

How to Become a Motorcycle Roadracer

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This is a list of Frequently Asked Questions about becoming a Motorcycle Roadracer. It is maintained by [Duke Robillard](mailto:duke@NOSPAMio.com), *duke@NOSPAMio.com* (that's me!). Please send me any additions, corrections, clarifications, or suggestions. In particular, if you find a dead link, please let me know...it's hard to keep up with stuff as it moves 'round. Also, this FAQ is very USA-centric, (even Northeastern US-centric) because that's what I know. Please send me other stuff so I can add it.

A new version of this document appears now and again. It was last modified on 30September 2000, and its travels may have taken it far from its original home on the Web. It may now be out-of-date, particularly if you are looking at a printed copy or one retrieved from a tertiary archive site or CD-ROM. You can always obtain the most up-to-date copy on the WWW at <http://www.io.com/~duke/newrrfaq.htm>. This article was produced for free redistribution. You should not need to pay anyone for a copy of it.

You may wonder why I think I'm an authority on this subject. Well, I've got a racing license, which is more than you! :-> Seriously, I'm no authority at all, but I did spend a couple of years going through the process of getting started. I got a tremendous amount of help from people, both on-line and off, and I thought maybe I could do something to help pay back my karmic debt.

Thanks to everyone on the [race list](mailto:race@micapeak.com) (race@micapeak.com, "subscribe race Your-Name" to listproc@micapeak.com). I stole a lot of this from your postings. You are the best resource a newbie racer ever had. Thanks in particular to Hardy Kornfeld, Billy Brownsberger, Paul George, Laura Hardy, Ed McFarland, Kevin Binsfield, Jon Fleming, Phil Calvin and the illustrious Gunn family.

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[Motorcycle Mailing List Roundup](#), which is a great thing, and also where I got some addresses.

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is Motorcycle Roadracing?

Motorcycle Roadracing is the best time you can have with your leathers on. Motorcycle Roadracing is better than drugs, sex, or money. This is good, since you need to give up all three to do it. Motorcycle Roadracing will rip off the back of your head and glue it on backwards. Motorcycle Roadracing is indescribable. In short, get thee to a track.

On a more concrete level, Roadracing involves a group of people on bikes, racing around an asphalt track with many left and right turns and elevation changes. The tracks are like those used in Formula 1 car racing, rather than like the ovals used in stock car racing--it's more like Watkins Glen than the Indy 500. The motorcycles used range from lightly modified street bikes to special purpose million dollar factory-built race bikes.

Roadracing is done on many levels, from local clubs to World Championships.

1.2 What do I Need To Go Racing?

Less than you think. You need a race-prepared motorcycle (see [2.1](#)) and protective gear (race leathers, helmet, gloves, and boots). You need a racing license (see [3.1](#) and [3.2](#)). You need a way to get the bike to the track (pickup, trailer, or van).

The gear is vital. New race leathers are somewhere close to \$1000, and worth every penny. They've got serious weight leather, foam padding, and hard plastic body armour. Racing gloves cost up to \$100, and boots cost up to \$300. Helmets are the same as street helmets; \$150-\$500, depending on paint scheme :->

Don't try to cheap out on any of this stuff. Used is okay (except for helmets, of course), but if you buy crummy leathers, you'll pay for the difference in ambulance fees and pain.

As far as getting the race-bike to the track, the cheapest thing to do is borrow your uncle's pickup. Failing that, you can get a hitch-and-trailer for your Big American Car or Yuppie Sport Utility Vehicle for between \$500 and \$1000, depending on quality, new or used, weight rating, etc.

Personally, I think a van is the best solution, because it keeps the bike out of the rain, is easier to drive than a car & trailer, holds a lot of tools and spares, and you can sleep in it. I initially bought a hitch-and-trailer, 'cause it was cheaper, and then I upgraded to a van.

Don't ride your bike to the track, because then when you wad it up in turn 6, you won't be able to get it home.

1.2.1 Where Do I Get Leathers and Such?

Some gear companies commonly used by racers:

- [AGV](http://www.agv.com). Frederick, MD 21701, 800-950-9006. They have a sponsorship program for anyone with a license, and inexpensive leathers. Cool boots and gloves, too. And the Max Biaggi Replica Helmet...Yum. Max is cool. <http://www.agv.com>
- [Vanson Leathers](http://www.vansonleathers.com), 617-344-5444, 213 Turnpike St Stoughton, MA. I bought my leathers here--they're great people to deal with and the leathers are primo. <http://www.vansonleathers.com>
- [NewEnough.com](http://www.newenough.com/), 888-530-7351. Quality used leathers, cheap. <http://www.newenough.com/>
- Syed Leathers, 11349 S. Orange Blossom Trail, Orlando, FL. (800) 486-6635, (407) 857-SYED, fax (407) 857-9233.
- [Z Custom Leathers](http://www.zcustom.com), Huntington Beach, CA (714) 890-5721. <http://www.zcustom.com>
- Dinar Leathers, Lebanon, NJ (908) 236-0512, fax (908) 236-0513
- Dainese. No direct contact info (they're Italian), but you can get them at lots of shops. You might try [MOTORACE](http://www.motorace.com), P.O. Box 861, Wilbraham, MA 01095. Tel: 800-628-4040, Fax: 413-731-8999, E.Mail: MOTORACE1@aol.com

- Alpinstars. Boots of Champions.
- Held. Gloves of Asphalt Resistance.

