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 84 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 VicRoads Customer Service Centres (see page 85), VicRoads website - vicroads.vic.gov.au or Accredited Motorcycle Trainers (see page 84).

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## Contents

Using this Handbook 2

**Getting Ready** 5
How do I get a Victorian motorcycle licence? 6
The law for motorcyclists 8
Beware of….. 12

**On the Road** 17
What to wear 18
What to ride 24
Starting out 28
Looking ahead and being seen 36

**Staying Alive** 45
Keep away from trouble 46
Keep a grip 54
Riding at night 58
Loading up 62
Riding in a group 66
Look after your bike 70

**Here’s Trouble** 73
Emergency braking 74
Skidding 75
Swerving 76
Over the top 77
One in the eye 77
Animal warning 78
Blowout 78
Mechanical problems 79
Pulling off the road 80
Dealing with a crash 80
Bike security 82

**Accredited Motorcycle Training and Assessment Service Providers** 84

**VicRoads Customer Service Centres** 85

**Index** 86
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. In 2008, motorcyclists accounted for 14% of all road deaths in Victoria, although they accounted for less than 1% of travel on Victorian roads.

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 actual 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 training and continuing 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. The staff at VicRoads or at an Accredited Motorcycle Training and Assessment Service Provider (Accredited Motorcycle Trainer) can also 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 location of Accredited Motorcycle Trainers and VicRoads Customer Service Centres can be found on pages 84 and 85.

Further information
More information, including several other booklets, is available from VicRoads by visiting vicroads.vic.gov.au or calling 13 11 17

Other helpful publications available include:
- **Road to Solo Driving** – handbook for new drivers/riders
- **Discover Safe Riding** – useful practice manual for new and returning riders
- **The Right Line and The Right Stuff** – small, portable and full of information and riding hints.

More road safety information is available from:
- **TAC Motorcycling** – spokes.com.au
- **TAC** – tacsafety.com.au
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.
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 tests 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 test **must** be completed on a two-wheeled bike. You may not attempt the test 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 at least 3 consecutive months. You then:

- book your motorcycle licence test
- provide evidence of identity
- take the test 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 84 or phone VicRoads on 13 11 71.
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. You must hold a permit for at least 3 consecutive months before attempting the Motorcycle Licence Test and:

- 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 pass an eyesight test and a Riding Skill Test. As you will be allowed to ride on the road on your own once you have the permit, it is essential that you can see properly and have enough riding skills to control a motorcycle.

- 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.

Motorcycle licence
You can apply for a licence if you are at least 18 years old and hold a current Victorian or interstate motorcycle learner permit for at least 3 consecutive months. Overseas motorcycle learner permits are not recognised. To obtain a licence:

- You must pass a Practical Riding Test on a specifically designed off-street range to assess your riding skills.

- Unless you already have a driver licence, you must pass a Hazard Perception Test to see how safely you respond to traffic situations.

It is strongly recommended that you do some training while you are preparing for your motorcycle licence. Training will make you a much more competent and safer rider, and help you with the test.

As the learner permit period cannot be extended, make sure you book early for your test - 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 may be issued subject to that condition. To understand your obligations, you should seek legal advice.
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.

**What’s the law while I’m learning?**

While holding a motorcycle learner permit, you **must**:

- Display an ‘L’ plate on the rear of the motorcycle so that it is clearly visible from 20 metres
- only ride a bike which is approved under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS)
- not carry a pillion passenger
- ride with a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC)
- not ride a bike towing a trailer.
What’s the law for probationary and newly licensed riders?

As a probationary rider of any bike (including road, trail, scooter and trike) you must:

- display a ‘P’ plate on the rear of the bike so that it is clearly visible from 20 metres
- ride with a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC)
- carry your licence at all times when riding
- only ride a bike which is approved under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS) until you have held a motorcycle licence for at least 12 months
- not carry a pillion passenger until you have held a motorcycle licence for at least 12 months.

All newly licensed riders, even those with a full car licence must fulfill the zero BAC, the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS) and the passenger restriction requirements for the minimum period of 12 months after the issue of the motorcycle licence.

Helmets

Riders and their passengers must wear helmets approved to Australian Standard AS1698 or AS/NZS1698, and these must be securely fitted and fastened on their heads. The helmets must be marked to show that they are certified as meeting the Australian Standard.

Parking

In Victoria you may legally park your bike on the footpath (unless otherwise signed) 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 for vision impaired pedestrians.

There is a useful pamphlet available from VicRoads called Guidelines for Parking Motorcycles on Footpaths.

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.
Lane splitting and restricted lanes

Avoid lane splitting, which is riding between lines of moving vehicles. It is illegal and can be dangerous to riders, especially for inexperienced riders.

