

# Driving in the Rain

*By*

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If you participate in club track events long enough, sooner or later, you will have a rainy day at the track. A rainy day is a great opportunity to sharpen your skills since the rain will force you to slow down and really concentrate on the car and the track. Slow is smooth and smooth is fast. After running an event in the rain it will make you a better dry track driver.

When you first leave the pits and enter the track it may feel as if it were the first time you've ever driven on a track. Your adrenaline will be flowing a little higher than normal; your heart rate will be increased. Just relax and breathe, you'll be just fine.

There are a couple of things to consider before you get on the track though. The first thing we want to do before climbing in the car, is try to make sure that the bottoms of your shoes are good and dry. See if you can have a friend handy with a towel so that you can dry off the bottoms of your shoes. If that is not possible, use a towel and throw it in the back of your car. One thing is for sure, you do not want your feet slipping off the pedals while you are on the track. Another thing is to run the floor heater while your are on the track. This will blow hot air on to your feet and pedals helping to keep them dry as well.

Your car should be equipped with a good set of rain tires. Rain tires are nothing more than a good set of street tires. You definitely do not want to run slicks. Run the air pressure up a couple of pounds higher than normal. This will bulge the center of the tire helping in displacing water. You should also have a new set of wiper blades on the car you'll need them. If you have an adjustable suspension set it to the softest setting. The car should be allowed to roll more than it would in dry conditions. You can even unhook the front sway bar to help the car roll more. The car needs to be softer not stiffer.

Ok, now your car is ready, your feet are dry and now its time to get on the track and go. Take it easy out there. Get the feeling of what the car is doing. As you are driving around the track you are going to have to make adjustments to your normal driving line. The Apexes may be filled with water and you don't want to run through that. Keep an eye out for puddles in other areas on the track and keep mental notes of those areas.

As you circle the track, try to find the "dry" tracks in front of you that the other cars have left behind. Try to stay in those tracks as there is more available grip there than out in the wet spots. The rain is going to wash away the rubber patch, so the only rubber patch on the track will be that one narrow groove that everyone is driving in that day. Try to stay in that groove. Increase your following distances. The driver in front of you is less likely to be checking their mirror as they are

concentrating on the track as well. You're not going fast enough to be drafting, so don't. Also, if they lose the car you don't want to get collected up in the incident.

Drive the car as you would normally do down the straights. You can go as fast as you feel comfortable in the straights. When approaching the corner, increase the braking zone. All braking should be done in a straight line. This is not the time to practice your trail braking techniques. Slowly squeeze the brake pedal. Don't stomp on it as this may cause you to lose control of the car. Apply the brakes just to the point of locking them up. If the brakes lock up ease off slightly and reapply.

As you enter the turn, slowly release the brake and slowly start to feed in the gas. You want to Tip Toe through the corner. The pedals are not on off switches. Ease into all of your driver inputs. Smooth is the key. Be easy on the clutch as well. Let the clutch out slowly to keep the tires from spinning.

In inclement conditions it would be advisable to run with your headlights on so that the driver in front of you can see you. You may not be able to see the driver behind you through the "rooster tails" coming off your car and the head lights will help you see each other. Safety is the key!

After several laps in the rain you will see an improvement in how smooth you can be. This will ultimately help on a dry track. Be careful and be safe out there.

Happy tracking!