

Passing

Safety protocol and racing etiquette provide guidelines for passing another car. It is recognized that the car being passed has the right of way and will be driving along the racing line. You, as the overtaking driver, have the responsibility to do several things. First, you must move off the preferred line as you begin to move past the car in front of you. Second, you must be absolutely certain that you have moved completely past the car before returning to the preferred racing line. Third, do not attempt to pass if you can't accomplish both of these safely! The overtaking car always has the obligation to perform the maneuver safely, but more room must be left for error when passing while both cars are slowing down. It is the passing driver's responsibility to complete the pass. If you cannot accomplish this safely, don't try!

You also have responsibilities if you are being overtaken. First, you must use your mirrors to notice a car closing to your rear. As a gesture of sportsmanship, you should acknowledge the approaching car by pointing off-line to signal the other driver that you are aware of his intention to pass and are indicating which side to pass. Second, you should continue on the racing line as you observe the pass. It is your responsibility to recognize that the pass has been completed and avoid driving into the side of the car that has overtaken you.

In a passing situation, the leading car (A) always has the right of way until the overtaking car (B) is at least alongside the car. Alongside means the driver has to be exactly opposite the other driver, perpendicular to the direction the cars are moving. Only when driver B is at least eyeball to eyeball with driver A, does he have the right-of-way into the corner. However, the car being passed (A) is still traveling at racing speed and must be allowed track space to safely negotiate the corner.

The passer (B) will usually attempt an "inside pass" (taking the inside line into the corner—the right side on a right hand turn—the left side entering a left-hander). It's not good enough to have just the nose of car B alongside the rear wheel of car A. However odd the path A may take, it is still the responsibility of the overtaking car to make a safe pass. "Outside passes" are more difficult, and should not be attempted unless the driver has considerable experience, a much faster car, and has complete confidence in the other driver to do the "right thing."

Here are good examples of the "right thing:" VMC member VARAC (Vintage Automobile Racing Association of Canada) drivers have driven complete laps of circuits like Mosport and Ste. Jovite side-by-side. They were racing hard, but they were also considerate of the other's track space. However, given the "Vintage Attitude" mentioned above, it is assumed that car A will not "block" car B. If the cars and drivers are absolutely equal, then it is a race. Car A should drive the "normal line." It is the responsibility of car B to get by. Changing line suddenly (jinking) to block a pass is not considered sportsmanlike. If a car remains on your tail lap after lap, why not let it by, and see if you can stay with it? This is particularly sensible conduct during practice and qualifying sessions.

Driving The Line

Common track etiquette dictates that cars on the track are to be driven along the racing line. If you are unfamiliar with the track, you are a danger to yourself and everyone else on the track. This is why you must prepare by walking the track, studying the map of the circuit and talking to your fellow drivers. If you have questions, ask. Be aware that the racing line may change due to track surface conditions. Incidents on the track may result in wet areas that need to be avoided. Sometimes the track surface begins to deteriorate and the prudent driver will avoid these rough surfaces. If it begins to rain, everything you've learned about the circuit is probably wrong. You will need to find a veteran to help re-work your plan. And after a downpour, the track may have standing water that should be avoided.

How Much Are You Worth?