1.3 How Much Money Am I Going to Spend?

You can do the first year for \$5000 - \$6000, including buying a used bike and protective gear, spares, and a trailer set-up. After that, it should be cheaper, until you need a new bike, or start messing with your engine. If you buy a bike in need of a lot of repair, you may wind up spending more than that.

I've found a weekend at the races typically runs a little less than \$300, including gas, oil, entrance fees, food, etc. You can do it cheaper, you can do it more expensive. If you have a big bike, you'll need to replace tires a lot (maybe every weekend), but on little ones, you can get a number weekends out of them.

1.4 Am I Going To Wind Up Maimed or Dead?

Well, all the championship level racers are maimed to a certain extent. Doug Polen has no toes on one foot, Mick Doohan's right ankle doesn't bend, and Wayne Rainey is paralysed from the waist down. On the other hand, I've met a lot of expert club racers who seem pretty much okay.

You are going to crash, and you are going to break bones. Your collarbones are goners. Fingers, handbones, wristbones, footbones, and anklebones are also likely to get broken.

However, serious injury and death are not very common. Most crashes involve sliding to a stop, getting up, and running to hit your kill switch. Racers like to claim the track is safer than the street, because there are no Volvos to turn left in front of you. And when you do crash, there's an ambulance a few minutes away, with the engine running.

But there's just no getting around the fact that this is a dangerous sport. If that bothers you a lot, maybe you should take the advice of a friend of mine, who suggested I try chess instead. :->
Remember: "It ain't a sport if it can't kill you."

1.5 What's a Typical Race Day Like?

At six am, you're awakened by the guy in the pit to your left, working on the jetting of his 2 stroke (WWWINNNNNGG). You didn't get to sleep until 1am, because Otis The Wonder Dog (staying in the pit to your right) was barking at the TV plugged into the Honda generator. You try to wake

up your pit crew, stumble to registration and give away money, eat a bagel as you push your bike through technical inspection, and then miss your first practice because you forgot to safety wire your oil drain bolt after you changed the oil at 3am on Thursday night.

Finally, you get out in practice, immediately find the limit of traction, spend two hours and \$100 at the on-track vendors getting your handlebars fixed, and then blow the start of your Supersport race. But it's all worthwhile when you stuff that guy on the new ZX-6R who's fast down the straights but can't keep in front of you in the carousel.

That's a little embellished, (could you tell?) but it covers a lot of what goes on. Many racers camp at the track (cheaper than motels, less packing and unpacking, less distance to travel in the morning). Race days start early, with a line for the showers forming by 7.

Whenever you go racing, you should always bring along somebody (your "crew") to help out. His main job is driving the truck home if you break your ankle, but he can also take lap times and help fix broken stuff.

You have to register for each race, and there's a fee for each (NE CCS is \$50 a race, for instance). Before you can get on the track (and after crashes) you have to go through technical inspection. There are generally several practices each day, divided up by speed, experience, and/or class of bike.

If you crash, you and your crew haul the bike back to the pit, fix it (there are usually vendors at the track, eager to sell brake levers and to mount tires), go through tech. again, and get back out.

And the best feeling in the world is watching someone pull away on the straight, and then reeling him back in in the twisty stuff.

1.6 I'm Still Not Sure I Want to Do This, How Can I Find Out?

One way to try to decide whether or not road racing is for you is to try out one of the many track classes, like Reg Pridmore's [CLASS](#), dp Safety School, [Keith Code's California Superbike School](#), [FastTrack Riders](#), the [Team Hammer Endurance Advanced Riding School](#), [Ed Barga's Real Race School](#), or the [MARRC](#), [Penguin](#), or [WERA](#) Roadracing Schools. Each of these organizations offer track time at minimal expense (you can use your street bike, or sometimes rent a race bike) and teach riding techniques valid for all speeds and all types of riding. See [4.1](#) for more info on these.

There are a number of on-line racers who blame their current obsessions on attending [CLASS](#) (805-933-9936).

Another excellent idea is to go to the races a couple of times and hang out in the pits. If you can find a racer who might need crew, volunteer to go along and help. This is the best way to learn the routine. This sounds self evident, but there are many people who want to start racing without having ever been into the pits; they've just seen it on TV or from the grandstand.

Lastly, you should volunteer to be a corner-worker at your local track. Corner Workers are the rodeo clowns of Road Racing. They hang out near the crash points on corners, and when someone goes down, they run out to get the racer and his bike out of harm's way, and out of the way of the rest of the race. They're also in charge of the signalling flags that get waved when something goes wrong, and on getting the oil off the track. Without them, we'd all be sitting home wishing we could go racing.

If you go to the track and say "I'd like to corner work" they'll be delighted to have you, trust me. You get to see the racing up close (only the racers get better seats), meet racers, learn the track and rules, etc. Sometimes you even get paid for working, or maybe get free lunch.

Cornerworking is also a good suggestion for people who are concerned about the possibility of injury. There is nothing like spending a day watching people get back on their bikes after crashing.

A couple of good cornerwork organizations are [the US Marshalls](#), which runs the safety crew at Loudon, and [MARRC](#), which does the hard work at Summit Point.

1.7 What About Medical Insurance?

Some medical polices cover you for track injuries, and some don't. Call your insurance company and find out. If you're not covered, you'll need to get a special policy. The American Motorcycle Association (AMA) has a policy called ARMOR that covers you in AMA sanctioned events. Call the AMA to see if your series is sanctioned. [AHRMA](#), [LRRS](#) (the Northeast CCS region) and the [Great Lakes Road Racing Associated \(GLRRA\)](#) are sanctioned.

