

How to Get Into Racing

Perhaps you are one of those kids who looks up to racecar drivers featured on TV. Or you may be an adult who never let go of a hunger to go fast and compete. Racing is an expensive past time, but the good news is that competitive racing is...

Part 1 of 4:

Learning about Racing

1.



Visit your local track. Short tracks and road courses are spread throughout the world and you may have one in your area. Travel to the tracks and sit in the grandstands. Find out which type of racing appeals to you and watch how the race functions.^[1]

1. Go-karting is an ideal starting point. Go-karts are the cheapest racing vehicle to buy and are safest to race.
2. Motorcycle racing has various forms, including road racing, endurance, track racing, and drag racing. Motocross adds jumps. Standard races are simplest for beginners and don't require more expensive cars with safety modifications.
3. NASCAR is the highest version of stock car racing. Racing is more of a marathon than Formula One and takes place on oval tracks using closed-wheel cars. Many track races in America are similar to this and can be used by beginners with civilian cars.
4. Formula One is the most prestigious racing form and uses open-wheel, aerodynamic cars making circuits on tracks across the world. Formula Two and Indy car are lower-level versions. Open-wheel cars may be less common or more expensive than beginner stock races.

5. Vintage racing is also highly prestigious, but lack the exposure and sponsorship opportunities of Formula One. It also does not have career building potential as a professional driver since most racers are amateurs racing their personal vehicles. However if you intend to hold a regular day job and race as a hobby, vintage racing can be a great way to expand your network with fellow professionals and business owners who are also passionate about cars.
6. Endurance racing, such as 24 Hours of Le Mans, blends physical endurance with strategy and technology over a long period of time.
7. Drag racing involves accelerating quickly to race a short distance in a straight line.
8. Rally racing involves completing driving through any off-track terrain.
9. Street racing is illegal and highly dangerous unless done through sanctioned events.



Buy a pit pass. Some racetracks, including those of NASCAR, offer pit passes, which allow you behind the scenes access. Before the race, you'll get to witness the pit crew making the final tune-ups for the cars. This provides you at least some perspective on car mechanics.^[2]

1. Some tracks also offer garage passes, but these are harder to come by and are mostly reserved for staff.

3.



Connect with racers and mechanics. Racing is no different than other jobs and activities in that other people can help get your foot in the door. Spend time at the tracks and around the mechanics and drivers, if possible. Also visit auto shops. Make friends and learn from their vehicular and racing knowledge.

1. At first, you may have to volunteer for small jobs in a shop or at a track. Keep working until you gain sufficient knowledge and trust.
2. Online forums are also a good opportunity for connecting with others while learning about racing.

4.



Work on vehicles at home. To be a racer, you need to know how your vehicle works. Even top-level racers have mechanical knowledge that makes problem-solving and track navigation second nature. Buy an old vehicle or learn how to maintain your own. While race cars are different, the fundamentals you'll learn, such as changing parts, optimizing speed, and performing maintenance, still apply.^[3]

1. Get repair books from the library and consider signing up for shop classes.

5.



Join a pit crew. Pit work provides an opportunity to learn about cars or stay in racing without driving. To get started, you can join a specialty school such as NASCAR's or master making mechanical work quickly. Get started with working and networking at lower level races while keeping an eye out for pit crew tryouts.

6.



Participate as an official. Motorsport marshalling such as signalling and track cleaning is also an option to get close to racing without driving. While you may be able to take a short, accredited course online, many tracks accept unskilled volunteers. Start at small posts at local races. As you continue to develop your knowledge and reputation, you can volunteer for higher races or apply to official positions at major organizations.^[4]

Part 2 of 4:

Becoming a Driver

1.



Start with go-karts. Many racers, including Lewis Hamilton and Tony Stewart, started with go-karts. This is a safer and cheaper option to get used to how a vehicle handles during a race. Practice at nearby kart tracks. From there, look into buying a kart and entering races.^[5]

2.



Attend racing school. There are many different schools. Some of them are a day or two of driving lessons with professional instructors. Others can last a few months and cost thousands of dollars. While the former is good for getting a taste of racing without buying a car, the latter is often required to get an official racing license.^[6]

1. Check the requirements of the racing circuit you want to join. For example, you'll need a license from a school accredited by the Sports Car Club of America before you can join their sanctioned road races.

3.



