

RSA



THIS IS YOUR BIKE

A safety guide for you and
your motorcycle or moped

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre
Road Safety Authority



Contents

The RSA logo consists of the letters 'RSA' in a white, sans-serif font, centered within an orange square with rounded corners.

Introduction	1
Direct Access	2
Direct Access (Graph)	3
Direct Access (Graph)	4
Progressive Access	5
Progressive Access (Graph)	6
Progressive Access (Graph)	7
On the day of your motorcycle test	8
During your motorcycle test	8
Old type paper licence	8
New type plastic licence	8
Riding a motorcycle	9
Lifelong learning	9
Post-Licence training	9
Staying safe	10
Being a safe Motorcyclist	11
Vulnerability	11
Control	12
Hazards	12
Attitude & Behaviour	12
Socially Responsible Riding	13
Drink/Drugs	14
Safe Motorcycle	15
P.O.W.D.E.R	15-17
F.I.G.S	17
Safe Riding	18-19
Areas identified as being of higher risk when riding a Motorcycle	20-23
Pillion Passengers	23-24
Longer Journeys	25-26
Legal issues	26
Fixed fines and Penalty Points	26
Fatigue	27
Consequences of road collisions	27
Table 1 (Statistical information on fatalities and injuries)	28
The scene of a crash	29
Eco-Riding	30
Summary	31

This Is Your Bike

A guide to post-training and safe motorcycling

Introduction

This booklet aims to provide you with advice and information on taking to the road on two wheels. It will briefly cover the different routes for obtaining a full licence and the training required at each stage. It will also cover the training available for those who already hold a full licence or those returning to biking after a long absence.

As millions of trained motorcyclists around the world prove every day, biking can be a fun, safe and satisfying activity. Proper training and good habits will help to keep you and your passenger safe.

All road users including pedestrians behave differently on the road, sometimes in unpredictable ways. This presents a major challenge for anyone using a motorcycle. Only if you are safe in what you do on your motorcycle can you hope to overcome the challenges presented by the actions of other road users and the environment in which you ride your motorcycle.

For those returning to biking after a long absence or for those who are already qualified motorcyclists and looking to enhance their skill levels, there is now a structured, mandatory training system, Initial Basic Training (IBT). IBT caters primarily for novice motorcyclists taking up biking for the first time. IBT courses can be tailored for those with more experience (qualified motorcyclists) using the proven structures within the IBT syllabus.

For more information on the IBT syllabus, visit www.rsa.ie.



Initial Basic Training

Mandatory training for motorcyclists has been introduced to help build the knowledge understanding and skills required to become a safe motorcyclist. The training is aimed at those taking to the road on a motorcycle for the first time, and will develop the students' overall ability, and help prepare them for their practical driving test.

Direct Access

On the 19th of January 2013 the Road Safety Authority (RSA) introduced new processes for obtaining a motorcycle licence. There are now two options for those who want to obtain a motorcycle licence: 'Direct Access' and 'Progressive Access'.

What is "Direct Access"?

Direct Access

Direct access is the training option for anyone who has not previously held any motorcycle 'learner permit'. Direct access is available in all motorcycle categories, AM, A1, A2 or A.

Note:

Choosing a motorcycle category will depend on your age and requirements.

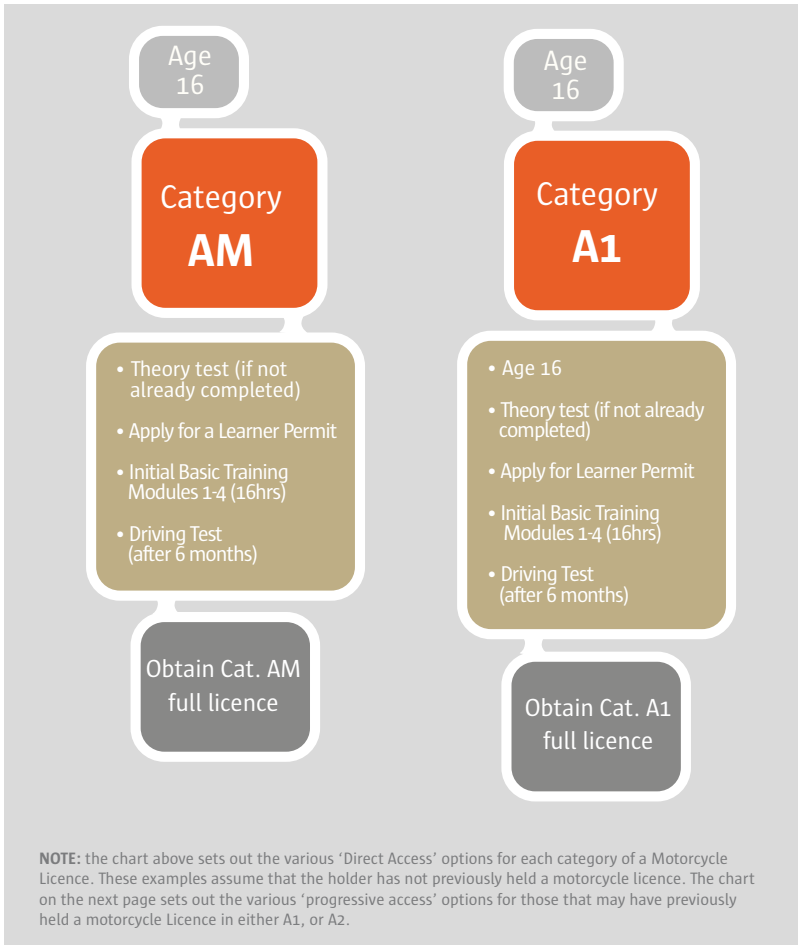
Once you have chosen the type of motorcycle you would like to ride you will need to:

