

arrive
alive!

vic roads

The Right Line



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NOTE: This is not the VicRider Handbook and not the basis for the motorcycle knowledge tests.

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Introduction

Perhaps you've just joined the six-figure number of Victorians with motorcycle licences or perhaps you're coming back to two wheels after an absence. Whichever, this booklet is for you.

It is designed to be carried alongside your bike's Owners Manual and contains the kind of information you'll often need to use in your motorcycling life.

It lists VicRoads offices and tells you how to get in touch with groups like the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV), the Motorcycle Riders Association of Australia (MRAA), the Women's International Motorcycle Association, rider training providers, the Ulysses Club (for riders over 40 years of age), the Legal Aid Commission of Victoria and the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC) for assistance.

In addition, this booklet describes ten tactics designed to make your life as a motorcyclist safer and more enjoyable. While motorcyclists are vulnerable on the road, you can increase both the pleasure you get from your riding and your physical safety by incorporating the ten tactics into your riding life.

Safe riding!



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How the government helps

Road safety is everyone's responsibility and the costs of collisions and injury are carried by the community. Therefore, governments "as representatives of the community", naturally have an interest in all road users – this includes motorcycle riders and pillion passengers.

If anyone is injured in a road crash they will receive medical help and ongoing rehabilitation if necessary, that's why third party personal insurance is compulsory. It's incorporated into your bike registration fee and, in fact, makes up the bulk of the payment. This is the main reason why riding an unregistered bike isn't such a good idea – the rider (you!) rather than the insurer may have to pay for medical treatment in the event of a crash, and the bills can sometimes add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Government legislation also aims to make motorcycling safer. One example is the compulsory use of helmets which has reduced head injuries in crashes. Another example is the discouragement of drinking alcohol and riding by imposing fines, loss of licence and, in repeat cases, prison sentences. The blood alcohol limit in Victoria is below .05 g/100ml but for learner, probationary and restricted riders, the limit is .00 g/100ml.

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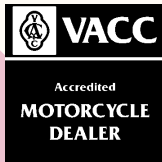
Rider training

Victoria has one of the best rider training systems in the country. The Victorian Government, through VicRoads accredited motorcycle training providers, makes sure people can control a motorcycle before they get a learner permit. To go beyond the permit you must show you can ride a bike to a suitable level of skill.

Check the useful information list on page 25 for the range of services VicRoads offers, and the back of this booklet for a listing of all VicRoads offices. Accredited rider training providers are listed on page 28.



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How motorcycle shops can help

One of the most convenient sources of information on just about any aspect of motorcycling is your local motorcycle shop. The staff there will know which clubs are active in your area and where facilities such as rider training and legal off-road riding areas are located.

A motorcycle shop has a large variety of motorcycles, accessories and protective clothing. The staff can assist you in choosing the most appropriate and suitable bike for your licence and skill levels.

Many motorcycle shops are a member of the Motorcycle Industry Division (MID) of the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC). Accredited VACC MID members abide by a “Code of Business Practice”. To identify a VACC Accredited MID member, look for the sticker on the shop window.

A motorcycle shop in the business of selling road motorcycles, must be a Licensed Motor Car Trader (LMCT). A Motor Car Trader must comply with the relevant legislation and guarantee Clear Title.

If you have any problems with a VACC MID member, the VACC can assist to resolve the matter. Contact the VACC on (03) 9829 1111.

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Ten tactics for survival

- one** Watch the big picture (note your surroundings)
- two** Keep your distance
- three** Be seen (visibility)
- four** Be predictable (no surprises)
- five** Think like them (learn how other road users think)
- six** Read the road (road conditions)
- seven** Pace yourself (speed)
- eight** Ride straight (alcohol and drugs)
- nine** Trust your bike (maintenance)
- ten** Trust yourself (rider training)

more details over the page...

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1. Watch the big picture

When you go for a ride, things constantly happen around you that influence your level of safety on the road. If you understand how the conditions you ride in might affect you, you can be prepared for the unexpected. Here are some examples:

cars, trucks and buses leave an oily strip in the middle of traffic lanes;
roads are particularly slippery when a light shower comes after a long, dry spell;
kids, dogs and cats are more likely to appear suddenly in suburban streets;
native animals are more likely to appear on country roads around dawn and dusk;
drivers stuck behind a slow-moving vehicle are more likely to behave erratically; and
hard surfaces (like tarred roads) require different riding techniques to riding on loose surfaces.

