



A GUIDE TO
Motorcycles

Types of Motorcycles

American highways are full of motorcycles, especially during warmer months. Watching a large group of motorcyclists enjoying the roads together has become part of our nation's summertime fabric. Deciding whether to make a motorcycle purchase? Learn to tell the difference between these bikes and their intended uses to make the best choice for you and your family. If you're considering a motorcycle, determine which bike provides you the most comfort in position, speed and price.



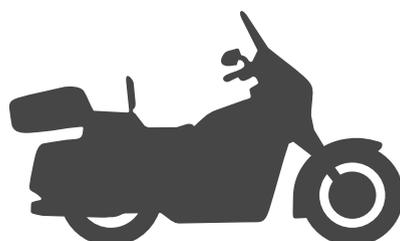
STANDARD MOTORCYCLE

This basic design is sometimes called the “naked motorcycle.” Typically offering moderate-size engines and an easy-to-use framework, this standard model is the easiest for a new rider to learn. The bike commonly comes with an upright seating position, as well as handlebars and foot pegs that are designed so riders do not have to reach too far forward. For a beginner in motorcycle riding, the standard might be the easiest model on which to learn.



DUAL-SPORT MOTORCYCLE

Dual-sport bikes are basically street-legal dirt bikes. Built to better handle rough terrain, dual-sports still offer a smooth ride on highways. These options feature a small engine and lightweight frame, making them great beginner bikes. Make sure you can comfortably reach the ground with both feet while you are on this bike as the seats are typically higher than other models.



TOURING MOTORCYCLE

These bikes are great for long-distance cruises due to their large engines and ability to hold greater capacities of fuel. This option might not be the best for new riders because of its size and high cost. Touring motorcycles offer an upright, comfortable ride while providing ample storage space, which comes in handy on long trips.



CRUISER MOTORCYCLE

A cruiser is a larger bike sporting a V-twin engine to offer low-end torque. The riding position is lower than most other models and features high handlebars and forward-facing foot pegs. This unique setup causes drivers to lean back — a risky option for a beginner as the seating style takes time to get used to. Some of the risks include high winds and hazardous road conditions.



SPORT MOTORCYCLE

Sport bikes are meant for extreme acceleration and high overall speeds. They are fixed with high-performance engines and a light frame. The riding position for these models is quite unique as the foot pegs rest higher and the handlebars require a longer reach than traditional motorcycles. This position makes the bike and rider more aerodynamic when traveling into the wind at high speeds.

Motorcyclist Safety

Motorcycles are great machines for taking joyrides and enjoying the warm outdoor air. They do pose greater risks to their operators than passenger vehicles, so safety is something you should never skimp on while riding.

The Insurance Institute for Highways Safety states that motorcyclists are 30 times more likely to die in a car crash than people in a car. This startling fact should be enough to convince motorcycle riders to follow all safety precautions.

ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET

According to the IIHS, only 19 states currently have a universal helmet law in place. A universal helmet law states that every motorcyclist is required to wear a helmet.

Even if it isn't against the law to skip the helmet in your state, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urges you to wear it anyway. Here's why:

- Helmets reduce the risk of death due to an accident by 37 percent;
- Helmets reduce the risk of head injury in accidents by 69 percent;
- In 2013, helmets saved nearly 1,630 lives and \$2.8 bil-



lion in economic costs; and

- If all motorcyclists wore helmets in 2013, America could have saved an additional \$1.1 billion.

In 2015, 4,868 motorcyclists lost their lives on American roads. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also reports in states without universal helmet laws, one in seven of those who perished

did not wear helmets.

FOLLOWING ALL TRAFFIC LAWS

Traffic laws are put in place to protect every person on the road. Motorcyclists are at a greater risk as they are not protected by the sturdy frames of passenger vehicles. Even if you are an experienced rider, you are urged to be cautious of

your own driving while paying attention to everyone else on the road.

The NHTSA offers the following eye-opening statistics from 2013 that should convince motorcyclists to follow all traffic laws.

- **Not licensed:** Twenty-five percent of motorcyclists who lost their lives in crashes were riding without being licensed.

- **Drinking and driving:** Nearly 4,400 riders were killed in traffic accidents; 28 percent of those had more than the legal limit of alcohol in their system at the time of the incident.

- **Speed limits:** Thirty-four percent of all motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the accident.

Getting a License

Before you can legally enjoy a motorcycle on American highways, you must acquire a special driver's license issued in your state of residence.

Each state has its own unique rules about how to obtain this document. It should be easy to access a handbook from your local Department of Motor Vehicles.