Don't race without medical insurance. If you think an aftermarket shock is expensive, wait till you price those external fixators for broken bones. A friend of mine reports his grandmother got one for a broken wrist: a simple one, 4 bolts, two clamps, one tube. Parts alone cost \$3,500. And you can guess the hourly rate for an orthopedic surgeon. Seriously, a big racing injury can easily bankrupt you.

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2. Motorcycles & Race Classes

2.1 What Bike Should I Use to Go Racing?

The conventional wisdom is that you should start on small bikes, and learn to ride before you get enough horsepower to really hurt yourself. In the US, the most popular starter racing bikes are the Suzuki SV650, Kawasaki EX-500, the Yamaha FZR 400, the Honda Hawk GT-650, and Your Current Street Bike.

- [Suzuki SV-650](#)

This bike has dethroned the FZR-400 as the best lightweight production racer. It's light and fast, and there are plenty of aftermarket parts and support. It's also a twin, which is good for class egibility. The only downside is that you can't get the fairing-ed version in the US yet, but word is that's changing next year, and [Sharkskinz](#) can probably help you right now. If I were gonna start racing next season, I'd get one of these. There's a website, too: <http://www.sv650.org/> and an e-zine: <http://www.svrider.com/>



- [Kawasaki EX-500](#)

Made from 1987-2001, this is a 500cc parallel twin with a cradle frame. You can find race prepped specimens for under \$2000. It's not the best handling of these bikes, but it's cheap and fine for starters. As a little twin, it's legal for lots of classes. There's a EX500 mailing list filled with racers: send 'SUBSINGLE' in the body of the message to EX500-request@lists.best.com. There's also a Ninja mailing list that includes the EX500: send a message to majordomo@technolust.net and in the body of the message put 'subscribe ninja-l' Finally, there's a [Home Page](#) (<http://www.sport-twin.com/EX500Hm.shtml>) with a FAQ and a lot of good stuff.



- [Yamaha FZR 400](#)

Imported to the US from 1988-1990, this is a 400cc inline four, with an aluminum "Deltabox" twin-spar frame. The 1990 model had twin front brake calipers and a Deltabox swingarm. Race ready versions are usually close to \$3000. This is probably the best of the three, but it also costs the most. I bought this one, because I didn't want to worry about whether the problem was me or the bike; with the FZR, I know it's me. There's a mailing list for this bike also: see <http://www.egroups.com/group/fzr400>. Also, there's a [Yamaha FZR 400 Web Page](#) (<http://www.activebike.com/400page/>) you can scope out.



- Honda Hawk GT 650

Made from 1988-1990, this is a 650cc V-twin with a twin-spar frame. Race ready versions are around \$2500. The engine is a little weak in stock form, but can really breath fire when worked on. As a little twin, it's legal for lots of classes.

There's a [mailing list](#) for this bike: send "subscribe hawkgt-l yourfirstname yourlastname" in the body of a message to listserv@listserv.hawkgt.com or visit <http://www.hawkgt.com> or go directly to the lists page where a web form can be used for subscription at <http://www.hawkgt.com/archives/hawkgt-l.html> and select the button "HawkGT-L Subscriber Functions".

- Your Current Street Bike

This bike has one obvious advantage: it's nearly free (you do have to spend some money race prepping it). A lot of people start on their 600 Sportbikes; in my region, the Amateur 600cc grids are completely packed. The disadvantage of this bike is that when you wreck it, you've got no street bike. An even worse problem would be wrecking it on the street and having no race bike! In addition, it's a royal pain to rip all the street stuff (lights, signals, etc) off every weekend, and when your suspension is set up correctly for the track, it's unrideable on the street. A final warning: some organizations don't let novices on anything bigger than a 750.

A good way to pick a bike is to go to your local track, hang out in the pits, talk to people your own age who are smiling, find out what they are riding and why. Look at how many bikes are in each class, and how the racing is going. Some classes are just for nut cases (I would **never** say that about any particular class, like, oh, say, the Amateur 600's). Other classes have an air of respect for their fellow riders.

Some people start in vintage racing; it's not just for retired roadracers. A good starter bike is a CB350 Honda. They are cheap, and in the USCRA there are two classes for them, one for stock motors and one for modified motors. The USCRA also has a class for the RD 350 Yamaha. One of the main advantages of vintage road racing is that it is a fixed target. Once you sort out a machine you can race it year after year; there are no new Vintage bikes coming out. Most clubs rules are very stable and do not allow new technology to creep into the classes. Michael Moore runs a Vintage Roadracing list: send mail to majordomo@list.sirius.com with the following command in the body of your email message: 'subscribe vintage-roadrace name@domain' Also, the [WERA Vintage](http://www.weravintage.com/) series has a web page: <http://www.weravintage.com/>.

No matter what bike you race, it's simpler if you buy a bike that's already being raced in the class you're going to join--that way all the grunt work of race-prepping has been done. And stay as close to stock as you can; you need to spend the first season learning to race, not working on your porting.

