


Motorcycles





Motorcycles



This chapter contains information on how to obtain a motorcycle driver's licence. It also provides safety information for the operation of a motorcycle.

Anyone who lives in Nova Scotia and wants to operate a motorcycle on our public roads and highways needs either a separate motorcycle driver's licence or an add-on to their regular driver's licence called an endorsement. This endorsement lets them drive a motorcycle as well as a regular passenger vehicle. One is for people who already have a driver's licence, and the other is primarily for those who do not. Both are explained in this section.

There are two ways to obtain this licence in Nova Scotia. The first is through a driver enhancement officer at a Registry of Motor Vehicle site or Access Nova Scotia centre. The second is through an approved motorcycle training course.

Visitors or newcomers who already have a valid motorcycle driver's licence, or a valid driver's licence with a motorcycle endorsement from another part of Canada or from another country, can drive in Nova Scotia for up to 90 days without getting a Nova Scotia motorcycle driver's licence. After that, you need a Nova Scotia licence.

People Who Do Not Have a Regular Driver's Licence

In Nova Scotia, anyone who wants to get a regular motorcycle driver's licence has to proceed through the Graduated Driver's Licence (GDL) program regardless of their age or driving experience. Learner motorcycle licenses can be obtained through a driver enhancement officer at a Registry of Motor Vehicle testing site, Access Nova Scotia centre, or an approved motorcycle training program.

8

Motorcycles

Level 1: Learner motorcycle licence (called Class LM)

For motorcycle drivers, this is the first level in the graduated licensing program. To get this licensing level, you have to do three things:

- 1 qualify for a Class 7 (learner's) licence
This is where every new driver has to start, because it covers the basic tests everyone must pass: vision, road signs, traffic and safety rules.
- 2 pass a written test on motorcycle safety rules
- 3 pass a "practical skills" test (sometimes called a balance test), which is a form of road test. It includes such things as a pre-trip check, basic motorcycle balance, and stopping/braking techniques
There is a road test fee for the practical skills test. You must make an appointment to take this test. However, if you take an approved motorcycle training course, the test is included.

All drivers, regardless of age, must pass through the provincial Graduated Driver's Licensing Program (GDL).

Remember that until you actually have your learner's motorcycle licence, you are not permitted to ride a motorcycle on any highway or public road in Nova Scotia.

Restrictions in this stage: There are three special driving restrictions when you drive with a learner's motorcycle licence:

- 1 Zero blood alcohol level
- 2 No passengers
- 3 Daylight driving only: you can drive ONLY during the period from 1/2 hour before sunrise until 1/2 hour after sunset.

Level 2: Newly licensed motorcycle driver's licence (called Class 6N)

For motorcycle drivers, this is the second level in the graduated licensing program. To get this licence, you have to do two things:

- 1 qualify for a learner motorcycle licence, by means of a balance test
- 2 complete a 6-month probationary period before taking an advanced road test with the department driver enhancement officer. (If you pass an approved motorcycle training course, this period is reduced to 3 months.)

Restrictions in this stage: There are two restrictions when you drive with a newly licensed motorcycle driver's licence:

- 1 Zero blood alcohol level
- 2 Driving Curfew: A newly licensed motorcycle driver is not allowed to drive between midnight and 5 am, unless you have a written exemption from the Registry of Motor Vehicles.
You must pay a fee to apply for this exemption.

A Class "6" or "6N" Motorcycle Licence is also valid as a Learner's Licence for passenger vehicles.

Level 3: Regular motorcycle driver's licence (called Class 6)

For motorcycle riders who do not want to get a Class 5N Licence, this is the third level in the Graduated Driver Licensing system. To get this licence you have to do two things:

- 1 Hold a current Class 6N motorcycle driver licence for a two-year period.
- 2 Complete an approved motorcycle driver improvement program. You must also provide the Department with proof of successful completion of a motorcycle driver improvement program.



People Who Already Have a Regular Driver's Licence

If you already have a valid Nova Scotia driver's licence (Classes 1,2,3,4, or 5), it can be upgraded to include driving a motorcycle by having an endorsement added. This means you still have the driving privileges given by your regular licence and you will have motorcycle driving privileges.

