



## On the Road

### ***Making choices and staying in control***

*One of the most valuable resources you have as a beginner rider, or as someone coming back to riding, is the knowledge and experience of other motorcyclists. Use it. Ask around when you are considering buying a bike, clothing or accessories. Ask about anything you're not sure of. But always make sure you balance advice; read up on the subject too, and ask more than one person. Don't just collect the prejudices of others.*

*Accredited Motorcycle Trainers can provide good advice as well as training. VicRoads also has a program called The 'Mates' Riding Scheme that helps experienced riders to guide and advise beginner riders.*



Clean your helmet with mild soap and water. Don't use solvents like petrol or methylated spirits, because these can attack the material of the helmet. For the same reason, avoid painting your helmet or applying stickers.

*Wearing the right gear is vital to your safety and comfort – if you aren't comfortable, you aren't safe, either. But always remember that even the best safety equipment won't protect you from everything. Ride just as carefully as you would if you were out there without it!*

## Helmet

By law, every rider and passenger, including pillion and sidecar passengers, **must** wear a helmet approved by Australian Standards.. The helmet **must** be securely fitted and fastened on your head. Don't underrate this. A helmet will reduce the chance of serious head injury if you crash, and may well keep you alive.

Your helmet **must** carry an Australian Standard AS1698 sticker. Look for this when you buy a helmet and do not remove it. If your helmet does not have the sticker, you could be fined.

Buy a new helmet that fits snugly and securely when done up. Helmet interiors are designed to mould to one head shape; anyone else wearing that helmet will have limited protection. Although it may not be noticeable, used helmets may also be damaged. Even the best helmets are designed to take only one impact. You will



*Your helmet must carry an Australian Standard AS1698 sticker. Only buy a helmet carrying this sticker.*

not necessarily be able to see damage, so buy a new helmet. Even dropping a helmet on the ground can damage it.

Helmets deteriorate with use and even in storage. Look for wear such as loose or compressed padding and exposed metal, and damage like cracks and frayed straps. A new helmet only costs money, whereas an old one could result in brain damage.

Get a helmet that can be easily seen. If other road users can see you, even in poor light or bad weather, they can avoid you. But don't ever rely on others seeing you! The responsibility for staying out of trouble is yours.

## CHECKLIST

Your helmet **must**:

- have an Australian Standard AS1698 sticker
- fit snugly and securely when done up.

Your helmet should:

- be bought new
- be in good condition
- be checked regularly
- be easily seen
- be cleaned according to the manufacturer's instructions
- be replaced if it has received a hard knock.



## Eye and face protection

Your face and especially your eyes need protection from the wind, dust, rain, insects and stones. Visors or goggles (worn with some helmets like the ones used for dirt bikes) give this protection. If you wear sunglasses instead, make sure that they really do protect your eyes and that they are impact resistant. Tinted eye protection **must not** be worn at night because it makes it difficult for you to see properly. Scratches on the surface of any eye protection can blur and distort light at night and should be replaced.

### CHECKLIST

**Your visor must** meet Australian Standard AS1609. There is no Australian Standard for goggles or sunglasses specific to motorcycle use, but any eye protection you use should:

- be free of scratches
- be impact resistant
- not restrict your vision to either side
- be fastened securely so that it does not rattle or blow off.

## Clothing

Motorcycle clothing is designed to protect you from injury, and should help you to be seen. It should also be comfortable and keep you warm.

Being seen is an obvious aid to safety. To protect you from injury, motorcycle clothing will have padding and be made of special abrasion-resistant material. Leather probably still offers the best abrasion protection, but may not be suitable in hot, wet or cold conditions. Synthetic textile-based jackets and pants are now available and many of them are highly effective.

Good gear will be designed to stay comfortable even after some time on the bike, and will not balloon out or flap. Wet weather gear will keep you dry, and should also be brightly coloured because visibility may be poor when you are wearing it.

Proper motorcycle clothing will also be warm or offer ventilation, depending on the season. All of these things are important because discomfort, heat and cold will reduce your concentration, slow your reflexes and make you less able to control your bike properly. Several manufacturers now offer well-vented clothing for summer.