2.2 How Do I Find This Race-Ready Bike?

The best ways are

1. hang around the pits at your local racetrack (see [5.1](#)) and look for "For Sale" signs,
2. check the classifieds in Cycle News, Roadracing World, or American Roadracing (see [6.1](#)),
3. check around the newsgroup and mailing list (see [6.1](#))

2.3 What Class Should I Race In?

Most organizations have different racing classes divided up by engine displacement, engine type (2-stroke vs 4-stroke), number of cylinders, and how much magic has been performed on the bike. Take CCS, for instance (see [3.2](#)). It has a number of "Lightweight" classes for production-based street bikes. These classes allow 4 stroke bikes with 4 cylinders up to 400cc or 4 stroke twins up to 650cc. "Lightweight SportBike" is for mildly altered bikes (new pipes, jetting and

suspensions) on DOT tires. "Lightweight Superbike" is for bikes with titanium con-rods and such, running on slicks. (The details of what's legal and what's not are more complicated, but that's the general idea.) The grids for these classes are filled with the three bikes mentioned in [2.1](#)

You're usually allowed to "race up a class," which means you can ride a 600cc bike in the 750cc class. On some tight, twisty tracks, you might not even be at much of a disadvantage. At the AMA national at Loudon, for instance, there's usually a 600 in the top ten of the 750 Supersport races. And in the beginner classes, slow bikes with fast riders beat fast bikes with slow riders all the time.

It's a good idea to start in relatively slow, lightweight classes. If you take your CBR900RR to the track to learn on, odds are you're going to get lapped an awful lot, fall down all the time, and might even be a danger to the more experienced racers. In fact, some organizations don't let novices on anything bigger than a 750. My race school instructor explained this decision: "It was just getting too bloody."

2.4 What's this "YSR" stuff I Hear About?

Another Bike/Class option is to race YSRs. The [Yamaha YSR](#) is a 50cc or 80cc two stroke that looks like a sport bike. They are raced in parking lots, on go cart tracks, and on regular race tracks.

YSR racing isn't as high speed as full size racing, but it is a fantastic alternative for people who can't ante up the entrance fee for big-time racing, or are not prepared (due to family, etc) to risk life and limb for the pursuit of adrenaline.

YSR's also provide a semi-safe place to hone up racing skills (most of them are directly transferrable) before stepping up to lightweights. Crashes are not usually serious, so racers can get used to falling off.

There are mini-racing (as it's also called) groups around North America--check the [Team Calamari YSR50 Racing Page](#) for more details; they've got addresses and numbers for groups around the continent. You can also check [Craig Faison's Page on YSR's](#) (<http://www.magpage.com/~cfaison/ysr.htm>) which includes [the Eastern American Roadracing Association \(EARA\) rulebook](#) (<http://www.magpage.com/~cfaison/rulebook.html>). [Koping Hu's Home Page](#) (<http://www.geocities.com/MotorCity/4200/>) Also has YSR info.

2.5 What's This "Mini-Moto" Stuff I Hear About?

Mini-Motos are little miniature motorcycles--like 8 inches high, 3 feet long, and 50lbs. They've got little 2-stroke engines, no suspension, tire compounds that feel like real race tires, and cost \$1500. People race them in parking lots and sometimes on go-kart tracks. Supposedly, they'll do 60mph, given a long enough run. It's something to see.

2.6 What is "Race-Prepping"?

"Race-prepping" is getting your bike ready to race. If you've bought a bike that's already been racing, race-prepping is all the grunt work you don't have to do. It means stripping off all the street stuff (lights, signals, kickstands, etc), replacing the radiator coolant with water, safety-wiring anything you wouldn't want to come loose at speed, putting on number plates, adding a steering damper, etc.

[The Mid-Atlantic Roadracing Club \(MARRC\)](http://marrc.nova.org/html_docs/rrs.bikeprep.html) has a very cool on-line [guide](#) to how to race-prep at http://marrc.nova.org/html_docs/rrs.bikeprep.html. You should check it out.

"Safety-wiring" is drilling little holes through the heads of bolts that hold on important stuff, running wire through those holes, and then attaching the wire to some fixed point, or to another bolt. This makes it impossible for the bolt to turn, no matter how much it vibrates and bounces. Obvious targets for safety wiring are oil drain plugs, fork oil drains, the remote shock reservoir (mine fell off once) and brake caliper bolts.

It is really helpful to have someone show you how and what to safety wire; the race rulebooks are not very clear or complete. When you go to the track to hang around before becoming a racer, you can check this out, perhaps asking someone for hints and help. Most racers are very helpful about this kind of thing, and love to talk about their bikes. (Just don't catch them 10 minutes before their next race.)

Every organization has its own specific rules about race-prepping. You'll find them in the rulebooks (see [6.1](#) and [3.2](#)).

2.7 Do You Insure Race Bikes?

No.

That's a little extreme, but not much. Some people do get special theft insurance if the bike is really valuable (like a Ducati 996 or Honda RC45). There's no such thing as liability insurance on the racetrack. If somebody hits you, you can yell at him all

you like, but he's not going to pay to fix your bike, or pay for your ambulance ride. And for God's sake, don't get a lawyer and sue him--that will be the end of amateur racing. There's no such thing as collision insurance either. If you slide your bike into the wall, you buy the new front end yourself. Racers have a phrase to describe these unpleasant incidents: "That's Racing."

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3. Racing Organizations

3.1 What's a Racing Organization?

A Racing Organization is a group that sanctions races. They set up the weekends, officiate, keep the records, and take your money. They also issue racing licenses.

In the US, The [Western Eastern Roadracing Association \(WERA\)](#) and the [Championship Cup Series \(CCS\)](#) are nation-wide organizations, with regional series spread across the country. No matter where you live, you can race under one of these two. If you do really well in your region, you can go to the Grand National Final (WERA, Road Atlanta) or the Race of Champions (CCS, Daytona) at the end of the season. Also, the [WERA Vintage](#) series has a web page: <http://www.weravintage.com/>.

