

Racing your car at Alaska Raceway Park 101

- Take the second entrance into the Park, this is the Racers Entrance.
- Stay to the left, and pull up to the ticket booth. The nice lady behind the window will ask you what class you want to enter. Most new racers either race “Test and Tune” or Trophy class. (see rule section for a description of both) In exchange for your hard earned cash, you received a tech slip for the class you entered.
- Find a spot to park on the grass. This will be your “Pit” area. (Paved Pit Areas are available for season rental) Set out the lawn chairs, and cooler this is your pit area for the day. Tune your radio to 95.1, this is how you hear when your class is allowed to get in the staging lanes. Once you have your pit area set-up, fill out the tech slip to the best of your ability and head over to Tech, it was next to the Racers Booth where you pulled in. Don’t forget your helmet!
- Tech will be looking for leaks, seat belt condition, missing lug-nuts, battery hold-downs and any obvious unsafe condition with your car for the speeds that they, or you, estimate that your car will reach. Your helmet needs to be a DOT / Snell approved and tech will be checking for the label. We want you and everybody else to have a safe and fun experience at the park. Now that we know we’re safe.....lets go fast!
- Tech most likely wrote some numbers and your class on your windows with a temporary marker. This marker is available at the gift shop, and would be a good thing to add to your racing bag. Your going to need it later if you entered Trophy Class.
- If it is early in the day, you can drive over to the staging lanes. Enter any lane between 2 and 6 up until Eliminations begin. Once eliminations begin, the announcer will tell you what lane to get in. The beginning of every event starts with “Test & Tune” for at least a few hours. So its a good idea to get to the Park early so you get lots of practice in before eliminations. You can still test and tune during eliminations, but wait for the announcer to make the call.
- So your in the staging lanes, make a note of what lane your in. When you get up to the head of the line, the Track Official will signal what lane he wants to pull up. When he signals you to pull up, drive to the lane he pointed at. Follow the officials signals. When its okay to do a burnout and pull up to the starting line, they’ll let you know.
- Slowly pull up to the starting line. You will see the Christmas Tree in the center of the track. When your front tires get close to the yellow lines, the very top bulb will light up. This is called Pre-Staged. It is a courtesy to wait for the opponent to pre-stage as well before you complete the staging process. This is called “Courtesy Staging” and it is a good practice. Once both cars are pre-staged, pull up a few more inches and the “Stage” bulb will light.

- Once both cars are Staged, the lights will begin counting down. The object here is to leave as close as possible to the 4th light just coming on. Most racers will leave on the 3rd amber light, because by the time their car and body react the green light is already on. This is called “Cutting a Light” So practice this! When you see the 3rd amber light up, floor it! If you left too soon, the bottom Red light will come on and you just red-lighted. (not good, but okay during T&T) Go as fast as you feel safe to the finish line! Once both racers cross the finish line, the win-light will come on the corresponding lane. Slow your car down, but stay in your lane. The exit is up on the right and a track official will be there to signal the racers off of the track.
- Make the turn off the track and head down the return lane. The speed limit here is 15 mph so slow down and wave to your fans! They’re cheering you on, you just made a pass!
- When you get to the tower, a track official will hand you your time slip. This slip is crucial to your success. The time slip contains your times incrementally down the track and it shows your reaction time. As the day goes on, and you get better at cutting a light, you will notice your improvement through these slips.
- The goal here is to run your car as close as possible to the exact same time every time. This is called consistency. If you entered Trophy Class, once eliminations begin, you will take that marker you bought from the gift store, and write the E.T. on your passenger side glass, and windshield that you think your car will go. When it is your turn to race, the announcer will make the call, (listen to 95.1 on the radio) Head to the lane that he wants you to, and get ready to race!
- Now it is Game time. If you run faster than the time on your glass, it is called breaking out and you lose. If you run close to your time, and cut a good light chances are that you won that round! Good job! Head back to your pit area and cool down. The next round will be in about 30 minutes or so and you need to be ready. Get the car cooled down, and relax a little bit. Stay focused. Continue making rounds, (usually 4 or less) and if you make it to the final you will win a very nice trophy. The awards ceremonies are always held in the lounge above the snack bar. Head up to the lounge and get your Trophy! Congratulations!
- See you next weekend.