To obtain a motorcycle learner's licence in addition to your regular driver's licence, you must pass the following tests:

- 1 a written test on motorcycle safety rules
- 2 a "practical skills" test/balance test, which is a form of road test; you have to be on your cycle to take it. The test includes such things as a pre-trip check, basic motorcycle balance, and stopping/braking techniques.

After you pass those two tests, you will be issued a learner motorcycle licence. This indicates that you are now also qualified as a motorcycle learner.

Note: Whenever you are driving a motorcycle, you must always carry this learner motorcycle licence with you in addition to your regular driver's licence.

Restrictions: There are three conditions when you drive with a learner motorcycle licence:

- 1 Zero blood alcohol level
- 2 No passengers
- 3 Drive in daylight hours only

Motorcycle endorsements

There are two types of motorcycle endorsements:

- A Valid for the operation of any motorcycle
- D Valid for motorcycles with an engine size of 100 cc's or less

To get a motorcycle endorsement, you have to do three things:

- 1 qualify for a learner motorcycle licence (paper) by passing a motorcycle rules test and balance test
- 2 complete a practice period of three months (see previous page)
- 3 pass an "advanced skills" test which is another road test

If you completed an approved motorcycle training course, the practice period is reduced to one month, and the chief instructor will stamp your licence (LM). You will not be required to be examined by a driver enhancement officer, as both practical tests are included in the training program.

Once you have completed those three requirements, a motorcycle endorsement is placed on your regular driver's licence. This is in the form of the letter A or D added to your licence class at the Registry of Motor Vehicles. There is no further waiting period, and all driving restrictions are lifted.

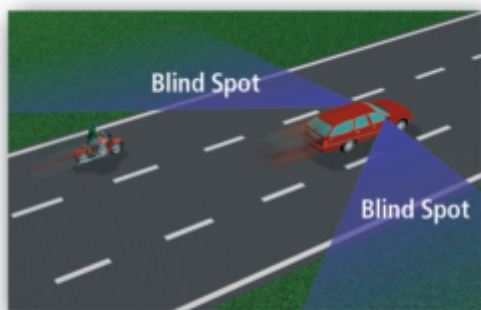
Motorcycle Safety Information

Safety First!

There are two essential elements of motorcycle safety: awareness and smoothness. Due to the consequences of a collision, it is important for a motorcyclist to identify potential highway and traffic hazards and to evaluate the level of risk posed by any given hazard. The best way to avoid trouble is to see it coming. Look ahead, anticipate, and take corrective action. It is also important to be smooth with the operation of the motorcycle's controls. If you are aware, you will protect yourself from the environment.

Think for a moment how you would handle these situations:

- Children are playing near the street and one runs out in front of you.
- Vehicles are approaching from either side of an intersection and one is not yielding.
- A train whistle sounds as you approach a railroad crossing.
- The road ahead of you changes from pavement to loose gravel.



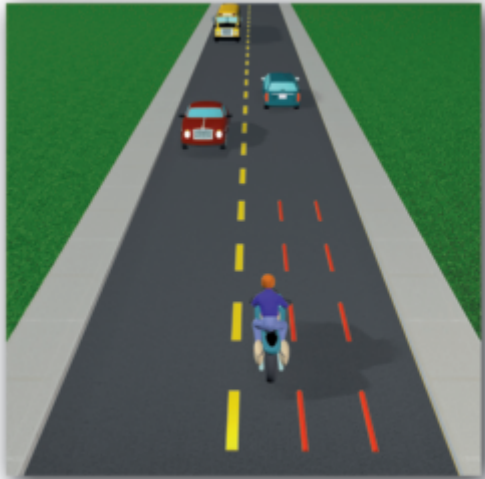
Blind Spot

It is equally important to learn to handle the motorcycle well. Remember, it takes time and practice to develop road and handling skills. You may want to practice your manoeuvring skills in a lot or private parking area. You must get permission from the property owner.

An important aspect of operating a motorcycle is to make yourself visible. Too many motorcycle crashes occur because motor vehicle drivers fail to see a motorcyclist. Be aware of the blind spots of other drivers. Don't ride in another vehicle's blind spot.

Warning! Even vehicles with side mirrors on both sides have blind spots.

