



LAP 18 — PIT TIPS

The time you spend at the track is precious because it's expensive, not just in dollar terms but also in terms of time. After weeks and sometimes months of preparation, it's time to start having fun by making every grid and maximizing your track time. Your odds of being successful and having a positive outcome improve with a little planning and better organization.

Think about what you need to support your Mustang while in the pits and make sure you have only what you need nearby. Start with the trailer. If you have an open trailer, unload your Mustang and anything else you may carry on it (like spare tires) and then tow it somewhere outside the pits and drop it off. Then drive your tow vehicle back to your Mustang and use it as home base, parking it in the spot your trailer used to take. Doing this takes only 10 minutes and gains you and entire weekend of not stepping over or around the trailer. Most people with open trailers transport their tools and spares in the vehicle so this works quite well. If you have an enclosed trailer it's likely your tools and spares are inside the trailer so drop it in the pits and go park your tow vehicle outside where the open trailers are parked. If more participants would do this the amount of useful room in the always-crowded pit area would almost double.

Next, think about the items you'll need over the weekend, they can be categorized into three groups:

A. Personal Support

B. Vehicle Support

C. Special Circumstances Only

Personal Support items are those that provide you access to the facility or track. Your drivers suit, gloves, helmet, socks, shoes, hearing protection, and Hans device can be kept in an inexpensive duffel bag. In addition, the paperwork supporting your registration and any technical forms can be kept in a paper folder located inside the duffel bag. This is helpful when passing through technical inspection because your safety items and registration are together in one place and available when you need them.

Vehicle Support items are those required to maintain your Mustang. You'll need a jack and jack stands, lug wrench, torque wrench, air pressure gauge, windshield cleaner, motor oil, hand cleaner, gloves, air hose, and a supply of compressed air. Spare tires and a folding table are a good idea, too. A small air compressor, air hose, and portable tank work well when there is a power outlet nearby. For convenience, some people use a nitrogen bottle carried to the track because power for a compressor isn't available. You won't need a full tool kit because you're only maintaining your car, not repairing it. This means you'll only need the basic open end wrenches and sockets from 5/8-inch on down complemented by a few screwdrivers and a pair of pliers. If you toss these in a small duffel bag you have a nice little kit to tote around as you tighten and check things on the car.

Special Circumstances like unplanned maintenance or vehicle repair can require items that need not be unpacked unless absolutely necessary. Here is where you pull out the big guns, wrenches of 11/16-inch and up, breaker bars, timing lights, drain pans, etc. Remember, when it's time to leave on Sunday everything that wasn't unpacked doesn't have to be reloaded later, which is a very good thing after a long, hard-working weekend at the track.

If you have friends you normally pit with it's a good idea to coordinate with them prior to an event and agree who is bringing the big items like the jack and jack stands, tables, air compressor, etc. There is really no reason for everyone to bring more than is required and again it's less that has to be re-packed when it's time to break camp on Sunday. The odds of you both needing the jack at the same time are very low but make sure you bring enough jack stands to take care of two Mustangs at the same time, four are usually plenty. At some tracks, the pit areas are in the dirt so remember to bring some pre-cut pieces of 3/4-inch plywood to set your jack stands on to provide additional stability.

Organize your pit area to make it easy to enter and exit the pit. If possible, arrange it so you can drive through the parking area without using reverse gear. Sharing a parking area with a buddy is helpful in this regard as you can park one car behind the other and the first one back to the pit drives through to the front spot leaving space behind for the other. This arrangement makes sharing support tools much easier. Bring some tape and post the day's schedule of events on the door to your trailer or on the side of a toolbox, you'll be surprised how handy it will become. Leave your lug wrench, torque wrench, gloves, and tire air pressure gauge on a table adjacent to the car and share them with your buddy. You'll find pit organization fun and challenging. Walk around and notice how other drivers organize their areas, some are more organized than others and you'll probably notice a relationship between their lap times and how their pit area looks. If you want to be one of the faster guys it's clear you need to adopt a mentality of keeping your area clean and neat. Besides, the track owner will appreciate not having to clean up after you leave.

Now that you've gotten your pit more organized, you can focus on what's important—getting faster!

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