



WHAT IS AUTOCROSS?

“Solo” is the brand name for SCCA Autocross and on paper it seems very simple – use traffic cones to make a mini-roadcourse in a parking lot and see who can get the lowest time without hitting any cones or going off course.

Despite the low overall speeds attained during competition, it’s one of the most intense, rapid-fire forms of motorsports you can enter.



Competitors range from the casual participant who may use the same car that they drive daily to work, to the hard-core driver who has a dedicated competition car, and special tires to squeak out every last fraction of a second. In between the extremes, there are levels and classes for different degrees of car modification.

Whatever your level or car – there is a place for you in SCCA Solo.

HOW DO I AUTOCROSS?

Because SCCA Solo uses rubber traffic cones to build a course in large parking lots, it makes autocross one of the easiest and least expensive ways to compete in a car.

While speeds are generally no greater than those encountered in highway driving, the combination of concentration and precision maneuvering leaves many drivers with their heart racing and hands trembling from adrenaline after a run.

Although there are many ways to autocross and the effort can be as easy or as intense as you want, the basics of going autocrossing are simple.

WHAT YOU NEED

Driver's License: You need a current learner’s permit or driver's license to enter a Solo event.

Helpful tip – If you are under 18, you will need both your parents to sign a minor waiver for you.

Vehicle in good working order: Autocrossing doesn’t require the same safety gear as race cars, but your car must be in good shape with no loose/worn suspension parts, battery is secured, tires have no cord or metal showing, brakes and seatbelts are in good shape and it has no big fluid leaks.

Helpful tip – When you get to an event, the tech inspector will make sure your car is ready to go.

Helmet: You will need a helmet when you’re driving on course, but “loaner” helmets are available at the event. If you bring your own, it has to meet certain safety standards – more than just “DOT-Approved.” The most common certifications are Snell “M” and “SA”. ECE R22.05 certified helmets are not allowed.

Helpful tip – If you’re not sure if your helmet is OK, show it to a tech inspector who can let you know if it’s acceptable.

How to Participate

Find an event: the Reno Region SCCA events are listed on our FaceBook page and website.

Register: Sign up online before coming to an event, because, if you just show up, it just might be full.

Helpful tip - Arrive early and tell registration you're new, they will walk you through the process.

Show up: Once you have what you need and have registered, the next step is to come out to an event, sign the waiver, and come on in. Because autocrosses tend to pack a lot into a day, pay close attention to the schedule.

Helpful tip – Autocrosses runs in any weather. Bring appropriate clothing, closed-toed shoes, and drinks/snacks for the day. Since no loose objects are allowed in your car while you're competing, a plastic tote bin is a helpful item to put your stuff in.



Get your car checked out: The technical safety inspection, also known as “Tech,” is where one of your fellow autocrossers will double-check your car and make sure it passes all those safety items. They will look under the hood, inside the interior and trunk, check your tires, make sure your suspension is tight, make sure your helmet is good to go, and see that there aren't any loose pieces on/in your car. Your battery will be checked so be sure it's secured properly (no bungee cords).

Helpful tip – When you get to tech, open the hood and trunk for the inspectors. Also, if you don't have numbers, you can get them from registration, or you can use painters tape to make numbers and class letters.

Walk the course: Since you will only get a few course runs, it's important to walk and plan how to drive it. You probably want to get there in time to walk the course at least 2-3 times and they usually take 15 minutes per lap.

Helpful tip – The course should be marked well enough that you don't have to memorize it, but the better you learn it the faster you will go. Don't be afraid to ask another member to help you walk through it. Reno has mentors to help.

Help Out: One of the things that makes autocross less expensive than other forms of motorsports, is that competitors are also organizers and helpers. That person who helped you sign the waiver is probably driving today. There will be a time period during the day where you will need to help out. Helping out will probably be re-setting cones on course when they get knocked down, until you get trained for something else!

Helpful tip – Registration is when you find out what group you're driving in, which group you're working in.



Drive: There will probably be an area for “grid” where you park between runs, and grid workers will tell you when to go up to the line to make your run. Have fun, look at your time, and try to go faster. Repeat until all your runs are done.

Helpful tip – Look ahead and relax.

AUTOCROSS CLASSES



Cars and vehicles are classed in Solo according to modifications and potential. Each category has a set of allowed modifications and then the cars are divided into classes by ability. After all, it wouldn't be fair to have an Italian exotic race against an economy car.

Street Category

Classes in the "Street" Category have the most restrictive rules, which keep competitors from feeling the need to make extensive modifications to their cars. "Racing" tires are not allowed and only a few parts and changes are allowed.

Street Touring Category

Street Touring classes are the next level up from the Street classes and although they still require true "street" tires, more bolt-on modifications are allowed, to make the cars handle better.



Street Prepared Category

This set of classes is where the level of commitment to modifying your vehicle really starts kicking in. Tires must be DOT-approved but sticky "racing"-style competition tires (sometimes called "R-comps") are allowed. This is the first set of classes where competitors can modify some engine externals (induction, exhaust, etc.) and even swap parts between some trim levels.

Street Modified Category

Want to add a turbo? Do an engine swap? Install a cam? A wing for some aero-grip? Tires must still be DOT-approved but R-Compounds are allowed.

Prepared Category

This is a step up from the "Street" set of classes and is based off wheel-to-wheel road racing preparation for production-based cars. Prepared allows true racing slicks and "gutting" of the interior are allowed.

Modified Category

The highest set of allowances, these classes have a place for cars built specifically for autocross, production-based cars with the most extreme modifications, and road racing formula cars and sports racers. If your car doesn't have a good place before this, it is sure to find a place here.

Karts, Classic American Muscle, Xtreme Street, Club Spec etc.

There are some classes which don't fit the previous sets, but play an important part of automotive and racing enthusiasts lifestyle. SCCA has classes for karts, Classic American Muscle (CAM), Vintage cars, and College-engineering Formula SAE.