

JERSEY RACING BOARD DRIVERS SCHOOL INSTRUCTOR DUTIES

This outline of instructor responsibilities is designed to guide and assist SCCA licensed drivers function as instructors at SCCA events. A considerable portion of this document has been drawn from the Washington DC Region Instructor Duties. Most of the credit its development goes to Chuck Allard, WDCR's long time Chief Instructor. Thanks Chuck.

You have been asked to be an SCCA instructor in order to pass some of your knowledge and skill on to others who wish to join our sport. Part of your responsibility as an instructor is to give back to others some of what was given to you when you first obtained your license. In order for all of us to continue to enjoy our sport we must ensure that new drivers are equipped with the skills necessary to enjoy a competitive and SAFE racing career. You have an obligation by accepting a position as an instructor to provide as much help and guidance to students as you possibly can. This includes being both fair and straightforward to the students.

This year, the Jersey Racing Board is formulating an instructor program that has included the thoughts and ideas of many different instructors and also incorporates feedback from students. Many techniques have been adapted from the highly successful Washington DC Region program. We are proud of our program; our efforts are constantly on display via the results of our graduates. We continue to seek additional ideas and input to continue the evolution of the program.

In order for this evolution to be positive and manageable, this paper is presented to provide a baseline from which you will work. Our school will be most effective if we work together applying consistent teaching methods.

Several items that are common to all groups are debriefing modes and feedback techniques. We use a combination of Group and Individual debriefing in order for all students to hear comments on their progress after each session. The Group sessions should be to the point and include appropriate corrective comments along with recognition for things done well. This portion of the debriefing should be limited to leave time for Individual debriefings. The Group Chief acts as the moderator and adds appropriate direction to the sessions. When you break into Individual debriefing sessions with your students you should be prepared to answer their questions and provide positive feedback or gently focus them on their deficiencies.

If as an instructor, you have comments about another instructor's student, pass them to the other instructor to relay them to the student. Nothing is worse than a student receiving conflicting feedback from separate sources during the school.

Instructors should not argue among themselves in front of students. We are supposed to present a unified front and, in fact, the students are advised in the Thursday night session that the instructor comments are consensus statements. This means that you have discussed your opinions about student performance with the other instructors in your group and that there is agreement on the decision, method, grade and comments provided to the students. This is especially true with difficult or poor students. Providing false hope, not being honest in your feedback or surreptitiously telling a student that you voted for him but were 'overruled by others' is damaging to the school and student.

You have an obligation of being fair to the student but also to the school program and your fellow drivers. The product of all of our efforts will be on the grid next to you soon enough. Our goal is to make sure that the preparation and skill is sufficient.

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There are several items to consider that will enhance your performance as an instructor.

1. Be Prompt! Both the students and your group chief is relying on you.
2. Be Articulate! Talk to the students; explain what you mean in several different ways. Project your voice during debriefings. Ask the students questions to make sure that they understood you.
3. Dress well for the occasion! This means that you should not wear your grubbies. Its hard to take advice from someone who looks like they sleep in their garage clothes.
4. Take Notes! Some of your comments will not only be shared verbally but will also need to be entered on the student's grade sheet.
5. Get to know your students on a first name basis! This will improve the rapport between you and your student.

WEEKEND AGENDA

Friday Evening (optional, but recommended)

7:00 PM The school classroom session will be held at the Lightning Cassroom. This meeting is mandatory for students. All of the classroom instruction will be presented in this meeting as well as the procedural aspects of the school. It would be very worthwhile for instructors to observe the session.

Saturday

7:15 AM Arrive at the track and check in with the chief instructor and your group chief after registration. We plan to meet in the classroom. When you arrive, your group chief will be able to discuss your student assignments with you.

7:30 AM Instructors meeting in the classroom. A general discussion will be held concerning the procedures and schedule for the day. Last minute changes in student assignments will be made as necessary,

8:00 AM Mandatory drivers meeting. You will break out by groups and meet your students. Start going over procedures and the school schedule with the students. Discuss and organize the track familiarization drive around.

8:30 AM The track will be open for drive rounds for about 20 minutes. Have your students ready in your car/van for an on track 25 minute session. This drive around is the only time you will be in a vehicle with the student except for lunch time. Walk arounds are not permitted but, if you choose, you may stop at a turn as long as you are off the line. Exercise caution and keep speeds low.