Another national organization is [American Historic Racing Motorcycle Association \(AHRMA\)](#), which runs vintage racing and "alternative types of modern roadracing that otherwise would not receive the exposure they deserve. These include Sound of Singles (SOS), Battle of Twins (BOT), and the Sound of Thunder Series." These are very cool races to watch, because they've got bikes you don't see anywhere else, like Britten and Saxon-framed three cylinder modern Triumphs.

In addition, there are a lot of local organizations, some of which are associated with WERA and/or CSS, and some of which are independent.

You can get the schedules for these organizations by contacting them, or by checking the lists in the back of [Roadracing World and Motorcycle Technology](#) or [American Roadracing](#) magazines

3.2 What are the NA Organizations by Geographical Area?

USA (Nationwide):

Western Eastern Roadracing Association (WERA), 3446 Bells Ferry Rd., PO Box 440549, Kennesaw, GA 30144. Phone: 770-924-8404, Fax: 770-924-1277, werahq@aol.com. See <http://www.wera.com> for the 1998 Rules and Schedules.

Championship Cup Series (CCS), 704-684-4297. See <http://www.ccsracing.com> for the 1998 Rules and Schedules.

American Historic Racing Motorcycle Association (AHRMA), PO Box 882, Wausau, WI 54402-0882, 715-842-9699, fax: 715-842-9545. See <http://www.ahrma.org/> for membership information and schedules.

Canada (Nationwide):

Association Sportive Motocycliste (ASM), 322 Raymond Casgrain, Laval, QC, H7N 5N8. Phone: (514) 663-2431, fax: (514)663-5816.

Northeast US:

CCS Northeast Region. **Loudon RoadRacing Series (LRRS)** and GP/Pro is the local organization that runs the the CCS NE series. They also have their own classes. Races take place at New Hampshire International Speedway, Loudon, NH. PO Box 73, West Hurley, NY 12491-0073. 914-679-5547.

US Classic Racing Association (USCRA). Vintage racing at Loudon (NHIS), Atlantic Motorsport Park, Nova Scotia, Canada, Mosport Park, Canada and Summit Point Raceway in West Virginia. Rules: c/o Robert Coy, 441 Athol Road, Richmond, NH 03470. phone 603-239-6778, fax 603-239-7343. <http://kyalami.chess.cornell.edu/uscra.html>. Membership: c/o Charlie Seymour, PO BOX 473, Sanbornville, NH 03872. 603-522-3104. \$15 a year and you must be a AMA member Newsletter: Richard Peterson Jr., 1251 Middle Road, East Greenwich, RI 02818. mtpracin@aol.com.

Eastern Canada:

Association Sportive Motocycliste (ASM), Ontario: 905-522-5705?
Quebec: (514) 582-4051? Toronto: 416-635-9763?

Canadian Motorcycle Association, 902-835-3300.

<http://www.canmocycle.ca/>

RACE Super Series, 613-966-4882

US Classic Racing Association (USCRA). See Northeast US.

Atlantic Motorcycle Competition Riders Association (AMCRA). Based at Atlantic Motorsport Park (AMP), Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia.
<http://www.procycle-hdd.com/amcra>

Mid-Atlantic US:

CCS MidAtlantic Region

WERA Mid-Atlantic Region

Mid-Atlantic Road Racing Club (MARRC). Provides safety crew for WERA and CCS regional races, and runs a school and open practice days at Summit Point, WV. <http://marrc.nova.org> They also have an [on-line guide](#) to race-prepping that's very cool (http://marrc.nova.org/html_docs/rrs.bikeprep.html).

Southeast US:

CCS Southeast Region

CCS Florida Region (Talladega,)

Southeastern Sportbike Association (SSA). runs a school and open practice days at Roebing and Talladega. se-sport@mindspring.com

Northern US:

WERA NorthCentral Region

CCS Great Lakes Region

Central Roadracing Association (CRA), 612-3324. <http://www.cra-mn.org>

Great Lakes Road Racing Association (GLRRA). call Eric Knacke at

(616) 458-5888. <http://www.glrra.com>

Mid West US:

WERA MidCentral Region.

Central Motorcycle Racing Association (CMRA): local organization that's the WERA affiliate. (800) 423-8736, <http://www.flash.net/~cmra>, PO Box 156, Richmond, Texas 77406.

CCS Mid West Region.

Great Lakes Road Racing Association (GLRRA). call Eric Knacke at (616) 458-5888. <http://www.glrra.com/>

CCS Great Plains Region.

Midwest Cafe Racing Association 314-771-2531

Mid West Canada:

Manitoba Roadracing Association, 204-775-9473

Calgary Motorcycle Roadracing Association, 403-280-3144

Western US:

CCS Great Plains Region

WERA MidCentral Region

Motorcycle Roadracing Association (MRA), PO Box 40187, Denver, Colorado 80204, 303-530-5678, <http://www.mra-racing.org/>. Races at Second Creek Raceway, Pueblo Motorsports Park, Mountain View Motorsports Park, Stapleton Motorsports Park, the new Pikes Peak International Raceway, and on the streets Steamboat Springs (I don't know anywhere else west of Ireland where you can race on a real street course!).

American Federation of Motorcyclists (AFM), 510-796-7005. <http://www.afmracing.org/> PO Box 5018-333 Newark, CA 94560.

[**Willow Springs Motorcycle Club**](#) (WSMC), PO Box 911, Rosamond California, 93560-0911. 805-256-1234, fax 805-256-1583, racewillow@aol.com. <http://www.race-wsmc.com>

[**California Mini Road Race Association**](#) (CMRRA). 909-674-5357. YSR racing. 15023 Valencia Street, Lake Elsinore, CA 92530. Races at Lake Perris Raceway & Willow Springs. brad.glustoff@airtouch.com, cmrra1@aol.com, <http://members.aol.com/CMRRA1/CMRRA.html>.