STUDYING FOR THE PERMIT TEST

Begin studying for your permit test by reviewing the handbook of your state's motorcycle laws. The handbook will list answers to the questions you will find on the permit test.

Once you have a good grasp of your state's laws, you can apply for your permit. You will be required to pay an application fee as well as pass a vision and written test. Once you receive your permit, you can legally practice on the road with certain restrictions.

MAKE IT STREET LEGAL

Before you take your bike out on the road for practice, you need to be sure that it is properly registered as stated by your local DMV. States may have different requirements to register a bike, so it is best to ask your local officials.

Your motorcycle also needs to be insured. Check with local agents for the best price you can obtain for your situation. It also must have valid license plates before hitting the road. These are necessary requirements for any motorcycle you will be using for your test.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

A motorcycle permit gives you a

great opportunity to gain some real road-time experience on your bike. Permit restrictions can vary from state to state but generally include:

- Don't ride at night;
- Stay off freeways; and
- No passengers are allowed on the motorcycle.

Be sure to practice for the full

amount of time your state requires before applying for a license. Take your time on roads that don't have heavy traffic to get a good feel of how your motorcycle performs. Practice braking, stopping and turning techniques in an open parking lot as you will likely be performing these for your actual test at the DMV.

TAKING THE FINAL TEST

Successfully completing a written test and usually a road exam will earn you a motorcycle license. There may be a small fee.

Don't be discouraged if you happen to fail any portion of the test. You have a certain time frame to try again, depending on your state's laws.



Dressing Appropriately

Clothing designed for bikers does more than make a fashion statement. In fact, proper clothing can be a lifesaver during an accident. Pavement is unforgiving, especially if you take a spill on a bike.

Before getting on a motorcycle, be sure to take proper measures to keep yourself safe and comfortable. Some states require you to wear a helmet, but that is only one item on a long list of protection equipment you should consider wearing.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT HELMET

If you have taken any type of motorcycle safety course, you already now how important it is to wear a helmet. Do you know how to choose a safe, effective helmet for motorcycle riding?

There are generally three different types of helmets that are available to you: a half-shell, three-quarters or full-face helmet, featuring a lock-in visor. The full-face style provides the best available protection to your head.

The Department of Motor Vehicles recommends some other things to look for when



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choosing the safest helmet:

- Be sure it fits your head snugly.
- Look for any visible cracks, loose padding or damaged safety straps. Any defects noticed should be immediately reported to the salesperson.
- Be sure the helmet stays fastened closely to your head as you ride. A loose helmet creates a greater risk that your helmet might come off your

head during an accident.

- Look for manufacturer-applied DOT lettering imprinted on the back of the helmet. This shows that it meets U.S. Department of Transportation safety standards.

PROTECTING YOUR FACE AND EARS

If you decide to go with a helmet other than the full-face style, you are leaving

important parts of your face vulnerable. The DMV recommends wearing a face shield rather than sunglasses or goggles, as they can easily blow off at highway speeds.

A complete face shield protects your face from dangerous sun rays, dirt, rain and insects. You don't want anything hitting your face and distracting you from safe driving. Don't wear tinted eye protection at nighttime.

PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

You should always wear a jacket that covers the entirety of your arms as well as long pants. Denim jeans will provide you with the best protection over other types of pants. For an extra level of safety, wear a pair of leather chaps over your jeans.

Gloves also are a good idea. You will gain a better grip and protect your hands from wind or damage from road debris.

Maintaining Your Bike

Motorcycles are just like any other vehicle with an engine: Maintenance is crucial for proper performance. Following the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule is a good way to ensure your bike will run efficiently and safely for years to come.

Some may consider motorcycle maintenance even more important than a passenger vehicle because a bike offers no cabin for protection during a breakdown in unfavorable conditions. You can also find comfort in checking fluid levels before hitting the road. Some bikes don't offer the storage space for extra bottles of important fluids.

OIL CHANGES

The frequency you should have your oil and filter changed is determined by your motorcycle's manufacturer. It is important to refer to your manual to find this important information. If you happened to buy a used bike that didn't come with a manual, you should inquire with a local dealer about obtaining one.

Generally, oil changes are performed around the 3,000-mile mark while filters are sometimes recommended to be changed every other oil change or 6,000 miles.

If you determine you are low on oil during a regular fluid inspection, never top it off with regular automobile motor oil. Motorcycle oil is specially formulated to protect an engine, gear box and lubricate the wet clutch which transfers engine power to the drivetrain.

TIRE SAFETY

Making sure your motorcycle's tires are filled with the proper amount of air and the tread is at a safe depth can ultimately save your life. The recommended PSI levels will also be listed in your owner's manual as well as pressure for traveling with heavy loads.

