

Rookie Training Guidelines



This document is intended to outline general recommendations for how the training progress is recommended to progress and to outline criteria for advancement. Every driver (and handler) progresses at their own pace so it is difficult to say how many sessions will be required in order for a driver to be cleared to participate in the rookie divisions. Advancement and progression of drivers is at the discretion of the rookie director, not the handler of the driver who is in training.

This is a general guideline for how to train rookies and the metrics have been used at Dixie Shootout tracks to aid in the advancement.

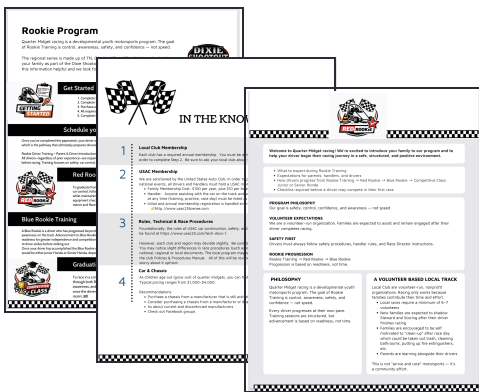
General training notes:

- The rookie director is ultimately responsible for the safety of the drivers (making sure they are properly secured in their cars), handlers and those who are participating in training. Not everyone has had experience around race tracks, and often times those who have experience around race tracks are “too” comfortable and need to be reminded to stay alert.

Getting Started with a New Family

Before a driver can begin training, they must complete the necessary membership.

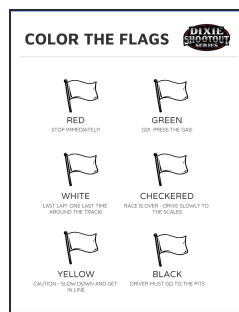
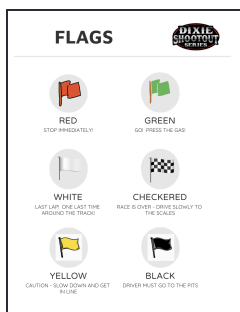
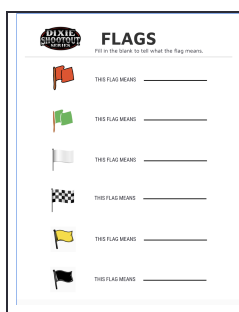
<input type="radio"/>	USAC Membership- usac25.com
<input type="radio"/>	USAC Track Waiver https://trackwaiver.com/waiver/USAC
<input type="radio"/>	Local Club Membership



First Steps

Prior to hitting the track,

- Provide a copy of the Rookie Program to the parents.
- Review the flags with the driver and give them crayons to complete the handouts to better understand the flags.
- While the driver is completing the flag assignment, review the expectations with the parents and answer any questions.



Rookie Training continued

Prepare to Walk the Track

- Place cones on race track to generally outline the desired line around the racetrack.
- Print out a diagram of the track (similar to the one below).

Walk the Track

- Walk the track and play Green Light, Yellow Light, Red Light
 - Green = Run
 - Yellow = Slow down and Walk
 - Red = Stop
- Use print of track layout to demonstrate appropriate line and what is expected.
- Explain what will happen when you enter the corner too soon (wash out wide towards wall), or enter too late (low exit)
- Show the drivers where to enter the track
- Explain that only one car should enter the at a time and are to follow the line as smoothly as they can around the cones. (Note that the cones are only intended to get them close and they should not be "aimed for" as they navigate the track.)
- Emphasize that when drivers enter the racing surface, they are to automatically assume the caution flag is out and they are NOT to go fast until they are told to by the flagman.
- Explain they will Start slow and gradually come up to speed once they get the feel for the car and are as smooth as can be expected by a new driver.
- Let them know what to expect...you are going to wave the yellow, green and red flags so they need to pay attention and do the same when are in the car as they are doing when walking around. Green = Go, Yellow = Slow Down and Red = Stop
- Let them know that when you wave the white flag they will have one more time around and checkered flag means they need to exit the track.
- Encourage drivers to slow down after checkered flag (caution is out) an to make sure they are slow before exiting the racing surface.



