

The Victorian Rider Handbook



More Information

If you would like more details on the information in this handbook, please contact:

VicRoads Tel: 13 11 71

Latest information on road laws

Road laws change from time to time, and so do the knowledge tests. Make sure you have the most recent edition of this handbook and any update information sheets relating to motorcycles. The *Road to Solo Driving* has details of road laws and the VicRoads website – **vicroads.vic.gov.au** – also carries information on laws and any changes.

If you are in doubt, contact VicRoads (Tel: 13 11 71).

Further help in developing your riding skills

- VicRoads Accredited Motorcycle Training and Assessment Service Providers (Accredited Motorcycle Trainers) can provide advice and help get you started – see page 86 for details. Most provide advanced rider training courses as well as those for beginners.
- *Discover Safe Riding* is designed to help you to build experience and skills once you get on the road. This booklet is available from the VicRoads website - **vicroads.vic.gov.au**

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Using this handbook

This handbook has been produced to help you to become a competent, safe motorcycle rider. It is based on an approach called defensive riding.

Anyone going for a Victorian motorcycle learner permit or Victorian motorcycle licence will find it valuable. So will anyone who wants to be up to date with roadcraft and defensive riding – with survival. Whether you are new to motorcycling or coming back after a break, this book is for you.

The handbook is divided into sections covering different aspects of riding. You should read them all, and try the 'Check your understanding' questions which follow. The questions let you:

- review the information
- check your understanding
- become familiar with the style of questions in the Motorcycle Learner Permit Knowledge Test.

Road safety is important to all road users, but it is especially important to motorcyclists. In a crash you have less protection than a driver. Motorcyclists make up more than 16% of all Victorian road fatalities and serious injuries although motorcycles account for less than 1% of travel.



Please keep in mind that getting your licence, even after all the training, does not necessarily make you a competent and safe rider. Learning to ride in a safe environment, away from the road, can give you skills, but it is not the same as being out there in the real world with traffic and unpredictable road conditions.

It takes years of practice to learn all the skills and correct riding techniques. As a young or inexperienced rider, you are almost three times more likely to be involved in a crash than an experienced rider. In the meantime, this book can be a great help.

When it says '**must**' in this handbook, it is telling you something that a law specifically requires you to do. When it is advice, it says 'should'.

When it says 'bike', this means any motorcycle (including road, trail, motor scooter and trike). If it is talking about a specific kind of bike (say one with a sidecar) it will use more specific terms. Otherwise, it will simply say 'bike'. When it says 'rider' it means any motorcycle (including road, trail, motor scooter and trike) rider.

Special note - oral tests

If you have trouble reading or writing, an oral test can be arranged. An Accredited Motorcycle Provider can get an interpreter for you if you have trouble with English. Tell them when you are booking your test if you need an oral test or an interpreter. The locations of Accredited Motorcycle Providers and contact details for VicRoads Customer Service Centres can be found on pages 86 and 87.

The Accredited Motorcycle Provider must obtain a clearance from VicRoads prior to you being assessed for your Motorcycle Learner Permit or Licence Assessment.

Further information

More information, including several other booklets, is available from VicRoads by visiting vicroads.vic.gov.au or calling 13 11 71.

Other helpful publications available include:

- *Road to Solo Driving* – handbook for new drivers/riders

More road safety information is available from:

- TAC Motorcycling – spokes.com.au
- TAC – tacsafety.com.au





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Getting ready

Getting ready

Basic things you need to know and do before getting on a bike

You may be beginning to ride a bike for the first time, or returning to riding after a break. Either way you need to know about getting a motorcycle learner permit and licence and the laws that apply to newly licensed riders. You also need to know about the hazards for riders and ways you can reduce the risks. Remember it will take time to build your skills and experience.

If you want to ride a motorcycle with a manual transmission you should train on a bike with a manual transmission.

If you pass the assessment on a bike with an automatic transmission you will be limited to riding these types of bikes for three years unless you are reassessed on a manual bike.



How do I get a Victorian motorcycle licence?

The licensing process is designed to make sure that you are a competent and safer rider by the time you get your licence. The various stages, training and assessments are designed to give you basic information and skills, but always remember that there is nothing like experience to make riding safer.

In general, your assessment must be completed on a two-wheeled bike. You may not attempt the assessment on a bike fitted with a sidecar.

The stages of the licensing process are simple. You must be at least 18 years of age and have held your motorcycle learner permit for a continuous period of three months immediately before the motorcycle licence is granted.

You then:

- book your motorcycle licence assessment
- provide evidence of identity
- complete the assessment and if you pass, pay for the licence
- receive your motorcycle licence.

Tip

To find out more about training in your local area, see the list of Accredited Motorcycle Trainers on page 86 or phone VicRoads on 13 11 71.



How do I get a motorcycle learner permit?

You can apply for a motorcycle learner permit if you are at least 18 years old. The permit is valid for 15 months and cannot be extended. To obtain a new motorcycle learner permit you must pass the assessments. For details on the assessments visit vicroads.vic.gov.au.

- Unless you already have an Australian or New Zealand car learner permit or driver licence, you **must** also pass the Car Learner Permit Knowledge Test to check your understanding of road law. This test consists of 32 multiple choice questions based on the Road to Solo Driving handbook, to test your knowledge of road law and road safety. Overseas permit or licence holders should contact VicRoads to find out test requirements.
- You **must** also pass the Motorcycle Learner Permit Knowledge Test, based on this handbook. The test consists of 32 multiple choice questions on safe riding and on the law specific to motorcycles. The questions in the 'Check your understanding' sections of this handbook are similar to the actual test questions, but they are not the same.
- You **must** obtain a medical clearance by VicRoads if you have a medical condition, and successfully complete the assessments. As you will be allowed to ride on the road on your own once you have the permit, it is essential that you are medically fit and have the skills to control a motorcycle.

How do I get a motorcycle licence?

You can apply for a licence if you are at least 18 years old and have held a current Victorian or interstate motorcycle learner permit for a continuous period of three months immediately before the motorcycle licence is granted.

You can also apply for a motorcycle licence if you hold, or have held within the past five years, an interstate or overseas motorcycle licence (providing that you're at least 18 years old and your licence is not suspended). Overseas motorcycle learner permits are not recognised.

To obtain a licence:

- You must complete a check ride and pass a riding skill assessment. For details on the check ride and the assessment visit vicroads.vic.gov.au.
- Unless you already have a driver licence, you **must** pass a Hazard Perception Test to see how safely you respond to traffic situations.

As the learner permit period cannot be renewed, make sure you book early for your licence assessment – at least 4 weeks before your learner permit expires.

Fact

If you already hold an Australian car learner permit or driver licence which is subject to a condition such as an alcohol interlock condition, your motorcycle learner permit or licence will be issued subject to that condition. To understand your obligations, you should seek legal advice.

The law for motorcyclists

Bike riders must obey the same road laws as drivers. The Road to Solo Driving handbook has general road law information for all road users. There are also some laws that are only for learners or newly licensed riders.

Refer to page 9.



While you are a learner rider, you must:

- display an 'L' plate on the rear of the motorcycle so that it is clearly visible from 20 metres
- carry your learner permit at all times when riding (or a receipt until your learner permit is received)
- only ride a bike which is approved under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS)
- not carry a pillion passenger (a motorcycle and sidecar is acceptable with a passenger)
- ride with zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC)
- not ride a bike towing a trailer or another vehicle
- ride with headlight on at all times
- wear a securely fitted and fastened high visibility vest or jacket whilst riding
- ride only a motorcycle fitted with an automatic transmission if you passed the ride assessment on an automatic motorcycle
- Not use a phone/device, hands-free or hand-held except for navigation and play or stream audio material if set up before riding. Can make simple audio adjustments (volume/song selection) and navigation changes using inbuilt device only.
- not motorcycle lane filter.

High visibility vest or jacket

All motorcycle learners must wear a high visibility vest or jacket.

A high visibility vest or jacket must meet at least one of the standards listed below and be labelled or marked with the appropriate standard. It must also be securely fitted and fastened.

The standards for a day and night high visibility vest or jacket are:

- AS/NZS 4602.1:2011
- International Standard ISO 20471:2013 *High visibility clothing - Test methods and requirements*
- American National Standard ANSI/ISEA 107-2015 *High visibility safety apparel & accessories*
- European Standard BS EN 471:2003 *High visibility warning clothing for professional use. Test methods and requirements.*

What is the law for new licensed riders?

While you hold a restricted motorcycle licence, you must:

- ride with a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC)
- only ride a bike which is approved under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS)
- not carry a pillion passenger (a motorcycle and sidecar is acceptable with a passenger)
- not ride a bike towing a trailer or another vehicle
- ride with headlight on at all times
- ride only a motorcycle fitted with an automatic transmission if you passed the ride assessment on an automatic motorcycle
- carry your licence at all times when riding (or a receipt until your licence is received)
- Not use a phone/device, hands-free or hand-held except for navigation and play or stream audio material if set up before riding. Can make simple audio adjustments (volume/song selection) and simple navigation adjustments using inbuilt device only when riding.

The restriction period is 3 years.

Probationary riders must also:

- display a 'P' plate on the rear of the bike that is clearly visible from 20 metres
- ride with a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC)
- carry your licence at all times when riding (or a receipt until your licence is received)
- Not use a phone/device, hands-free or hand-held except for navigation and play or stream audio material if set up before riding. Can make simple audio adjustments (volume/song selection) and simple navigation adjustments using inbuilt device only when riding.



Helmets

Riders and their passengers **must** wear helmets that are approved to the following standards:

- AS 1698-1988
- AS/NZS 1698:2006 (or any later version of that standard)
- ECE 22.05 (or any later version of that standard).

All helmets **must** be marked to show that they are certified as meeting the standard. Please see VicRoads website for more information on certification marks.