- Sit and pass a theory test (if not already completed)
- Apply for and obtain a learner permit in the relevant category
- Take the required IBT on the appropriate motorcycle
- Pass a driving test (after holding a learner permit for six months)

The following chart shows the steps involved in obtaining either a learner permit or driving licence in each category:



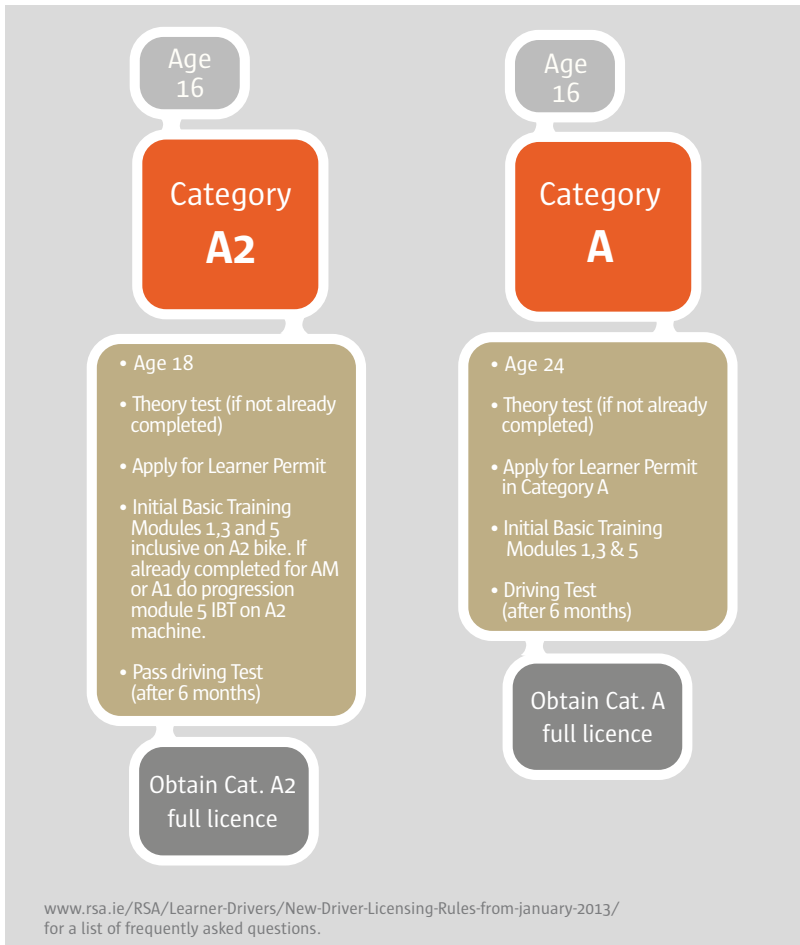
Process of obtaining a motorcycle driving licence through **Direct Access**



The following chart shows the steps involved in obtaining either a learner permit or driving licence in each category:



Process of obtaining a motorcycle driving licence through **Direct Access**



Progressive Access

What if I want to ride a bigger motorcycle?

What is “Progressive Access”?

Progressive Access

Progressive Access is a training option for motorcyclists who wish to obtain a licence for a higher powered motorcycle. The progressive access route is available to those motorcyclists who have held a motorcycle licence in a lower category (smaller machine) for a period of at least two years and who now wish to progress to a higher powered machine. Progressive access recognises the motorcyclists’ prior training and experience gained on the lower powered motorcycle, and allows the motorcyclist to progress without needing to retake a driving test. Progressive access is available when moving up from category, ‘A1’ to ‘A2’ or when moving up from category ‘A2’ to ‘A’.

Note:

Progressive access is not available between category ‘AM’ and ‘A1’. The progressive access route available will depend on your age and previous permit/licence entitlement. If the full licence held for the lower Category is limited to automatics (Code 78) then it is only possible to undertake the IBT training on an automatic bike in the higher Category in order to take the Progressive Access route.

The following chart shows the steps involved in obtaining a driving licence in a higher category by means of progressive access:



Process of obtaining a motorcycle driving licence through **Direct Access**

Progression from A1 to A2

In all cases:

- Min Age: 18yrs
- Apply for learner Permit in **Category A2** after holding a full **Category A1** driving licence for a minimum of two years.
- Complete Progression Module (Module 5) on an **A2** type motorcycle (11hrs)
- Having completed **Module 5** you may then obtain your full **Category A2** type driving Licence. Alternatively you may choose to undergo and pass a practical driving test in **Category A2** which leaves you with the options set out below;

Options

1. If you choose to undergo and pass the practical driving test on a **Category A2** type motorcycle and later on you choose to progress to a **Category A** type motorcycle (having held your **Category A2** driving licence for 2 years). You may proceed without the need to undergo a practical driving test on a **Category A** type motorcycle.
2. If you had not taken and passed a practical driving test to obtain your **Category A2** driving licence (that is, you obtained it by undergoing a progression module) you may not progress on without passing a practical driving test for a **Category A** type driving licence. In order to progress to a **Category A**, you must hold your **Category A2** type driving licence for at least two years, undergo the progression module (module 5) and pass a practical driving test on the **Category A** type motorcycle.