For all of these reasons it is worth buying proper motorcycle clothing. Use your information sources – talk to experienced riders, read up on different items of clothing and ask questions in bike shops.



*Warm weather riding gear comes in a range of styles. It includes pants such as these with plenty of protection, but that look the same as jeans.*



*Wet weather riding gear includes suits like this, that you wear over the top of your normal riding gear.*

*Choose the right full protective gear to suit the weather conditions.*





*Leather riding suit.*

## Checklist

**Jackets and pants** (or one-piece suits) should:

- be equipped with protectors at elbows and knees, and preferably spine, hips, shoulders and chest as well
- cover your arms and legs completely, even in hot weather
- fit snugly at neck, wrists, ankles and waist when you are riding
- keep you comfortable
- be brightly coloured.





## CHECKLIST

### Gloves or gauntlets should:

- be designed for motorcycle riding, with fingers that allow you to use the bike's controls easily and give you a good, comfortable grip
- be made of strong leather or a high-quality synthetic material
- fit snugly and securely (especially around the wrists) to prevent them coming off in a crash.

## CHECKLIST

### Boots should:

- be designed for motorcycle riding and be made of strong leather or a strong synthetic material with reinforcements
- cover your ankles, preferably with some kind of reinforcement
- have strong non-slip soles
- not have rings, laces, other bits sticking out or elastic sides – they could slip off or catch on the motorcycle and be pulled off in a crash, leaving your feet unprotected.





*Choosing a motorcycle is one of the most enjoyable things a rider does, and it can have a major impact on how much you enjoy your riding and how safe you are. If you use your information sources – talk to experienced riders, read up on different bikes and ask questions in bike shops – you’re most likely to end up with the best choice for you. One of the best sources of information is your Accredited Motorcycle Trainer.*

## Types of bikes



**Road bikes** and trikes are designed to travel on sealed surfaces and have appropriate road tyres.



**Scoters** are small two-wheelers, usually with a lot of bodywork and the engine mounted at the back on the swingarm.



**Road/trail bikes** range from small and light machines right up to huge, heavy adventure tourers.



*There are also offroad bikes that are designed for recreational riding, such as motocross and track racing. Others in this class are ag (agricultural) bikes, intended for farm use, and recreational four-wheelers. Usually none of them can be registered for on-road use.*

## Which bike is right for you?

You **must not** ride a bike of more than 260cc whilst you hold a motorcycle learner permit and until you have held a motorcycle licence for 12 months.

You should feel comfortable and in control while handling the bike, which means it should not be too tall or too heavy for you.

## Riding someone else's bike

It can be risky to ride a borrowed or rented bike. You will be unfamiliar with its controls and responses, and even if it is the same model as your own, it may not be in good mechanical condition. Ideally you should get as much experience on your own bike, before attempting to ride a borrowed or rented bike. If in doubt, don't ride an unfamiliar bike. However, if riding an unfamiliar bike you should:

- familiarise yourself with the controls
- make all the same safety checks you would make with your own bike
- ride more cautiously than you would on your own bike.



## Riding off-road

If you go riding off-road (often called dirt riding) in places such as State Forests, State Parks and National Parks there are some things you need to remember.

- Your bike **must** be registered (full or recreation registration) and roadworthy, and you **must** hold an appropriate permit or licence.
- You **must** wear an approved helmet, and you should wear protective clothing. Bike shops stock this as 'enduro' or 'motocross' (MX) gear.
- In Victoria, bikes with recreation registration may only be ridden on local roads outside built-up areas. Built-up areas are defined by speed zones of less than 100 km/h. They **must not** be ridden on freeways and arterial roads as specified in the Road Management Act 2004.
- If you are riding a bike with recreation registration, you **must not** carry any load (including panniers) or a pillion passenger.
- If you go off the beaten track, you should advise someone reliable where you are going and when you expect to return.

## Check your understanding

Answers to these review questions are upside down at the bottom of this page.

