

Every year thousands of people are killed or seriously injured on our roads, but motorcyclists suffer disproportionately. They are 40 times more likely to be killed than a car driver.

As motorcyclists take advantage of many of our rural roads to test their machines, the risk can be far too high. Too often riders don't have the skills to handle their machines.

Instinct and quick reactions on their own aren't enough - you need to **THINK!** It doesn't matter if you've been riding for years or if you've just returned to biking; what you need is up-to-date bike handling skills, inside information and a head stuffed with riding know-how. The best riders:

- **Are seen.** Dipped headlights, even in daylight, can help you to be seen;
- **Anticipate** the actions of motorists;
- **Are alert and observant.** Important when you are negotiating junctions or roundabouts; and when you need to look out for other vulnerable road users;
- **Ride at a speed that will enable you to slow down and stop in good time.** The unexpected can happen. Ride according to the conditions;
- **Position in the best place.** Usually the middle of the lane. But take up your road position in good time before turning right or left, showing others what you aim to do;
- **Overtake safely.** Can you see hazards? Can you overtake without speeding up or swerving too much?
- **Take a 'lifesaver' glance over the shoulder** before carrying out manoeuvres - you need to know where other drivers are and what they are doing;

Most people are oblivious to the danger motorcyclists face each time they go out on the road. Imagine hitting a big pothole halfway around a corner in a car - it wouldn't be much cause for concern, but on a bike the impact could be really dramatic. The same goes for a whole host of other dangers that car drivers don't have to worry about.

Large goods vehicles have a reputation for overfilled fuel tanks and 'dumping' slippery diesel on tight bends and roundabouts, making the road surface a real danger, and it doesn't end there. Next time you are out and about have a look at all the gravel and debris which builds up at some T-junctions and in bends and corners.

What to wear

It's important to buy the right gear before you get on your motorcycle. You need:

- An approved **helmet** that fits securely. A white or brightly coloured helmet can help you to be seen.
- Good **clothing** - and that means jackets, trousers and boots. The best is CE marked and can protect you from getting hurt if you come off. It should be fluorescent during the day and reflective at night. Weather proof clothing will not only make you feel more comfortable, it will also allow you to focus more on your riding.

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Pillion

Pillion passengers represent a fairly small number of casualties, but their injuries are likely to be severe. A recent 'survey' showed that pillioners and riders were likely to have similar protection to the upper body in terms of jackets and helmets, but pillioners were less likely to have motorcycle boots, gloves, jeans or any sort of body armour.

As occasional passengers it is perhaps not surprising that pillioners are often less likely to have adequate protective clothing, but it is a serious safety problem. You can help by:

- Insisting on adequate protective clothing for your pillion;
- Being aware of the different handling characteristics of your motorcycle when carrying a pillion;
- Reviewing your own riding attitudes - and skills.

Pillioners may crowd the rider on some motorcycles. This can be awkward under heavy braking and in slow speed manoeuvring. On a short wheelbase machine, the weight shift to the rear can result in some steering instability under certain circumstances.

Instructions for pillioners

- Align your body with that of the rider
- Grip the grab rail, or hold the rider at the waist and grip with your knees when under braking.
- Pick a shoulder to look over and don't change shoulder or wriggle about when cornering or braking, although this may be fine at other times.
- Stay quite still as the motorcycle is coming to a stop, to aid the rider's ability to maintain the balance of the machine.
- Keep your feet on the foot pegs at all times

Hone Your Skills

Have you thought about developing your skills further? It can be a good investment in your own safety. If you are an experienced rider, it may be years since you thought about training. An advanced riding course could help you with new techniques.

Before deciding on training, it's worth finding out just where you're at and what you need to know, and there are plenty of organisations that can help:

- The Driving Standards Agency
- The Motorcycle Rider Training Association
- British Motorcyclists Federation
- RoSPA Advanced Drivers Association
- The Institute of Advanced Motorists
- Better Motorcycling 'Roadcraft' course arranged by the Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnership in conjunction with Gloucestershire Constabulary.
- Enhanced Rider Training scheme - this is a new Driving Standards Agency scheme available to riders wishing to enhance their riding skills with the help of local riding assessors.

For most people the bare minimum is a refresher on road positioning, planning ahead and what to do if someone you're riding with has an accident. However, there's always plenty more to learn.