Notes

- If you are aged 24 yrs or over you may opt for the **Category A** 'Direct Access' route without the need to obtain a **Category A2** driving licence and wait the two years.

Visit www.rsa.ie/RSA/Learner-Drivers/new-Driver-Licensing-Rules-from-January-2013/ for a list of frequently asked questions.

The following chart shows the steps involved in obtaining a driving licence in a higher category by means of progressive access:



Process of obtaining a motorcycle driving licence through **Direct Access**

Progression from A2 to A

In all cases:

- Min Age: 20yrs
- Apply for learner Permit in **Category A**
- Complete Progression Module (Module 5) on an A type motorcycle (11hrs)
- Must have held a **Category A2** driving licence for a minimum of 2 years.
(Or be at least 24 years of age and opt for Direct Access to **Category A**.)

Options

1. If you obtained your **Category A2** driving licence by passing your practical driving test between **Categories A1** and **A2** you may then apply for your **Category A** driving licence without the need to undergo a further practical driving test.
2. If you obtained your **Category A2** driving licence completing the progression module from **A1** to **A2** you must then apply for and pass a practical driving test for your **Category A** driving licence.

Notes

- If you are aged 24 yrs or over you may opt for the **Category A** direct Access route, without the need to obtain a **Category A2** driving licence and wait the required two years.

The above notes set out options for progression for those who have previously held the relevant category of full driving licence for the required length of time. If your situation is not set out above please contact your local IBT trainer or the Road Safety Authority (Tel:096 25000) for further information.

Note: Further information is available on Direct and Progressive access options and driving licence rules see the RSA website www.rsa.ie

Once you have selected the best option for you – Direct Access or Progressive Access, you can then obtain your learner permit and complete the required IBT training.

The next step is your driving test. The driving test can be a stressful experience for some, and so it is important to familiarise yourself with the requirements of the driving test and how you can be best prepared for the test.

For further information about the day of your driving test, visit www.rsa.ie.

If you have been a qualified motorcyclist for a period of time, returning to biking after a long absence, or if you have just passed your test, you need to be aware that there are two types of driving licence in use: the paper licence, and the newer plastic card licences.

You need to ensure your licence covers you correctly for the type of motorcycle that you are currently riding. This is particularly important because of the new Category ‘A2’ (20-35kW) licence and the new Category ‘A’ (over 35kW) unrestricted licence.



On the day of your motorcycle test



Old type paper licence



Durning your motorcycle test



New type plastic licence

For further information on Licences visit www.rsa.ie.

So you have passed your test or have already been a full licence holder.

Learning continues throughout our lives. You don't stop learning the day you leave school. In any walk of life you benefit from further training and assessment of the skills you have learned.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong Learning is the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge. Learning is not something that only takes place in school, it can also apply to other areas in our lives. When we have learned to ride a motorcycle and have passed a driving test, we are only at the beginning of learning and building our skills and knowledge. It is the knowledge that we will gain through experience and time that will help us be safe road users. For those more experienced motorcyclists who hold a full licence, it is recommended that the learning process should continue. Ongoing education is very important in the development of the competent motorcyclist. Post-license training with an approved motorcycle trainer is a necessary part of lifelong learning.

Post-license training may include

- Riding in adverse weather conditions (being able to determine if the journey is absolutely necessary)
- Riding with a pillion passenger
- Group riding (be able to take into account the needs and abilities of other motorcyclists)
- Riding at night
- The different forces at work (centrifugal) and the effects that this has on traction
- Safe overtaking techniques including motorway riding
- Safe cornering techniques and counter steering
- Lower and higher speed cornering (bends)
- Track day events
- Off road riding

What do I need to do to stay safe?

“With power comes responsibility”

It is undeniable that motorcyclists, who account for about 2% of road users, make up a disproportionate number of road crashes and sadly also fatalities. (Approximately 12%)

You have the power and ultimately the responsibility to determine whether you become a statistic or a safe Motorcyclist.

The power is in your hands to either allow your newly acquired skill, proven by taking the driving test, to grow and develop into an enjoyable pursuit or to stagnate which could end up causing you and your family great pain and suffering.

There will come a time in your riding experience that will test your skill. This is a case of ‘when’ and not ‘if’.

In the case of an accident, it is no help to you or your fellow road users to have been “in the right” if you are dealing with an insurance claim, are injured, or worse.

So:

To live a long a happy life as a motorcyclist means you must be prepared.

To remain safe, motorcyclists must

- Be a safe motorcyclist
- Be a socially responsible motorcyclist
- Maintain a safe motorcycle
- Plan a safe journey
- Embrace and engage in lifelong learning

Motorcyclists, especially novice motorcyclists and those returning to biking, have an increased risk of being involved in fatal crashes and collisions when compared to other road users. Motorcycle training (pre-and post-driving test) helps to reduce the numbers of collisions and fatalities on our roads.

In recent years (before it was compulsory), over 50% of experienced motorcyclists acknowledged this and on their own initiative undergone training - before or after taking the Driving Test. (source; MAG survey)

Being a Safe Motorcyclist

There are a number of issues which contribute to being a safe motorcyclist:

- Understanding the importance of having good mental attitude
- Choosing and wearing suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- The motorcyclist should be familiar with the motorcycle being used (primary and secondary controls) – ABS non ABS etc.
- Has the motorcyclist been correctly trained or built up the necessary experience for the motorcycle they are riding



Vulnerability

You have less stability and crash protection on a bike than in a car

These disadvantages are slightly offset by having better visibility and maneuverability on a bike.