Rookie Training continued

Safety Checklist

- Show the driver which pedal is brake and which pedal is gas.
- Go over the pedals and ask them what each pedal is for.
- Show the driver the switch and when to use it.
- Check your driver for the below safety
- Check the drivers ability to hear you on the receiver and explain that you will be talking to them but they won't be able to talk back to you. Make sure they know that if they have a question, they'll need to come to the work area to ask you a question.

Driver Safety Gear (First Priority)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helmet (Snell approved, properly strapped) with clear shield for night and amber shield for day (optional) | <input type="checkbox"/> Arm restraints (securely attached, not twisted) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neck collar / head & neck restraint or hans device | <input type="checkbox"/> Racing suit (zipped fully) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves (on and fitted) | <input type="checkbox"/> Hair tucked in helmet (if applicable) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shoes (closed-toe, secure) | <input type="checkbox"/> Receiver is operatable |

Car Safety – Quick Visual + Touch Check

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ⚠ Race Readiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiver with adequate battery | <input type="checkbox"/> Cockpit & Driver Fit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seat secure • Current dated and not expired 5 point seat belt harness system • Head clearance should be more than 2 inches from roll bars • Seat belts tight and properly routed • Driver positioned correctly (not sliding around) • Steering reach and pedal reach appropriate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Throttle & Brakes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throttle returns freely (no sticking) • Brake pedal firm and brakes working • Kill switch functional | <input type="checkbox"/> Engine & Drivetrain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas • Chain tension correct • Fuel cap secured • No fuel leaks • Exhaust secure (not loose or exposed hazardously) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare Wheels & Tires <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lug nuts tight • Tires properly inflated | |



Rookie Training continued

Phase I: On Track

- Start slow and allow drivers to come up to speed once they get the feel for the car and are as smooth as can be expected by a new driver. Small inputs on the steering wheel.
- Throw random caution-flags and red-flags to observe how the driver responds and is paying attention.
- End session with white and checkered flag, encourage drivers to slow down after checkered flag (caution is out) and to make sure they are slow before exiting the racing surface.
- Once driver is confident with the cones, remove the cones from the track and observe if the racing line is maintained.
- Confirm the driver continues to respond to flags and other instruction.

Criteria to move to next phase:	Success
Driver is smooth and is (generally) following the appropriate line on the racetrack.	<input type="radio"/>
Driver is responding to instruction, following flags and can enter and exit the racing surface safely.	<input type="radio"/>
Driver can maintain a reasonable speed and would not be a hazard with other cars on the track.	<input type="radio"/>



Rookie Training continued

Phase II: On Track

- If possible, have new drivers follow a “more experienced” rookie starting at a slow/caution speed.
- NO PASSING is to be done during this phase. This is to get a driver comfortable with having another car in their field of vision.
- Speed up and slow down the cars on the track using the flags, encouraging the following car to get as close as they can to the bumper of the lead car.
- Speeding up and slowing down cars with flags and commands on raceceiver are intended to simulate a caution situation where a driver needs to slow down without plowing into the other cars on the track.
- Switch between lead and following cars under caution speed to give all drivers equal time to get used to having a car on the track with them.

