

# ATTENDING A SAFETY CLINIC

SUZY JOHNSON

"I think it's time that I learned how to four-wheel," I said to my club members. They had puzzled looks on their faces, knowing that I'd been Jeeping with my family for most of my life. But most of my knowledge had been handed down over the years, a mixture of folklore and fact. I needed to know the difference.

Besides, I had an invitation from the Esprit de Four club to attend one of their clinics at Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area. So, my son and I packed the Jeep and headed to Hollister on a gorgeous Friday afternoon in May.

Esprit de Four's crew greeted us the next morning at their campsite, carefully dividing nearly 40 vehicles and their occupants into groups and directing us to our next activity.

The historic schoolhouse in the park was the site of our classroom instruction, which included amusing anecdotes, a great slideshow, and final answers to many four-wheeling myths. Our knowledgeable instructors made the new drivers feel right at home, patiently answering their many questions.

Excitement ran high as we left our school benches and headed out to our vehicles. Several easy trails had been arranged for us, along with a few moderate obstacles, and a trip through the park's obstacle course.

Our leader coaxed us on the radio, reassuring a few of the drivers who seemed to be getting a little nervous.

Ruts can be treacherous if you're not careful, and I usually avoid them. But with Esprit de Four's expert spotters, I thought I'd give it a shot. Keeping the

hood level was the goal, and their guidance made it easy. It was exciting to see how many of the participants put their vehicles in low range for the first time and went for it.

The rest of the day was spent driving over logs, climbing ledges, starting and stopping on a hill, and everyone's favorite: precision backing. Let's just say that I'd better keep

my day job.

In the end, we were treated to a delicious barbecue, and the icing on the cake: our certificates.

So, if you need to know how to



put your sparkling new rig into low range, or if you want an answer to the question of whether you can really break your thumbs with the steering wheel, a safety clinic should be on your to do list.

To find out about upcoming clinics, visit the calendar at [ingear4x4.com](http://ingear4x4.com).

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