**1. Jane sees a range of secondhand helmets for sale at a garage sale. They all look new and some are in bright colours. She should:**

- A choose the one with the brightest colour and a full visor
- B not buy a secondhand helmet as she may be unable to see any damage to it
- C not buy a secondhand helmet without speaking to the previous owner

**2. The best types of foot protection for riding a motorcycle are:**

- A sandals
- B runners or track shoes
- C leather boots designed for motorcycle riding

**3. The main reason for wearing clothing designed for motorcycling is that it:**

- A keeps you warm
- B helps protect you in a fall
- C both of the above

**4. Shane has just passed his motorcycle learner permit and has the chance to ride his friend's new motorcycle. Before he rides he should:**

- A check that the fuel tap is on reserve
- B reconsider and choose not to ride an unfamiliar bike
- C ride with his friend as a pillion passenger

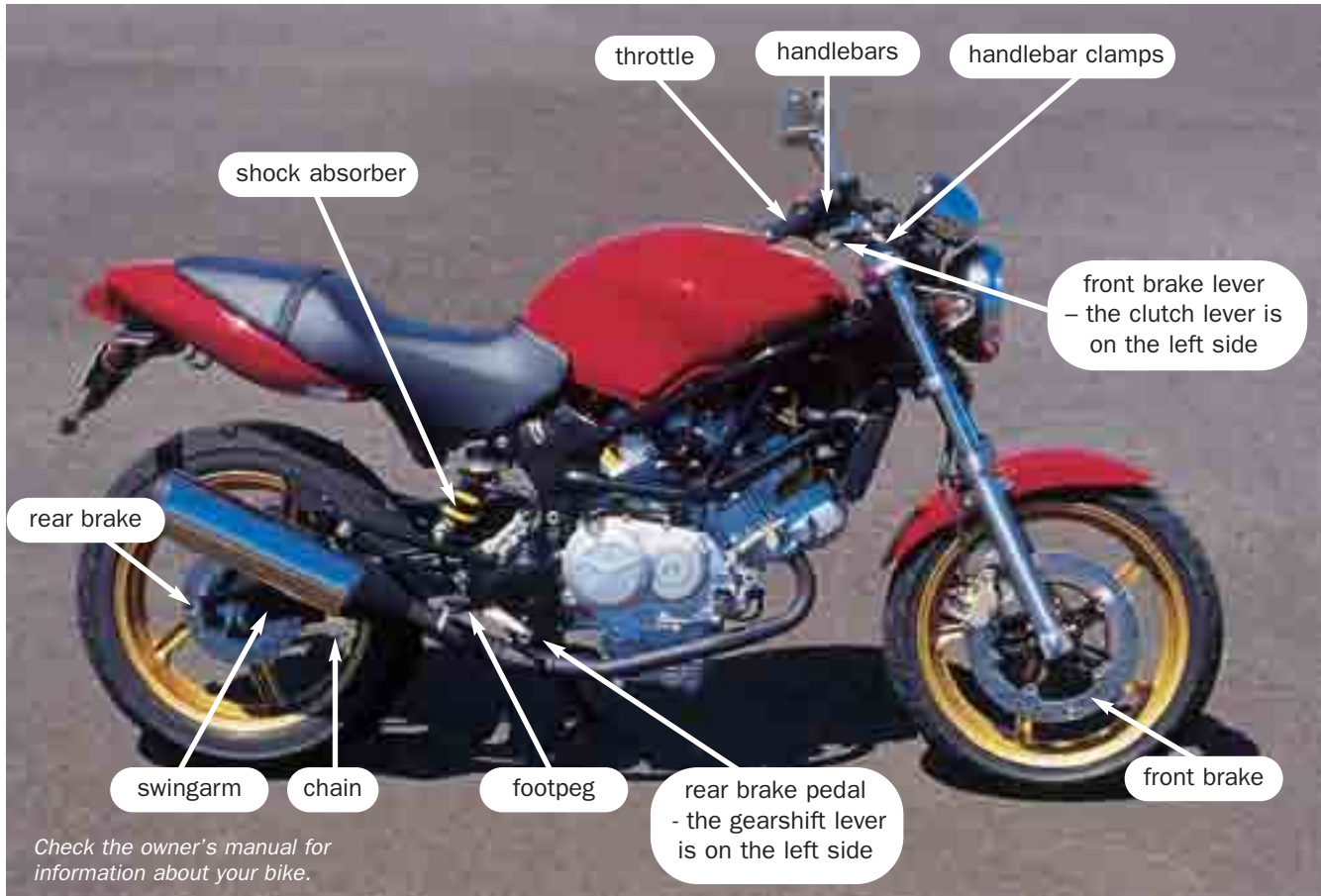


ANSWERS 1B 2C 3C 4B



*No matter what bike you choose to ride it needs to be set up to suit you. Making the right adjustments from the start will not only make your bike more comfortable to ride, it will also improve your ability to control the bike. In addition to these adjustments there are a number of important checks to make every time before you ride.*

## A simple guide to the parts of a bike

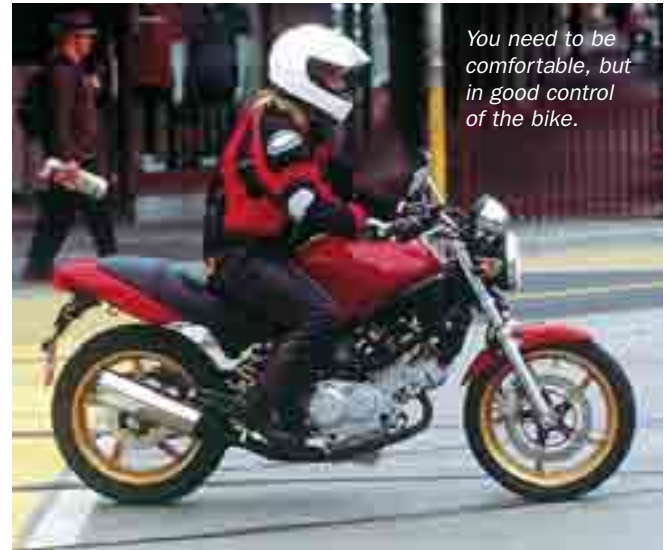


## Setting up for yourself and your bike

You and your bike are partners out there on the road, and like any partners you should make sure that you can get along. This will require a bit of adjustment from each of you. Some of these comments will not apply to scooters, because they are built differently.

### Personalise your bike

- Some bikes allow you to adjust the height of the seat. Set it so your feet are comfortably flat on the ground when you are sitting on the bike.