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2. Keep your distance

Keeping a safe distance from other road users, parked cars and fixed objects on the side of the road will give you more time to react if something unexpected happens. Remember other road users can act in an unpredictable manner. Keeping your distance allows you to respond when:

- a driver ahead suddenly hits the brakes;
- a car pulls out without indicating;
- a driver overtaking a line of traffic miscalculates and is forced into your lane;
- a driver ahead decides to turn suddenly without warning; and
- other road users do anything unpredictable.

When riding you should use the “two second” guide – always keeping at least two seconds between you and the vehicle in front. One way of checking this guide is to note when the vehicle ahead passes a fixed object on the side of the road (perhaps a telegraph pole), and start counting to yourself “one thousand and one, one thousand and two”. If you pass the fixed object before you get to “two”, you’re too close!



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Sometimes you need to increase your following distance and keep more than two seconds behind, for example when:

conditions are poor and your vision is reduced, such as at night or when it is raining or foggy;

the road is wet or slippery;

the road is unmade;

you are on a highway where the speed of the traffic is high;

you are beginning to tire and might not react as quickly; and

you are following a bigger vehicle such as a truck or bus which is harder to see around, or you are unable to see through their windscreen.



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3. Be seen

Many drivers say at the scene of the crash “Sorry, I didn’t see you”. That’s not good enough, all road users have an obligation to be aware of motorcyclists. However, riders also need to make sure they’re as obvious as possible to other road users.

You can increase your visibility by:

wearing bright protective clothing and a bright helmet;

riding with your lights on in the appropriate conditions; and

riding in the correct road position so you can be seen in both rear and outside mirrors of the vehicle in front of you. So when travelling on a multi-laned road:

- (a) try to avoid the centre lane (as you will need to look out for traffic on both sides);
- (b) ride in the right wheel track of the vehicle in front, when travelling in the left lane; and
- (c) ride in the left wheel track of the vehicle in front, when travelling in the right lane.

Remember experienced riders always assume they haven’t been seen and are prepared for the unexpected.



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4. Be predictable

Bikes can accelerate faster than cars, fit into smaller spaces, and are more manoeuvrable and versatile in traffic. While these advantages make motorcycles useful, they are also the reason other road users often don't "see" riders. A car driver may wander in and out of a small gap in the traffic without realising a rider might be about to enter it.

If other road users can see you, know what you intend to do (because you signal your intentions well in advance) and you ride at their pace, you increase your safety and are less likely to be involved in an "incident".

Riding between rows of cars (lane-sharing), sudden lane changes, accelerating quickly into vacant spots and turning up in traffic situations unexpectedly are practices which can make riders temporarily invisible to other road users.



Remember a rider must not overtake on the left of a moving or stationary vehicle in the same lane, or on a road without marked lanes.

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5. Think like them

Just as bikes have advantages and limitations, so do cars, trucks and other road transport. If you understand how car and truck drivers think, and if you understand the limitations of their vehicles, you can anticipate their possible behaviour and ride to suit it. Here are some examples:

a driver may change lanes on a multi-laned road if a space is available in another faster moving lane, so make sure you are visible to other drivers (see page 11);

truck drivers leave a bigger gap between themselves and the vehicle in front because trucks take longer to stop in emergency situations, so do not use the gap;

indicator lights sometimes don't cancel, suggesting a car intends to turn right in the near future when in fact it intends to go straight ahead or even turn left. Use the "two second" guide so you have enough time to manoeuvre out of a potentially dangerous situation;

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because cars accelerate slower than a bike, it may take them longer to overtake the vehicle in front than a bike following them might anticipate. Experienced riders make their own judgements about overtaking and don't rely on other road users; and cars and trucks committed to a change of direction can't quickly alter their course.

Anticipating the likely behaviour of other traffic allows you to plan alternatives to counter any danger.



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6. Read the road

All roads are different. Even the same road can change overnight because of rain, different patterns of road use, roadworks or unexpected oncoming traffic. Motorcycles are more susceptible than cars to changes in road conditions. Experienced riders “read” the road and adapt their riding to suit. Some common situations to consider are:

Painted lines (pedestrian crossings, lines at traffic lights) are more slippery than unpainted tar, particularly when wet;

Motorcycles can be harder to control on loose surfaces (like dirt or loose gravel roads);

Sides of tarred roads tend to break up and affect motorcycle handling;

Riding over tram and train lines needs extra care, try to:

- look to where you want to go rather than concentrating on the direction of the tracks;
- complete any turns before crossing the tracks if possible and don't ride where tram tracks join;
- cross tracks at an angle and keep your bike in an upright position; and
- hold your throttle steady and avoid slowing or braking as you cross tracks;

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vehicles leave an oily strip in the middle of traffic lanes which is particularly slippery when it's raining, especially near intersections, so avoid the centre of the lane; changes in colour or shape of road patches ahead indicate a change in road conditions, so safely position your motorcycle to avoid such rough patches; and shiny bitumen is very slippery and especially dangerous in wet conditions, so you should decrease your riding speed and avoid these sections if possible.

