

INSTRUCTOR'S CORNER

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"SLIP" Part 2

"Coasting"

SLIP-THE NEW DRIVING SKILLS EVALUATION FORMAT

In 2014, we introduced the first test of a different Student and Instructor Evaluation system. The system is from Driving Evals.com. This system utilizes an on-line evaluation to be completed after the event, and makes the evaluations available to both the Student and the Instructor for future reference. The response was really good. Both the evaluation completion rate and the feedback were great. In 2015 we introduced a new version.

The new format is called SLIP (Skill Level Instruction Program). SLIP identifies skill sets in considerable detail-the skills we should expect to see at each skill level. These are in detail dialog, not simple numbers.

This matrix allows Instructors to more accurately and consistently evaluate student's progress by providing very specific criteria for each driving skill, then to translate that into Skill Levels. Rather than "I gave you a 6 on this skill", we can check the box that says "Does not crab in. Tracks out, but leaves excess room to a wall or berm." That box has a number above it on the form. That is the number that corresponds to that specific skill. If the student can meet the criteria, give them the lower number associated with that box. If they sometimes do better, but are not quite at the next level, then don't give them the higher number. That just seems so much more useful to the student. The SLIP format can then help translate the "box scores" into a skill level. Done consistently, the evaluation from one instructor to the next Instructor should be more consistent.

In reviewing the Instructor evaluations for students from the last schools, it seems that many of us are still using the old number scale, rather than looking at the skill matrix and letting the numbers sort themselves out. In our former system we scored students on a 1 to 12 scale. The new system also contains numbers (1 to 13), but the numbers mean VERY different things. The SLIP scale accounts for a wider range of skill sets (all the way to professional level) at the high end. This has the effect of making the raw scores seem lower if you just look at the number and compare it to our previous system.

The SLIP level names are:

L1-Novice. L2-Lower intermediate.

L3-Upper intermediate. L4-Experienced.

L5-Advanced. L6-Expert. L7-“Uber”

Here is a quote from the SLIP instructor’s guide:

“Be completely honest with the numeric skill ratings. SLIP is a tough scale, with lots of growth room at the top. You will seldom-if ever-encounter students above L5 (Advanced). L4-L5 is sufficient for candidates to enter Instructor training. Most good instructors drive at an L5 or L6 level. L7 is rare, many clubs will have no L7 students.”

“COASTING”

“If you can go directly from braking to full throttle, you probably over-slowed the car.” Liam Dwyer-Continental series pro driver (and two time winner).

Wow! Haven’t we all learned that you never coast-ever? Well, there is a school of thought that says maybe we should.

I had the pleasure of having Liam coach me during ITS in June at VIR. When I trail braked into T1, and started to get on the throttle, Liam said “coast”. Of course I said “WHAT?” Then he did it again as I was in Hog Pen. Of course I did what he asked, but I had no idea why, and thought it was a bit strange.

After we finished the session, I asked Liam why and he told me that many pro-level drivers coast at certain times, primarily just before they get on the throttle exiting a corner. The theory is centered on the idea that if the car is still slowing, then adding throttle will just transfer weight to the wrong end, not allowing you to go to full throttle, because you have taken weight off the front tires. Ever“feather” the throttle as you exit a corner until you feel that the car can take full throttle?

As this concept was so very foreign to me, I asked a friend of mine (Allen Pugh) who has a PhD in physics and was head of the School of Science and Technology at one of the top engineering universities in the US for his opinion. He has lots of experience instructing at HPDS events as well.

He of course asked for more information, so I sent him a Traqmate data set that I had from Barber in my car and a video with data of Tom Long at the same corner (T1) in his Mazda. I gave my friend all the data I could get from the videos.

He came back to me in a few days with the observation that Tom Long was carrying much more speed into the corner, (and in the corner) than I was (no big surprise there) and that Tom was in fact coasting just before he went to the throttle, using the friction from the side loading to slow his car enough to permit him to go to full throttle, rather than feathering.

I searched around the internet and found that Ross Bentley has also found a place for “coasting”. Other pros also believe in this concept. Here is a quote from Randy Pobst’s website:

“To go faster, get on the power LATER” “Virtually every corner has just one proper place to begin to apply that precious natural resource, refined oil. One time. If you ever back off and re-apply-what went wrong? Too soon on the gas, yes.”

Jackie Stewart put it more succinctly: "Never apply the throttle until you can keep it down."

So a combination of using the slip angle friction to continue to slow the car after braking, along with being patient with the throttle to avoid taking away lateral grip when you still need it, might just be “coasting” or you could call it “pausing” if the coasting words bothers you.

Hey, give it a try, you never know-right? Once you decide if it works for you, you might even suggest it to your next student.

CONTACT US:

Please do. We want to hear what you want to say on the subject of Instructing and Driving. Contact us at scottmeyer400@gmail.com