Get a racing license. Once you've finished school, you need to submit paperwork to become a certified driver. Go online to the organization's website and download the application. The SCCA for example requires your medical history and a physical exam along with schooling. Check with your chosen track or organization for the requirements.^[7]

1. Don't forget to renew your license while you're an active racer.

Part 3 of 4:

Building a Racing Vehicle

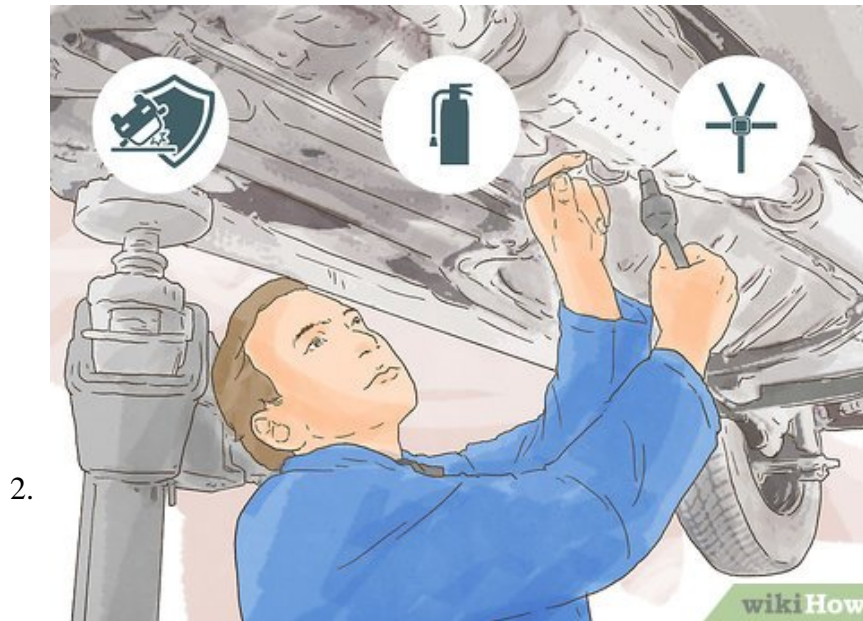
1.



Get an appropriate make of vehicle. The easiest way to get a vehicle to enter into a race is to have someone who will let you rent or borrow one. If you don't, you will have to buy one. The kind of vehicle

you need depends on the category you wish to enter, but classes are available for even slow civilian cars. You'll have to search dealerships, junkyards, and sales listings for a seller.

1. Some classes, such as small production sports cars in vintage racing and Improved Touring class in SCCA races, are cheaper and easier to handle for beginners.



Modify your vehicle . At the very minimum, the organization you join will mandate that you add safety features to your vehicle. For cars, this includes a roll cage, a harness, and a fire extinguisher. Check with the organization for the features needed to enter races.^[8]



Fix up your vehicle. As long as your racer works and is safe to use, you can enter it in a race and even place well. However, you may want to upgrade to better parts and with a used vehicle you will probably need to make repairs. Give the vehicle a test run then repair systems such as braking and acceleration that feel lacking.

1. Keep a budget. Racing gets very expensive. Remember that you'll need to spend money on towing, replacing tires, and repairing damage after a race.

Part 4 of 4:

Racing in Competitive Events



Join an event. Sign up for a race at the track. Expect to pay up to a couple hundred dollars in entry fees and face an inspection. Towing charges in case of an accident are also possible. Once you have signed up for your event, follow the instructions of the organization and track when showing up at the event.^[9]



Run a test lap. Usually a track will let you run some practice laps. Contact them for policies and open times or find a similar space where you can drive your vehicle and test its handling. Once you have a feel

for it, go home and make adjustments. Your vehicle may need big ones, such as wheel alignment.^[10]

3.



Work your way up. You may be satisfied in local, fun races or even go-karting. For those that aspire to join the higher ranks, a lot of work and luck is involved. Go out and win at the low levels, then join more prestigious races. If you display racing talent or have established connections, you may find a sponsor.^[11]

4.



Get a sponsorship. Finding a sponsor is tough and competitive. The best way to do this is winning. As you build a reputation, sponsors may start coming to you. You will need to build an audience, so be kind to everyone and display good character. The more visible you are, the more likely you are to attract a sponsor's attention. Be gracious for opportunities rather than critical.^[12]

1. Once you start gaining some success, you can reach out to companies you like. Keep in mind though that they get many such inquiries and have likely already sought out the drivers they want.
2. Once you get a sponsorship, you must represent the brand well. Display their products or advertisements and stay away from controversy.

5.



Join a racing team. While you can start a team with your friends or other racers, to join the big teams that offer you benefits, you will need to win and establish yourself as a racer. Do what you did to attract sponsors, since teams often function the same way. Once you develop your reputation, a team may seek you out to represent them. Otherwise, you can try sending them a message and speaking to their representatives.

1. In seeking sponsorships and a team, think of yourself as a brand. Maintain personal responsibility and be friendly, but also market yourself. Establish a media presence, including online.
2. Remember to be graceful even during rejection. Represent yourself well if you want a team to let you represent them.

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