2 out of 3 (66%) motorcycle crashes involves a car

This is not surprising as 9 out of 10 (86%) of all crashes involve cars.

20 motorcyclists are involved in collisions on Irish roads each week which result in injury or death.

It really doesn't matter who is at fault when involved in an accident, the motorcyclist will more than likely suffer worst in a collision with another vehicle. So, how can we address our vulnerability in relation to other road users?

Control

All motorcyclists need to ask the following questions:

Am I in control.....of myself?

Do I concentrate when I am on the bike, observe all around and anticipate the actions of others? Do I refrain from riding if I have consumed alcohol or I am taking medication that could impair my performance? Is my gear appropriate for the weather conditions and personal protection?

Am I in control.....of the bike?

Is the machine properly maintained and roadworthy? Have I taken a training course to develop the skills needed to handle a motorcycle in a safe and socially responsible manner on the road?

Am I in control.....of my immediate surroundings?

Am I aware of the dangers posed by the actions of others, variations in the road surface and weather conditions?

Do I know how to deal with hazards?

Have I been trained to recognize, assess and manage hazards?

How will I know what is a hazard?

A hazard can be defined as anything that contains actual or potential danger to you, such as:

- Physical features such as junctions, hillcrests, roundabouts, bends, etc.
- Risks arising from the movement and position of other road users
- Problems arising from variations in road surface, weather conditions and visibility

Attitude & Behaviour

Good or appropriate attitude in the context of riding a motorcycle means recognising the responsibilities you have to yourself and others and taking them seriously.

Your attitude towards riding your motorcycle is absolutely critical in determining the likelihood of you having a crash.

Motorcycles are not inherently dangerous. **You** are the determining factor that makes it so – or not, depending on **your attitude**

Responsibility to yourself

Do you understand the importance of being respectful to other road users?

Are you in the proper frame of mind to undertake the journey?

Do you know how to avoid getting into conflict with other road users, even if they are in the wrong?

Responsibility to your family

Every time you go out on your bike your ultimate aim is to return home safely. Apart from the fact that there may be people who are socially and financially dependent on you, the manner in which you ride may cause unnecessary stress and anxiety to those close to you. Taking a proper training course and developing a safe and socially responsible attitude to your biking will help alleviate some of these concerns

Responsibility to pillion

It is a tragic fact that pillion passengers account for a disproportionately high number of motorcycle fatalities and serious injuries each year. If you carry a pillion, are you legally entitled to do so?

Do you ensure their gear offers adequate protection? Do you brief them before the ride and show consideration to them during the ride?

Responsibility to other road users

Do you know the Rules of the Road? Can you form an accurate assessment of what are safe, legal and considerate actions on a motorcycle? When taking up any activity it is important to learn the rules and find out what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to others. Motorcycling is fundamentally different from most other activities in that your life depends on knowing the rules. Attempting to use the full potential of a powerful machine on today's crowded roads is stupid, selfish, irresponsible and dangerous. A motorcycle with powerful performance capability will require a greater level of responsibility when deciding to use the extra power.

Socially Responsible Riding

All road users need to understand that we have a collective responsibility to each other when sharing the road, especially when riding a motorcycle. Riding a motorcycle or driving a car is not something that we do in isolation of everything else that is happening around us. A good understanding of the social

skills (attitude and behaviour) required by allroad users will help to develop a proper safety first attitude.

When riding a motorcycle there are many factors that affect the level of risk you may be exposed to. As road users, we all need to understand our own limitations and abilities, which in turn can affect our behavior, especially when riding a motorcycle.

So what makes a better, safer, socially responsible motorcyclist? It can be a combination of things such as:

Intellect: applying a good level of reasoning and understanding especially in relation to riding safely

Attitude: having a positive attitude towards your fellow road users

Emotions: not allowing emotions to interfere when riding a motorcycle or allowing any situation to lead you into doing something out of character

Actions: when emotions take over they can lead to inappropriate actions (acts of aggression for example)

The previously mentioned points can help us to remain a good safe motorcyclist with a healthy respect for our fellow road users. There are however other influences that can contribute to being an unsafe motorcyclist and have an impact on others.

For example:

Driving under the influence of drink, drugs and medicine

- Understand the effects that riding under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medicines can have on safe judgments that may affect others
- Understand the legal limits
- Understand the consequences of penalty points accruing on your license
- (See section on 'Legal Issues'.)

You may now be thinking there's a lot to take in and implement each time you ride your motorcycle – but it is very easily achieved on a structured training course with a qualified trainer that will show you the way to recognise and refine your knowledge and skills.



Safe Motorcycle

When purchasing a motorcycle, you are investing a lot of money in something you want to last a long time and be 'fit for purpose'. If it were anything else – from a suit of clothes to a new kitchen, you would expect it to fit. So your motorcycle should be the same.

When choosing to buy a motorcycle it is important to ensure that it is suitable for the motorcyclist in relation to, height, weight and power output. If the motorcycle is an older model, does it require an engineer report? Does the licence entitlement cover the power output of the motorcycle? Is the motorcycle maintained to manufactures recommendations. Regular maintenance and preventative care will go a long way to keep a motorcyclist safe and should also help ensure trouble free riding.

Have you read the owners handbook for your bike?

As the motorcyclist you are responsible for ensuring that the motorcycle you are riding is safe to use on the public road and that it meets all the legal requirements. Check the motorcycle over before the start of every journey using a system or routine to help remember what daily checks should be carried out.

The use of a mnemonic or acronym can help when performing routine safety checks checks.