Parking

Unless otherwise signed, you may legally park a bike (but not a trike) on the footpath in Victoria as long as you do not obstruct pedestrians, delivery vehicles, public transport users or parked cars.

Do not park:

- near or on service access points such as Telstra pit covers and post boxes
- too close to the building line, as this can create an obstruction to vision impaired pedestrians.

For more information visit vicroads.vic.gov.au

Hook turns

When turning right bikes **must** make hook turns where these are indicated, and **must** make them exactly as cars do. See *Road to Solo Driving* for a description of hook turns.

Motorcycle lane filtering

Lane filtering is when a motorcycle or scooter travels at low speeds through stopped or slow moving traffic unless otherwise signed.

Motorcycle learner permit holders are not permitted to lane filter.

Use of helmet devices for navigation to play or stream audio material

Motorcycle helmet devices include head-up displays, communicators and cameras on the helmet.

As a probationary or restricted rider, you can only use a motorcycle helmet device for navigation and to play or stream audio material, and only if setup **before** riding.

If you are using a communicator to play or stream audio material, you cannot control the communicator using voice commands or touch it while riding.

If you are a fully licensed rider, you can use a motorcycle helmet device to make and receive phone calls, and for navigation and to play or stream audio material.

However, it is recommended that the use of motorcycle helmet devices be minimised for your safety.

Lane splitting and restricted lanes

Avoid lane splitting, which is riding between lines of moving vehicles at over 30km/h.

You **must not** ride your motorcycle in tram lanes, bus lanes, bicycle lanes or other lanes designated for special vehicles. Exceptions permitted under the road rules are when entering or leaving the road or where you otherwise have to cross the lane, or where signs indicate you may do so. See the *Road to Solo Driving* for more details.

Passenger

Only one pillion passenger may be carried if your licence is not restricted. The passenger **must** be provided with footpegs and their feet **must** reach these footpegs. The pillion passenger **must** sit astride the motor bike and behind the rider, face forward and keep both feet on the footpegs.

Children under eight years of age **must not** travel as passengers on motor bikes. However, they are still permitted to travel in a sidecar.



Travelling in a sidecar

When a sidecar is used, it **must not** carry more than the number of passengers for which it is designed.

Carrying animals

Animals **must not** be carried between the handlebars and the rider of a motor bike. However, there is an exemption for farmers travelling up to 500 metres on a road when undertaking farming activities.

Vehicle impoundment

The vehicle impoundment laws (also known as hoon laws) apply to riders of motor bikes. Your motor bike may be impounded by the police if you are detected committing an offence such as excessive speeding, improper use of a motor vehicle (for example burnouts), or driving while disqualified.

Crash management

Your responsibilities if you are involved in a crash are exactly the same as for a driver. For full details, see *Road to Solo Driving*. This booklet also has a lot of other information about road laws.

Check your understanding

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

1. **You are riding with a pillion passenger, the pillion passenger:**
 - A. can sit sideways
 - B. is allowed to face rearward
 - C. can be 9 years old
2. **Angela holds both probationary car and probationary motorcycle licences. When riding her motorcycle she:**
 - A. must display a 'P' plate on the rear of her motorcycle
 - B. does not need to display a 'P' plate
 - C. must display a 'P' plate on the front and rear of her motorcycle
3. **Steve holds a probationary licence. He may legally ride his bike if:**
 - A. he has not had a drink for a while
 - B. he has no alcohol in his blood, that is, his Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) is zero
 - C. he has a BAC below .05

Beware of...

There are more hazards out on the road than a beginner can imagine, so it makes sense to try to be ready for anything. Riders returning after a break will find that the number of vehicles on the road and the speeds at which they can travel have increased significantly and motorcycles are different too.

Build up your skills gradually – by getting used to riding in daylight, for example, before tackling night riding. You are almost twice as likely to have a crash in your first 8 months on the road, and it takes some time for the odds to get much better.

In the meantime, give yourself an extra margin of safety by slowing down, giving yourself more space on the road and thinking well ahead. Ride with the right attitude – don't be overconfident, impatient or in the wrong mood to ride, such as when you are angry or upset.

Experience will teach you to identify potential dangers, work out just how dangerous they are and how best to cope with them. Sections *Staying Alive* and *Here's trouble* of this handbook contain more about hazards and how to detect and handle them. But there are some things that stay dangerous no matter how much experience you have.



Alcohol

The law says that road users with a full licence **must** have a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) below .05g/100ml. Riders holding a learner permit, a probationary licence or a restricted motorcycle licence **must** have a zero BAC. There is a good reason for these restrictions.

Alcohol combined with riding is dangerous because it:

- affects your judgement and reduces your ability to judge risks including distance and your own and other vehicles' speed
- affects your sense of balance
- gives you a false sense of confidence, which may encourage you to take risks
- makes it difficult to concentrate and do more than one thing at a time – as well as possibly not being in control of your bike, you may simply not see hazards, or not react to them properly
- slows your reaction time, making you more likely to crash.

If you are a drink driving offender and have been disqualified from driving then, after completing your disqualification, it is likely that when you get your licence or permit back, you will need to have an alcohol interlock fitted to your motorcycle. An alcohol interlock prevents the motorcycle starting if the rider has been drinking alcohol.

Other drugs or medical conditions

Any kind of drug, legal or illegal, could make you drowsy, dizzy, weak or otherwise less capable of riding a motorcycle. That is why it is an offence to ride while impaired by a drug.

Check with a pharmacist or doctor to see if the drugs you are taking are likely to affect your riding. Combining drugs with alcohol or other drugs can be especially dangerous.

Cannabis is a major concern because it may reduce riding skills, cause lapses in attention and reduce your ability to process information.

Police may undertake roadside saliva testing of drivers and riders to detect the presence of speed or Ice (Methamphetamine), cannabis (THC) and ecstasy (MDMA). Driving with these drugs in the blood or saliva is an offence and penalties (including licence loss) will apply.

If you have a medical condition which might affect your ability to ride, such as diabetes or epilepsy, you **must** check with VicRoads whether you are eligible for a permit or licence. If you develop such a condition once you have a permit or licence you **must** advise VicRoads.

Tip

If in doubt about any kind of drug you've taken, don't ride.

Tiredness

Riding a motorcycle is harder and more physically tiring than driving a car. It can tire you more quickly. Tiredness, or fatigue, makes it more difficult for you to make decisions, especially quick decisions. Being tired affects concentration, balance and vision. Riding smoothly, which is the safest way to ride, is almost impossible when you are tired.

Make your riding less tiring by:

- protecting yourself from the weather with proper clothing - heat and dehydration will tire you just as surely as cold and rain, and full protective clothing will help prevent dehydration
- avoiding alcohol and drugs
- planning regular, frequent stops into your trip
- being well rested before you start
- not riding during those times when you would normally be asleep.

Relying on other road users for your safety

Relying on other road users for your safety can be a major hazard. Always remember that you are responsible for your own safety. Don't ever rely on other road users to look after you. Even if you are wearing high visibility clothing and making eye contact, do not assume that they have seen you.

Tip

Motorcycling is a complex activity that constantly challenges you. You may not be able to meet the challenge if you're not fully alert. Avoid riding when you are tired.

Check your understanding

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

1. You are planning a trip to Adelaide, but you have a cold. You want to take medication. You should

- A. take some medicine to make you feel better
- B. ask your doctor or pharmacist whether the cold medicine will make you sleepy or drowsy
- C. try to get there as quickly as possible so that you can rest when you arrive

2. You are planning to ride to Sydney from Melbourne. It is a perfect summer's day with the temperature around 25 degrees Celsius. You should plan to:

- A. get there in eight hours because the conditions are so good
- B. get there with only one stop because the conditions are so good
- C. make regular, frequent stops to keep yourself alert

3. Here are three types of drugs which people sometimes take: alcohol, medicines prescribed by a doctor and medicines sold by a chemist. Which drug may affect your riding?

- A. Only alcohol
- B. Only medicines given to you by your doctor
- C. All three types

ANSWERS 1B 2C 3C



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On the road

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.



What to wear



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 that is certified to meet Australian Standard AS 1698, AS/NZ 1698 or European Standard ECE 22.05. The helmet **must** be securely fitted and fastened on your head. Don't underestimate this. A helmet will reduce the chance of serious head injury if you crash, and may well keep you alive.

Your helmet must be marked to show that it complies with the AS 1698, AS/NZS 1698 standard or European standard ECE 22.05. A face shield or visor must meet the Australian Standard AS 1609 or meet appropriate European standard. For helmets manufactured or imported from 1 July 2012, the helmet **must** be marked with the symbol of a body accredited by the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ), certifying compliance with the relevant standard. For more information on the certification marks visit vicroads.vic.gov.au.

Details of current accredited bodies can be found at jas-anz.org Look for this marking 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 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.

Tip

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.

Checklist

Your helmet must fit snugly and securely when done up, and show that it is certified to meet the following standards:

- AS 1698-1988
- AS/NZS 1698:2006 (or any later version of that standard)
- ECE 22.05 (or any later version of that standard).

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 face shield or visor must meet Australian Standard AS 1609 or appropriate European standard. 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

For the legal requirements for high visibility vests or jackets refer to page 9.

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.

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



Wet weather riding gear includes jackets and pants that have interlocking zippers to prevent leakage.



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
- be securely fastened.

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.



What to ride



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.

Also consider the various safety technology now available such as Motorcycle Stability Control (MSC) system when choosing a new motorcycle.

Types of bikes



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



Motor scooters 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.

Tip

There are also off-road 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 only ride a bike which is approved under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS) whilst you hold a motorcycle learner permit and a restricted motorcycle licence.