North West US:

[**Oregon Motorcycle Road Racing Association\(OMRRA\)**](#), PO Box 6388 Portland, Oregon, 97228, 503-221-1487, <http://www.omrra.com/>.

[**Washington Motorcycle Road Racing Association, \(WMRRA\)**](#) 206-972-4499, <http://www.wmrra.com/>.

[**Northwest 883 Twins, 604-585-HAWG.**](#)

South West US:

[**CCS South West Region**](#)

[**WERA SouthCentral Region**](#)

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4. Racing Schools

4.1 What's a Racing School?

What, you think Kevin Schwantz was born that way? He had to learn somewhere. A beginner race school will teach you the basic stuff about how to survive on the track, what the various flags mean, what a cornerworker does, and so on. You usually need to take a school in order to get a racing license from one of the race organizations.

Later on, you can take advanced race schools, in order to trim some seconds off your lap times.

4.2 Racing Schools: When, Where, How Much?

The paper Roadracing magazines (see [6.1](#)) have listings of dates for most of the track schools. You can also check racingschools.com. It also covers car schools, but just grit your teeth and skip past them.

[Penguin RoadRacing School](#)

347B Pratt Street, Mansfield, MA 02048. 508-339-4673 Phone manned 9am-1pm Mon-Thu by Eric Wood. Held at Loudon, New Hampshire on the Friday before every NE CCS race weekend. \$150 tuition. You can rent an EX500 (\$225) and leathers (\$40). Qualifies you for a CCS license (for \$75) and racing the same weekend. <http://www.penguinracing.com>

[MARRC Roadracing School](#)

c/o Karen Ball 4714 Manheim Ave. Beltsville, MD 20705-1819 Phone#: (301) 937-4834. Taught at Summit Point Raceway in West Virginia, on CCS race weekends. \$140, with a \$20 discount for pre-entry. And it's only \$90 if you volunteer to cornerwork. Qualifies you for a CCS license (for another \$50) and racing the same weekend. raceschool@marrc.nova.org They also have an [on-line guide](#) to race-prepping that's very cool (http://marrc.nova.org/html_docs/rrs.bikeprep.html).

[Team Promotion](#)

These guys are a Sportbike club that holds track days on various tracks on the East Coast. They also run a school that qualifies you for a CCS license. Pretty good website, too. <http://www.teampromotion.com/>

[Team Hammer Advanced Riding School](#)

Travels the country. Instruction from former National Endurance Champ rider (and very nice guy) Michael Martin. Can be taken on a street bike (and most people do), but qualifies you for CSS and WERA licenses. <http://www.teamhammer.com/hschool.htm>

[Frank Kinsey Racing School](#)

(321-267-4787) teaches the rider's school at Moroso Motorsports Park in West Palm Beach, Florida and also does "on-track" instruction geared to a wide range of motorcycle riders - street riders to racers. It's a good website (<http://www.kinseyracingschool.com/index.html>); check it out.

[Ed Bargy's Real Race School](#)

770-745-7809, ebrs@mindspring.com, at various tracks in the Southeast. \$165.

Lots of track time and high quality instruction from Ed. Qualifies you for WERA and CCS licenses and you get a \$50 gift certificate for Michelins.

<http://www.mindspring.com/~ebrs>

The Southeast Sportbike Associations's School

The SSA rents tracks in the southeast for racers and street riders to get on the track. track time is \$75-\$125 for the day, and the class is an additional \$25. Qualifies you for a WERA and CCS license. Concentrates on the flagging and starting procedures and isn't a go-fast type class.

Keith Code's California Superbike School

818-246-0717, 800-530-3350, FAX: 818-246-3307 PO Box 9294, Glendale CA, 91226. <http://www.superbikeschool.com>

Jason Pridmore's STAR Motorcycle School

4587 Telephone Rd. #206, Ventura, CA 93003-5653, 805-658-6333, Fax 805-658-1395, <http://www.starmotorcycle.com>

FastTrack Riders

310-699-2305. Willow Springs, Rosamond, CA. Classes given at Willow Springs. Tom Sera is now the guy in charge; Lance Holst is an instructor, and he also gives private lessons (818-666-0112). <http://www.fastrackriders.com>

Willow springs new racer school

805-256-1234

WERA New Racer Rider's School

770-924-8404. Summit Point, WV. Qualifies you for a WERA license.

AFM race school

510-537-8208. Given by AFM, the California racing organization. Mostly Classroom race theory; very little track time. You must safety wire your bike.

FASTTRAX Performance Riding School

Run at [Nelson Ledges Road Course](#) in Ohio. Contact [Bob Stanley](#)), at 1919 Balmore Street NW North Canton, Ohio 44720, <http://www.fastone.com/>

dp Safety School

805-772-8301. A street-bike class given at the various Northern California tracks.