- Adjust the gear and rear brake levers up or down so that they are within comfortable reach of your feet. Remember that you need to move the gear lever up and down, not just down like the brake lever. If you are not sure how to do this, ask your Accredited Motorcycle Trainer or bike shop for advice.
- If the handlebars are adjustable, set them so they are comfortable. If you can't get them comfortable, consider replacing them or changing the clamps that hold them.
- If your bike has adjustable clutch and front brake levers, set them so that they are in easy reach of your fingers.



*You need to be comfortable, but in good control of the bike.*



*Hold the handgrips firmly and keep your wrists low with the knuckles at the highest point.*

## Set yourself up

- Your posture should be comfortable while allowing good control of the bike. Keep your head up and your line of sight level with the road. Your arms should not be feeling too much strain from holding up your body.
- Sit close enough to the handlebars so you can reach them with your arms slightly bent. You should be able to turn the bars without stretching.
- Hold the handgrips firmly and keep your wrists low with the knuckles at the highest point. This gives you good control of the throttle while making it easy to reach the clutch and brake levers.
- To maintain posture while braking and absorb shocks from the front end of the bike, your elbows should be slightly bent and tucked in.
- Grasp the fuel tank firmly with your knees to balance the bike and keep control when turning, slowing or speeding up.
- Keep your feet on the footpegs while the bike is moving, ready to use the foot controls.

## Checks to make before each ride

You should check your bike before each ride. Your safety begins with your machine.

### Controls

- Brakes should work smoothly. The front and rear brakes should each stop the bike when fully applied separately.
- Clutch and throttle should work smoothly and the throttle should snap shut when you let it go.
- Make sure cables are lubricated and there are no visible kinks or broken strands.