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.
- Your learner permit and licence conditions still apply.
- 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 main reason for wearing clothing designed for motorcycling is that it:

- A. protects you from the weather
- B. helps protect you in a fall
- C. both of the above

3. 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 3B

Starting out



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 motorcycle

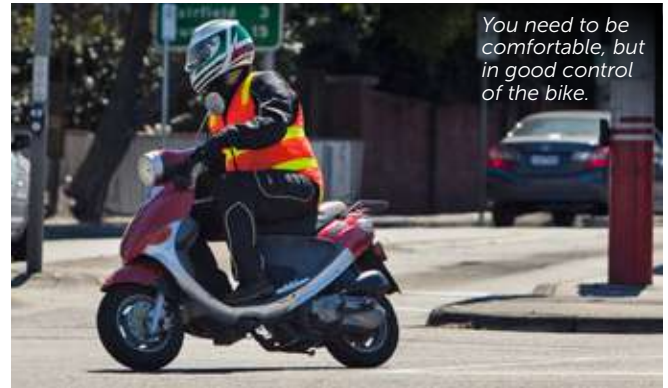


Setting up for yourself and your bike

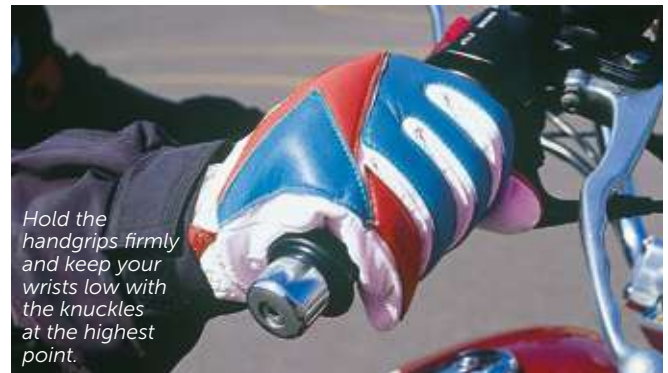
You and your bike are partners out there on the road, and like any partners you should make sure that you can get along. This will require a bit of adjustment from each of you. Some of these comments will not apply to scooters, because they are built differently.

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.

Tip

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.

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.

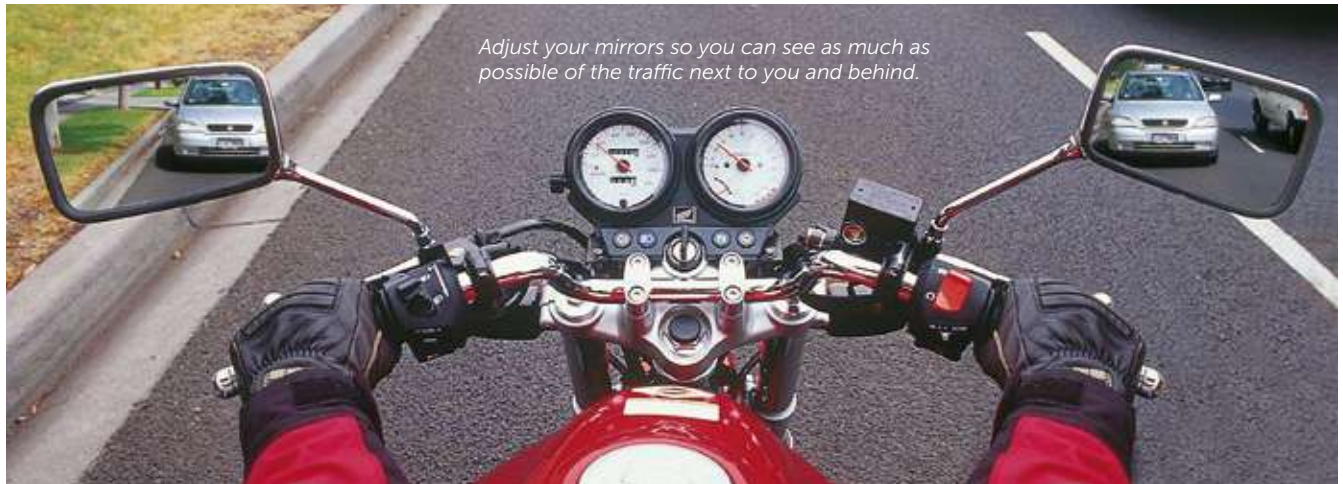
Tyres and chain

- 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 1.5mm 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.



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 pages 20-25).
- Make sure you are fit to ride and not tired (fatigued) or impaired by alcohol or drugs (see pages 15-16).
- 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.
- Decide when to ride and when not to ride.

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:

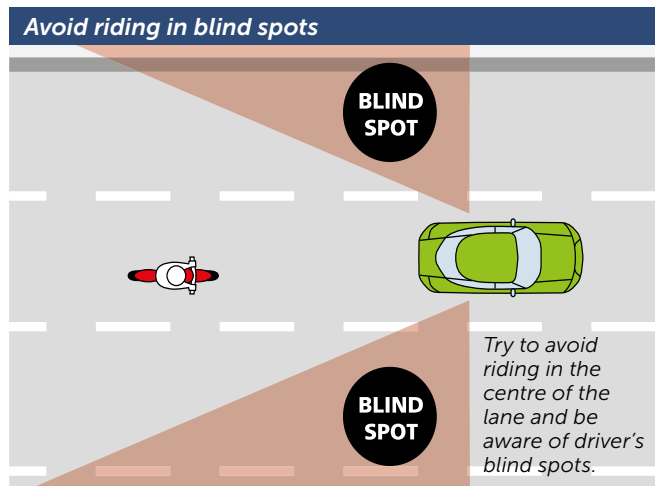
- When riding around a corner, try to position yourself on the road so you can see through the corner.
- Lean with your bike while you turn, keeping your head up and line of sight level with the road. Turn your head, look where you want to go and ride smoothly.
- When pulling out from the kerb, position 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.



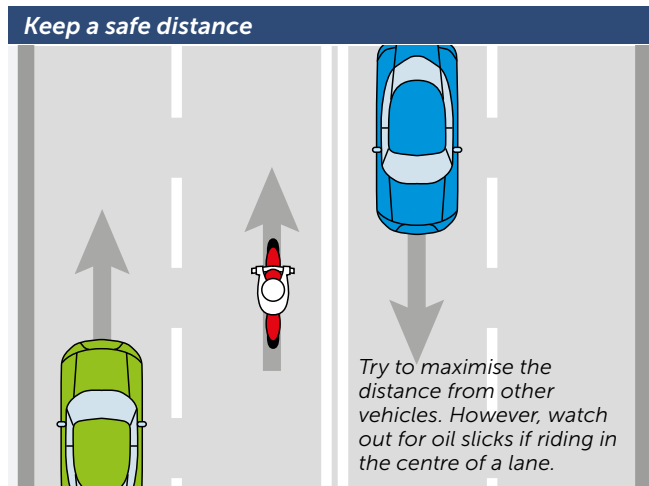
Good positioning

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

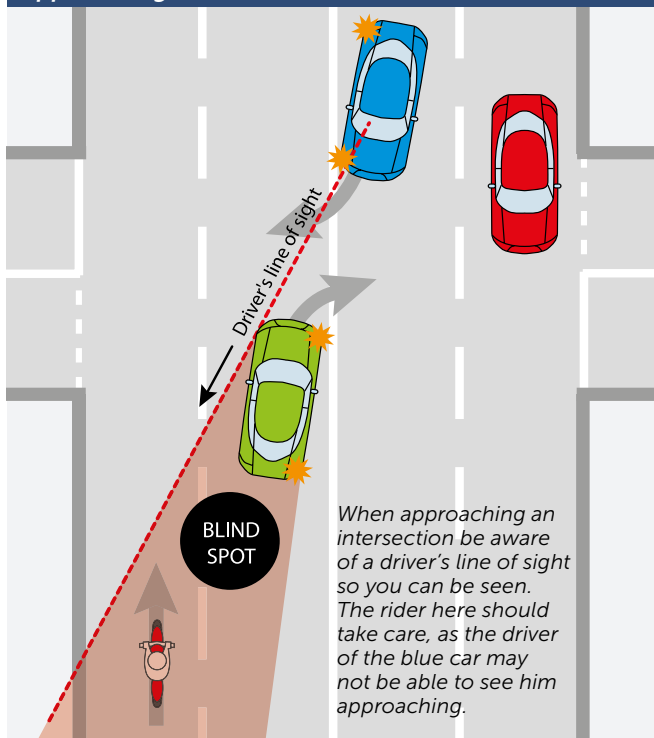
- Ride in the right-hand wheel track of the road, where you can be seen in both the rear vision mirror and the external mirror of the car in front of you. You can also see vehicles coming the other way, and be seen by them. Normally the road surface will be best here as well, without the oil slick that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



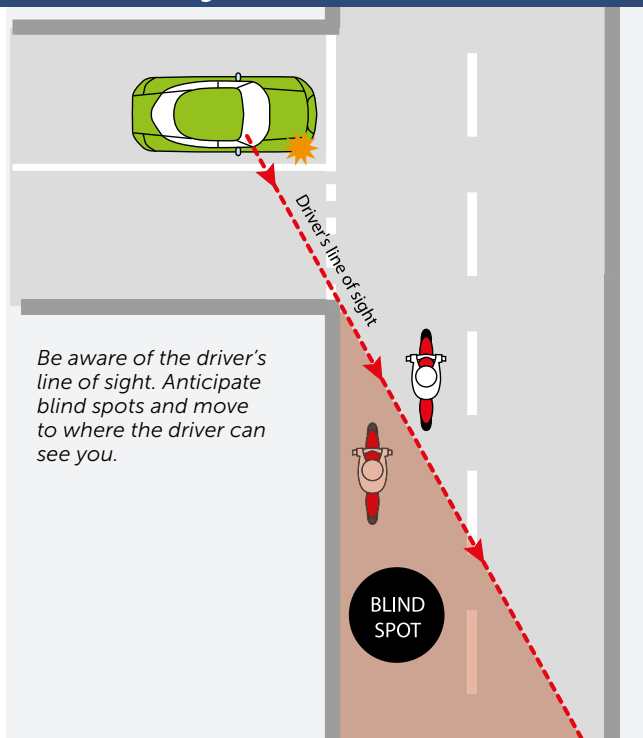
- When riding on a multi-lane road, avoid the centre lane unless there is a median strip, otherwise you will have to watch out for traffic going in both directions. Ride in the right-hand wheel track when travelling in the left lane and the left-hand wheel track if you are riding in the right lane.
- 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.