[Learning Curves Roadrace School \(LCR\).](#)

Closest raceschool to Road America. 7881 West Beckett Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53218, 414-461-0116 or 414-327-0140, <http://www.execpc.com/~rcrrik/>

[FAST Riding School](#)

Runs at Shannonville and Mosport, Ontario, St-Eustache, Quebec, Race City, Calgary, and Grattan, Michigan. They rent bikes (GSXR600, YZF600 or ZX6) and leathers. RR#1, Carrying Place, Ontario, KOK 1L0. <http://www.reach.net/~fast/>

[Danny Walker's American Supercamp.](#)

Most of the top American road racers have experience riding Flat Track (aka Dirt Track), a kind of motorcycle racing where you slide the rear wheel around to turn the bike. (See FlatTrack.com for more info.) Danny Walker will teach you how to do this on XR100's. If you're lucky, Chris Carr or Scott Russell will show up and show you how it's really done, and then you can pump them with questions about road-racing during lunch. You'll fall off about a million times, and you'll be limping for days, but you'll also be dying to go back. American Supercamp, 217 Blossom Dr., Loveland, CO 80537. 970-669-4322, Fax 970-669-6102, <http://www.americansupercamp.com/>. Email Danny Walker at danny@americansupercamp.com.

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5. Tracks

5.1 What Tracks are Local to Me & What are They Like?

In North America, we're lucky; we've got the [North American Motorsports Page](#), with their collection of [North American Tracks](#): <http://www.na-motorsports.com/Tracks/>. This is an excellent site, covering all sorts of Race Tracks. It has directions to the tracks, track maps, nearby food and lodging...everything. You want the Road Courses. In Great Britain, try the [British Motor Racing Circuits Page](#) <http://www.bmrc.co.uk/index.html>.

In fact, these sites are so good that I'm probably gonna drop this track section in the near future. Until then, here're some real short blurbs on tracks.

[New Hamshire International Speedway](#), Loudon, New Hampshire. 603-783-4931. Commonly called "Loudon." 1.6 miles, 12 turns, crisscrosses a NASCAR oval. Site of National AMA Superbike race during Laconia Bike Week. Track record 1'13'xx"

Nice bathrooms, showers, and garages. Camping allowed, pets allowed.
<http://www.nhis.com/>. Here's a [map](#)

[Nelson Ledges](#) Garrettsville, OH, near the OH/PA border, east of Cleveland. 216-548-8551.

[Summit Point Raceway](#), Summit Point, West Virginia, ~90 minutes west of Baltimore. (304) 725-8444. <http://www.bsr-inc.com/bsr/summit/>

Atlantic Motorsport Park (AMP), Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, Canada. 8 hour ferry ride from Portland ME + 3 hrs on the road. 1.6 mile, 11 turns, elevation changes, blind entries and exits. Lap record is 1:09, held by two time Canadian Superbike, and 5 time Canadian 600 champ Don Munroe of Bedford, NS.

Mosport Park, 60 miles east of Toronto, Canada. 905-513-0550.

Blackhawk Farms, Beloit, WI ~1-1.5 hours NW of Chicago. 1.9 miles.

[Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course](#), Lexington Ohio (near Mansfield which is between Cleveland and Columbus). Not many club races...the [GLRRA](#) has one weekend there in 1998. <http://www.midohio.com>

[Willow Springs](#), "The Fastest Road in the West." 85 miles north of Los Angeles. Run by [Willow Springs Motorcycle Club](#) (call Kenny Kopecky @ 805-256-1234, racewillow@aol.com). 2.5 miles. Also, for track time programs at Willow there is: [FastTrack Riders](#)

Stapleton Motorsports Park, the old Stapleton Airport Runways, Denver, Colorado. 3.1 mi, 10 turns, track record 1:58:05

Second Creek Raceway, 88th Ave & Buckley Road, Denver, Colorado. 1.75 mi, 11 turns, lap record: 1:09:98.

Pueblo Motorsports Park, Pueblo Blvd, Pueblo, Colorado. 2.25 mi, 12 turns, track record: 1:35:29

Steamboat Springs, Street Course in Southern part of the city of Steamboat, Colorado. 1.7 miles, 10 turns, track record: 1:22:48. One of the last Street Courses in the US.

Mountain View Motorsports Park, 30 miles north of Denver, Colorado, exit 245 off I25. 1.7 mi, 9 turns, track record 1:02.14.

Grattan Raceway, located in Grattan, Michigan, about 20 minutes east of Grand Rapids. Hosts WERA and CCS races.

Putnam Park Road Course, located in Mt. Meridian, Indiana, about 40 minutes west of Indianapolis. WERA and CCS races.

[Road America](#), Elkhart Lake, WI. One of the best tracks in the US.

<http://www.roadamerica.com/>

Indianapolis Raceway Park, in you guessed it, Indianapolis, Indiana, in the suburb Clermont (right by the Speedway). WERA and CCS.

Texas World Speedway, located in College Station, Texas. WERA races for sure, CMRA races, and maybe CCS races (not sure).

Memphis Motorsports Park, located in Millington, Tennessee, somewhere around Memphis. WERA National.

Oak Hill Raceway, Henderson, Texas, WERA regionals

N.C. Motor Speedway, Rockingham, NC, WERA regionals

[Hallett Motor Racing Circuit](#), Hallett, OK. 1.8 mile, 10 turns. WERA regionals.

<http://www.mavier.com/hallett>

Gateway Intl Raceway, Fairmont City (St. Louis), Il, WERA regionals

[Las Vegas Speedway Park](#), Las Vegas Speedway Park, Las Vegas, NV,

<http://www.lvms.com>. WERA regionals.

[Laguna Seca](#), Monterey, California. Site of US Round of World Superbike and formerly, the US Grand Prix. One of the best tracks in the US. <http://www.laguna-seca.com/>

[Sears Point](#), the SF Bay Area, California. <http://www.searspoint.com>.