*Do a safety check before each ride.*



*Your Accredited Motorcycle Trainer is the best person to teach you the basics of starting off, using the gears, braking, cornering and turning. If you are uncertain about anything, make sure you ask.*

## Tyres and chain

- Check tyre pressures when the tyres are cold. Correct pressures should be listed on a sticker on the bike (possibly on the swingarm) and in the owner's manual.
- Check that the tread depth is more than 2mm all over the tyre tread. Less than this is illegal and very dangerous. The sidewalls of the tyres should be free of cracks or bumps.
- Make sure that the tyre tread is free of cuts, nails or cracks.

- Check that the chain (if the bike has one) is lubricated and the tension adjusted correctly. The owner's manual will have details of how to do this.

## Mirrors

- Clean and adjust the mirrors before you start. It is dangerous to do this when you are moving.
- You should be able to see just past your body, and as much as possible of the traffic next to you and behind you.

*Adjust your mirrors so you can see as much as possible of the traffic next to you and behind.*



## Lights & signals

- Check that all lights and indicators are clean and in working order. Indicators **must** flash and be bright enough to be seen. The headlight **must** be adjusted properly so that it is not too high or too low. Both low and high beams **must** work. Check that the tail light works, and that the brake light works when you apply the hand and foot brakes.
- Test the horn.

## Fuel & oil

- Check the fuel level and don't ride with the fuel tap on reserve until it is necessary.
- Check the oil level. The engine needs oil and could seize if the level drops too far. This will do damage to the engine and could lead to a crash.

## Yourself!

- Check that you are dressed safely and properly (see Chapter 4).
- Make sure you are fit to ride and not tired (fatigued) or impaired by alcohol or drugs (see Chapter 3).
- Make sure you are in the mood and have the right attitude. Riding while angry or in any other high emotional state could make you careless or aggressive.

## CHECKLIST

Before you ride each time check:

- brakes are working
- clutch and throttle are working smoothly
- cables are lubricated
- tyre pressures are correct and look for tyre wear
- chain is lubricated and adjusted
- lights, indicators and horn are working
- mirrors are clean and adjusted
- there is enough fuel and oil
- you are dressed in the right gear
- you are fit to ride
- your mood and attitude is right to ride safely.



## Check your understanding

Answers to these review questions are upside down at the bottom of this page.

### 1. Glenn has just taken delivery of a new motorcycle. He should:

- A immediately take it out for a run on the open road to see how it goes
- B adjust the controls and, if possible, handlebars and seat to suit himself
- C take all his friends on rides to show them how much fun motorcycling is

### 2. Anne is trying to show her sister how to sit on the motorcycle in the correct position. She should sit:

- A at the back of the seat with her arms straight so that she can turn quickly
- B close to the handlebars so she can bend over the front of the bike and see the road ahead more clearly
- C close enough to the handlebars to reach them with her arms slightly bent so she can turn without having to stretch

ANSWERS 1B 2C



# Looking ahead and being seen



*Being visible is not a guarantee of safety on the road, but it is the beginning of being safer. As a motorcyclist you need to do as much as you can to help make yourself be seen, but do not assume that being seen is enough. You need to be able to see clearly around you and to anticipate – think ahead and be ready to respond before things happen. Your safety is in your own hands at all times.*

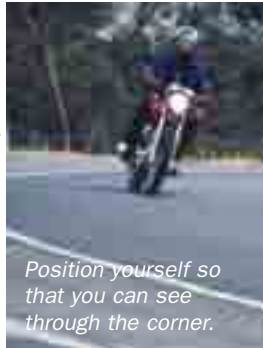
*Remember that you are sharing the road with others – drivers, riders, pedestrians, cyclists, trucks, buses and trams. So ride cooperatively in traffic, and help everyone get to where they are going safely.*

## Looking ahead

A very large part of road safety is anticipation – being ready to respond to things before they happen. That’s not as hard as it sounds; in fact, it’s one of the things you learn as you go along. People who have been riding for a while become very good at it, which is one reason why they’re usually safer.