Every motorcycle is entitled to the full use of a traffic lane and a full parking space. A motorcycle rider has a choice of where to drive in the lane. The best position is the blocking position, which is slightly to the left of the centre of the lane.



Blocking Position

8

Motorcycles

This discourages other drivers from trying to squeeze past you in the same lane. When riding on a freeway with three or more lanes, avoid the centre lanes because you don't have a blocking position.

Always wear a helmet

A helmet is your only protection against a serious or fatal head injury. Both you and your passengers must wear helmets that are approved helmets that are properly adjusted and securely fastened. All helmets must meet one of the following standards: Canadian Standards Association Standard; Snell Memorial Foundation; United States of America Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard - 218; (DOT) American National Standard Specifications for Protective Head-gear for Vehicular User 290.1; or the British Standards Institute. All helmets must bear the appropriate monogram or symbol.



Wear a Helmet

Choose a helmet with a bright colour. Ideally, it should have reflective material on the back and sides. Make sure that the helmet is properly fitted to your head. When you put it on, it should be snug. Securely fasten the strap. Full-faced helmets usually offer the best protection.

Always wear eye protection

Windshields or fairings are no substitute for proper eye protection. Momentary blindness from rain, wind, dust, insects, or debris can cause you to lose control. Goggles or clear face shields designed for your helmet provide the best protection. Eyeglasses or sunglasses provide some protection. Tinted shields should not be worn in low light situations or at night, and "bubble" shields may distort your vision.



Helmet

Always wear protective clothing

Cover up from head to toe. Leather is the best protection against natural hazards like insects or debris and provides

the best protection from injury in case of a fall. Heavy nylon and denim are acceptable alternatives to leather. Your clothing should fit snugly, with no hanging flaps or laces, and should allow sufficient movement to operate the controls. Clothing should be warm and ventilated. Bright colours and reflective items make you more visible. Boots or shoes should be sturdy and high enough to protect your ankles, and leather gloves should be worn.



Clothing

Before You Start Your Motorcycle...

Licence, registration, and insurance

Always carry your licence, registration, inspection, and insurance liability card.

For safe operation, you must maintain your motorcycle in sound mechanical condition. You should routinely check the motorcycle and get it repaired at the first sign of a problem. Here are some things to look for:

Tires and wheels

Check tread depth, sidewall condition, air pressure, rim condition, spoke tension, axle nuts, and cotter pins.



Safe Operation

Brakes

Check both the front and rear brakes for wear and adjustment. Check brake fluid levels and check for possible leaks.

Clutch, throttle, and choke

Make sure the controls work smoothly and that the throttle snaps closed when released.

8

Motorcycles

Lights

Check lighting system regularly for defects; keep all lights clean. Check all four turn signals to make sure they flash properly. To be seen during the day, ride with your headlight on even if your motorcycle is not equipped with a daytime running light. Test your high and low beams at night. Test your brake controls and make sure the brake light is working properly.

Mirrors

Adjust your mirrors before driving. Replace broken or damaged mirrors immediately.

Electrical system

Check the condition of your battery. Make sure battery connections are tight and terminals are clean. Make sure battery fluid levels are correct.

Test your horn

Chain or belt

Check the chain or belt for proper tension. Review your owner's manual for adjustment and maintenance.

Lubrication system

Check and maintain oil levels. Look for leaks.

Suspension

Check that the suspension operates smoothly and that there are no fluid leaks.

Major nuts and bolts

Check for fasteners that have vibrated loose. Ensure that everything is fastened securely, such as turn signals and foot rests.

Safety Tips

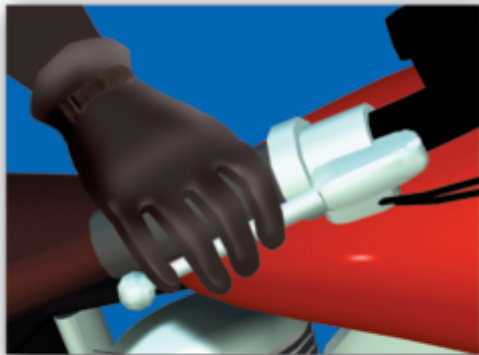
Starting Your Motorcycle

Develop a routine for starting the engine to ensure that nothing important is missed. Think of FINE-C:

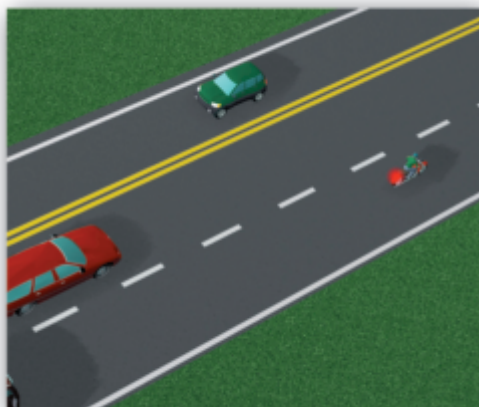
- F** Fuel Does the tank have enough fuel for the trip? Is the fuel valve turned on?
- I** Ignition Is the ignition key turned on?
- N** Neutral Is the transmission in neutral? Roll the motorcycle backward or forward while sitting on it, to ensure that it is in neutral.
- E** Engine Cut-Off Be sure the "shut off" switch is turned to the "Run" position or the motorcycle will not start.
- C** Choke/Clutch If the engine is cold, you may have to apply the choke. It is always a good habit to disengage the clutch when starting the engine.

Effective Braking

Your motorcycle is equipped with front and rear brakes. The front brake provides 70 per cent of your stopping power.



Use all Fingers



Never Ride
the Brake

You need both brakes to stop effectively, so get into the habit of using both brakes every time you slow down or stop. This practice will help you develop proper skills and instincts for when you must react to an emergency situation.

Here are some tips to effective braking:

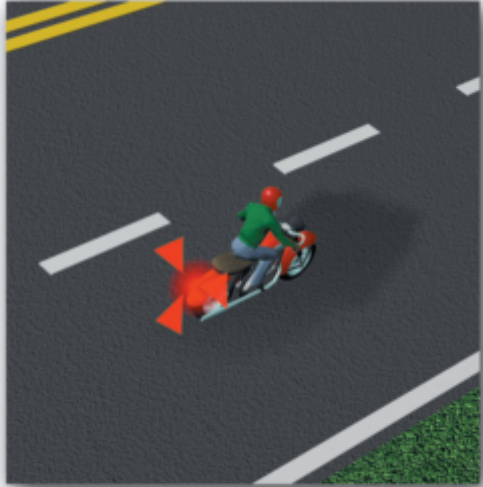
- Always be ready to stop.
- Learn to downshift properly. Downshifting uses engine compression to reduce speed.
- Use all your fingers to apply the front brake.
- Apply both brakes at the same time.
- Do all your braking before you get into a turn until you learn the cornering limits of your motorcycle. Use caution on wet surfaces, gravel roads, and dirt layers on paved surfaces.
- Never ride the brake. This turns the brake lights on and confuses other drivers. It also causes unnecessary wear on your brakes.

- Because you can stop more quickly than most other vehicles, constantly check your mirrors for someone following too closely. Flash your brake light to alert drivers behind you. Always leave plenty of distance between you and the vehicle ahead in case you need space to avoid a crash.

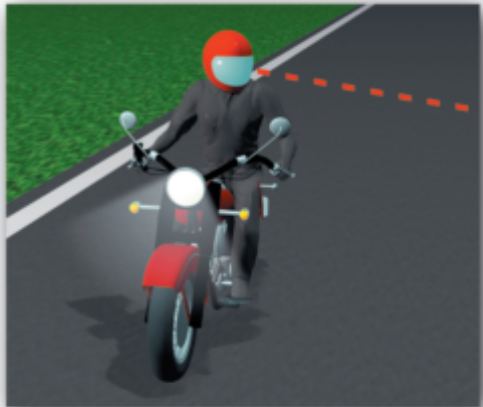
Shoulder checks

When you plan to start, stop, or change direction in traffic, it is important to check your blind spots. Turn your head and glance over your shoulder at the traffic behind you in the next lane.

On a roadway with more than two lanes, check the far lanes as well as the lane next to you. Another driver may be moving toward the same space you are.



Flash Brake Light



Turn Your Head

8

Motorcycles

Safety zone

Always leave plenty of space between you and the vehicles around you so that you have time to react and some place to go. Space will allow you to see traffic and road conditions ahead more easily, provide room to stop safely, and give you a buffer zone in order to keep a vehicle from hitting you from behind.