Approaching an intersection



Driver's line of sight



Place yourself where you are as safe as possible

- 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

For a rider issued with a motorcycle learner permit or a restricted licence on or after 1 October 2014 the motorcycle headlight must be turned on at all times.

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 pages 60-61 for more information on riding at night.

Indicators and brake lights

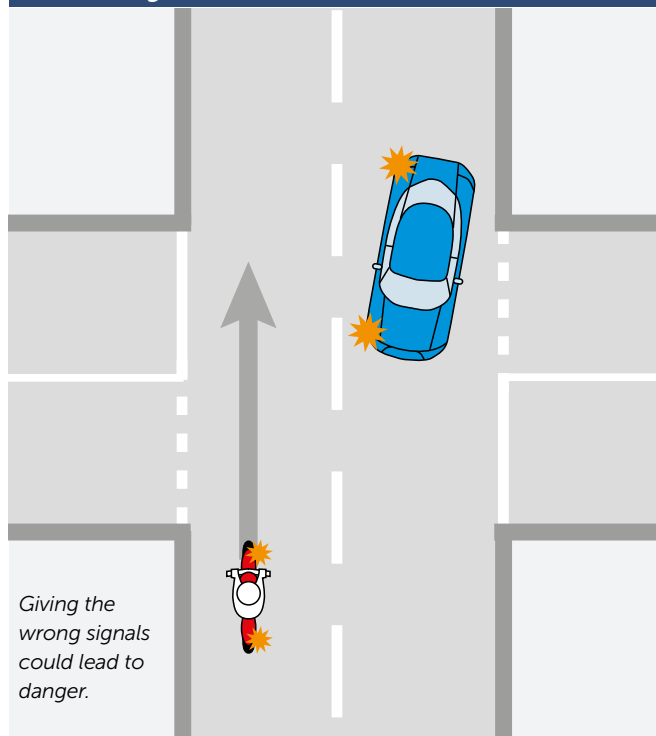
Indicators and brake lights remind other road users that you are there and tell them what you are about to do. They need to be able to look ahead just as much as you do, and this way you give them the information they need.

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.

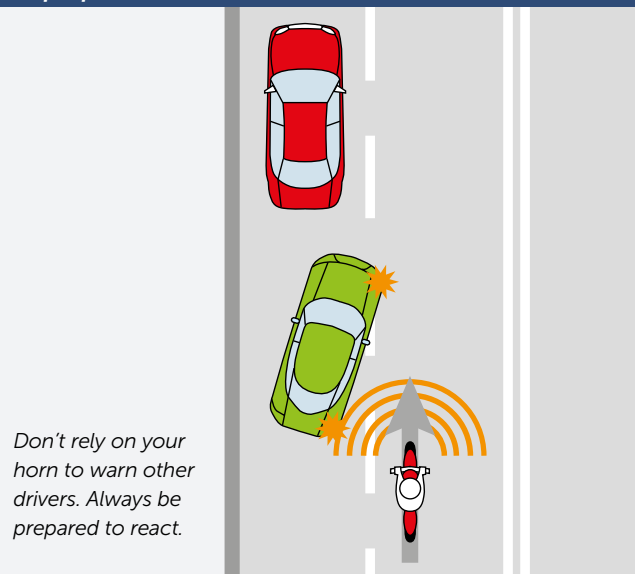
Accurate signals



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



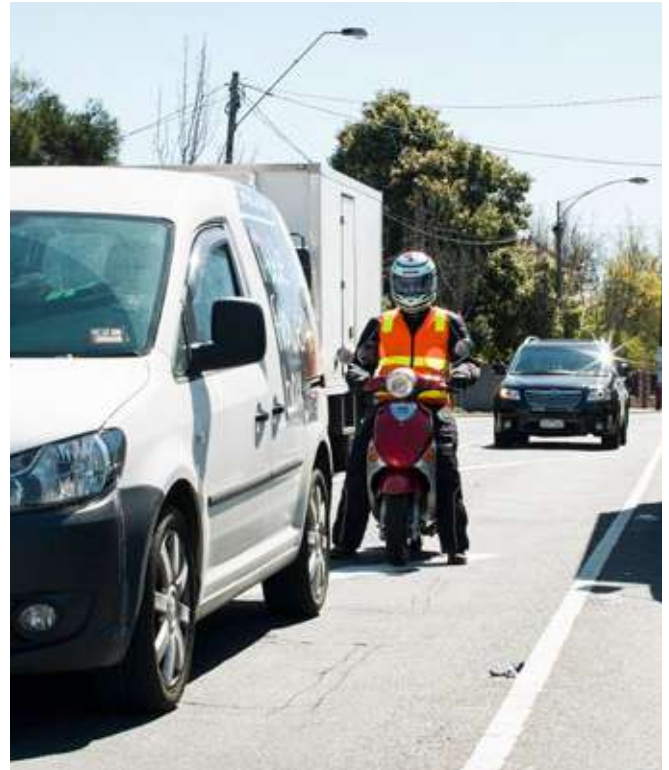
Be bright...

For a rider issued with a learner permit on or after 1 October 2014 they must wear a high visibility vest or jacket (refer page 9).

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



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Staying alive

Staying alive

Anticipation and skill make riding safer and enjoyable

The one thing above all others that will keep you safer on the road is your attitude. You can learn as many skills as you like, and be the most technically skilled rider around, but you can throw it all away because you can't be bothered thinking before you act. Make no mistake about it, the road is a dangerous place, especially on a bike. Staying alive while you are out there is your responsibility.



Keep away from trouble



Keep a survival space between you and the traffic around you.

It might sound simple, but what can't get at you can't hurt you. So it makes sense to stay as far away as possible from the things that can hurt you on the road.

Survival space

The consequences of an error, yours or someone else's, can be very serious for you as a rider.

Survival space is the best protection you can have. The more space you have around you, the more time you have to see trouble and work out a way of avoiding it. Of course, that only works if you keep your eyes open and your mind alert.

In front

This is the distance between your bike and the vehicle you are following, and you have control over it. As an inexperienced rider, you should try to keep a 3 second gap between you and the vehicle in front, so you:

- have more time to stop in an emergency
- are able to see much better over the top of and around the vehicle in front of you
- can see traffic signals, road signs and hazards well ahead
- be able to avoid potholes and other road surface hazards
- have more time to plan your response
- look, slow down and move away
- start wide and finish tight in curves.

You are also increasing the safety margin of the traffic behind you.

If you are too close, you may pay too much attention to the vehicle in front of you instead of thinking for yourself.

There are times when you will want to be even further than 3 seconds away. They include:

- poor riding conditions with reduced visibility, perhaps at night or in rain and fog
- on a wet or otherwise slippery road
- on gravel or other unpredictable road surfaces
- on a high speed road such as a main highway – almost 40% of road fatalities involving motorcyclists have occurred where the speed limit is 100 km/h
- being behind a big vehicle like a truck or bus, which is hard to see around.

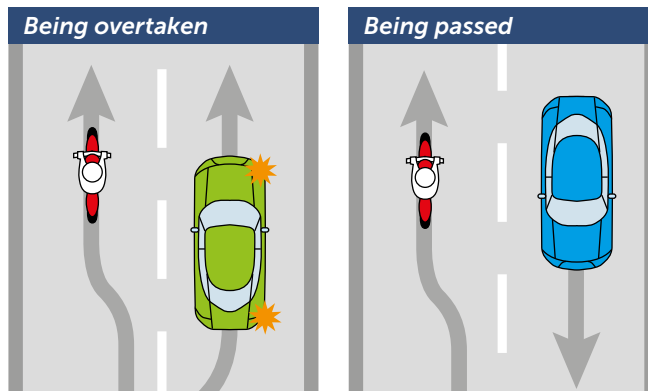
Whatever you do, don't tailgate (ride too close behind another vehicle). No matter how good your brakes are, in the real world a car can almost always out-brake an inexperienced rider in an emergency. More importantly tailgating does not allow for sufficient reaction time regardless of how good your brakes are. If you tailgate it is also harder to see obstacles or hazards on the road ahead.

To the side

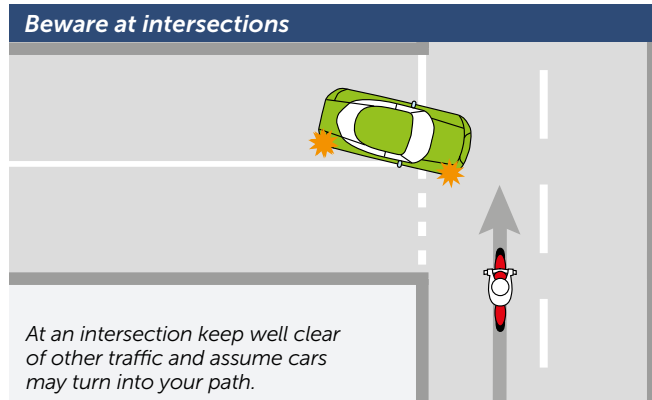
Motorcyclists have an advantage over car drivers. You can move from one side of your lane to the other to increase distance from other vehicles. Experienced riders move lane position depending on traffic – but they always check their mirrors and do a headcheck before they do!