By using good observation skills, riders can adjust their speed and position on the road to suit the conditions.



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7. Pace yourself

As Michael Doohan says later in this booklet, the circumstances which allow him to ride fast on a track don't exist on public roads. The many decisions you need to make on speed every time you ride depend on:

road conditions; traffic conditions; your skill level and amount of experience; legal speed limits and speed advisory signs; and the type and condition of the bike.

The safest speed for a motorcycle in traffic is generally the speed at which all the other vehicles are travelling. Riding slower or faster than this increases risk, so ride at a speed that is both legal and suits the conditions.

Many motorcyclist deaths occur when the rider hits a fixed object (tree, telephone pole, parked vehicles, road sign); remember the faster you ride, the harder you may hit such objects.



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8. Ride straight

Alcohol and other drugs (even ones like cold & flu tablets) affect your ability to ride. They may make you clumsy and less careful than you might otherwise be. Not only will alcohol and drugs affect your judgement, but most importantly your balancing skills. In Victoria, learner permit holders, and probationary and restricted motorcycle licence holders must have a “zero” BAC reading. Experienced riders must be below the limit of .05 g/100ml. When you know you’ll be drinking at a social event try either:

not riding;

staying at the place of the event; or

making alternative transport arrangements.

Some drugs can also affect your riding ability, especially if combined with alcohol. In Victoria, it is an offence to ride while impaired by a drug. Remember it is best to plan ahead, rather than leave decisions till the last moment.

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9. Trust your bike

A bike in good condition allows you to trust its performance and concentrate on the other issues of riding. A bike in good condition will have:

- suspension which allows the bike to recover quickly from changing road conditions;
- steering-head bearings and swingarm bushes/bearings which ensure the wheels remain in alignment during braking, cornering or acceleration – get your bike shop to check for you if you're not sure how to do it yourself;
- an engine which idles evenly, accelerates and decelerates smoothly without “hesitations” or jerkiness;
- no fluid leaks from the forks, brakes, suspension or engine;
- lights and instruments which are operational at all times;
- brakes which operate smoothly and predictably; and
- tyres with legal tread depth and correct pressure (refer to your Owners Manual).

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The more you know about your bike, the more predictable your rides will be. Ways of learning about your bike include:

practising different riding techniques, for example, emergency braking in streets with no traffic, car parks or off-road facilities; this will help you know what your bike is capable of;

reading the Owners Manual comprehensively;

referring to a workshop manual for your bike;

doing your own regular bike maintenance (you can try a maintenance class at a TAFE college too);

developing a good relationship with the bike shop staff who service and repair your bike;

reading general interest motorcycle magazines;
and

joining a club which concentrates on your make of bike.

Beware of riding unfamiliar bikes. Mistakes are more likely to happen on bikes you're not used to.



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10. Trust yourself

Most new riders in Victoria undergo some specialist rider training before they get their L plates.

However, the experience which builds knowledge and confidence usually has to be gained in the complex environment of the road. Tactics to add to your safety, while you are gaining experience, include:

allowing yourself plenty of time to complete rides;

choosing routes which minimise hazards;

choosing not to ride if conditions make you feel uncomfortable;

listening and learning from experienced riders you respect;

not riding with others who pressure you to ride beyond your capabilities;

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riding with a new Australian Standards approved helmet which is properly fastened and fits correctly. Never use a helmet that has taken a hard knock, been dropped or is second hand (even if it looks okay); and wearing protective clothing – remember the only thing between you and the road is your clothing. Leathers are great, but it is worth finding out about new materials.



Also remember luggage and pillion passengers alter the way your bike handles.

Advanced riding courses which will increase your confidence and skill level are available from accredited rider training providers. Learning to use the brakes on your bike properly is a vital skill, as well as understanding and learning the technique of countersteering. Expert advice will help you acquire such skills!

