



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Does this really work:

A. Research has shown that graduates of this program have 77% fewer crashes than their peers.

Q. How much time does this take?

A. Clinics begin promptly at 9:00am and are always finished before 4:00pm. We also take a lunch break of about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Q. Why does it cost so much?

A. Actually, it costs very little – in relation to this same program in other cities. The Alabama Region of the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) was one of the first to adopt this program after it was developed. We see it as a way to use the skills we have learned on the racetrack to give something back to our community and so we operate the clinics as a public service. The New Driver Car Control Clinic is available in about a dozen cities nationwide operating as a commercial enterprise. The cost in those cities is more than 50% higher than here in Birmingham. Also consider the cost of wrecks to insurance premiums, deductible amounts, and car repair. And nothing or no one could ever put a price on the cost of your child's life.

Q. Are the exercises all in parking lots, or are there on-road lessons too?

A. The New Driver Car Control Clinic exercises are performed in a parking lot where we can control the access to the lot by unwary passers-by. By having a controlled space, students feel more at ease.

Q. Will this hurt my car?

A. The exercises are performed on courses marked with orange traffic cones. Hitting one of these will do no damage to your car. It may leave a black mark that will easily wipe off. You may see some slight additional wear on your tires because we are performing extreme accident avoidance, braking, and panic maneuvers. But this is the only way to experience and learn how to control a car in those situations. It's just something you have to feel and can't be taught in a classroom.

Q: How old must my new driver be:

A: S/He must have a valid Learner's Permit or Driver's License and enough experience behind the wheel to be comfortable making the car go forwards, backwards, left, and right. S/he should also be comfortable pulling into a line of parked cars. Clinics are open to all 15 and 16 year olds, and to 17 year olds in certain circumstances. Call if you have a 17 year old you would like to attend the clinic.

Q: What happens at a Clinic?

A: The New Driver Car Control Clinic is an advanced level of driver's education. We start with a short classroom discussion of vehicle dynamics -- how and why the car behaves the way it does in an emergency. We then move to the Training Range and begin performing in-car exercises. We know there is no way to hold a teenagers interest for a full hour of classroom time, so the classroom sessions are broken into relevant parts with lots of driving time in between.

Q: What will we learn in a Clinic?

A: We teach accident avoidance and defensive driving skills including **Brake Management** -- the "panic" stop without the panic, whether your car has ABS or not; **Steering Management** --how to make the car go precisely where you want it to, even in an emergency; **Eye Management** -- judging where the four corners of the car are and the relationship between where your car is and where you want to go.

Q: What kind of a car should we bring?

A: Bring the one that the new driver is most likely to be driving in everyday life – the one that you put their life in. We get everything from cargo vans to sports cars. Every car is different in its performance, but none can defy the laws of physics. Because class sizes are kept small, we can tailor the instruction to your student in your car.

Q: Can I cancel or change my reservation?

A: Because we have fixed costs, like insurance for the site owner, we are unable to offer a refund for no-shows. We will, however, allow you to change your clinic date if we are notified at least seven (7) days in advance.

Q: What about rain?

A: Clinics only get better in the rain! If you're going to let your student drive on the street in the rain, then they need to be prepared for accident avoidance more than ever. We all know that wet weather contributes to accidents. Bring your rain gear if rain is in the forecast.

Q: Will I get a discount on my insurance?

A: The way that most state laws read, any company licensed to sell insurance in that state MAY, if it chooses, give a discount for a defensive driving course. We do give a certificate of completion for you to give to your insurance agent. Many of our customers do receive discounts. Contact your agent to see if your family qualifies.

Q: What will I do while my new driver is doing the exercises?

A: Coaches watch, ride, learn, and participate. Without fail, whenever we do these Clinics, several Coaches come to us afterwards and say, "Geeze, I learned as much here as my child."

Q: Who is the “Alabama Region of the Sports Car Club of America” and are your instructors qualified?

A: The Sports Car Club of America is one of the oldest and largest motorsports sanctioning bodies in the world, and you’ve probably never heard of us. We’re all familiar with that other large motorsports sanctioning body, NASCAR, because they do such a great job in promoting their program. But the SCCA is different. The majority of us are amateurs, paying all the bills for our racing out of our own pockets. We hold races, usually without advertising to spectators so that we can keep the cost of insurance down. We also have a professional division that is responsible for some of the greatest series in American racing history, like the TransAm and CanAm series. SCCA concentrates on “road racing”, that is driving on closed tracks where the driver has to turn left AND right, accelerate, brake, shift, avoid other cars and still try to be competitive. All of our instructors come from a motorsports background. They transfer the accident avoidance and panic situation skills they have learned on track to your child. Who would you rather have teach your child these skills; the part time Driver’s Ed teacher who’s really a full time assistant head coach down at the local high school or a race car driver?

Have a question in search of an answer? Please email us at NDCCC@ALSCCA.org.