

## QUALIFYING

**The easiest pass you will ever make is rolling past another competitor on the way to your well-earned grid spot.** But that’s not the main reason that qualifying well is so important. The field regularly gets tangled up during the start, so you want to be in front of that. If it is raining, you *must* be in front of it if you have any hope of seeing anything. If there is no tangling, I’m sure you have noticed how rapidly the field spreads out during the first few laps. If you intend to pass anyone, learn how to get it done at the start or during the first lap. The way most races go, after the first lap you are where you are going to finish unless you screw up. Autocross is an excellent way to learn how to drive cold tires very effectively. It will also help many other aspects of your road course expertise, including learning how to instantly transition your head from preparation mode to go mode with no ramp-up time in between.

## STARTING

You want to come as close to jumping the start as you can get away with. If you are half a second late, you will get eaten alive. Here’s a technique that works really well for rolling starts. When the grid is formed up for the start, get in first gear, drag the brakes with your left foot, control your speed with brake modulation, ease the throttle all the way open, and keep it there. When it’s time to go, just release the brakes. There will be no engine lag because it’s already roaring away, the driveline is already wound up, and dragging the brakes against full power in first gear is a very effective way to warm up both the brakes and tires. This is because the non drive axle brakes generate drag, which is balanced by equal and opposite thrust from the drive axle tires. This technique is worth about half a car length on anyone not using it. You will have to shift entirely by intuition because you can’t hear your own car and you absolutely cannot afford the ¼ second that it takes to glance down at the tach when you are closely surrounded on all sides.

## KEEP THE HAMMER DOWN

I managed to lead the first 15 ½ laps of a 16 lap race at Corpus Christi and finished second due to stupidity. *You’re welcome, Scotty.* Instead of going as fast as I could, I made the mistake of only maintaining about a 1 second lead on him. That worked right up until I ran wide entering the corner at the end of the main straight on the last lap due to a little bit of brake fade. One minor bobble cost me a win because I unwisely chose not to maintain a lead that was large enough to tolerate any imperfection. I learned my lesson from that, which is why I lapped every car in my class two races in a row later on.