P.O.W.D.E.R

Petrol, **O**il, **W**ater, **D**amage, **E**lectrics and **R**ubber

Petrol - make sure you have enough fuel for the journey. Does your machine have a reserve tank switch or just a warning light? Can you turn the fuel tap to reserve while on the move, without taking your eyes off the road? Do you know where the tap is?

Oil - How do you check the oil level on your machine? Most dry sump machines require you to check the oil when the engine is hot, while most wet sump machines should have their oil level checked with the engine cold.

Which type is yours? The owner's handbook will tell you how to perform this check correctly. Is your machine a two stroke or a four stroke? On a two stroke machine the two stroke oil should be checked every time you fill up with petrol, and on a four-stroke machine the procedure for checking the oil level varies. Is it dipstick or sight glass? Should it be checked on a hot or cold engine? Having this knowledge about your machine is incredibly important. Without it, you may be looking at a major repair bill for engine seizure and/or crash damage.

Water - How do you check the coolant level? Where is the filler cap? Opening the radiator cap when the engine is hot is inviting the risk of serious scalding, so ensure it is cool before removing. Is your machine water or air cooled?

Damage - Check the bike for signs of obvious damage. Are the extremities of the machine scuffed, such as indicators, bar-end weights and levers? Are the light lenses or mirrors cracked or broken? Noticeable buckles in the rims? Any drips or pools under the bike? Check for damage to the tyre walls and rim. Your machine could have been knocked over while unattended or it could have been

borrowed during the day without your knowledge.

Electrics - Are you sure all your lights and signals are clean and working? Don't wait until you need to use your horn to discover it is faulty, always check your signals before a journey. Is your faulty brake light inviting a rear end shunt? Do you know where the fuses are and can you replace them? Do you carry replacement bulbs?

Rubber - Your tyres form a contact patch with the road no bigger than the palm of your hand and are thus an essential component of motorcycle safety.

That contact is (literally) all that stands between you and the tarmac!



Too much air in your tyres reduces grip by making the tyre stand proud of the road surface. Too little air promotes instability because it allows the side walls of the tyres to flex. Do you know what your tyre pressures are and the legal minimum tread depth? If you are unsure, study the rules of the road. Remember if you are going to pull a nail out of one of your tyres, do it outside a Motorcycle repair shop so your puncture can be fixed on the spot. There are other parts of the motorcycle where rubber covered components may need inspection and attention from time to time, handlebar grips, foot pegs and brake hoses which would need to be checked for cracks and/or leakage of fluid.

An acronym can also be used when making final checks prior to start up.

F.I.G.S.

Fuel, Ignition, Gears and Start;

Fuel - Check you have enough fuel to undertake the journey planned. If a fuel tap is fitted to the machine, does the motorcyclist understand the different positions (on, reserve and off etc.)? On a two stroke machine is the oil/fuel mixture correct?

Ignition- Is there an immobiliser or an alarm fitted to the motorcycle? When ignition is switched to its 'on' position, (1st position) are all the relevant ignition lights operating? Some motorcycles have a built in self-diagnosis system. The speedo and rev counter needles will rotate all the way to the right and return to their standard position; this will normally indicate that all is o.k. Does your machine have this type of system? Is the motorcycle electric or kick start? Understand the importance of shutting off the ignition not the emergency cut off switch (red switch).

Gears- Ensure the motorcycle is in neutral. Even if the green neutral light is showing, knowing how to check for a false neutral is important.

Start- Having covered the different procedures above it should now be safe to start the motorcycle. It is important to always remember to retract stands, especially side stands. Most modern motorcycles are fitted with a switch that shuts down the engine if gear is engaged while the side stand is down.

Finally, you must ensure the maintenance schedule for your machine is adhered to. If you cannot do it yourself get a professional to do it or show you how. For instance, a badly maintained chain may snap or

jump off or incorrect levels of fluid in the final drive of a shaft driven motorcycle could lead to a serious collision. If the motorcyclist is unsure how to carry out this type of check, then they should refer the motorcycle to a suitably qualified competent person such as a main dealer.

The system described (P.O.W.D.E.R. or F.I.G.S.) can help ensure that nothing is left out when carrying out final checks or pre start up checks.

Safe Motorcyclist, Safe Motorcycle - now Safe riding!

Now you are familiar with keeping both you and your machine safe, you can begin to learn the elements of defensive riding, which are to:

- Look
- Anticipate
- Plan
- Execute safely (to follow through on the plan)

By consistently applying these elements and routines in your everyday riding you will be demonstrating defensive riding skills.

Hazard management skills

Every motorcyclist must have the knowledge understanding and skills to anticipate and react to all imminent or potential dangers. A motorcyclist must be able to manage all hazards and risks in a variety of traffic situations. This includes roads with variable speed limits, complex junctions and layouts, riding in busy built up urban areas. Any time you ride your bike you must be confident that the road space you occupy is safe and that the road space you are about to enter is also safe. This may seem like a tall order, but all you have to ask yourself is;

Do I have space and time to deal with an emergency?

If the answer is no, then find out why very quickly!

Some of the reasons why you do not have enough space and time to deal with hazards may include

- Inappropriate speed for the grip available
- The capabilities of the machine
- Your own abilities/over confidence
- The volume of traffic at that time

Lack of awareness

- Understand the movement and position of other road users, the road surface and weather conditions
- Can be dangerous for the motorcyclist who has had little or no training in the detection, assessment, prioritisation and management of hazards

Lack of anticipation/concentration

- Not being able to predict the possible future actions of others or changes on the road layout and condition ahead. This requires high levels of concentration, observations and forward planning
- Is the motorcyclist distracted, cold, and wet, under the influence of alcohol or taking medication? As a motorcyclist are you paying enough attention?