Moroso Motorsports Park, West Palm Beach, FL. About 10 miles NW of West

Palm Beach on 710 (Beeline Hwy). 2.25 miles with 10 turns, flat, fairly long back straight running along dragstrip. Races run by Henry DeGouw (407)793-3394. Several grades of race gas available, pretty good concession stands, permanent bathrooms with showers (but stinking sulfur water), camping permitted outside the pits, no dogs.

Roebing Road, Faulkville, GA (west of Savannah, just off US80). 2.1 mi., 9 turns, one slight elevation change, >1/2 mile long front straight, excellent traction, bumpy now but scheduled for repaving this winter. 100, 108 and 114 octane race gas available, good concession stand, nice bathrooms and showers, camping allowed, pets allowed.

[Road Atlanta](#), Braselton, GA (about 30 miles NE of Atlanta off I-85). AMA Nationals, WERA nationals (including the season finale GNF), WERA regionals, and maybe, soon World GP Championships. One of the best US tracks. 2.5 miles over rolling hills, very high speed back straight into the unique dip known as Gravity Cavity. Lots of paved pit area, concession and gift stands, several grades of race gas, really nice bathrooms and showers, camping allowed, pets allowed. Quiet time imposed by local ordinance from 10:00-12:30 Sunday.
<http://www.roadatl.com/>

Talladega Gran Prix Raceway, Talladega, AL. 1.3 miles, flat. WERA regionals and national. Fair concession stand, permanent bathrooms w/ showers - okay once you sweep out the spiders and other critters, camping allowed, all grass pits with gravel driveway (hard to do bump starts).

Daytona International Speedway, Daytona Beach, FL. 3.6 miles incorporating the tricky infield section with the high speed banking and back straight. Paved pit area, some open garages, some enclosed garages (fees charged during Bike Week, free first come/first served during Race of Champions). No camping, no pets, decent bathrooms, fair-good concession stands, heavy security.

Portland International Raceway (PIT), Portland Oregon. WERA Pro Races.

Hawaii Raceway Park, West side of Oahu, about 40 minutes out of Honolulu. 1 1/3 miles long, run in a counterclockwise direction, and is decent in it's safety value. Lap records in the low :55 (808) 833-RACE.

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6. Other Sources

6.1 Where Do I Go To Get Other Info?

[Bob Stanley](#), of the [FASTTRAX Performance Riding School](#) and one of the guys involved with bike racing on the [Nelson Ledges Road Course](#) has set up a [Web Page](#) for a mentors program for newbies. Start at <http://www.fastone.com> and then go to "Racers Willing to Adopt."

There are several nationwide US periodicals that cover Roadracing extensively:

[Roadracing World and Motorcycle Technology](#)

PO Box 1428
Lake Elsinore, CA 92531
published monthly, \$18/year
<http://www.roadracingworld.com/>

[American Roadracing](#)

11435 North Cave Creek Road
Suite 101
Phoenix AZ 85020
published 10 months a year, \$20/year
<http://www.amasuperbike.com/subscribe.htm>

[Cycle News](#)

PO Box 498
Long Beach, CA 90801-0498
published weekly, \$38/year
<http://www.cyclenews.com/>

On-line, there are a number of places:

[rec.motorcycles.racing](#), our beloved newsgroup.

[Race Email list](#). Send "subscribe race Your-Name" to listproc@micapeak.com. This is generally a very high signal-to-noise ratio list, and it has a number of regional and national champions on it.

[Motorcycle Online](#). <http://www.motorcycle.com/motorcycle.html>. This is a very cool on-line Bike magazine.

The official rules are in the race organizations rulebooks; contact them for copies

(you can usually get a freebie).

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7. Miscellaneous Stuff

7.1 Why do Road Racers Stick Out Their Inside Knee?

(Thanks to Duncan Hardy (duncan@ducati.uk.sun.com) for the bulk of this answer, and to Jobst Brandt (jbrandt@hpl.hp.com) for the effect lean has on the tire performance.

1. It lets the bike lean less for a given speed. By sliding off the inside of the seat, the rider's body weight is moved towards the inside of the corner. This means the bike needs less lean for a given speed and turn radius. As ground clearance is often the limiting factor in cornering (particularly at higher speed) this allows the rider to corner at higher speeds.

Here's some nerd info that describes turning geometry:

$$t = \arctan [v^2 / (g * R)]$$

v is your velocity, R is the radius of your turn, g is the gravitational constant. t is the "lean angle." It's the angle between

1. the horizontal, and
2. a line from the contact patch of your tires through the center of gravity of the bike-rider system.

Hanging off and sticking out your knee moves the CG of the system to the inside, while leaving the bike more upright, so you don't run out of ground clearance.

Aside from running out of ground clearance, a second limiting effect is caused by excessive lean. At lean angles below 45 degrees from the horizontal, tires no longer purely roll and are rotating more about a vertical axis rather than a horizontal one. This makes them act more like a rotary brush of a street sweeper than a rolling wheel. With steep lean, the contact patch twists in place scrubbing away traction and power so that leaning farther reduces cornering ability and ultimately causes a washout in the turn. Incidentally, since cars do not lean, they do not exhibit this behaviour, and can corner with greater G-forces than motos.

2. Some riders like to 'feel' the road so they know their lean angle. (You can't afford to look down). It doesn't hurt - they wear pucks on their knees to avoid damage. Only problem sometimes is the rumble strips on car circuits.
3. Top riders can use their knee to change the balance of the bike, for example taking some of the weight off the rear wheel when they want to induce a bit more slip.
4. Some will claim it also aids braking (because of air drag) going into a corner. Every little bit helps....