



Puget Sound Road Race Association

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a racing kart? Are they like the rental karts I've driven in the past?

Although roughly the same size, real racing go karts have very little in common with what are referred to as "concession karts". Purpose built 2-cycle race engines, high performance disc brake systems, sticky racing slicks and on-board computer systems make these true race vehicles. Lightweight materials make the typical kart weigh less than 200lbs.

What is road racing?

If you have seen any professional karting on TV, you most likely saw sprint racing. They utilize sprint or sit-up chassis on short, tight, winding courses. These are typically less than a mile long and are purpose built for karts. Road racing utilizes enduro chassis as well as the sprint chassis. We race on regular road race courses like Pacific Raceways (SIR), Portland International Raceways and Sears Point Raceway. Nearly all the road race courses that host American Le Mans, Champ cars and NASCAR also host kart races.

You mentioned enduro chassis, what are those?

We have already talked about sprint or sit-up chassis which you will probably easily recognize. Enduro or laydown chassis are specifically built for road racing. They are narrower and longer than their sprint chassis counterparts. In most cases they run the same engines as the sprint chassis. The driver lies almost totally flat in the kart and they are typically less than 18" tall. Because of the aerodynamic advantage of the enduro chassis they tend to be a little faster than an equivalently powered sprint chassis.

What is the difference between a shifter kart and a clutch kart?

A shifter kart has an engine and transmission that closely resembles what you would find in a motorcycle. A clutch kart uses a centrifugal clutch mounted on either the engine or the rear axle. Shifter classes are popular choices for those with motorcycle experience but do add a level of complexity and cost. Clutch karts are generally considered a purer form of the sport, are simpler and less expensive. Both have advantages and disadvantages. It's more of a philosophical decision than a practical one.

Do you have a new driver program?

The PSRRA does not have a formalized new driver program but typically what we would do is team you up with an established racing team to get you started. If you are looking at purchasing used equipment most local teams with equipment for sale are more than happy to help you get going and make you a deal.

How old do drivers have to be or how old is too old to go racing?

We have a couple junior classes that start at age 13, for most other classes you need to be 16 to race. For drivers younger than 13, I'd suggest you contact our sister organization The Puget Sound Go Kart Association at <http://www.psgka.com>, then come road race with us when you come of age. As for being too old, we have a number of 60+ year old drivers. The average driver is in their 30s and 40s.

How fast do they go?

Speeds can range from 75MPH in the limited classes and up to 160MPH+ in the unlimited classes. The more popular classes like TaG and the 80cc and 125cc shifters run in the neighborhood of 100-120 MPH.

How safe is road racing?

Your greatest risk to life and limb will come from traveling on the highways to and from the race. That being said, this is a motorized sport and we are traveling at high speeds, so accidents do happen. All race events have an ambulance staffed with EMTs on standby, if needed. Because the karts do not provide much protection, our safety gear is designed along the lines of motorcycle racing. Karts do not have seat belts because it is generally best to be thrown clear in an accident. Your great-grandfather would have loved it. However, the karts are so light and the center of gravity is so low that they very rarely flip and scrub off speed quickly if you go off course.

Do women race karts?

You bet they do. We have a few women drivers that have been racing for a number of years and a new one that recently started. Most come from racing families but that's not a requirement, just having the desire to race and have fun is all you need.

Is road racing a family friendly sport?

It's a great family sport. The atmosphere is laid back and friendly. There are always a number of family members at the track. Some choose to participate as crew members, other hang back and enjoy the company of others. Some get involved in actually running the races by working in registration or volunteering as a corner worker. There are plenty of opportunities for family members to be as involved as they want to be. Most race venues allow for camping at the track and have areas where younger children can play without getting tangled up in racing activities.

Do I need to be a mechanic or have other special skills?

Not at all. If you can change your own oil you probably have the mechanical skills needed to get started. You will be subject to some fairly high G forces and vibrations, kart racing is a pretty good workout so you should be in good general health. All you need other than that is a passion for racing.

How much is it going to cost me to go racing?

How fast do you want to go? Basically the higher the performance the higher the cost but to give you an idea of what it would take to get started we have a spreadsheet at the end of this FAQ that should help you. The short answer is you can get started for just a couple thousand dollars.

