judged as “Full Class” which includes interior, exterior and storage. No engines are judged at the club level. Cars are further classed by the model year and will be assigned to you. Entrants are categorized as either “novice” or “veteran” for the sole purpose of year end championship points. A novice is anyone in their first year of concours competition. You may or may not have veteran competitors in your class, depending on who enters. Many members have more than one car and may choose to showcase their older marque car in the Paul Miller Classic Concours and later model car at a different event. Veteran status is used only to determine which Veteran receives a special trophy at year end. You will be in the running for the Novice of the Year trophy.

On the PCA Zone and National levels, things get much more complicated -Full, Preservation, Restoration, Preparation, French, and Wash & Shine classes. In fact, there is a full page decision tree to determine how to register for a Parade level concours. Those are “future you” issues.

Preparation for the event typically begins long before you arrive. Most first-time participants spend days washing, polishing, vacuuming, and inspecting every visible surface of the car. While the exterior naturally gets the most attention, many newcomers quickly discover that judges often look at details owners overlook in everyday driving. Door jambs, wheel wells, exhaust tips, interior trim, seat rails and trunk compartments all become part of the preparation process. Tiny imperfections such as dust in air vents or fingerprints on instrument gauges suddenly seem much more important.

However, one important lesson experienced competitors often share is that perfection is not expected for first-time entrants. Judges and fellow participants understand that novices are learning. In fact, many owners say the preparation itself becomes one of the most rewarding parts of the experience because it allows them to develop a deeper appreciation for their Porsche.

Spending hours cleaning and inspecting the car often reveals design details and craftsmanship that may have gone unnoticed before.

On the day of the event, expect an early start. Most concours participants arrive well before judging begins. This gives owners time to park, unload supplies, and perform final touch-ups after the drive to the venue. It is common to see people carrying bags filled with microfiber towels, detailing sprays, brushes, glass cleaner, and even Q-tips for tight spaces. A freshly cleaned Porsche can still collect road dust, water spots, or brake residue during the trip, so the final preparation session becomes part of the ritual. Bring a chair and some plastic garbage bags to place the contents of your car in as weather can be fickle.

For many novices, the atmosphere is one of the biggest surprises. Instead of a tense competition, NNJR Concours events often feel more like a gathering of enthusiasts who genuinely enjoy talking about cars. Owners exchange stories about road trips, restoration projects, modifications, and maintenance experiences. Questions are encouraged, and longtime participants are usually happy to offer tips on detailing techniques or event preparation. Most experienced competitors remember exactly what it felt like to attend their first concours and go out of their way to make newcomers feel welcome.

As judging begins, entrants are asked to stop prepping their cars. This is a good time to grab some coffee and walk around and look at the other interesting entries. You should keep an eye out for your class judging team as it makes its way through your class. You will be asked to participate as the owner of your car. Judges often start by asking about it -how long you've had it, how you use it. Now is the time to let them know if it's your first P car, your daily driver, your grandfather's barn find, or any other interesting facts about it. The process is generally calm and systematic as the team moves around your vehicle carefully, inspecting different sections according to their assignment: Interior, Exterior, Storage. They will ask you to open or close the doors and the frunk. Judges will examine paint condition, wheels, tires, glass, carpets, seats, dashboard surfaces, and storage compartments. In fact, they can examine anything they would like, including the factory supplied tool kit and spare tire!

One misconception among first-time entrants is that judges are trying to embarrass competitors or aggressively search for flaws. Nothing could be further from the truth. All NNJR judges are club members, volunteers and Porsche enthusiasts themselves. Their role is to evaluate the cars fairly and consistently while helping owners learn the standards of concours preparation. Many judges are willing to explain deductions and provide constructive feedback after the scoring is complete. For a novice, this feedback can be extremely valuable for future events. If you want to know what to improve for the next event, ask for your scoresheets at the end of the event and see where there might be room for improvement.

Another important thing to understand is that concours judging rewards cleanliness and attention to detail – not expensive modifications or flashy presentation. In fact, overdoing certain details may work against an entrant. Excessively glossy tire shine, greasy engine dressings, or overly shiny interior products may appear unnatural and distract from the car's presentation. The goal is to prep your car so that it looks like it just rolled off the production line.

It is also important not to compare yourself too closely to veteran participants. Many competitors have spent years refining their preparation methods and understand exactly what judges tend to

notice. They may own specialized tools, professional lighting, or extensive detailing equipment. As a novice, your goal should not be perfection or winning trophies immediately. Instead, your first concours should be viewed as a learning experience and an opportunity to immerse yourself in the Porsche community.

Beyond the judging itself, one of the greatest rewards of attending an NNJR Concours is the sense of connection with fellow enthusiasts. Walking through rows of beautifully maintained cars allows owners to appreciate the diversity of Porsche history and design. You may see everything from 356s to classic air-cooled 911s to modern GT cars and rare special editions. Conversations happen naturally, and many long-term friendships within Porsche clubs begin at events like these.

By the end of the day, most first-time entrants realize that the experience is far less intimidating than they imagined. While trophies and awards are certainly enjoyable, they are often secondary to the friendships, knowledge, and motivation gained from participating. Many owners leave inspired to improve their detailing techniques, learn more about their cars, and return to future events with greater confidence.

Ultimately, entering your first NNJR event as a novice is about much more than competition. It is an opportunity to celebrate your car, learn from experienced enthusiasts, and become part of a passionate automotive community. Whether your Porsche is a pristine collector car or a well-loved driver, showing it with pride and enthusiasm is what truly matters. For most newcomers, the first event is not only educational but also the beginning of a much deeper appreciation for both the Porsche brand and the community that surrounds it.