



A Quick guide to getting started in Hillclimbing and Sprinting

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Hillclimbs and sprints are cheap and easy ways to get into motorsport, with pretty much whatever car you drive.

So what is hillclimbing and sprinting? Hillclimbs and sprints are basically the same discipline and are referred to as speed events. And let's clear one thing up, hillclimbing is NOT driving a car up a muddy hill, that's Trials. Speed events are timed laps of a circuit or a run up a hill. They are about the oldest form of motorsport and originated in France over 100 years ago. Cars are run one at a time, so the sport is relatively safe as you only have yourself to blame for an accident. Events are all run on solid surfaces, tarmac or concrete, and involve a standing start and a flying finish. You will

learn more about the format of events. later in this article. Speed events are a great way into motorsport, but many get hooked and never move on. If you want to drive fast in a competitive environment and a friendly atmosphere then this is what speed events are all about. There is one more thing worth mentioning at this point and that is that two drivers can share one car at any event. Sharing a car will likely reduce your event costs and even if you're not competitive in the class, you will always be racing someone with the same equipment - so no excuses!



OVERVIEW

The following sections will guide you through all the basic steps required in order to go hillclimbing and sprinting. We have tried to cover all the basics but you may require more reading on some sections especially when it comes to preparing your car to meet the specific regulations for the respective class. Hopefully by reading this guide you will

gain enough knowledge to get you on the road to your first event. It is important to state at the outset that the definitive guide to rules and regulations is laid out in the Motor Sports Association (MSA) Competitors Year Book or 'Blue Book' as it is more commonly referred to. You will receive

a copy of the Blue Book when you get your competition licence, but it is also available online www.msauk.org. In addition, organisers of Championships and the Events themselves publish Supplementary Regulations, which must also be followed before being able to take to the track.



What Cars Can you Use?

Speed events allow a large variety of cars to compete, ranging from production cars (with varying levels of modifications) and all types of kit cars through to single seaters (which can range from Formula Fords and motorbike-engined specials to £50,000+ 600bhp machines). Very few types of cars are excluded from speed events.

As a beginner with no racing experience and a 'B' Class licence (see how to get one in the licence section) you will be able to drive all types of production and kit cars but will be limited to a 2.0 litre engine

capacity in single seater and sports libre classes (unless running in a roadgoing condition).

If you want to use a road going car, and many people do, be that your weekend

toy or everyday road car, and many people do, then you will need it to satisfy a number of safety and competition requirements:





1. A sticker on the ignition key or cut out switch indicating which way to turn it off
2. A yellow battery earth cable (yellow tape works wonders here)
3. Your race number on the sides of the car.
4. A timing strut.
5. Secure seats
6. Two throttle return springs
7. A generally good-condition car
8. If you are entering a roadgoing class then the car must have a valid MOT, road tax disc and insurance.



Modifying Your Car

If you want to modify a car or build a non-roadgoing car then the MSA requirements are a lot more involved. The regulations are all in the 'Blue Book' but speaking to other competitors is a great way to get the information you need. The HSA has members competing in most classes and someone should be able to help you. So either come along to an event and have a chat or use the 'Ask and Expert' feature on the HSA website.

If you want to buy a car already modified for Hill-climbing then you should ensure that any non-roadgoing car has an MSA logbook. Logbooks are essential for non-roadgoing competing cars. Although they are easy to obtain, buying a car with one gives some security that it meets the specific regulations.



Personal Safety Equipment

The minimum you require is a helmet, some fireproof overalls and a pair of fireproof gloves; all these items must meet the required specifications as laid out in the 'Blue Book'. As of 2012, overalls must be FIA approved, so Proban is no longer acceptable, which it has been until 2012. Some helmet specifications are planned to be withdrawn, so it is worth consulting the Blue Book to ensure your helmet will continue to be acceptable. Additionally you can buy fireproof underwear, balaclavas and racing boots; these are not necessary but it's all added safety. Anyone selling such equipment should be able to help you out.

Helmet

Nomex suit

Gloves

Optional boots

Getting a Racing License and a Copy of the Competitors' Yearbook (Blue Book)

All UK race licences are issued by the MSA. As a beginner you will need a "non-race National B" licence. In most instances you will require no medical, just your doctor's name and address and then a passport photo of yourself. The licence lasts for 1 year from January 1st to December 31st.

Once you start competing, you can get your licence upgraded by getting it signed at events to say that you competed in a safe and satisfactory manner.



Why do I Need to Join a Car Club and why the HSA is Ideal

To gain entry to events you will need to be 'invited'. This basically means that events are only open to members of clubs or specific championship competitors. Who is invited to an event is listed in the supplementary regulations issued with entry forms by the organising club. Of course, not all events are open to all clubs and championships.

The HSA, as a national club, is invited to many speed events throughout the year and throughout the country. The HSA Speed Championship visits many of the best Hillclimb venues in the country and is an ideal way to get invited to enter such events.



Entering Events

Assuming that you now are a member of a club invited to your chosen event and you have a licence, some safety gear and an eligible car then you are ready to enter.

First you need to get an entry form. Some clubs have moved with the times and entries are available on-line, with others you will need to fill in a form. In most cases forms can be downloaded from the organising club's website.

The HSA has a list of all invited events and an interactive map showing where some of the most popular courses are. There are a number of things to watch out for when completing forms or on-line registrations. All events have opening and closing dates for entries, although as some of the most popular events are over subscribed you are not guaranteed an entry. It is good advice to send off entry forms as early as possible as most clubs have a first come first served policy.



Sharing a Car

Speed events are unique in that two people can share a car at one event. This is an ideal way to start competing as lots of costs are shared and although you might not be the fastest in your class at least you can compete with your co-driver.

As far as entry to events goes, both drivers will be required to fill in a form and pay the entry fee. There will be a section on the entry form to indicate that you are sharing the drive and a place to name the other driver.

Useful Links

www.hillclimbandsprint.co.uk

www.msauk.org

Hillclimb Schools

www.harewoodhill.com/

www.gurston-down.org/

www.bugatti.co.uk

www.shelsley-walsh.co.uk/

www.hdlcc.com/

What to do on the day

Before each event you will be sent Final Instructions. These will tell you things like:

- Where the event is and how to get there
- What time the gates are open; important if you intend to arrive the evening before the event.
- What time scrutineering is
- What time signing-on commences
- An agenda for the rest of the meeting
- When you can walk the course
- Most importantly, who you will be competing against and the current class record

Signing-on: You need to take yourself, your licence and any club and championship ID cards to the signing on office. Every event seems to have a different method for how this works, but all are generally explained in the final instructions. If in doubt someone at the event will know.

Scrutineering: Your car and personal safety kit will need to be inspected by an MSA Scrutineer. These generally come to you and are not to be feared. Over the years I've been pulled up on many minor items, but never been stopped from competing.

Drivers' briefing: before some events all the drivers will be called to a meeting where the Clerk of the Course will explain how the day is to be run and what is expected of everybody. Make sure you attend, especially if you are a new driver.

Walking the course: It is encouraged for first timers to walk the course, however, you will find that even the most seasoned competitors will walk the course in the morning.

Finally the Racing

Once all this is completed you're ready to compete. You will be called by race number to the start line (or invariably the start line queue). When it is your turn you will need to drive to the start line where the marshals will line your timing splitter up with the starting equipment. Then you just have to wait for the green light and off you go. A point of note is that the green light does not indicate that the timing has started, merely that the course is clear for you to go. You can therefore take your time and go when you are ready. Don't take too long though marshals can get impatient!

