

*From an article in Nooze, January 2007
This is not intended as the official guide to offroading, but simply to give you an idea
of what to do and expect, if you'd like to get down and dirty at the club's site.*

So you want to drive at Newbourne?

A Beginners Guide

I thought it might be a good idea to run through the steps that are required to drive around our offroad site at Newbourne (entrance to the site is at Grid Ref TM 2722, 4380 or post code IP12 4PA).

There are many different facets from preparation, the scrutineering, signing-on to drive and of course the driving itself.

Normally we hold an annual Novice driving day which is fine if you are joining just before we are holding it but what about the other 360-odd days of the year?

So the first thing is, what to do on arrival:

It is worth mentioning at this point that the access track to the site has a posted **5 MPH** speed limit! As you pass the gateposts you have a choice of direction: If you are only spectating or socialising, please turn right into the car park. If you wish to drive the courses please fork left to the scrutineering area and wait in the queue (we'll get to you as soon as possible). The Scrutineer will check your vehicle over to make sure it is safe to use offroad. Have a read of 'Wayne's Guide To Off Road Preparation' for some pointers. All being well the Scrutineer will deem your vehicle offroad-worthy after a final check of the parking brake on the hill and give you an initialled sticker. Drive into the competitor's car park and take the sticker into the porta-cabin where the person signing you on will also initial it. Pay your money and fill in the 'Competitors' signing-on form including the names of any passengers. Please also be aware that **every person** who will drive your vehicle needs to sign on as a driver. This ensures that you, and any passengers in your vehicle will be covered by the MSA's insurance.

Remember: **It's only a fiver for each extra driver!**

MSA rules state that if driving a soft-top then all hood sticks and the canvas must be in place if you don't have a roll cage. Another important safety issue is seat belts. All passengers must be belted in, even if the vehicle doesn't require them by law (manufactured before 1st Jan 1965). The MOT man might not mind, but the MSA does and they are the people to whom we are answerable.

So what do you do now?

Well go stick your sticker on the right hand top corner of the windscreen and then empty your vehicle of anything not strapped or bolted down (refer to Wayne's guide again for info). If you have under-14's on board, please be aware that they need a 'Hi-Vis' garment while outside the vehicle (the Club Shop sells these at a very competitive price). For your safety there are Marshals positioned at strategic points for recovery and to give guidance, if required. Please take notice of any signals or requests a Marshal might give you. A Marshal may sometimes stop you as you leave the parking area on your way onto the courses. Don't worry you haven't done anything wrong; he will just be looking for loose items etc, to keep you safe and sound. If you haven't driven offroad before or would like some guidance then it'll be worth mentioning that fact as you sign on at the cabin. Someone will always be available to give you a drive around and/or sit beside you in your vehicle.

Now it's time to go have some fun.



There are four courses to try:

The Novice Course, which just gives a taster and is used mainly for tuition and those with very shiny vehicles with spoilers etc. If you turn up without recovery points this is probably as far as you will be allowed to venture offroad: You have been warned!

The Yellow Course is an 'intermediate' course with all types of terrain, including hills, holes, side-slopes and cross-axles. Although it can get tricky at times, the Yellow is normally passable by most types of Land Rover. The only exception to this is the 'bomb-hole' in wet weather and the 'Axle Twister' section. The axle twisters test you and your vehicle's ability to negotiate the various holes and mounds that try to get you cross-axled (having one front and one rear wheel diagonally, not in contact with the ground). This course has been designed to catch you out whatever length your vehicle's wheelbase!

The Black Course is the fun bit, with its tabletops, steep descents and muddy holes. It's wet, muddy and needs some thinking not to mention luck to drive successfully.

The Woodland Course can be accessed either from the bottom of the Black course or by using the access track along the front of the car park turning left at the end and down the hill, crossing the public footpath. On leaving the woodland course please be aware of walkers and other vehicles coming down the hill in front of you.

What about while you're out and about on the courses?

Don't drive too fast:

'Wannabe Comp-Safari drivers' roaring around the Yellow course impress no one and that's why there is a **15 mph speed limit** in force on the site, and we will enforce it if we must! Besides, the faster you go, the more chance you are going to damage your vehicle.

Here's a little motto for you: "As fast as necessary but as slow as possible". In other words, yes there are times when you will need momentum to negotiate a particular section, but most of the time you won't. I can remember Fred James driving the whole site on tick-over one day when he first got his 90, and watching Andy Cutting drive the courses is a lesson in itself.

Don't follow too closely:

You should always keep at least one obstacle between you and the vehicle in front: This gives room for vehicles to manoeuvre should they get into difficulty. After all, it's no good following a car into a hole only to find that he can't get out the other side and needs the room you are taking up for a run up and then, oh dear, you can't get traction to reverse back up the slope either!

When you are out driving the courses, always bear in mind that there are bystanders and pedestrians around and while we strive to keep them off the routes, sometimes you do find them nipping across.

Another safety point is on 'table-tops' where you can't see anything but sky and bonnet! Always pause on the top (break-over) to check the descent. On one occasion - a night drive - we had a vehicle stuck in the hole after a table-top. The driver elected to simply sit in his vehicle awaiting recovery, but unfortunately as it was dark, no one realised he was there, including the guy who came along a little while later, didn't pause to check his descent and ran into the rear of the stricken motor!

So if you are stuck especially somewhere that is difficult to see, please get out of your vehicle and wave and shout. All Marshals' have radios and will be able to call up assistance if you do have problems, or if you have CB radio give a shout on Ch 5. At the very least, in the dark, stand somewhere visible back along the route you just travelled, which will at least avoid your vehicle being run into.

We are constantly striving to develop the site, so if you have any ideas or would like to help out just speak to a committee member (mug-shots in the signing-on cabin). But most of all stay safe and have fun.

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