



Newsletter “SKIDDING”



November 2024

Diary Date: AGM - March 4th 2025

Skidpan Experience, Thruxton.

On Saturday 19 October 2024, 20 participants from the High Wycombe Group of Advanced Motorists and associated organisations took part in an informative and exciting skidpan experience at the Thruxton Motor Racing Circuit.



The differences between under-steer and over-steer were explained in the classroom briefing, along with the steering techniques needed to re-balance the car in each situation. Drivers and passengers went out in pairs, just one car on the skidpan at a time for safety, with instructions and guidance given over an in-car radio by the instructor when required. But for the most part it was just left to the drivers to get the feel for handling a car in a skid, and practice regaining control of the vehicle.



Three different types of cars were made available for the event: a Mini, Ford Puma and Toyota GT6. These provided a choice of front or rear wheel drive, and could be driven with and without the electronic stability controls and ABS which are standard on all modern vehicles. In addition, participants could experience the difference when driving in very slippery conditions on normal road tyres versus Winter Tyres. Everyone noted the significant additional control while on winter tyres – a good lesson learned.



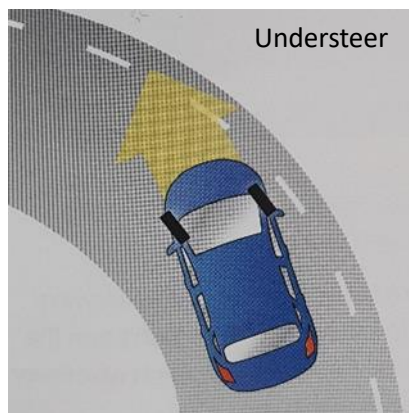
It was a fun day in a relaxed atmosphere, and a few participants even took the opportunity to drive their own cars on the skidpan to get the feel of controlling their vehicles in slippery conditions, while in a safe and non-damaging environment.

(Report by Nigel Mason)

Now for the technical bits:

Skidding is caused by excessive speed, coarse steering, harsh acceleration, or excessive or sudden braking, or a combination of these. It is often accentuated by inclement weather conditions. *But the real cause may be the driver!*

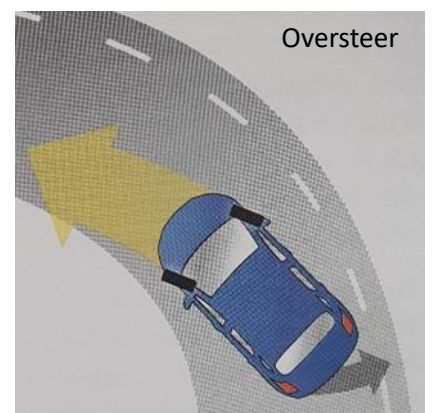
How does a skid happen? When one or more tyres loses normal grip on the road, causing an involuntary movement of the vehicle, in an unintended direction. (Although 'Drifting' has turned this into a new Motorsport! – Ed).



Understeer (LEFT) is the tendency of the vehicle to **turn less** in response to a given turn of the steering wheel. Most front-wheel drive vehicles will tend to understeer.

Oversteer (RIGHT) is the tendency of the vehicle to **turn more** in response to a given turn of the steering wheel. Oversteer is more a tendency of rear-wheel drive vehicles.

(Visuals Source: Roadcraft)



Note: Modern vehicles have electronics to minimise the risk of a resulting skid, although Carmakers tend to engineer in Understeer under extreme conditions, it being generally safer to hit an obstacle in front, rather than on the side of the vehicle, as that is where the majority of the impact absorption and safety systems are placed.

Acquaplaning is when a wedge of water builds up between the front tyres and the road. The road does not necessarily need to be flooded or puddled. Whether you brake or steer in such a situation the vehicle will not respond!

To correct **remove pressure from the accelerator**, allowing the wheels to turn, helping to expel the water and re-gain grip. **Don't turn the steering wheel**, until the vehicle has stabilised.

When driving in **icy or snowy conditions** the same principles apply. One extra tip in these conditions: switch off the radio – if you cannot hear tyre noise then you may be on smooth ice!

Tips:

- **It is better to avoid a skid than to correct one.**
- **Drive safely. Drive in accordance with the road, traffic, and weather conditions.**
- **Know your own limits, taking into account the road, traffic and weather conditions.**
- **Know your vehicle limits, taking into account the road, traffic and weather conditions.**
- **Correcting a skid: Reduce power. Avoid braking. Steer into the direction of the skid.**
- **Regularly check your tyre condition, pressures and legality.** As Nigel reports, consider winter tyres for winter driving. (In many European Countries it is a legal requirement.)

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