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Mick Doohan

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MOTORCYCLE RACER

I can ride a bike around the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit as fast as anyone. The confidence I need to do this comes partly from skill and machine preparation, but it also comes from knowing everyone else is riding in the same direction, knowing what's around every corner, knowing the track condition (and knowing it won't change suddenly) and knowing that others in the race are highly skilled. It's also nice to know that if I crash, I probably won't hit anything.

When you're making a decision on how fast to ride on public roads, ask yourself how many of those things apply in your situation. The answer is none.

Think about it...



A black ink signature of Mick Doohan, written in a stylized, cursive script.

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Moira Stewart

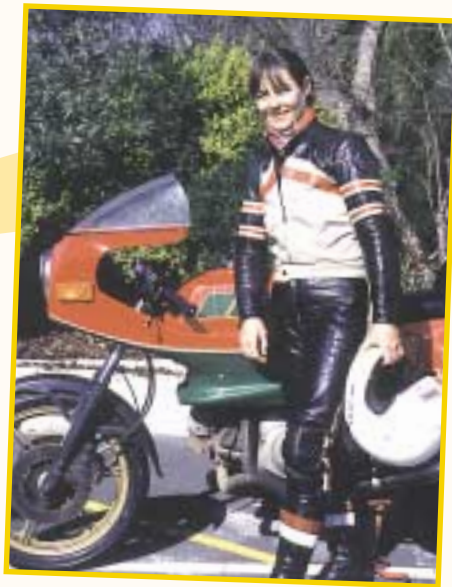
MOTORCYCLE RIDING INSTRUCTOR

Bikes became a passion for me not long after I started riding them. Since then I've enjoyed many thousands of hours and kilometres on the wonderful roads of Victoria and interstate.

Attaining the skills necessary for safe riding has enhanced my enjoyment, and so has becoming an instructor and passing those skills on to others.

I've also enjoyed meeting new people through the network provided by groups such as the Women's International Motorcycle Association.

See you on the road!



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Useful contacts

Licences, registration and much more

VicRoads has offices around the state and is the organisation to talk to if you're after a learner permit or probationary licence. VicRoads also takes care of registration enquiries and can provide an updated list of accredited rider training providers. If your bike is modified, VicRoads can put you in touch with a consulting engineer who is qualified to approve bikes for registration. VicRoads can also issue a 28-day permit for unregistered bikes to be ridden, but only for roadworthy work to be performed. Registration fees can be paid at VicRoads or at any bank. VicRoads' addresses are listed in the back of this book. For further information ring **13 11 71**.

Consumer protection

The VicRoads' Vehicles Securities Register (VSR) can tell you, *before* you buy, whether a particular bike still has money owed on it by a previous owner. If it does, it could be repossessed from you even though you've paid for it. Contact the VSR on **13 11 71**.

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The **Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC)** is an employers organisation representing all facets of the automotive industry. The Motorcycle Industry Division (MID) is one of 14 Divisions and represents manufacturers, dealers, repairers, and parts

and accessories businesses throughout the State. Accredited members abide by a Code of Business Practice and can be identified by a VACC Accreditation sticker on the shop window. Contact VACC on (03) 9829 1111 for your nearest Accredited MID member.

If you believe you've been dealt with unfairly by a bike shop, **Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria** might be able to help, phone 1300 558 181.

Legal assistance

Victoria Legal Aid can provide legal information, phone (03) 9269 0234 for the switchboard or (03) 9269 0120 for a telephone information service.

Community Information Centres can give you information and advice on legal resources and just about anything else. For the branch nearest you, check your white pages.

If you're an **RACV** member, motoring legal advice is also available by calling (03) 9790 3308.

Touring

The Victorian Visitor Information Centre, located at the Melbourne Town Hall, supplies touring and travel information. For information phone 13 28 42.

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Insurance

If you have been injured in a motor vehicle accident in Victoria, your medical, loss of earnings and rehabilitation costs should be covered by the Transport Accident Commission regardless of who was at fault in the accident. Contact the **Transport Accident Commission** on 1300 654 329 or free call on 1800 332 556 for insurance claim enquiries. To be eligible to make a claim, you must report the accident to the Police.

General information and the social scene

The **Motorcycle Riders Association of Australia (MRAA)** is a lobby group which provides advice and information, on topics such as motorbike insurance. Contact the **MRAA** on (03) 9699 1811.

One of the biggest social bike clubs in Australia is the **Ulysses Club**. Anyone over 40 years of age who holds a current motorcycle licence, or who is a partner of such a person and over 40 can join. Until you reach the grand old age of 50, you will be a “junior” member, but with full membership rights and privileges. It’s just that you might have to help some of the “seniors” off their machines sometime! Contact the Melbourne branch secretary, Geoff Farrington, on 0409 532 375.