Lack of observations

- Due to the narrow profile of a motorcycle, a motorcyclist is more vulnerable and less visible than most other road users. Good and appropriate observations can reduce the risk when riding a motorcycle.

Forward planning/observations are a crucial element for the competent motorcyclist. A motorcyclist needs to be alert at all times on the approach to junctions, entrances and exits from premises, or in heavy traffic congestion. Scanning in the distance will help to build a picture of what is developing up ahead. This will allow the motorcyclist to, look, assess and decide how best to deal with the problem being presented. The only things that we can control is our own speed and direction. Since we cannot control the actions of other road users we must safely manage and prioritise the hazardous situations that they present as our journey unfolds ahead of us.

- Crash statistics show that some aspects of riding a motorcycle carry a higher risk than others.
- Study the points below and put them into your riding plan*.

*What is a Riding Plan?

- What can I see?
- What can I not see?
- What is reasonably likely to develop?

Areas identified as being of higher risk when riding a Motorcycle

- Speed
- Bends in the road
- Overtaking
- Riding at night
- Group riding

Speed

- Speed is the biggest contributing factor to road deaths in Ireland. Most surveys carried out in recent years have proved that speed is at the top of the list for those involved in serious or fatal road accidents. All motorists must comply with speed limits at all times. Are you familiar with the speed limits on the different types of roads, such as?
- Motorways
- National roads (Primary and Secondary)
- Non National roads (Regional and Local)
- Roads in built up areas, such as cities, towns and boroughs

The speed at which someone can travel will be determined by the speed limits and prevailing road and traffic conditions.

Bends in the road

What factors need to be taken into consideration when approaching bends 'to the left and right' on a motorcycle?

What are the;

- traffic conditions
- known hazards
- potential hazards
- condition of the road surface
- weather conditions
- cambers of the road

Understand;

- Not every bend is the same.
- Which direction is the bend going (left or right) and what position within your lane needs to be taken on approach
- Sharpness of the bend
- Is it an open or closed bend
- What speed is being carried on approach to bend
- How to adjust speed before the bend (braking and gearing down)
- The importance of avoiding braking in a bend if possible. If it is necessary to brake in a bend, especially if banked over, then use the rear brake only (avoid using the front brake)

- Do not accelerate or decelerate while in the bend (this can interfere with the stability and balance of the bike)
- When coming out of the bend and returning to an upright position on a clear road the power can be increased in a smooth and gradual manner

Overall safe cornering comes down to; gathering information on approach to the bend, taking up the correct position, adjusting speed as appropriate, selecting the correct gear, accelerating smoothly out of the bend.

If the incorrect position and speed is carried into a bend then the laws of physics will take over! Regardless of how skilled you are you will not win a battle against the laws of physics.

Overtaking

What factors need to be taken into consideration when overtaking 'vehicles or objects' on a motorcycle?

- Ask yourself firstly - is it necessary?
- Scanning: Identify the vehicle ahead and decide if you need to adjust your speed on approach
- Take every possible step to ensure that the driver of the vehicle you intend to overtake is aware of your presence

- Are you permitted to overtake at this particular point on the road (is it legal)?
- Are there any junctions, entrances or driveways up ahead
- Make sure that you have a clear opportunity to overtake
- Check for oncoming traffic
- Check to see if there is enough room ahead of the vehicle to complete the overtake manoeuvre and return safely to the normal riding position
- Having established that all ahead is in order it is critical to be aware of presence and speed of traffic behind you
- Just before executing the manoeuvre it is critical to apply the appropriate (OSM-PSL) routines
- Take up a safe position for overtaking
- Adjust speed smoothly and progressively
- Correct gear selected for overtake
- Execute the manoeuvre
- Take the appropriate observations when returning to normal lane position (clearance for the other vehicle)

Riding at Night

Whether you ride at night by choice, or you have to continue riding at night in order to complete a journey, a

number of factors need to be taken into consideration. Vision is an important factor when riding at night. It can be more difficult to drive safely on the road if your vision is impaired. It can be extremely difficult to see obstacles and hazards at night. It is a proven fact that the human eye takes a number of minutes to adjust to changes in light levels (dawn to dusk) or when exiting a tunnel for example. There are some precautions that can be taken to assist a motorcyclist when meeting on-coming traffic at night.



- Use only clear visor or glasses (not tinted) ensuring that they are clean and free of scratches
- If a windshield/screen is fitted to the motorcycle ensure that it is clean and free of scratches
- Ensure that all lights are in working order and correctly aligned (including fog lights if fitted)
- Ensure that all switch gear is in working order (dipped/high beam)
- Avoid looking at bright lights and being distracted. If an approaching vehicle is blinding you, slow down and try and avert your eyes by looking towards the edge of the road and away from the oncoming lights. If still being blinded then slow down significantly, and if necessary find a safe place to pull in and stop
- Always ride within the area that you can see to be clear (within the coverage of your headlight beam). Otherwise the braking distance, which is based on speed, reaction time and the road conditions, will exceed the distance you can see ahead
- When following another vehicle, always dip your headlights
- Gather information from other road users. Looking at the movement of other traffic up ahead can help to establish if the vehicle is going into a bend (left or right) or their brake lights could alert you to the sharpness of the bend
- Riding at night puts a particular strain on the eyes which in turn can lead to fatigue. If you are experiencing difficulty in staying focused, or if tiredness is affecting your levels of concentration, then you are becoming

a danger to yourself and other road users. You should find somewhere safe to pull in and stop, have some coffee, and only continue the journey if you are alert enough to do so.