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During the drive around you might cover the following topics:

1. Preparation before leaving paddock with race car (torqued wheels, air pressure, gas, nomex, bathroom, etc)
2. Driving through the paddock SLOWLY
3. Entering the makeup grid
4. On the grid (belts tight, helmet strap, visor, mirrors, etc)
5. Five and one minute warnings
6. Leaving the makeup grid
7. Entering the track during a session
8. POINT OUT THE FLAG STATIONS
9. The classic line through the turns
10. Entry and apex points (explain where and why)
11. Shifting procedures (how more than where)
12. Brake points (how to mark a spot and move it closer to a turn)
13. Hand positions
14. The importance of smoothness

9:00 AM The first session will start promptly. If your students are in the first session, make sure you have them back in time to be suited up and in their cars when the session starts, This means that their crew should manage the details. Emphasize that the student is there to learn and the crew is there to take care of the car.

Critiques will start after the first session. You should have been at a corner observing for the session but feedback from this first session should be relatively short. Take notes on your students and others so that the appropriate instructor can pass on the guidance during the individual debriefing. In subsequent sessions, the group and individual briefings should strive for improvement in the students' performance. Positive input works better than caustic comments. Would you be able to determine your problem better with 'Hey dummy, you're still screwing up Turn 1 and spinning' or 'If you would brake a little longer and turn in toward a later apex you won't spin in Turn 1'.

Throughout the school, make sure that you and the other instructors are covering different corners for each session. Coordinate this through the Group Chief. Make notes on student laps times starting around the second session. Throughout the school, note their improvement in times and work with them on smoothness. We do not emphasize speed over smoothness but rather one should lead to the other. As an instructor you have to perform the delicate balance so that you do not 'overinspire' a student to go fast with perhaps disastrous results and do not underemphasize speed to the point that they are turning the smoothest 3:00 laps ever. Exercise appropriate judgment and work with your Group Chief if necessary.

While you are monitoring your students' progress, make sure you maintain control over them. A major distraction at this point in their progress is an overzealous crew or mentor. Lap boards, stopwatches and external advice are things better suited for race weekends. Students have enough to do listening to you without these other distractions. Remind them that you and your peers will be grading and judging them based on what you are asking of them. In order for them to be successful they will have to meet your requirements, not their crew's.

The alternating on-track sessions continue through Saturday and Sunday Morning. After lunch on Sunday. We have the traditional practice starts to familiarize students with the SCCA start procedures and give them a an introduction to wheel-to-wheel racing.

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One of your most important duties at the end of the weekend is finishing up the details. This means that the paperwork must be correct and complete. As mentioned earlier, you and your the other instructors in your group will reach a consensus agreement on the fate of your students. You should do this in private before you fill out the paperwork understanding that what gets submitted is the party line supported by all. It is easy to grade an exceptional student. Everyone will agree and comments will flow onto the grade sheet. Its equally easy to grade a turkey. You all will have something to point out about the particular student's deficiencies. Make sure that these are being captured on paper. MORE IMPORTANT ... MAKE SURE THAT THE STUDENT HAS BEEN GETTING FEEDBACK THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL TO THE EFFECT THAT HE NEEDS TO IMPROVE SUCH AND SUCH TO COMPLETE THE SCHOOL.

Being a nice guy and avoiding facing up to your responsibility to inform a student that he is not doing well can be devastating on the individual at the end of the school. Getting the bad news on their logbook after you have gone home is not a professional way to handle your instructor responsibilities.

Finally, grading the marginal student requires a lot of soul searching. If it is their first school, it is easier since they are not going to be awarded or denied a novice permit. However, if it is their second school, what will you do? Carefully review all notes from yourself and the other instructors in your group. Talk among the instructors. Decide what is best for the club and your student; them make sure that all will continue to support the decision. Your job is to sell your decision to the student (if it is not favorable) and defend it to the Group Chief, Chief Instructor and Chief Steward. Make sure that you provide adequate and appropriate comments on the grade sheet that support your consensus decision.

Grade Sheet Comments

Bad Examples:

Good Student - Waive second school

Lousy Student - Hold back license, unsatisfactory

Good Examples:

Good First Time Student - Showed continuous progress in lap times (20 seconds at end of school). Corrected tendency to early apex. Consistently showed competitive spirit in close racing during practice starts.

Student Rated Unsatisfactory (or Satisfactory but recommend third school) - Student needs to improve tendency to run off course, missed apexes and lateness for grid and meetings. Throughout the school, the student improved on shifting and foot work but will benefit from improvement in other areas.

We hope that if you have gotten this far in reading this paper, you will realize that the role of instructor is important and critical to the health of our racing program. One last thought, if you are going to be an instructor, give it your all. Spend the time and effort to do it right, including the paperwork and being there until the end to insure that everything is complete. Your students will have put up with a lot, conquered fears, overcome adversity and swallowed ego throughout the school. Regardless of the outcome, congratulate them on their courage and effort. You have been there for the entire school for them, finish the job.