**Lane splitting**

Lane splitting is illegal and can be dangerous for you as a rider.

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; they **must** be provided with footpegs and their feet **must** reach these footpegs. A pillion passenger **must** sit astride the motorcycle and behind the rider, face forward and keep both feet on the footpegs.

A child under eight years of age **must not** travel as a passenger on a motorcycle. 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 motorcycle. 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 motorcycles. Your motorcycle 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 must not carry a pillion passenger until you have held your motorcycle licence for:
   A. 6 months
   B. 12 months
   C. 18 months

2. Angela holds both probationary car and probationary motorcycle licences. When riding her motorcycle she:
   A. should 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

Answers 1B 2A 3B
There are more hazards out on the road than you can imagine, so it makes sense to try to be ready for anything. This applies to a beginner or someone coming back to motorcycling after a break. 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 bike licence for less than 12 months 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 (methamphetaimine), cannabis (THC) and ecstacy (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.*
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 brightly coloured clothing and making eye contact, do not assume that they have seen you.

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.

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
On the Road

What to wear 18
What to ride 24
Starting out 28
Looking ahead and being seen 36
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 the Australian Standard. The helmet must be securely fitted and fastened on your head. Don’t underrate this. A helmet will reduce the chance of serious head injury if you crash, and may well keep you alive.

Your helmet must be marked to show that it is certified as meeting the AS1698 or AS/NZS1698 standard. Look for this when you buy a helmet and do not remove it. If your helmet does not have the sticker, you could be fined.

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

Even the best helmets are designed to take only one impact. You will not necessarily be able to see damage, so buy a new helmet.
Even dropping a helmet on the ground can damage it. Helmets deteriorate with use and even in storage. Look for wear such as loose or compressed padding and exposed metal, and damage like cracks and frayed straps. A new helmet only costs money, whereas an old one could result in brain damage.

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

**Checklist**

Your helmet **must**:
- show that it is certified to meet the AS1698 or AS/NZS1698 standard
- fit snugly and securely when done up.

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

**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.*
Clothing

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

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

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

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

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

Eye and face protection

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

Checklist

Your visor must meet Australian Standard AS1609. There is no Australian Standard for goggles or sunglasses specific to motorcycle use, but any eye protection you use should:
- be free of scratches
- be impact resistant
- not restrict your vision to either side
- be fastened securely so that it does not rattle or blow off.
Choose the right full protective gear to suit the weather conditions.

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

Wet weather riding gear includes suits like this, that you wear over the top of your normal riding gear.
Jackets and pants (or one-piece suits) should:

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

**Checklist**

Leather riding suit.
Checklist

Gloves or gauntlets should:

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

Checklist

Boots should:

- be designed for motorcycle riding and be made of strong leather or a strong synthetic material with reinforcements
- cover your ankles, preferably with some kind of reinforcement
- have strong non-slip soles
- not have rings, laces, other bits sticking out or elastic sides – they could slip off or catch on the motorcycle and be pulled off in a crash, leaving your feet unprotected.
Choosing a motorcycle is one of the most enjoyable things a rider does, and it can have a major impact on how much you enjoy your riding and how safe you are. If you use your information sources – talk to experienced riders, read up on different bikes and ask questions in bike shops – you’re most likely to end up with the best choice for you. One of the best sources of information is your Accredited Motorcycle Trainer.
Types of bikes

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

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 until you have held a motorcycle licence for a minimum period of 12 months. You should feel comfortable and in control while handling the bike, which means it should not be too tall or too heavy for you.

Riding someone else’s bike
It can be risky to ride a borrowed or rented bike. You will be unfamiliar with its controls and responses, and even if it is the same model as your own, it may not be in good mechanical condition. Ideally you should get as much experience on your own bike, before attempting to ride a borrowed or rented bike. If in doubt, don’t ride an unfamiliar bike. However, if riding an unfamiliar bike you should:
- familiarise yourself with the controls
- make all the same safety checks you would make with your own bike
- ride more cautiously than you would on your own bike.