Consider changing your lane position when:

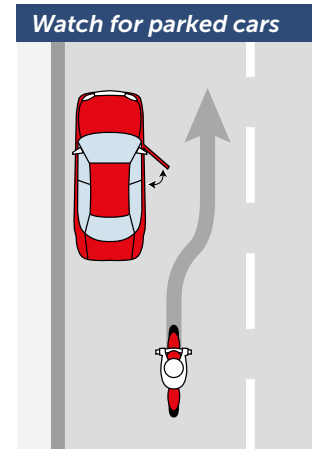
- You are being overtaken or passed by another vehicle.
There is no point in being closer to another vehicle than you need to be. Nearly a quarter of all collisions between bikes and other vehicles involve vehicles coming from the opposite or adjacent direction.



- You are near a large truck or bus. They can cause wind blasts that affect your control.
- You are approaching an intersection. Place yourself where you have the best possible vision and are well clear of other traffic. About half of all collisions between bikes and cars happen at intersections. If you see a car that could turn into your path, or pull out on you, assume that it will and be ready for it.
- You are passing parked cars, or vehicles waiting to turn left. Keep to the right part of the lane, away from the possibility of doors opening or pedestrians stepping out from between cars.



- A driver is pulling out from the kerb. Some people don't check properly if there is traffic coming up, and bikes can be hard to see.
- A driver is pulling out from the kerb. The car might do a U-turn instead of just going straight ahead, so approach carefully. Be ready to swerve or stop and to sound your horn as a warning.
- You find yourself sharing a lane. You need a full lane to yourself to be able to move safely if a problem comes up, instead of being trapped in a small space that could disappear. It is unsafe to ride between rows of cars even when one or both rows are stopped. A car door could open, a pedestrian might suddenly appear or a car might move over and close the space you need. To stop cars from sharing your lane, position yourself so you are not riding at the extreme edge of your lane.



Keep clear of parked cars.

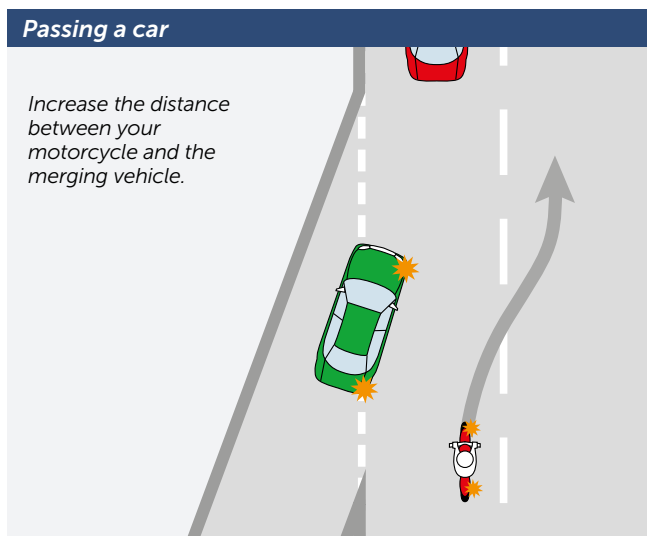
- There is another vehicle alongside, in the next lane. Don't ride next to other vehicles if you don't have to – they restrict the space you have to move, and they may move over on you at any time. Move forward or drop back until you are in a free space.
- Vehicles are merging. At places such as freeway entrance ramps, make room for entering traffic by changing speed or changing lanes.

Behind

Unfortunately the driver behind you has more control over the space between you than you do. If someone is too close (tailgating), drop back yourself to increase the survival space between you and the car in front. Then let the tailgater overtake you. Such drivers are better in front of you, where you can keep an eye on them.

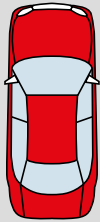
Scanning

This is a vital part of being safe. Experienced riders not only ride smoothly, they also continuously take in their environment. Watch someone who has been riding for a few years and you will see that they scan – their heads and eyes move constantly. Instead of focusing on any one part of the road they are looking up close, then far away, then to the right and the left – they are taking in the entire road environment without ever losing sight of the vital stretch right in front of them.

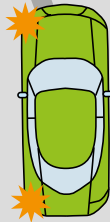


Scanning does not necessarily mean looking directly at everything. You can see out of the corner of your eye and as your eyes pass over things. You can be aware of the footpath, of the behaviour of someone in a parked car nearby and of the driver of a car four vehicles in front of you, and you can do it all without being distracted. Sort the information in order of its importance to you. It takes practice, but it's worth learning.

Beware of other traffic



Make sure you do a headcheck before changing lanes or a situation like this may occur.



Use the height advantage you have on a motorcycle and look over cars in front of you. Use that advantage to see what you're getting into. Scanning also gives you a chance to check the road surface well ahead for potholes, loose gravel and other potential hazards.

Combine a glance in the mirrors and headchecks to give you a picture of what's happening behind you. Do this often and quickly, because what's behind you is part of your environment too, but always get your eyes back to the front quickly. Check the mirrors even when you are stopped, because you may need to get out of someone's way.

When merging, changing lanes or leaving the kerb always do a headcheck of the lane next to you and your own lane, before you move. Another vehicle may be headed for your space, and it may not be visible in your mirrors.

Tip

A headcheck involves looking over your shoulder to see things behind and to the side. But remember, don't take your eyes off the road ahead for more than a second.

Planning

There are two kinds of planning you can do – tactical and strategic.

Tactical planning involves looking ahead as you ride to see potential trouble, and deciding what to do about it before you get there. It can help you to avoid emergency stops and wild swerves. Experienced riders know that other road users make mistakes and try to plan their reaction before it happens. It is also good planning to be sure how you will get back into your lane before overtaking, and how you will complete complicated turns.

Strategic planning is done before you leave on your ride. Consider the alternative ways of getting to where you want to go, and pick the safest and easiest. If you are on a small, low capacity bike avoid freeways; if you are on a big tourer, stay out of heavy and congested traffic; and so on.

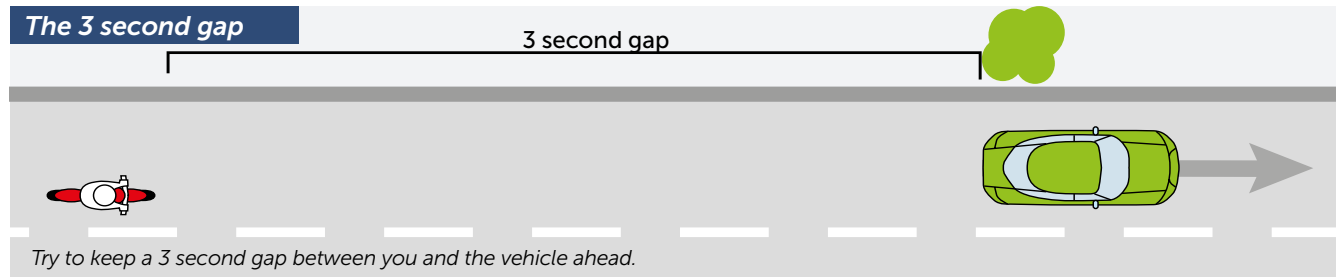
Another really good plan to stay out of trouble is to not ride with other riders who have no respect for their own safety. If someone rides irresponsibly on a bike, you don't want to be there (or even be in the way) when something goes wrong.

The 3 second gap

Measuring a safe following distance is simple.

When the vehicle ahead of you passes a tree, a power pole or something similar, use that as a reference point and start counting – “one thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three”.

If you get to the tree or other reference point before you finish counting, you are too close. After a while you will get good at estimating this gap, although you should still check yourself every now and then.



Check your understanding

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

- 1. The gap between your motorcycle and the vehicle ahead, in good conditions, should be at least:**
 - A 2 seconds
 - B 3 seconds
 - C 4 seconds
- 2. Peter is riding along a freeway in the left lane. Cars are moving on to the freeway from the entrance ramp. He should:**
 - A accelerate to get ahead of them
 - B continue to travel at the same pace and position as it is their responsibility to merge into the traffic safely
 - C adjust his speed to increase the distance between his bike and the merging traffic
- 3. When you are being followed too closely you should:**
 - A travel faster to increase the distance between you and the tailgater
 - B brake several times to let the driver know that you think he is driving dangerously
 - C increase the space in front of your motorcycle so you have more time to react, if you need to
- 4. Scanning involves:**
 - A studying the movements of the car ahead of you
 - B looking at the road just ahead of you
 - C moving your eyes from side to side to look at the whole road scene

5. Before changing lanes always do a final:

- A sound of your horn
- B headcheck
- C flash of your brake lights

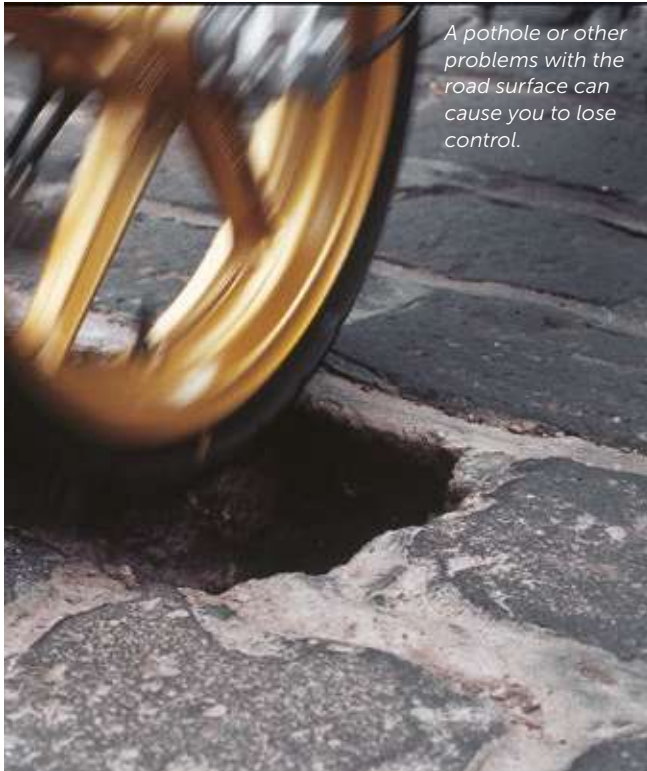
6. To prevent other drivers sharing your lane you should:

- A ride to the right of your lane
- B ride to the left of your lane
- C not ride at the extreme sides of your lane

ANSWERS 1B 2C 3C 4C 5B 6C



Keep a grip



Consider that the two patches of rubber connecting you to the road surface are about the same size as the palm of your hand. Make sure they can do their job. There are several things that will make it harder for them.