Group riding

In general motorcycling is a solo activity. It can be very enjoyable to take out your motorcycle on a summer's evening and head out for a spin. For many motorcyclists, 'when the visor is closed,' it is an opportunity to shut off from other things in their life. This type of riding can lead to the motorcyclist riding in isolation of other road users.

Riding in a group takes on a different dynamic for different motorcyclists. You will have those who just like to be in the company of other motorcyclists. You may have those who wish to demonstrate their track skills on the public road (the 'show off'). Within any group of motorcyclists there are bound to be varying levels of skill, understanding and experience.

Here are some useful tips to remember before getting involved in group riding.

- Ensure you are a safe and competent motorcyclist before riding in a group

- Know and understand your own ability and limitations
- The group leader should allow for the limitations of various group members and set a safe comfortable pace for others to follow
- Never try to keep up to the same pace as a more seasoned motorcyclist
- Never be pressured into riding outside your comfort zone
- Understand the importance of riding in a correct formation (not in line with the back wheel of the motorcyclist in front)
- Always leave a safe distance between yourself and the motorcyclist in front

Pillion Passengers

It is the motorcyclist who ultimately must take responsibility for anyone riding pillion. Don't assume your passenger knows anything about the motorcycle or motorcycling. Take time to ensure your passenger is aware of the 'do's and don'ts' before riding pillion on your motorcycle.

Pillion passengers need to be properly protected while riding on the back of a motorcycle. It is therefore imperative that the pillion passenger wears the appropriate personnel protective equipment (PPE)



It is arguable that given their disproportionate representation in motorcycle fatality figures, pillion passengers deserve more protection than the motorcyclist.

Pillion passengers can have a serious effect on the balance and stability of a motorcycle.

They affect

- Balance (by changing the centre of gravity of the machine)
- Braking (the increased weight will increase stopping distance)
- Steering (the steering of the machine can become unpredictable with a pillion)
- Acceleration (the extra weight will decrease acceleration performance, perhaps critically on a smaller machine during an overtaking manoeuvre)
- Ground clearance (the extra weight may cause the machine to come in contact with the road, startling the motorcyclist and resulting in loss of control)

Most importantly, a motorcycle relies on balance for stability. If a pillion passenger moves about or leans the opposite way to the bike while cornering, it would create a hazard that may become so severe the motorcyclist cannot compensate, resulting in a crash. Do you have enough experience and confidence to deal with the previously mentioned effects on your machine caused by carrying a pillion? Are you legally entitled to carry a pillion passenger? Are you insured to carry a pillion passenger?

Pillion passengers must not

- Move about unnecessarily
- Put their feet down in corners or when the machine is stationary
- Lean against the direction the machine is banked towards
- Mount or dismount the machine without alerting the motorcyclist of their intention

The motorcyclist should ensure

- A pillion passenger wears appropriate clothing
- Their helmet is securely fastened (legally this is the motorcyclist's responsibility)
- They hold onto the motorcyclist or to a grab rail or saddle strap
- They lean with the machine

Longer Journeys

So you've got to the point where you want to go further. You want to take a long journey. Perhaps do a tour on your machine. Motorcycling is quite a physical activity as well as mentally tiring. Like any muscle – the skills needed to perform well need to be developed with practice. A weight lifter starts off with light weights and then goes on to the heavy ones. Treat your long distance riding the same.

Start off small and work up to the big distances.

There are a number of issues to be taken into consideration when planning a longer journey.

- Suitability of the motorcycle. – Is it capable of carrying luggage - weather protection (faired or un-faired) – the terrain to be covered etc.
- Is the motorcycle roadworthy and in good running order to take on the journey

- Is all documentation in order- license- insurance-tax etc.?
- Know and understand the rules and regulations which may apply in other jurisdictions (when abroad)
- Routes – for example, checking if you have planned the route properly
- Have you taken into account possible restrictions or hazards that may be encountered on the journey?
- Are the roads tolled?(delays can be caused at toll booths were the motorcyclist is not properly prepared causing an unnecessary hazard)
- Time – for example, can the journey be covered in a reasonable amount of time without riding an excessive amount of hours or at excessive speed?
- Distance – for example, checking if long distance can be reduced. Riding long distances without proper rest or breaks will put the motorcyclist at risk due to tiredness
- Weather conditions – have you taken into account the prevailing weather conditions
- Should routes be altered or changed due to poor road or weather conditions



- Has the motorcyclist the proper weather proof PPE to undertake the journey (very cold/wet weather can effect concentration levels drastically)
- Is the journey necessary or can it be rescheduled for another time

Legal issues

It is important for every motorcyclist to be aware of the law and to conform to all legal requirements.

Read the following section now and check you are compliant.

You must satisfy the following legal requirements before riding your motorcycle on the road.

- You must read and understand the rules of the road
- You must hold a valid learner permit/licence for your age and the type of motorcycle being ridden
- You must be properly insured
- Your motorcycle must be taxed
- *You must wear a securely fastened helmet
- *It is the motorcyclist's responsibility to ensure that the pillion also wears a securely fastened helmet

* The strap retention system;

Different makes and types of helmet come with different 'strap retention systems' e.g. D-rings, Clip and Buckle, Quick release etc. Whichever type of helmet is chosen it is essential to ensure that the retention straps fitted to the shell of the helmet have some type of restriction system to prevent the strap pulling through the buckle e.g. '**a stitched folded ridge across the end of the strap**'. The danger in not having such a restriction system on the straps is that in the unfortunate event of an accident or collision the helmet may offer little or no protection as the strap could potentially pull through the buckle releasing the helmet from the riders head resulting in death or serious injury.