Used vs. new karts

If your budget is unlimited, then by all means buy new, but for the rest of us used equipment is a great way to get started without spending a great deal of money. You are going to make some mistakes your rookie season and the last thing you need to be worrying about is scratching the paint on your new chassis.

Are new karts faster?

There are some beautifully prepared karts out there that have never been at the front of the pack and there are some really tired chassis that put drivers on the podium each race. Bottom line it's about 20% equipment and 80% driver. It will take many races, maybe even a season or two before your lap times are being held back by your equipment and not your driving skill.

I am ready to go racing, what's next?

Come on out to the track and get a feel for sport. Our current schedule is up on our website. Pit pass prices are set by the hosting road racing club but are generally about \$12. Drop us an e-mail and we'll make sure to hook up with you at the track and give you the nickel tour.

How do I know what class to run?

Now you've opened Pandora's Box. There are about 30 classes to choose from that are run in this part of the country. Depending on your choice, your kart will most likely be eligible to race in more than one class. Several classes have light and heavy divisions or spec exhaust verses open exhaust divisions so with minor changes you can be competitive in more than one class. Budget, how fast you want to go, mechanical ability and whether you'd like to be able to sprint and road race the same chassis all play a role in finding the best class for you.

How long is the race schedule and how many races do you hold a year?

In our region, we run about 8 races a year, usually beginning in March and finishing up in October. Other regions with better winter weather in the country run fewer races but longer seasons so it's not uncommon for a few folks from our region to head for California or Nevada to catch a race in February or November.

What about rain?

We bolt up the rain tires, jump in the rain suit and go racing. Your next question is probably about snow so I'll tell you now that they only do that in Sweden.

How long are the race heats?

Most sprint classes run either a pair of 20minutes heats or a single 30 minute race. Enduro classes generally run 45 minute races.

Are there practice sessions?

Yes. The mornings of all race events have open practice sessions. The amount of practice varies depending on the race schedule but there is generally at least a couple hours of practice each day. Some events like Spokane and Bremerton offer a paid all day practice on the Friday before the race.

Where can I get more information?

The PSRRA has a great website at <http://www.psrra.com> with information and contacts. Feel free to send us your questions via e-mail. Another good source of general karting information is <http://www.ekartingnews.com> which is considered the clearing-house for everything karting in North America.

Example Karting Costs

Safety Equipment		
Helmet	SNELL 2005 approved helmets are required. Helmets start at \$100 and go up from there.	\$300
Suit	Karting suit is not required but highly recommended. Motorcycle style safety gear is totally acceptable.	\$300
Neck Collar	Required on sit-up chassis.	\$45
Gloves	Karting gloves are not required, Motorcycle style gloves are acceptable.	\$45
Shoes	Karting shoes are not required but shoes must provide full ankle coverage.	\$75
Karting Equipment		
Kart	Depends greatly on the class. Can start at about \$1000 and go up to \$25,000. For this example we are looking at a TaG sit-up chassis.	\$3,500
Kart stand	Not required but very nice to have.	\$150
Fuel Jug	Any 5 gallon approved fuel container will work. This price is for a racing style container.	\$25
Memberships and race fees		
IKF	This is our main sanctioning body and insurance provider. This is a required annual membership.	\$60
PSRRA	Local club membership. Not a requirement but provides discounted race fees and pays for itself in a couple races.	\$100
Race Entry Fees	Depends on the track, but they typically range from \$225. (all you can race) Pit passes for non-racing parties run about \$12	\$225

Total \$4,825

Other costs to consider

Transportation Karts will fit in the back of a full size pickup and in most other SUVs and small trucks by removing rear tires and side pods. Small utility trailers can be purchased for less than \$200. Most karts weight less than 200lbs and we've even seen them on roof racks.

Tools There are some specialized tools that may be required for your particular kart but basic hand tools are generally all that's needed. A good set of sockets, wrenches, screwdrivers and pliers and you're most of the way there.

Lodging Our 8 race schedule takes us to Bremerton, Portland, Seattle and Spokane and many are multi-day events. Camping is generally permitted at all the tracks but facilities can be limited. Inexpensive hotels are always available near the tracks.

Other stuff Our goal would be to hook you up with an established race team to get you going. During the first year you can probably plan on spending some money on miscellaneous items. Things like canopies, spare parts, totes, cooler, etc?.