You can help yourself with this by looking ahead. Here are a few examples:

- When riding around a corner, try to position yourself on the road so you can see through the corner.
- Lean with your bike while you turn, keeping your head up and line of sight level with the road. Turn your head and look where you want to go and ride smoothly.
- When pulling out from the kerb, position your bike at an angle so you can see the traffic in both directions.
- If you are making a U-turn, have a clear view of traffic in both directions.
- At intersections, don’t count on other vehicles giving you the right of way. Approach intersections slowly and carefully.
- Watch the road ahead by looking through or over the top of other vehicles.



*Position yourself so that you can see through the corner.*



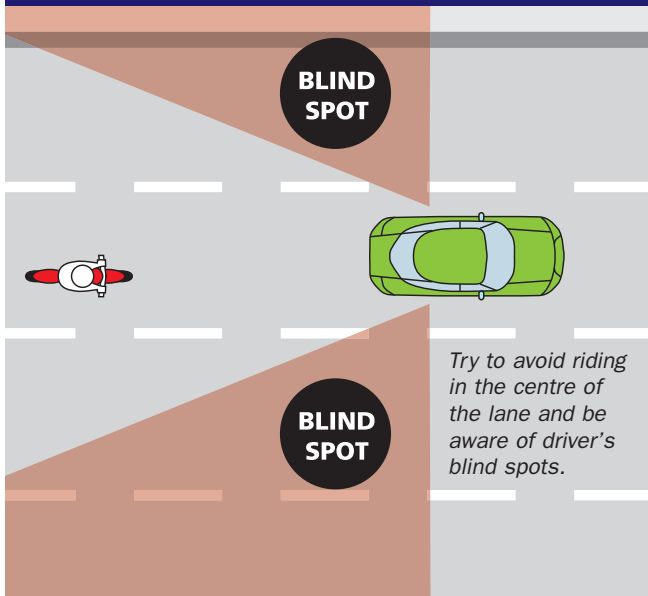
*At the roadside, angle your motorcycle to see both ways.*

## Good positioning

Place yourself on the road where you can see and be seen.

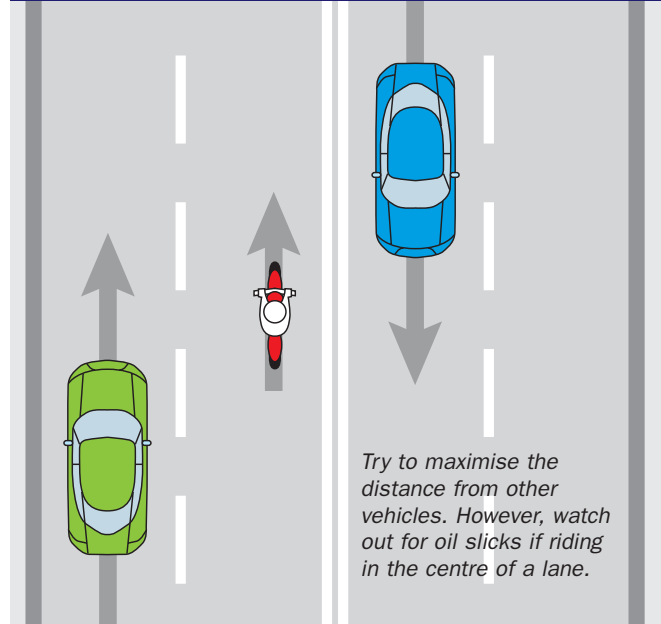
- Ride in the right-hand wheel track of the road, where you can be seen in both the rear vision mirror and the external mirror of the car in front of you. You can also see vehicles coming the other way, and be seen by them. Normally the road surface will be best here as well, without the oil slick that can form in the centre of the lane or the broken pavement and loose gravel at the edge of the road.