The risk of losing control of a bike can increase because of deterioration in the road surface, such as potholes, wheel ruts or grooves, slippery surfaces and loose gravel.

Just under half of bike casualty crashes involve loss of control.

Always try to be aware of the road surface conditions, and if necessary adjust your riding technique and speed to suit the conditions.

Tip

Loose dirt and gravel collect at the edge of the road, so try to stay away from there.

Slippery roads

Many things can make the road surface slippery, and you need to keep these in mind. This will become automatic as you gather experience. Here are some common slippery situations you may find.

- Sealed roads when they're wet, especially just after it starts to rain and before the oil and muck on the road are washed away.
- Painted lane and other markings, as well as steel and other naturally smooth surfaces – including manhole covers, tram lines, bridge expansion joints and even smooth bitumen used to repair roads – at any time, and even worse when they are wet.
- Unmade and gravel roads, and patches of sand or gravel that have collected on sealed roads.
- Mud, snow and ice, including black ice.
- Grease deposited in the middle of lanes, and oil or diesel spills.

Try to avoid slippery patches. If you can't reduce speed before you get to them, ride as upright as you can once you reach them and try to avoid turning, changing gear or speed, or using the brakes. If you need to brake, apply the front brake first then the rear brake. The important thing is to be smooth.

Bumpy roads and potholes

On rough roads, keep your speed down. That does three things – it gives you time to avoid the worst bumps or holes, reduces road shocks and gives your bike's suspension time to work. Remember that bumps can affect your steering as well as the suspension, so take it easy.

Grooved roads

Every now and then you will come to a road that has had grooves cut into it. This is usually to help make it less slippery in the wet – there's a warning already! Grooves are rarely a problem if you stay relaxed, maintain your speed and direction and just keep riding. Try to slow down as much as is safe before you get to the grooving.

Sloping roads

On a high crowned road, where the centre is much higher than the sides, the slope of the road will try to push you to the edge. This can be a worry especially in right-hand curves. Be aware of it, slow down and maintain your position on the road.

Tram tracks and railway lines

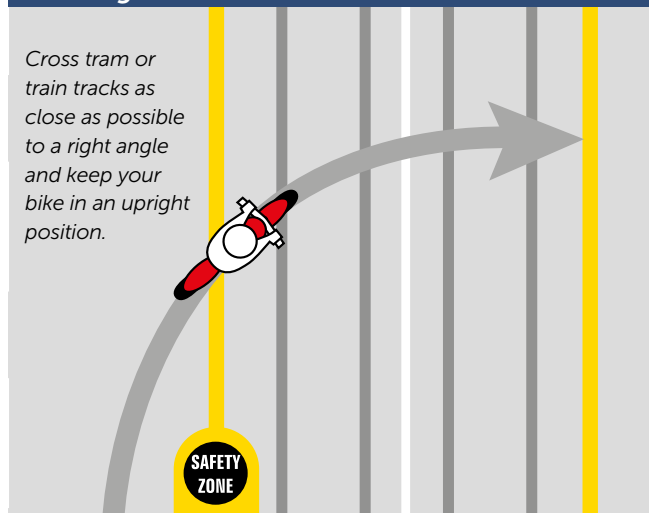
Avoid riding on or across tram or railway tracks. They are steel, and therefore slippery, and they can also have deep ridges of road material alongside them. Don't follow the rails because your bike's tyres could become trapped in these grooves.

When you cross tracks, remember these things:

- look where you want to go, not where the tracks are going
- avoid places where tracks cross each other

Crossing tram tracks

Cross tram or train tracks as close as possible to a right angle and keep your bike in an upright position.



- cross the tracks as close to a right angle as possible, but make sure you don't risk running into other traffic
- keep your bike upright
- maintain your speed and cross smoothly without braking or accelerating
- if possible, complete any turn before you reach the tracks.

Check your understanding

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

1. The best way to handle a slippery surface is to:

- A travel on the left side of the road
- B use the rear brake if you are in trouble
- C reduce your speed

2. Con wants to turn into a road but a number of tram tracks cross each other there. He should:

- A if possible, complete the turn before he crosses the tram tracks
- B brake whilst crossing tram tracks
- C ignore the tram tracks as they will not make much difference to the motorcycle

3. To ride safely along a bumpy road you should:

- A slow down quickly after the first series of bumps
- B keep your speed down
- C sit on the seat and try to steer your way through the bumps

4. Grease and oil from cars tends to build up:

- A along the sides of the road
- B in the centre of the lane
- C in the right hand part of the lane

ANSWERS 1C 2A 3B 4B

Riding at night

There are often fewer vehicles on the road at night, but about one in four casualty crashes happen between 6pm and 6am, so take care. For anyone issued with a learner permit or restricted licence on or after 1 October 2014 you must ride with the motorcycle headlight on at all times. For all riders you must have your headlight and tail light on between sunset and sunrise, when street lights are switched on, and in weather conditions with reduced visibility.

It is harder to see and to be seen at night. Your headlight will not show you the road as clearly as daylight will. Other road users may also have trouble seeing your headlight or tail light because of other lights.

Do not wear a dark tinted or scratched visor or tinted glasses, especially at night. You need to be able to see as clearly as possible.

You need to be able to stop within the distance you can see ahead, so slow down to match the distance your headlight shows you.

You can use high beam in built-up areas for extra seeing distance, except when within 200 metres of another vehicle. Make sure you dip your headlight to avoid dazzling other road users. Don't use high beam in fog, because it will just be reflected back at you.

If an oncoming vehicle has not dipped its high beam, or if its light is too bright for you, slow down and look at the side of the road ahead of you instead of at the vehicle, until it has gone past. Often there is a line there that you can use as a guide. That way you can keep track of where the road is going, and your vision won't be affected.

The tail lights of the traffic you are following can show you which way the road goes. If tail lights ahead of you bounce up and down, expect a rough road surface ahead.

Be seen

Keep in mind the comments about being seen in section *Looking ahead and being seen* (pages 38-45), and remember that it is more difficult to see anything at night – especially something relatively small like a bike. Because you only have a single headlight, it can also be difficult for drivers to judge how far away you are.

Take care

Ride more slowly at night to give yourself more time to read the road and react to problems. Ride further away from other traffic; it is difficult to judge distance at night. And always remember: don't ride when you are tired!

Tip

Make sure that any reflectors and all indicators and other lights on your bike are clean, and if it is not already compulsory, seriously consider wearing a reflective vest when you ride at night.

Check your understanding

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

1. Three things you can do to ride more safely at night are:

- A stay closer to other vehicles, always use the high beam, wear dark, warm clothing
- B reduce your speed, increase the distance between your motorcycle and the car ahead, wear a reflective vest
- C change the type of tyres on your motorcycle, stay closer to other vehicles, keep up with the flow of traffic

2. Nicole notices the lights of the oncoming vehicles seem to bounce up and down. She should:

- A use her high beam to get a clearer look at the road ahead
- B reduce her speed and expect a change in road conditions
- C move to the centre of the road



Loading up



Remember to expect your bike to act differently when it is carrying a load, whether that is a pillion passenger or luggage.

Carrying a pillion passenger

You must not carry a pillion if you are a learner rider or have a restricted motorcycle licence (a motorcycle and sidecar is acceptable with a passenger). To carry a pillion your bike will need a seat designed to carry a passenger and footpegs for them. The pillion's feet **must** reach the footpegs; keep this in mind if carrying children - who **must** be aged 8 years or more to travel as a passenger (unless in a sidecar). See pages 10 and 12 for law related to carrying a passenger.

Pillion passengers who are not used to being on a bike may react unpredictably, so ask them to relax, hold onto the bike's 'grab rail' or your waist and follow your lead when leaning. Pillions should wear the same kind of protective clothing and helmet as riders.

Getting ready

If it's possible, you should adjust the preload of the bike's suspension when you are carrying extra weight. Check your owner's manual for instructions. You may also have to add air to the tyres.

Adjust your mirrors with you and the pillion both sitting on the bike.



Passengers must wear an approved helmet that fits securely and the motorcycle must have pillion footpegs.

On the ride

It is important to ride very smoothly when carrying a pillion. Don't talk because this will reduce your concentration and take your attention off the road.

Remember that you are carrying a pillion, and ride more slowly and carefully. The bike will not accelerate and brake as quickly and it will handle differently in corners and over bumps.

Carrying animals

Animals **must not** be carried between the handlebars and the rider of a motor bike. However, there is an exemption for farmers travelling up to 500 metres on a road when undertaking farming activities.

Carrying a load

Bikes are not designed to carry large loads, but if you distribute the weight evenly there is no reason why small to medium loads should be a problem. The owner's manual should give you the total amount of weight the bike is designed to carry, including rider and pillion.

There are many different kinds of luggage available for bikes, including panniers or saddlebags, tank bags and seat bags. You may want to use more than one of these to balance the weight when you load your bike.

