

Hints and Tips

A guide to get into the winner's circle

Stock Division

While you're not allowed to mechanically alter or remove any part your sander if you're going to be racing it in the stock division, here are a few ideas that may help you get into the winner's circle.

1. **The shortest distance between two points is a straight line:** The simplest thing you can do to make your sander run faster is to ensure it runs straight down the track. There are various ways to achieve this such as making a simple wood box that covers the sander, metal guide frames with wheels, or bearing guide bars. Any one of these will help to make your sander run straight down the track. With the track width 7 3/4 inches wide, make sure you don't make the guides too tight. (1/4" clearance is suggested)
2. **Tracking:** Check to make sure your belt is running straight and true on the sander. It's a good idea to check this after every race. Power is provided in the pits for this purpose.
3. **Belt choice:** Make sure the belt you choose is new and sharp. An official track is made of softwood plywood, so the belts will bite into it. We find most people use coarser grits such as 36 and 24 grit. Don't leave it until the last minute to buy these belts. Go and buy them a few days early, perhaps buy a couple in case one tears, or gets clogged.
4. **The less drag the better:** Wipe any part of the sander or frame that will come in contact with the side rails of the track with wax, graphite, or silicone spray.
5. **Variable speed sanders:** While it may seem obvious, make sure your sander is set at the highest speed. We have had an instance when, after the race, one of the competitors noticed their sander was set at 5 and not 6 on the adjustable speed dial.
6. **Decorations:** If you are decorating your sander, make sure the decorating starts at least 2 inches above the base of the sander. This way none of the decorations will rub against the side rails and slow you down.

Modified Division

Most of the suggestions from the stock division are appropriate for the modified division also. In the modified division we have seen all sorts of changes that have been made in an attempt to make sanders go faster. The trick is to find the perfect balance between rpm, torque, and weight. Some people have tried mounting a router motor (25000 rpm) to a sander. This unfortunately does not seem to work, but makes for some pretty awesome burnouts on the start line. The modification of choice at the Nationals was to mount a grinder motor to a sander chassis. Steve Mackenzie, the national champion did just that and set a new world record time of 1.52 seconds. One thing to note is weight dispersion. One competitor at the Nationals weighted the front of his sander and took 2/10ths of a second off his time. Trial and error seems to be the only way. The main thing is to have fun regardless.