Criteria to move to next phase:	Success
Lessons learned in Phase I are maintained (paying attention, responsiveness to flags, following the line)	○
Driver can catch up to, without running over, the lead car. Demonstrates throttle and brake control to maintain pace with the lead car.	○



Rookie Training continued

Phase III: BASIC Passing Drills

- An experienced driver (or experienced “advanced” rookie) is best suited to be on the track for the passing drills.
- Use track plan to show visually how the pass is supposed to be executed (Basic sling-shot technique), and encourage ONLY passing coming out of the corner. No dive-bombing into the corners.
 - The passing car enters the corner slightly higher than the lead car, crossing behind the bumper at the bottom of the corner and initiating the pass coming out of the corner.
 - Encourage passing driver NOT to drive along the bottom of the track to make a pass, but to follow the car being passed up the track and stay as close to the other car as possible.
 - Establish position entering the next corner (at least half-way beside car with right-front next to the other driver), or concede the position and fall back behind the car that was intended to be passed.
- With the to drivers the passing drills will start slow-to medium speed. “Dicing” or “Crossing-over” is what is the intended passing drill with drivers passing each other on each subsequent straightaway. HOWEVER, it should be noted that this practice is not smart during a race as it kills momentum and allows the faster cars to drive away.
 - Passing drills back and forth, especially when “dicing” gives the drivers the “feel” for initiating and executing a pass.
 - Passing drills should be started slow and progressed until cars are almost at full-speed.
- The passing drills should be executed in a manner where a constant velocity is maintained and drivers are controlling their speed smoothly around the other car. Not smashing the throttle to pass the other car, only enough to smoothly execute the pass and to allow the other car to cross behind them and pass on the next straightaway.

Criteria to move to next phase:	Success
Drivers demonstrate that the lessons learned in the first two phases are maintained.	○
Drivers demonstrate that they can cleanly set up and execute a pass	○
Drivers demonstrate that they have the throttle control to maneuver around other cars.	○



Rookie Training continued

Phase V: Mock Races:

- This phase is intended to be the culmination of all training and the final step before participating in the rookie division
- Drivers will draw or randomly be assigned starting positions before the race starts.
- Handlers should buckle their driver in and safety the car as an official would safety.
- Drivers enter the track slowly as they would on a race night and follow flagman's instructions.
- Drivers are to line-up quickly and will go through the motions of an actual race:
 - Only pass coming out of the corner
 - Remind them it is only for practice and not to take unnecessary risks
 - Handlers are to be vigilant and working their appropriate corners
- Random caution and/or red flags encouraged to make sure drivers can slow down and stop around each other.
- Upon successful completion of the mock race, it is at the rookie director's discretion to advance the drivers to compete in the red rookie division.

DRIVERS
MUST
PASS ROOKIE REQUIREMENTS
TO RACE RED ROOKIE





REQUIREMENTS

FOR GRADUATION TO RACE

RED ROOKIE



A driver must complete ALL items below before graduating Rookie Training and racing as a **Red Rookie**.

DRIVER REQUIREMENTS	
<input type="radio"/>	Demonstrates consistent control of the car
<input type="radio"/>	Maintains proper racing line around the track
<input type="radio"/>	Understands flag colors used in rookie sessions
<input type="radio"/>	Responds correctly to hand signals
<input type="radio"/>	Safely enters and exits the racing surface
<input type="radio"/>	Slows the car appropriately after the checkered flag
<input type="radio"/>	Maintains awareness of surroundings (cars, cones, officials)
<input type="radio"/>	Shows emotional readiness (calm, focused, coachable)
<input type="radio"/>	Ability to cut switch on and off
SAFETY & PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS	
<input type="radio"/>	Proper seating position and belt fit verified
<input type="radio"/>	Understands Hot Chute and staging procedures
<input type="radio"/>	Understands red gate and scale rules
<input type="radio"/>	Raceceiver functioning and used properly
PARENT / HANDLER REQUIREMENTS	
<input type="radio"/>	Understand track access rules
<input type="radio"/>	Understand handler restrictions while cars are on track
<input type="radio"/>	Demonstrates safe pit and staging behavior
<input type="radio"/>	Acknowledges volunteer expectations
<input type="radio"/>	Reviews Policies & Procedures Manual
<input type="radio"/>	Acknowledges reviewing USAC rules for racing

Rookie Training continued

Phase IV: Sharpen the stone:

- After a driver graduates to Red Rookie, attendance at rookie training sessions is still expected in order to advance to blue and beyond into the competitive divisions. Driver's progress will be reviewed during local races, but proper evaluation happens at the training sessions. Constant review and practice with Phase III through Phase V instruction is ongoing while all drivers are still participating in the rookie program.