Keep the load:

- Low – ideally by putting it in the panniers or on the seat. If it is high it may unbalance the bike. Don't carry anything heavy or unwieldy on your back.

- Forward – by placing it above or in front of the rear axle. Anything behind the rear axle can have a serious effect on handling.
- Balanced – by filling panniers evenly or strapping heavy loads onto the seat.
- Secure – by putting it in one or more of the bags mentioned above or strapping it carefully to the bike. A loose load or strap could catch in the rear wheel or chain and cause a crash. Be very careful if you use elastic straps with metal hooks – these are a major cause of eye loss.

Finally, check the load frequently to make sure that it is still secure.



Sidecars and trailers

Sidecars (sometimes referred to as an 'outfit') completely change the way a bike handles. Before you ride a bike fitted with a sidecar it is very important that you practise in a quiet place with plenty of room and no traffic. Accelerating, steering and stopping, among other things, are very different with a sidecar. Get someone who understands sidecars to teach you to ride with one. It can be a very dangerous thing to do unless you are trained properly.

Remember a sidecar **must not** carry more than the number of passengers for which it is designed.

Towing a trailer is less of a change from riding a solo bike, but this also has its peculiarities. It will push the bike when you brake, and affect turning. It can cause serious instability on rough roads. Its weight will also change acceleration and handling. As with sidecars it is best to get someone who has experience to teach you to ride with a trailer. You **must not** ride a bike towing a trailer while you hold a motorcycle learner permit or restricted licence.

Tip

Remember that extra weight will cause the bike to handle differently. So increase your following distance, as well as allowing longer to speed up and slow down.

Check your understanding

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

1. Sam just got his licence and a new motorcycle. He rides his motorcycle around to show his girlfriend. May he take his girlfriend for a ride?

- A Yes, if he has another approved helmet
- B Yes, if he has footpegs and handgrips on the motorcycle
- C No, because he has not held his licence for 3 years

2. Melissa is taking her brother to his night class. She should:

- A give him advice on how to ride as a pillion passenger as they are riding
- B not speak at all because she cannot hear him clearly when riding
- C give her brother instructions about being a pillion passenger before they start

3. When you are carrying a passenger the motorcycle will:

- A respond more slowly, taking longer to speed up and slow down
- B respond more quickly, because the weight improves the handling ability of the motorcycle
- C not change the way it handles as long as the weight is spread evenly

ANSWERS 1C 2C 3A

Riding in a group



Riding with a group of friends is one of the most enjoyable things you can do on a bike. But there are some basic safety considerations to remember, including the most important one of all – riding in a group on the road is not, and should never become, a race! That's one of the main causes of crashes on group rides; the other is inexperienced riders trying to keep up with their more experienced friends.

Prepare

If you are organising or leading a group ride, make sure that everyone knows where the ride is going. Then, in case someone gets separated, they won't feel pressured to hurry to catch up. It also helps to agree on stops beforehand. Plan the timing of the ride according to the least experienced or slowest rider to make sure that you are not putting them under pressure to ride faster. Make sure that the group does not interfere with the flow of traffic. If necessary, allow other road users to pass you.

Tip

If the pace is too fast for you, don't try to keep up. It is no disgrace to drop back. The group should wait for you.

Keep the group manageable

Small groups are safer. It is easier to keep an eye on everyone and to make sure that all riders stay together – for instance at traffic controls and when overtaking. A small group is also better if you need to find somewhere with enough room to pull off the road safely. Try to keep the group down to four or five riders, and split it up if it is larger.

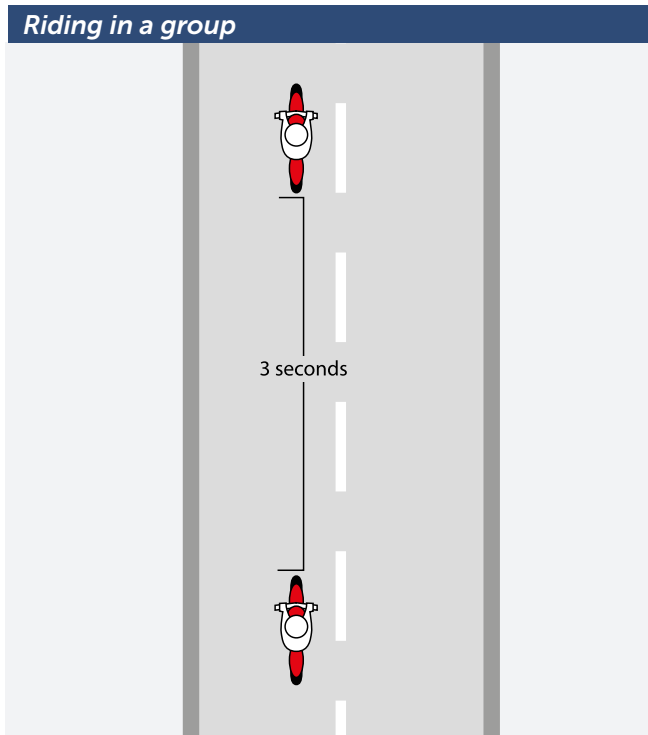
Positioning

Riders **must not** ride alongside more than one other rider unless overtaking. It is best to ride in one line with, for inexperienced riders, at least 3 seconds between bikes and a safe distance from other traffic. That way any rider will have time to react to emergencies, and room to move out of danger.

You are responsible for yourself

Do not follow another bike blindly. Place yourself on the road where you feel it is safe. Do not focus too much on the bike in front of you; it may not be taking a safe line. Pay attention to the entire riding environment at all times; your safety is still your own responsibility whether you are riding in a group or alone.

Wait until you have stopped before trying to speak to another rider.



Try to keep a three seconds gap when riding in a group.

Check your understanding

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

1. A group of friends decide to go on a ride out to the country. They should:

- A travel in groups of no more than four or five riders
- B travel as a group so that no one gets lost
- C divide into two groups and ride beside one another

2. You and your friend have become separated from the others in your group. You think you should take the next turn to the right. You should:

- A accelerate quickly to get ahead and lead the way
- B pull over to the side of the road and stop to discuss which turn to take
- C draw close to your friend and then shout instructions to let your friend know you want to turn

3. When riding with inexperienced riders you should:

- A avoid situations which may place them under pressure
- B pair up to ride
- C put the inexperienced riders in the front

ANSWERS 1A 2B 3A



Look after your bike



Your life depends on your bike, so take the trouble to run through the checklist on page 35 before you go for a ride. This will also allow you to pick up potential problems early. Any problems should be fixed as soon as possible – by a bike shop, if necessary. There are also some other things you should do regularly.

Maintenance

Modern bikes need far less maintenance than older ones, so this list is much shorter than it would have been a few years ago. That's all the more reason to do some regular maintenance, otherwise, you may not notice trouble developing until it is too late. Consult the owner's manual for guidance, and:

- Keep the bike clean. This counts as maintenance because it will help to stop corrosion and remove dust and grit that can cause wear. It is a good time to check for loose or missing nuts and bolts, loose spokes, cracks or dents in the wheel rims, blown oil seals and signs of rust anywhere on the bike. Pay special attention to cleaning lights and indicators, to make sure they are as bright as possible.
- Keep the chain adjusted properly, clean and lubricated. Follow the instructions in the owner's manual.
- Check the oil level regularly. Make sure the bike is upright and on level ground when you do this.

- Check tyre pressures when the tyres are cold, before you ride. Check tyre wear at the same time.
- Brakes do not usually need to be adjusted between services, but keep an eye on the wear indicators on the brake pads. Your owner's manual will tell you how to do this.

Servicing

All motor vehicles need regular servicing. Follow the suggested service intervals in your owner's manual. There are some things, such as changing the oil, that you may wish to do yourself. Other work will require specialised knowledge or special tools, and should definitely be left to a bike mechanic. Remember that you may void any warranty if you tackle certain jobs; check with your dealer if you are in doubt.

Check your understanding

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

1. Pre-ride checks of your motorcycle should include:

- A petrol, oil and condition of the paint work
- B wheel, tyres and controls
- C none of these, as pre-ride checks are unnecessary

2. To help make your motorcycle safe you should clean it each week because:

- A it makes it look better when it is on the road
- B it makes it easier to spot missing parts like nuts and bolts
- C it makes the motorcycle easier to see on the road

ANSWERS 1B 2B



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Here's trouble

Here's trouble

Be prepared if something goes wrong

Trouble comes in many forms. Things can happen quickly on the road, and you need to be ready to respond rapidly to a variety of emergency situations.

You also need to think about ways to stop the thieves who may be out to steal your bike!



What is an emergency?



An example of countersteering at low speed during training.

When something goes wrong on the road, you may have an emergency on your hands. If you're ready for it, you won't necessarily have a crash. You can prepare yourself for emergencies, and learn to cope with them. The key things are anticipation and practice.

Anticipation will become easier with time, but that is all the more reason to be very aware of it when you start out. Keep in mind the many potential dangers outlined in this book.

Also you need to find yourself a quiet place with no traffic and invest some time in practice. It will pay off every time you ride.

Emergency braking

If you are planning to buy a motorcycle to ride on-road, it is recommended that you buy one with an anti-lock braking system (ABS).

Emergency braking is the most important control skill needed to avoid a crash. It needs a great deal of practice to do well. The quickest way to stop a motorcycle is to:

- make sure you are upright and travelling in a straight line
- close the throttle
- apply the front brake first, using four fingers on the brake lever, then the rear brake
- pull in the clutch just before you stop.

Be careful not to lock up the wheels, because there is a good chance you will crash if you do. Should either wheel lock up and start to slide, release that brake and apply it again immediately but not quite so firmly.

