

**Driver's Ed. Education**  
**A Series of Specifics for Success**  
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**Article #11 - "Passing Grade"**

We've talked a lot about driving as it pertains to you specifically; by yourself, getting around the track effectively. Lets discuss an important "community" issue for a moment. Unless you are made of money and can build or rent your own track, you will not be out there alone. One thing you will learn in life is that no matter what you've got, someone's always got more. On the track that means passing. A no-brainer? Not likely!

Most venues operate in more or less the same manner concerning passing. The slower car points out the driver's window with the index finger to the side that they want the pass made. Just like anything, there are do's and don'ts, goods and betters. For beginners on tracks of clockwise circulation, it is advisable to only allow passing to your right. The slower car will stay on line at all times and give the signal for the faster car to pass off-line to the right. This is where most faster drivers will anticipate the pass to occur and you may cross them up to do otherwise. Incidentally, some groups allow the use of turn signals for passing, which can be advantageous in some instances.

But, by-and-large you will be pointing.

Nothing less than an emphatic point up and over the roof of the car will do. Quick pokes or flips of the hand may not register and may cause a dangerous situation. Multiple cars require a signal for each, not a group point-by. Remember, the other drivers are not mind readers. If they are prudent, they will assume that you may not have one. It may not be fair, but it is safer than hoping you do. Leave no doubt... Thrust the Hand OUT!

We've talked about vision previously. It is very important to good passing technique, be you the passee or passer. Good vision means being aware of not only where you are, but who is around you, and what their potential is. A good driver will be constantly scanning their mirrors for traffic coming on and be ready to let it pass smoothly.

The passee always has control of the situation, and should not initiate a pass unless they are ready for it. This requires looking in the mirrors early, assessing the closing speed of the other vehicle(s), and making the necessary adjustments. It is the responsibility of the passee to give a clear, emphatic, timely signal that

they are ready to be passed, position their car properly, and even lift slightly on the throttle if necessary to facilitate a clean pass.

The passer should never rely to much on sheer anticipation of another driver's moves. The safest way is to wait for the signal, and then pass leaving plenty of room beside and in front of the passee. I also see too many drivers acting like racers; blasting by mere feet away and then clipping in at less than 2-3 car lengths. These antics may unnerve a less experienced driver. Leave your macho joy stick driving at home... give 'em room!

What makes a good pass? Honestly, a good pass is most dependant on the passee being aware, and being courteous enough to give a clear and timely signal. When you gain sufficient experience and comfort on a particular track, in certain circumstances, there is nothing wrong with giving a signal before you reach your track out point, or even a quick point before you enter a turn. This lets a faster driver know that you see him and are ready to let him get on with his fast lap with minimal encumbrance.

If you are the first car in line leading onto a



straight (such as entering the back straight at Watkins Glen), you really needn't - and actually shouldn't - wait till you are "absolutely straight" to give a signal. Give it early and move over a couple of car widths to facilitate an earlier pass. This will make you golden with the faster drivers, and minimize traffic congestion and frustration in passing zones.

Now, some tips. Traffic is something that everyone has to deal with, be they in the top instructor run groups, the novice groups, or on the street. While it is understandable, it does no good whatsoever to get steamed because a car is too slow or "does not seem to have mirrors." Deal with it like an adult. Remember, you are all there to have fun and learn. Trackies are all friends, but learn at different rates, so give the more timid or "less aggressive" driver a break.

At the same time, if you see something discourteous or dangerous, it behooves you - or better, your instructor - to make this known to the event steward. They will then confer with that student's instructor forthwith and see that the situation does not persist.

If you are being held up by a driver that doesn't seem to acknowledge your presence, remember that it doesn't help if you are not in their mirrors. Pulling to one side or another takes you out of their field of vision, is rather rude, and can be dangerous if it distracts them. Weaving around and taking runs at them is completely uncalled for. If the problem persists, don't take things into your own hands. Again, have your instructor inform the event steward.

If you are a newer driver blessed with a fast car, take note. Drivers of higher skill may likely catch you in the tighter sections. If you see a car continually looming in your mirrors through the twisty bits, don't just romp on it in the next straight. Be a great guy/gal and let them by. They will be impressed by your courtesy, will disappear in the distance, and you can both get on with your runs.

Like everything else, passing should be done properly. If done well, it improves the experience for everyone involved. Although it seems to be less and less evident on the streets these days, you should drive at the track with a sense of deference and community. What counts most at the end of the day is your enjoyment, your improvement, and your reputation, not a quick lap time!

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**by John L. Hajny**

**I have striven to make this an extremely well written and accurate series on a subject that is not to be taken lightly and can obviously be dangerous. To maintain the accuracy and proper presentation of that message, I would ask that absolutely no use whatsoever of any text herein be made without my express written consent.**

**I ask you to please abide by this request.**

**Thank you.**