Phase VI: Blue Rookie Advancement

- A driver may be moved to blue rookie at the discretion of the rookie director.
- Have blue rookie candidates practice with the blue plate by themselves FIRST before putting them on the track with other drivers.
- Once they are comfortable with the speed go through Phase III through Phase V instruction with the blue plate to encourage growth and additional comfort.

Phase VII: Advancement to Competitive Divisions

- Once the rookie director is confident that a driver has advanced as far as they can in the rookie divisions it is time to move them into their respective competitive classes.



Rookie Training continued

Phase IV: Line Up Drills and Race Procedures:

- Start out of the car and on the racing surface with all of the drivers that are participating in the training program (even very new drivers can participate in this exercise).
- Go through the motions with all of the kids out of the cars and on the racing surface.
 - All cars entering the racing surface slowly
 - Getting in-line by starting position
 - Signal by the flagman to line up double-file (green and yellow furled flags side by side)
 - The “one to go signal” – have the kids walk around the track in formation side-by side
 - Encourage maintaining a slow speed with one to go and the appropriate time to fire coming to the green.
 - Review SINGLE FILE start procedures to go back racing after a caution flag
 - We enforce the restart line in all rookie divisions so drivers and handlers understand the rule and don’t have to learn the hard way once they graduate into the rookie divisions.
 - All four tires above the restart line AND nose to tail. Drivers cannot initiate a pass, even if all tires are above the line, before reaching the restart line.
 - Once procedures are reviewed all drivers then will get into their cars and will practice lining up and taking the green flag.
 - Have all drivers enter the racing surface under power and get in line based upon the race starting order.
 - Give drivers the signal to line-up, encourage a close and tight formation at a constant slow speed.
 - Alternate in different sessions which drivers line up inside and outside for practice.
 - Stay in-formation for extended periods so drivers get practice in line-ups. One or two laps isn’t enough, we often go 20-30 laps in formation to get drivers used to lining up in formation.
 - Have drivers take the green flag and race into turn one, but throw the caution on the back straightaway to have the field slow-down. Re-rack and re-start again so drivers get practice with the slow pace lap coming to the green and fire correctly.
 - After the double-file starts are practiced work on single-file starts in a similar fashion, focusing on the restart line and proper restart procedure.

Criteria to move to next phase:	Success
Driver demonstrates that lessons learned in previous phases are maintained.	○
Driver demonstrates ability to line-up and can maintain formation.	○
Driver demonstrates ability to take green-flag appropriately and responds to instructions to slow down and can re-rack quickly to maintain race pace.	○

Rookie Training continued

Closing notes:

- These guidelines are just a general progression for drivers, and each driver progresses at their own pace.
- Do not try to do too much in a single session if a driver is not responding well to instruction.
- Do not allow handlers to push their drivers too hard, the rookie director is in control of the training session. Should a driver appear too tired or if they are in too much emotional distress have them stop training for the day.
- With advanced drivers it is possible that multiple phases will be completed in a single session, and we have had drivers cleared to complete in the red rookie division in one or two training sessions.
- We encourage you to split your training sessions up into red and blue training so you can lump drivers together with others at their level. It also helps keep the flow of training faster for the blue rookies since the red rookie session is often filled with single-car runs that take longer to cycle through.
- In Dixie, we prefer not to have "Career Rookies". Once a driver is showing that they are competent in the areas being trained they are to be moved to the next level. Refer to advancement requirements in the USAC rulebook, there are limits to the number of races a driver can win in a particular division until they are REQUIRED to move to the next level.

Special thanks to Johnny Miller and Colt James for providing and assisting with preparing and editing the Rookie material.