Your bike may have anti-lock braking (ABS) which will prevent the wheels locking up. Try to ride as if the ABS isn't there; it is intended to take over only in extreme circumstances.

Braking through curves is a special case because the tyres are already using a lot of the available traction for cornering. If you brake too hard while leaning over, there is a good chance that you will fall over. The best thing to do is to complete your braking before you start to lean, but in an emergency that may not be possible.

There are two ways of braking while you are actually in a corner. The first is the simplest - just brake as you normally would, only more gently. You can continue around the corner, although the bike may want to 'stand upright' and go straight ahead. This way will not allow you to stop quickly.

The other way means standing the bike up straight so it is travelling in a straight line, and applying the brakes as you would for any emergency stop. This will stop you quickly, but will take you out of your line of travel. Be careful that you don't run off the road or into the path of other traffic.

Skidding

A skid tends to happen very quickly and can be extremely dangerous, so it's important to know how to control it. Here are some points to keep in mind:

- The most common cause of skidding is locking up one or both wheels while braking.
- The front wheel is most likely to skid when you brake too sharply or quickly. If this happens, release the front brake and immediately apply it again more gently.
- The rear wheel may skid because you have accelerated or braked too quickly or while turning. Ease off the throttle if acceleration was the problem. If it was braking, steer into the direction of the skid and release the rear brake when the bike is travelling in a straight line again.
- If the bike skids for any reason, keep your feet on the footpegs while you deal with it. This will give you much better control than putting your feet down.

See the diagram on the next page.

Skidding



If your rear wheel skids, steer into the skid and ease off the rear brake when the bike is travelling in a straight line again.

Swerving

There is a quick way to swerve around an obstacle, called countersteering. It's very effective, but it definitely takes practice. This is how to do it:

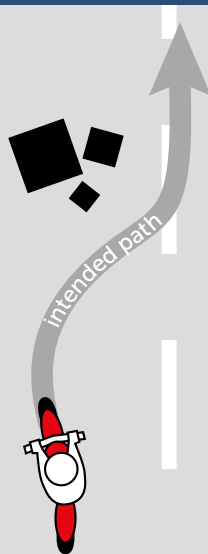
- To swerve quickly to the right, turn your head to the right, look where you want to go and press forward on the right handgrip.
- As you pass the obstacle, press forward on the left handgrip and look left. The bike will straighten up again.
- If at all possible you should stay in your own lane when you do this, so don't run wider than necessary. Changing lanes can be dangerous unless you can check that there are no vehicles in the lane you are entering.
- Reverse this process to swerve to the left, but no matter which way you swerve, do not brake at the same time or you could crash.

See the diagram on the next page.

Practice countersteering and you will find that it is a very useful skill to have. An Accredited Motorcycle Trainer will help you learn to use countersteering to swerve around an obstacle.

Countersteering

If your rear wheel skids, steer into the skid and ease off the rear brake when the bike is travelling in a straight line again.



Over the top

Sometimes you may have to ride over a small object or through a pothole that's in your way. If the obstacle is flat, like a sheet of cardboard or metal, ride straight over the top and do not brake. If it is bulkier, treat it the same as for a bit of rough road. Here are a few tips:

- If possible, brake before you reach the object, but release the brake before you hit it.
- Hold the handgrips firmly but don't grasp them too hard.
- Keep the bike in a straight line. This makes it less likely that you'll fall over.
- Stop afterwards and check tyres and wheels for damage.

One in the eye

One very good reason for wearing a visor or a good pair of goggles is eye protection. On a bike you will be hit by things like insects and gravel. A visor or goggles will keep them out of your eyes.

If you do get something in your eye, don't rub it or try to get it out immediately. Keep your hands on the bars, try to keep the edge of the road in view, slow down gently and pull off the road. Then try to remove the object from your eye.

Animal warning

Animals are a difficult problem because they are unpredictable. You should always try to avoid hitting them, but don't leave your lane or run off the road to avoid a small animal. You have a much better chance of surviving an impact with a small animal than with another vehicle or a roadside pole.

Don't try to kick dogs even if they are chasing you. Slow down as you approach them. Be careful that they don't run under your front wheel. Then speed up a little when you are past them. They will usually lose interest quickly.

Wildlife is even less predictable. Be especially careful at dusk or at night on country roads, because that's when many animals may be around - but keep them in mind at any time. The only thing that helps is riding really slowly and carefully, because animals like kangaroos and emus can seem to come out of nowhere.

Blowout

A blowout is a quick puncture. It will usually be caused by a sharp object such as a nail. Replacing your tyres before they become too worn is the best protection against blowouts. Not running over things like timber boards on the road is also important.

If the front tyre goes flat, the front of the bike will flop from side to side rapidly and it will be harder to steer. If the rear tyre goes flat, the back of the bike will slide from side to side. The faster you are going the more likely it is that you will lose control and crash. In any case you will need to react quickly.

- Hold the handgrips firmly and concentrate on steering. Keep your feet on the footpegs and try to keep going in a straight line.
- Do not use the brakes, especially on the wheel with the flat tyre.
- If the front tyre is flat, shift your weight as far back as you can to take the load off it. If it's the rear tyre, sit forward on the bike, and pull in the clutch.
- Close the throttle gradually to slow down.
- Once you have slowed, pull off the road and coast to a stop.

Tip

Checking your tyre pressures and the condition of the tyres frequently will help to prevent flats.

Mechanical problems

Bikes can cause emergencies, especially if they are not well looked after.

Wobble

Your bike may begin to wobble or shake from side to side at high speed. Apart from a flat tyre, this could be caused by:

- a heavy load, unevenly distributed
- a wheel that is bent or out of alignment
- poorly tightened or worn bearings in the steering head or swingarm
- a windshield or fairing that has not been fitted properly
- loose wheel bearings or spokes
- unsuitable or worn tyres.

If you experience a wobble make sure you apply both brakes carefully and slow down gradually. Carefully pull off the road.

Work out what was causing the wobble and correct the problem before you continue.

Tip

Remember that you cannot always tell from the wobble whether it is being caused by the front or rear of the bike.

Broken chain

You'll definitely know when this happens, because there will be a huge bang from the back of the bike and it will then either freewheel because there is no more drive to the rear wheel or skid because the rear wheel is locked up. Look after your chain, keep it properly tensioned and lubricated; replace it and the sprockets when they are worn.

If your chain does break, and does not lock up the back wheel:

- close the throttle
- brake to a stop.

If it does lock up the wheel, treat this the same way as a rear wheel skid – don't brake and steer into the skid.

Stuck throttle

If you don't maintain your throttle cable properly, or sometimes if there is wear in the carburettor, your throttle may stick while it is on. You will not be able to slow the engine. If this happens:

- pull in the clutch
- brake gently to a stop and pull off the road
- turn off the ignition.

Seized engine

Although it is more common in two-stroke engines, seizure does happen in four-strokes as well. The symptoms are the same as for a locked-up rear wheel, but the problem is easier to overcome. If it happens:

- pull in the clutch immediately
- brake gently to a stop and pull off the road
- turn off the ignition.

Let the engine cool down and add oil or coolant if either is low. The engine may start again, but it should be checked for damage.

Pulling off the road

If you have to leave the road to check or fix your bike, remember to:

- Check the roadside surface before you ride on it. Try not to pull off into mud or deep sand, and be careful of the edge as you move off the bitumen on to the roadside.
- Check your mirrors, do a headcheck and give a clear signal to let other road users know what you are doing.
- Stop well away from the road. A bike by the roadside can be hard to see. You might be hit by a car if you are too close to the road.

Dealing with a crash

If you are involved in a crash there are certain things you must do. The *Road to Solo Driving* details your responsibilities and also has good advice on some basic first aid. Remember if you need to call an ambulance, police or fire brigade, phone 000.



Check your understanding

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

1. If you need to stop quickly in an emergency, you should:

- A apply the front brake only
- B apply both brakes together
- C open the throttle

2. If you press forward on the left handgrip when riding, the motorcycle will:

- A lean to the right
- B lean to the left
- C not change its lean

3. The chain on Tam's motorcycle breaks, but the back wheel does not lock up. He should:

- A release the brakes quickly
- B apply the front brake harder
- C close the throttle and brake to a stop

4. Kim is riding along and the bike becomes hard to steer because her front tyre has gone flat. She should:

- A apply the brakes quickly
- B shift her weight far back on the seat, ease off the throttle and come to a stop
- C open the throttle and speed up to relieve the effect

5. You are riding along a freeway at 80 km/h. The front wheel begins to wobble. You should:

- A firmly grip the handgrips and accelerate out of the wobble
- B firmly grip the handgrips and apply the brakes quickly to make the shaking stop
- C don't fight the wobble, but gradually slow down and carefully pull off the road

ANSWERS 1B 2B 3C 4B 5C

Bike security



*For additional security
use an extra locking
device.*

Bikes are very easy to steal; they can just be picked up and moved. Less than a third of stolen bikes are recovered. It makes sense to be especially careful.

Protect the bike itself

- Make your bike as hard to steal as possible by always locking it.
- Fit an engine immobiliser if it doesn't already have one.
- Keep your keys safe!

Security at home

- Park your bike in a locked garage if you can, and lock it to something solid.
- Don't leave the keys with the bike even when it is in the garage.

Security on the road

- Try to park where you can see the bike, lock it, remove the keys and use some sort of locking device, such as a chain (choose one that is not easily cut) and a strong padlock.
- Lock it to something solid if you can; remember, thieves can lift even big bikes and carry them away.
- Don't leave valuables on your bike, such as in a bag or pannier.

Accredited motorcycle training and assessment service providers

For training and service provider locations and further information please visit vicroads.vic.gov.au or call 13 11 71.

VicRoads Customer Service Centres

For VicRoads Customer Service Centre locations or further information please visit vicroads.vic.gov.au or call 13 11 71

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