

A FEW QUICK TRICKS FOR THE TRACK

talk to customers every week answering a common question: "How can I go faster at the drag strip without spending much money or ruining my car for the street?"

This is a great question, especially for those of us who need to drive our car during the week and want to play at the track a few times each summer. I encourage everyone who is tempted to performance drive their Mustang to learn how to drive in a safe and controlled environment...that's why God invented race tracks! You don't have to have years of experience or the last name Force to be allowed on a track and have a ton of fun. I am not talking about going six seconds in the quarter mile. No, I'm talking about taking your daily driven Mustang and having an exciting and exhilarating day at the track. For those of you who think you might want to make a trip down the strip, here are a few track tips.

First, when participating in a sponsored event, contact the coordinator or the race track and ask what the track rules and equipment requirements are—for both you and your car. Every track will require a tech inspection of your car before you run on the track. For typical street-driven Mustangs, tech is not a very involved process and basically all an inspector wants to see is that all of the car's factory safety equipment is in place and functioning. They'll check to see that nothing is leaking (oil, coolant, fuel, etc.), and visually confirm that the car has no physical damage that could make it unsafe. Depending on the track and how fast your car will run, you will probably need a current automotive-rated crash helmet.

Now that you and your car have passed tech, you want to make sure that the car is ready to "give all that she's got." First, manage your Mustang's weight by removing unwanted weight caused by spare tires, tools, bowling balls, golf clubs, suitcases, etc. Think about your fuel level as fuel is very heavy. You need just enough fuel to run the event and a little to spare, but you

do not want a full tank of gas. Yes, a full tank of gas helps with traction but it also makes the car slower down the quarter mile.

Next, let's think about tires. Increase the tire air pressure on your front tires to 40-45 psi (depending on you tire) to make them easier to roll. The rear tires (assuming they are street tires) should grip as much of the road as possible, so the air pressure should be slightly lowered to "stick" better when you launch off the line. At the drag strip, drive around the "water box" if you are using street tires. The box is there for cars with race tires to start the tires spinning during the burn out. Spinning race

tires prior to the race does a few things: it cleans out any debris or dirt from the tire tread, and it heats the tires up with fresh sticky rubble to contact the pavement and it looks smokin' cool. Avoid the water with street tires though. Pull around the water box, back up so the car's rear tires are just in front of the water. Now, spin you tires a little on the dry pavement to ensure they're clean, and then approach the starting line for staging. If you spin you street tires in the water box the wheel wells get wet and drip water back onto your

tires. This will cause you to spin your tires off the line for a very slow—and embarrassing—start to your race.

Another easy trick is to disconnect the passenger side end link to your front sway bar (you don't need to remove it). Disconnecting this link allows more weight to transfer to the rear of the car during launch, which increases traction and improves your start off the line. Finally, if you are driving a manual transmission car, shift from first to second at 5000 RPM, don't run the engine up to 6200 RPM—I think you'll find this to be a faster way down the track.

These simple items can make your day at the track a ton of fun and cost you little more than the track entrance fee. Enjoy yourself. See you at the track!

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Scott Hoag