### Avoid riding in blind spots

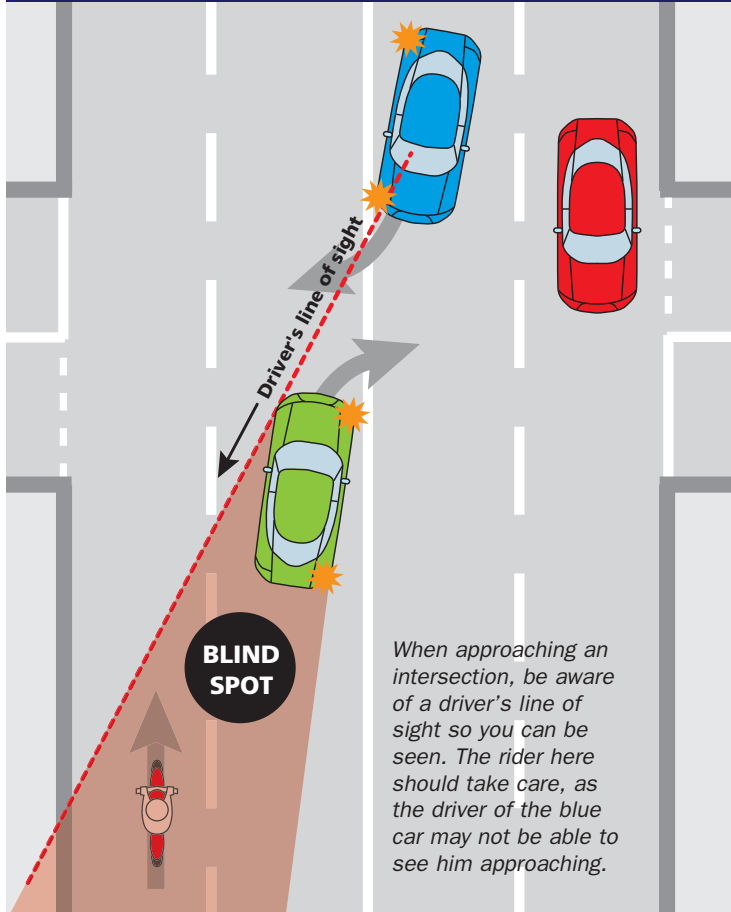


- When riding on a multi-lane road, avoid the centre lane unless there is a median strip, otherwise you will have to watch out for traffic going in both directions. Ride in the right-hand wheel track when travelling in the left lane and the left-hand wheel track if you are riding in the right lane.
- When overtaking on a multi lane road where there is no median strip with traffic in both directions maximise the distance from other vehicles. Ride in the centre of the lane but watch out for oil slicks.

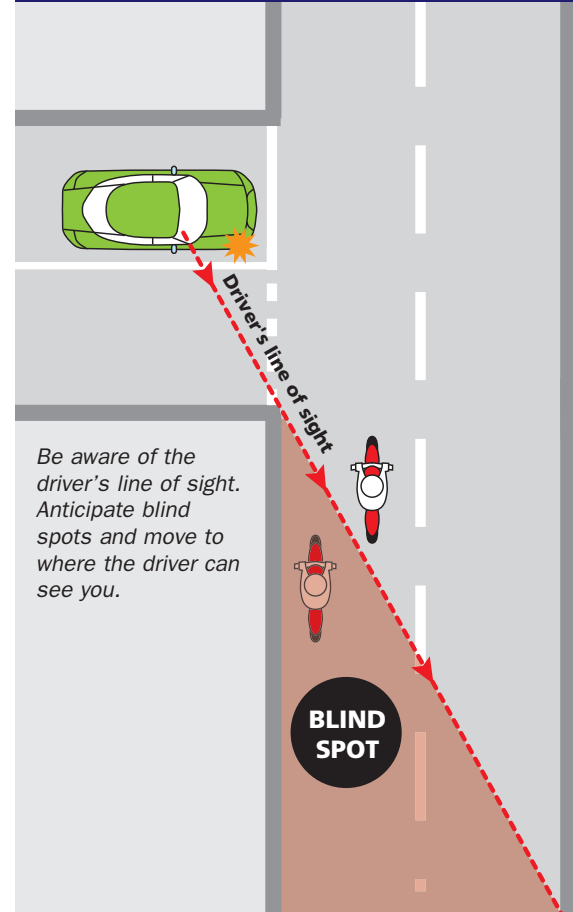
### Keep a safe distance



## Approaching an intersection



## Driver's line of sight



## Place yourself where you are as safe as possible

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- By placing yourself where you can see and be seen, you are 'claiming' the lane and discouraging drivers from trying to share it. Sharing lanes is dangerous.
- Don't ride in the blind spots that all cars have behind and beside them. Try to ride where you can see the driver's eyes in the car's mirror – that means the driver can see you too.
- Most crashes between a bike and a car happen at intersections, so place yourself where you can be seen and have as much room as possible to move.
- Slow down when there are cars about at intersections. Not all the drivers may be able to see you.
- Try to make eye contact with drivers coming in the opposite direction, to make sure they know you are there – but don't rely on that! Be ready to stop or take evasive action.



