

# Instant expert **Karting**

## 5 MISTAKES BEFORE YOU MAKE THEM



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MSA British Junior Karting Champion

**1 If you want to** compete at any level, do not underestimate how hard it is. Everyone fancies themselves as the next Michael Schumacher but practice is the key, just as in any other sport, to being fast and winning races.

**2 Start small.** Race at club level first, because if you dive straight into the higher classes at National level you'll be spending big bags of money to come last!

**3 Get the right kit.** Identify which class is best for you and then buy well-known brands for all your kit. This is not about having designer gear – it's just that the name stuff lasts longer and has a better resale value when you come to upgrade as you move up.

**4 Get help from someone** who knows the ropes – it will save time and money. But beware of 'experts' who want to charge a lot for running you as a driver. They're just trying to separate driver from wallet. When you start out at grass-roots level, there will be plenty of people offering advice for free.

**5 Don't pay over the top** prices for 'fast' equipment on the say-so of the seller. Don't be fooled – the eligibility scrutineers are tough and the rules are tight. Equipment is very close in performance terms, so anything that's 'ballistic' is probably illegal. Just ask yourself, 'why are they selling it if it's that quick?'

### GETTING STARTED

First of all, find your nearest track – try [www.go-karting.co.uk](http://www.go-karting.co.uk). For anything from £20 to £50 you can have a lot of fun but be warned: health-and-safety procedures are strict, so follow all instructions to the letter. The karts you'll get will probably be dog-slow, four-stroke, single-engined affairs, but some tracks offer more powerful machines. Most circuits organise regular race events, including multi-driver endurance races.

### GOING RACING

Go on to [www.karting.co.uk/abkc](http://www.karting.co.uk/abkc) – the Association of British Kart Clubs which will tell you where your nearest club is. All the big names started out karting as youngsters, including Michael Schumacher and Jenson Button. But don't worry, adults can have fun and race too. A race kart typically costs around £1800, with engines starting around £1500. One option is to hire a kart to race, or buy a good, second-hand kart. All the clubs run their own race series and offer the basic course to obtain a racing licence.

### RACING KARTS

The biggest kart manufacturer is Tonykart ([www.tonykart.com](http://www.tonykart.com)). There are a number of classes for racing but for beginners, Formula Rotax is ideal. Running an almost identical chassis to the faster karts, Formula Rotax features a long-life 125cc four-stroke engine that is much, much quicker than you'll experience at any rental kart track. The top senior class is the 90mph Formula A, which uses a two-stroke 100cc engine. The weight of the kart, engine and driver must be at least 150kg and the karts carry ballast to ensure all competitors reach the minimum weight.

### TOP-LEVEL KART RACING

Many of the top UK racers compete overseas, and the main international championships are held in Italy – the country regarded as the hub of karting. A few of the top racers are based full-time in Europe but also compete in the USA and Asia. The European and World Championships are organised by the CIK ([www.cikfia.com](http://www.cikfia.com)).

### YOU WILL NEED TO...

...get some basic kit, but you'll also have to be reasonably fit. Yes, you're sitting down, but even having a laugh with a few chums will see you suffering arm-pump and blistered hands thanks to heavy, direct steering inputs with no driving aids. It's no surprise that all pro-level karters are as fit and lithe as a butcher's whipper.

### Essential kit...

**Arai GP5 From £420**  
[www.gprdirect.com](http://www.gprdirect.com)  
Accidents happen, which is why you need a good lid. Arai protected the bonce of one Nigel Mansell for many years. They're the best in the business.



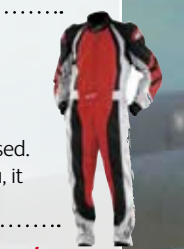
**Tillett P1 Ribtec £145**  
[www.tillett.co.uk](http://www.tillett.co.uk)  
Rib damage is the most common injury in karting, so good protection is vital. Prices range from £15 to £175. Some racers who have already suffered rib damage need specially moulded, £400 ones.



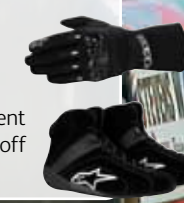
**Tillett T11KG £190**  
[www.tillett.co.uk](http://www.tillett.co.uk)  
A well-fitting seat helps you stay comfortable and safe. This carbon-fibre affair is offered in four different rigidities.



**Alpinestars K-MX3 £200**  
[www.alpinestars.com](http://www.alpinestars.com)  
Good quality overalls are essential to stop you getting grazed up, battered and bruised. This set not only protects you, it makes you look the part, too.



**Alpinestars Tech 1-KV gloves/ Tech 1-K shoes £50/£70**  
[www.alpinestars.com](http://www.alpinestars.com)  
Protective gloves aren't just about grip – your hands can become icicles at speed. Decent shoes stop your feet slipping off the pedals and improve feel.



### Jargon buster

**The track is 'green'**  
This means the track surface is dirty, has low grip and is slippery, meaning lap times will be correspondingly slow.  
**Fired-off**  
Means a driver has been punted off the track on purpose by a competitor.  
**A 'Billy'**  
A driver who isn't very experienced or fast.  
**Spannering**  
Doing the job of a mechanic.