Fixed fines and Penalty Points

Driving under the influence



- If the driver is a learner, novice or professional driver they are tested at the 20mg limit. If a driver is tested and they are above this limit, they are served with an on the spot fixed penalty notice, receive a fine of €200 and the person will be disqualified from holding a driving licence for a period of 3 months
- If the driver (any category, any vehicle) is tested at the 50mg limit and they are over the limit they will be issued an on the spot fixed penalty notice, receive a fine of €200 and 3 penalty points. Points will remain on the licence record for a period of three years, and any driver accumulating 12 points in a three year period will be disqualified from driving for a period of 6 months

For more information on driving under the influence of drink, drugs or medication e-mail info@rsa.ie website.

Fatigue

It is important to be aware of and understand the causes of fatigue while riding a motorcycle. Due to extreme tiredness, a driver may fall asleep while in charge of the machine. Riders may become too tired to ride for a number of reasons, such as,

- Not having enough rest before he journey
- Prolonged exposure to weather
- Prolonged exposure to noise
- Spending prolonged hours riding
- Riding at night



Consequences of road collisions

Adopting a socially responsible attitude when riding means having a clear understanding of the serious costs of fatalities and collisions

You may wish to consider the following:

- Collisions can have a devastating effect on the family when a life is lost
- Serious costs are involved if someone is left paralyzed after a collision
- There can be significant material costs due to property/vehicle damage following a collision

Fatalities & Injuries

The time period shown in the table below (2010 – 2017) gives clear examples of the dangers involved in seasonal riding. As motorcyclists we need to be fully aware that riding a motorcycle in ‘Spring/Summer (March to August) is a period of much higher risk than ‘Autumn/Winter (September to February) and is something that all motorcyclists need to take into consideration. Being aware and understanding the risks involved will help greatly in reducing these figures (as set out below) going forward so that when we look at new figures for the same time period in 2025 we should see a marked improvement.

Table. Motorcyclists killed and seriously injured by season 2009-2016

Season	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	2017
Spring/Summer	13	34	9	22	10	23	17	29	14	49	13	58	13	14
Autumn/Winter	2	3	0	2	3	2	3	3	0	2	1	7	0	0
Total	3	5	0	4	0	3	1	4	1	1	1	9	3	3

***Note: figures for 2016 and 2017 is provisional and subject to change. All figures include pillion passengers.**

Killed **Seriously Injured**

^2014 represents a break in the time series for serious injuries and is not comparable to previous years for trends analysis.

While statistics may seem like cold numbers, each represents a person’s life. This table clearly shows the differences/ variances in the amount of injuries and fatalities when comparing winter and summer months.

News bulletins on radio and television frequently share the tragic stories of death and injury on our roads. While we feel empathy for those directly affected we are also thankful that we have been spared such pain and suffering. The financial cost of death or serious injury can be measured precisely.

However it is much more difficult to measure the personal loss of a limb or a loved one. We cannot measure the pain caused to the family members and friends that are left behind.

The scene of a crash

If you arrive at the scene of a crash or are involved in a collision the general steps that should be taken are as follows:

- If you are involved in a collision you must stop (it is an offence not to)
- Summon assistance – ambulance, doctor, An Garda Síochána, fire brigade as quickly as possible. Dial (999 or 112)
- Provide them with information about the situation, exact location (number of vehicles involved and how many are injured) and any other specific information
- Do NOT attempt to remove a helmet from a motorcyclist unless you have been trained to do so safely
- Give first aid if required and you are competent to do so
- Keep any victims warm (coats, rugs should be placed round them)
- Do NOT move a casualty unless they are in a life threatening situation
- Do NOT give a casualty anything to drink
- Do NOT stay at the scene (unless you were directly involved) if there is adequate control and assistance



Eco-Riding

Eco-riding encourages people to ride using principals which encourage road safety and ensure savings in fuel consumption and a reduction in emissions. Eco-riding focuses on the effects our machines may have on the environment and how this affects others.

Avoiding noise pollution

- Over revving the engine - is it ever necessary?
- Fitting aftermarket exhaust systems- understand the effects that this can have on fuel economy and noise
- Using horns etc., in a built up residential areas

Eco friendly riding

- Understanding the methods that can be applied for eco-riding techniques including the effects that motorcycles have on the environment
- Avoid over use of lower gears
- Selecting an appropriate higher gear will use less fuel.
- This will also save you money!

Weight/Loads

Understand the effects of an overloaded motorcycle can have on the environment.

- Excessive or unnecessary weight will increase the amount of gear changing, contributing to higher fuel consumption

Summary

Whether returning to biking after a long absence or as a qualified motorcyclist wishing to enhance your riding skills. It is imperative to stay safe. This will ensure that you have many enjoyable years of riding ahead of you. Understanding the principals of safe and socially responsible riding as set out in this booklet will help you to achieve this goal.

Note:

With increased levels of experience and skill, seasoned motorcyclists must guard against complacency and avoid riding to the limits of their skill. Remember that on the public roads you must ride within the legal speed limit paying particular attention to the prevailing road and traffic conditions.

Remember: always expect the unexpected!

Working To Save Lives

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