## Headlight

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Riding with your headlight on during the day can greatly enhance your chances of being seen, especially on dull days, but don't rely on the headlight alone. If you have your headlight on during the day, always use low beam.

If you are riding with your high beam on at night, you **must** switch to low beam when an approaching vehicle is within 200 metres or when the other vehicle's headlight dips, whichever is sooner. When riding 200 metres or less behind another vehicle you **must** also dip your headlight. Use common sense, and make sure you don't dazzle others with your headlight. See Chapter 10 for more information on riding at night.

## Indicators and brake lights

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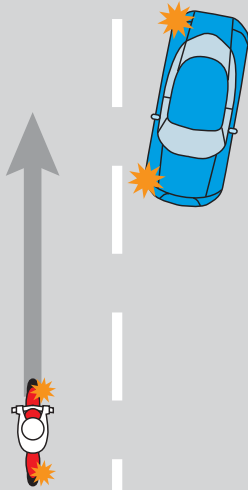
Indicators and brake lights remind other road users that you are there and tell them what you are about to do. They need to be able to look ahead just as much as you do, and this way you give them the information they need.

Before you turn, change lanes or merge you **must** use your indicators, even if you can't see another vehicle. Just because you don't see another vehicle, it does not mean it isn't there.

Send clear messages to the other traffic. Turn your indicator off when it is not needed. If you leave it on after you've made the turn you are giving the wrong message, which could be dangerous.

You can also make yourself more obvious to following traffic by braking gently and flashing your brake light, so they know that you are about to slow down.

### Accurate signals

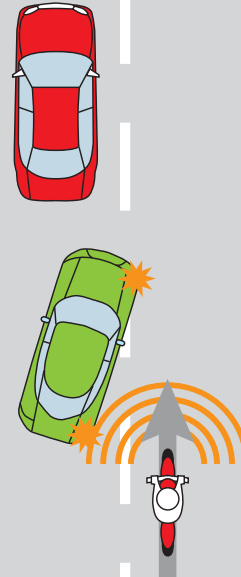


*Giving the wrong signals could lead to danger.*

## Sound your horn

Sound your horn as a warning in case of danger. It may let other road users who have not seen you know that you are there. Never rely on the horn though, because it may not be heard. Be ready to get out of the way of the danger yourself.

### Be prepared to react



*Don't rely on your horn to warn other drivers. Always be prepared to react.*



## Be bright...

Consider wearing a brightly coloured or reflective helmet and clothing. Yellow, orange and red are colours which stand out against most backgrounds. Reflective tape on your clothing or your bike works well at night, and a reflective vest is more noticeable to drivers behind you than a tail light.

## ...but don't rely on drivers seeing you

No matter how visible you are on the road, there may still be drivers who simply don't see you, or who don't obey the road rules. You need to keep an eye out for these drivers and be ready to take care of yourself.



## Check your understanding

Answers to these review questions are upside down at the bottom of this page.

### 1. Tom is about to pull out from the kerb to join the traffic flow. He should:

- A accelerate as quickly as possible so that he is going faster than the traffic, and it can't catch him
- B put on his indicator because that gives him right of way
- C make sure he positions the bike so he can see the traffic in both directions before pulling out

### 2. The three best ways to make yourself more visible are:

- A ride with your headlight on, ride where you can be seen and wear bright clothing
- B sound your horn, keep to the left of the road and flash your headlight
- C all of the above

### 3. At an intersection you should:

- A change lanes to get past other vehicles
- B choose a lane position which will enable you to be seen by other drivers
- C sound your horn and then speed through as quickly as possible



ANSWERS 1C 2A 3B

