

A GUIDE TO STARTING ON TARMAC AUTOTESTS



What do I need to do to my car?

TYPE OF CAR

Most people start off in their road cars; small hatchbacks have proved popular and competitive as well as MX5s. When you get to National level, most people use highly modified specialised cars. Because the tests involve manoeuvring against the clock, smaller cars are more suitable than large ones, although there are normally five different classes for various types of car, including a road going one. There is no need to have highly modified cars to start with, but there are certain basic things that you should do to make sure that your car will perform properly.

MODIFICATIONS TO CAR

No specific safety equipment is required, but all loose objects must be removed and the battery must be securely held down, as well as the drivers seat. It is recommended that a small spill kit is carried.

Most important, is to make sure you have a working handbrake, that can consistently lock the rear wheels with ease. Either overhaul the whole cable system, or if that doesn't work, then think about fitting a hydraulic handbrake.

Fitting of a steering wheel knob, especially on FWD cars. This means that you can steer with one hand while leaving the other one free to use the handbrake and gear lever. On RWD cars, a lot of the steering can be done with the throttle pedal.

Pumping up the tyres, on the non-driven wheels, to almost twice their normal pressure or even fitting narrower ones if available. This enables the car to slide more which is essential for some of the manoeuvres required. Tyre wear is likely to be experienced on a tarmac autotest (especially on the edges of the tyre) and it is highly recommended to take a spare set of wheels and tyres to ensure you can drive home legally afterwards. Some people will buy new tyres for events, but others will talk to their local garage/tyre dealership or even negotiate with the local breakers to keep costs down.

For RWD cars, the fitting of a 'torque biasing' or 'limited slip' differential is ideally required, especially on tarmac, otherwise just one wheel will spin and traction is lost. A lot of manufacturers have this as an option in most of their ranges, so either getting a model with it installed or getting a second-hand one from a breakers and having it fitted.

The specialist cars in the championship have had a lot of time spent removing weight, especially at the rear of the FWD ones. This means the car is a lot easier to move around and can do manoeuvres at a slower speed than a heavier car.

Remember that it is the competitor's responsibility to ensure that their vehicle and equipment comply with both the MSA's General Regulations (detailed in the MSA Competitors' and Officials' Yearbook) and the Supplementary Regulations (SRs) of the event or championship.