WIMA stands for the **Women’s International Motorcycle Association**. It’s a social and touring club for women riders and pillions. Contact Moira Stewart on (03) 9459 4217.

The appropriate place to ride a motorcycle fast is on a racetrack. For information on racing clubs and venues, contact **Motorcycling Victoria** on (03) 9482 5422. For trail bike riding, contact the Australian Motorcycle Trail Riders’ Association, Peter Ellard on (03) 9213 6716.

Other general motorcycling information and social scene news can be found in the various motorcycle magazines available. These can be found at most newsagencies. You can also check out the internet, for example – BikePoint.com.au.

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Rider Training

The following organisations are VicRoads accredited **motorcycle training providers** which means that aside from teaching you skills and safe riding practices, they issue you with a learner permit or motorcycle licence if you pass the relevant tests.



Armstrongs Driver Education Pty Ltd

Fairfield

Ph: 9499 9199

www.armdrive.com.au

Aust-Link Pty Ltd

Mildura Swan Hill

Ph: 5023 8581

Baylink Motorcycle Training Academy

Hastings

Ph: 5971 9312

www.baylinktraining.com.au

DECA

Bendigo Shepparton Wangaratta

Wodonga

Ph: 1800 809 413

www.deca.com.au

HART

Kilsyth Tullamarine

Ph: 9335 2766

www.hondampe.com.au

Motorcycle Motion

Moorabbin

Ph: 9532 0509

www.motorcyclemotion.com.au

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Motorcycle Training Academy

Doveton

Ph: 9706 9733

www.motorcycletraining.com.au

S.M.A.R.T. Training

Ardeer Bairnsdale Carrum Downs

Leongatha Newborough Sale

Ph: 1300 365 341

www.smart-training.com.au

South West Institute of TAFE

Hamilton Portland Warrnambool

Ph: 5564 8967

www.swtafe.vic.edu.au/shrt/shrt.htm

Stay Upright Motorcycle Techniques

Ballarat Geelong Hoppers Crossing

Horsham

Ph: 1300 366 640

www.stayupright.com.au

SWAN Training

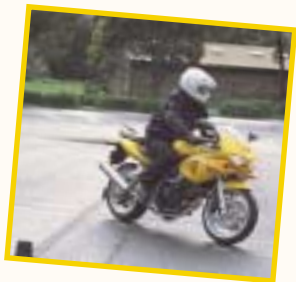
Swan Hill

Ph: 5033 1334

Transport Driver Training Pty Ltd

Dandenong

Ph: 1800 350 320



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OFFICE DIRECTORY

Melbourne and Metropolitan

Broadmeadow

Cnr Pearcedale Parade
& Johnstone Street

Burwood East

12 Lakeside Drive

Camberwell

3 Prospect Hill Road

Carlton

459 Lygon Street

Dandenong

16 Princes Highway
Doveton

Dromana

Shop 11
143 Point Nepean Road

Frankston

71 Harnett Drive
Seaford

Greensborough

Diamond Village
Shopping Centre
Nepean Street
Watsonia

Melton

C/- Shire Offices
232 High Street

Oakleigh South

1 Eskay Road

Sunbury

C/- Shire Offices
36 Macedon Street

Sunshine

499 Ballarat Road

Werribee

11 Riverside Avenue

Country

Ararat

Shop 2
56 High Street

Bairnsdale

535 Princes Highway

Ballarat

88 Learmonth Road
Wendouree

Benalla

50-52 Clarke Street

Bendigo

57 Lansell Street

Cobram

C/- Shire Offices
44 Station Street

Colac

Princes Highway
Colac West

Echuca

5 Mundarra Road

Geelong

180 Fyans Street
Geelong South

Hamilton

Riley Street

Horsham

14 O'Callaghans Parade

Kyneton

2 Beauchamp Street

Leongatha

Anderson Street

Maryborough

C/- Shire Offices
Neill Street

Mildura

109 -111 Orange Avenue

Morwell

87 Princes Drive

Portland

114A Percy Street

Sale

28 Princes Highway

Seymour

5 Crawford Street

Shepparton

231-239 Corio Street

Swan Hill

70 Nyah Road

Wangaratta

6-8 Handley Street

Warragul

Unit 5
131 North Road

Warrnambool

29 Jamieson Street

Wodonga

82-86 Elgin Street

For further
information
ring 13 11 71