The National Highway Traffic Safety

Administration recommends checking your tire pressure before every ride. This is because motorcycle tires can wear down more quickly than a car's tires.

Most motorcycle tires are developed with built-in tread wear bars. These bars are difficult to find at first but manufacturers note them by molded arrows on the sidewall pointing to their

location. Once tread is worn down to these bars, it is important to replace them.

FLUIDS

There are several important fluids that should be routinely checked to avoid major damage to your motorcycle.

- **Coolant:** Proper levels are crucial to protecting your engine from the high heat that motorcycles operate on.

- **Brake fluid:** You don't want to have a delayed stop in an emergency.

- **Transmission oil:** If your bike operates with a separate gear box than the engine, it will require proper levels of transmission fluid.



America's Great Rides

If you are planning a vacation this year, consider loading up your bike and visiting some of America's most popular roads for motorcyclists. These great attractions are packed with beautiful views, quick turns and wide-open highways.

TAIL OF THE DRAGON, TENNESSEE

One of the most popular destinations for motorcyclists in America is located on U.S. Route 129. It is an 11-mile stretch of highway that features 318 tight curves requiring incredible handling to execute them safely. Some of the more complicated curves have even been given nicknames by enthusiasts, including Gravity Cavity and Copperhead Corner.

This beautiful stretch of highway takes riders through the incredible Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Be warned — this road is not for novice motorcyclists. You don't want pieces of your bike to be featured on the Tree of Shame on the Tail of the Dragon. This shrine is built by damaged motorcycle parts that were left behind by drivers who couldn't handle the road.

TWISTED SISTERS, TEXAS

Twisted Sisters is the name given to three Texas Hill Country roads that create a great experience for motorcyclists. While this hotspot isn't as extreme as the Tail of the Dragon, it can still be tough to handle for a novice. Experienced riders can enjoy a 100-mile loop of Texas ranches, views and valleys.

You can also take a break from riding to visit roadside attractions like the Lone Star



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Motorcycle Museum, Stonehenge II and the Lost Maples State Natural Area. Don't be surprised if you find yourself pulling off the road to take some amazing photos to commemorate your visit.

COASTAL ROUTE ONE, MAINE

This is a highway more suitable for visits in cooler weather. Summer tends to attract bumper-to-bumper traffic of tourists wanting a glimpse of

the amazing sites Coastal Route One offers.

More suitable for a novice rider, this 167-mile stretch features more scenic detours than relying on intense curves to draw riders in. Be prepared

to view historic lighthouses, amazing wildlife and peaceful seaside villages. Bring your appetite because you will pass numerous lobster shacks while enjoying this motorcycle hot spot.

Sharing the Road

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly half of all motorcycle crashes involve another motor vehicle. Almost 40 percent of those incidents were due to the other vehicle turning left in front of a motorcyclist.

It is important for passenger vehicles and motorcycles to share the road and create a safe traveling experience for everyone. Motorcycles are vehicles that are given the same rights as any other vehicle on American highways. However, there are extra safety measures that should be taken by motorcyclists and the passenger vehicle driving among them.

PASSENGER VEHICLE RESPONSIBILITIES

Motorcycles feature a much smaller profile than other vehicles on the road. This may make it more difficult to see them in blind spots, or judge the distance and speed when they are approaching. This means taking extra care when a motorcycle is approaching.

As a passenger vehicle driver, you cannot always trust a motorcycle's turn signal. These typically don't self-cancel like a car, and the cyclist may have forgotten to manually stop the signal. Always analyze the motorcycle's actions before proceeding.

A bike also requires a greater following distance than a passenger vehicle. Small potholes can be incredibly dangerous to a motorcycle. Give them plenty of room to adjust to road hazards or emergency



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stops. A motorcycle can usually brake much faster than cars, which can result in a fatal rear-end accident if following too closely.

MOTORCYCLIST RESPONSIBILITIES

As a motorcyclist, it is your job to ensure that you are visi-

ble to other drivers on the road. This means keeping your headlights on at all times and using reflective strips so you're easily seen at night.

It is also important to stay in your lane like other vehicle types are required to do. Never weave in and out of lanes. This can create great

levels of damage to yourself and other drivers.

Always keep an eye out for turning vehicles. You should give other vehicles a three- or four-second lead time to give you sufficient time to react to emergency situations.

Groups of motorcyclists should ride in a staggered

position. This increases visibility to other motorists and sets the pace for safe following distance.

American highways are spacious enough for motorcycles and traditional vehicles. Do your part to allow your fellow driver to arrive at their destination safely.