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

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

1. Jane sees a range of secondhand helmets for sale at a garage sale. They all look new and some are in bright colours. She should:
   A. choose the one with the brightest colour and a full visor
   B. not buy a secondhand helmet as she may be unable to see any damage to it
   C. not buy a secondhand helmet without speaking to the previous owner

2. The best types of foot protection for riding a motorcycle are:
   A. sandals
   B. runners or track shoes
   C. leather boots designed for motorcycle riding

3. The main reason for wearing clothing designed for motorcycling is that it:
   A. keeps you warm
   B. helps protect you in a fall
   C. both of the above

4. Shane has just passed his motorcycle learner permit and has the chance to ride his friend’s new motorcycle. Before he rides he should:
   A. check that the fuel tap is on reserve
   B. reconsider and choose not to ride an unfamiliar bike
   C. ride with his friend as a pillion passenger

ANSWERS 1B  2C  3C  4B
No matter what bike you choose to ride it needs to be set up to suit you. Making the right adjustments from the start will not only make your bike more comfortable to ride, it will also improve your ability to control the bike. In addition to these adjustments there are a number of important checks to make every time before you ride.
A Simple Guide to the Parts of a Motorcycle

Check the owner’s manual for information about your bike.
Setting up for yourself and your bike

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

Personalise your bike

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

- Your posture should be comfortable while allowing good control of the bike. Keep your head up and your line of sight level with the road. Your arms should not be feeling too much strain from holding up your body.

- Sit close enough to the handlebars so you can reach them with your arms slightly bent. You should be able to turn the bars without stretching.

- Hold the handgrips firmly and keep your wrists low with the knuckles at the highest point. This gives you good control of the throttle while making it easy to reach the clutch and brake levers.

- To maintain posture while braking and absorb shocks from the front end of the bike, your elbows should be slightly bent and tucked in.

- Grasp the fuel tank firmly with your knees to balance the bike and keep control when turning, slowing or speeding up.

- Keep your feet on the footpegs while the bike is moving, ready to use the foot controls.

Checks to make before each ride

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

Controls

- Brakes should work smoothly. The front and rear brakes should each stop the bike when fully applied separately.

- Clutch and throttle should work smoothly and the throttle should snap shut when you let it go.

- Make sure cables are lubricated and there are no visible kinks or broken strands.

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.
Tyres and chain
- Check tyre pressures when the tyres are cold. Correct pressures should be listed on a sticker on the bike (possibly on the swingarm) and in the owner’s manual.
- Check that the tread depth is more than 2mm all over the tyre tread. Less than this is illegal and very dangerous. The sidewalls of the tyres should be free of cracks or bumps.
- Make sure that the tyre tread is free of cuts, nails or cracks.
- Check that the chain (if the bike has one) is lubricated and the tension adjusted correctly. The owner’s manual will have details of how to do this.

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

Adjust your mirrors so you can see as much as possible of the traffic next to you and behind 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 18-23).
- Make sure you are fit to ride and not tired (fatigued) or impaired by alcohol or drugs (see pages 13-14).
- Make sure you are in the mood and have the right attitude. Riding while angry or in any other high emotional state could make you careless or aggressive.

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

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

1. Glenn has just taken delivery of a new motorcycle. He should:
   A. immediately take it out for a run on the open road to see how it goes
   B. adjust the controls and, if possible, handlebars and seat to suit himself
   C. take all his friends on rides to show them how much fun motorcycling is

2. Anne is trying to show her sister how to sit on the motorcycle in the correct position. She should sit:
   A. at the back of the seat with her arms straight so that she can turn quickly
   B. close to the handlebars so she can bend over the front of the bike and see the road ahead more clearly
   C. close enough to the handlebars to reach them with her arms slightly bent so she can turn without having to stretch

   ANSWERS 1B  2C
Looking ahead and being seen

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

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

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

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

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

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

Avoid riding in blind spots

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

- When overtaking on a multi lane road where there is no median strip with traffic in both directions maximise the distance from other vehicles. Ride in the centre of the lane but watch out for oil slicks.

Keep a safe distance

Try to avoid riding in the centre of the lane and be aware of driver’s blind spots.

Try to maximise the distance from other vehicles. However, watch out for oil slicks if riding in the centre of a lane.
When approaching an intersection be aware of a driver's line of sight so you can be seen. The rider here should take care, as the driver of the blue car may not be able to see him approaching.

Be aware of the driver's line of sight. Anticipate blind spots and move to where the driver can see you.
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

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 58-59 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

Giving the wrong signals could lead to danger.

Sound your horn

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

Be prepared to react

Don’t rely on your horn to warn other drivers. Always be prepared to react.
Be bright...
Consider wearing a brightly coloured or reflective helmet and clothing. Yellow, orange and red are colours which stand out against most backgrounds. Reflective tape on your clothing or your bike works well at night, and a reflective vest is more noticeable to drivers behind you than a tail light.

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

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

1. Tom is about to pull out from the kerb to join the traffic flow. He should:
   A accelerate as quickly as possible so that he is going faster than the traffic, and it can’t catch him
   B put on his indicator because that gives him right of way
   C make sure he positions the bike so he can see the traffic in both directions before pulling out

2. The three best ways to make yourself more visible are:
   A ride with your headlight on, ride where you can be seen and wear bright clothing
   B sound your horn, keep to the left of the road and flash your headlight
   C all of the above

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