A two-second following distance rule is the minimum distance you should maintain while following another

vehicle under ideal conditions.

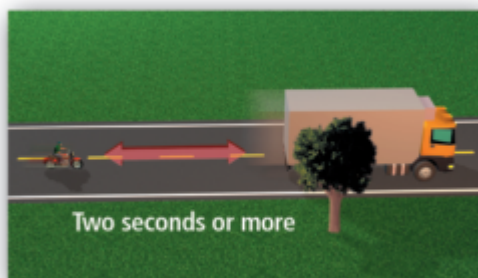
The rule works this way: as the vehicle ahead of you passes an object, such as a road sign, power pole, or guard rail, begin counting to yourself "one thousand and one, one thousand and two."

If you pass that same spot before you finish the two-second count, you are following too closely.

In unfavourable conditions or as you increase speed, always allow more time and space between yourself and other vehicles, or in other words, increase the two-second following distance rule.



Leave Plenty of Space



Two-second Rule

At 50 km per hour, you have gone 15 to 20 metres before your brakes start to take hold, and 30 metres or more before you are stopped! (That's the length of a basketball court.)

At 100 km, you have gone 30 to 40 metres before the brakes take hold, and about 90 metres before you are stopped—that's almost the length of a football field.

Sudden stops

When you have to stop quickly, don't panic. Look and steer in the direction you want to go. Try to keep the bike upright and in a straight line. Apply each brake as hard and as smoothly as you can without locking either wheel. If a wheel locks up, release the brake slightly and then reapply pressure. If you are forced to brake when the front wheel is turned, do it gradually. Give more emphasis to the back brake.

You need practice to know how much braking pressure you can apply without locking the wheels and skidding. In an emergency, draw in the clutch, gear down, apply the front brake, and push down on the back brake all at the same time. This will help you keep your balance and stop you in the shortest distance. Remember, if you take your feet off the footrests for balance, only your front brake remains on.

8

Motorcycles

Slippery surfaces

Any number of things can combine to make the road surface slippery, such as

- painted surfaces (lines and arrows), particularly when newly painted
- grease, oil, and rubber buildup or deposits on the roadway
- metal surfaces, such as railway tracks and bridge decks
- fallen leaves
- sand and gravel, which tend to collect where the road meets the shoulder
- wet wooden surfaces

Note: The highway is likely to be slippery for the first few minutes after it starts to rain, or following light drizzle!

Best practices when encountering slippery surfaces:

- Avoid driving. Pull off the road.
- Reduce your speed and use both brakes.
- Avoid sudden manoeuvres.
- Be smooth.



Reduced Visibility

Some Other Safety Factors

Intersections

Most collisions between vehicles and motorcycles happen at intersections! Other drivers often have a hard time seeing a motorcycle, especially when the motorcyclist is making a left turn.

Good motorcyclists are careful to maintain the proper blocking position to increase visibility. Proper positioning at intersections helps to prevent vehicles from moving up beside you and crowding you. Crowding not only restricts your visibility but can prevent you from being seen by other drivers.



Sight Lines

At an intersection where a lane is designated for right turns, maintaining your blocking position is more difficult. Here your blocking position is closer to the centre of the lane. As you approach the intersection, do a shoulder check, move to the centre of the lane, and stop if required. Make your right turn, and then, after making a shoulder check, move into the proper blocking position.

8

Motorcycles

Carrying passengers

If you have a learner motorcycle licence, you cannot carry passengers at any time! Once you graduate from that stage and you start to carry passengers, remember that the extra weight changes the way a motorcycle handles: its balance and the way it turns, speeds up, and slows down. You are responsible for your passenger's safety.

Here are some tips for carrying passengers:

- Your motorcycle must be equipped with a rear seat and footrests to carry a passenger.
- Don't assume the passenger knows what to do. Tell the passenger to sit as far forward as possible without crowding you, and to hold on tightly to your waist or hips.
- Make sure your passenger understands that he or she must keep both feet on the footrests at all times, even when the motorcycle is stopped.

As you are driving, be sure to alert your passenger of your intentions so that there are no surprises. Allow first-time passengers to get used to riding by first taking them out at slow speeds in light traffic.



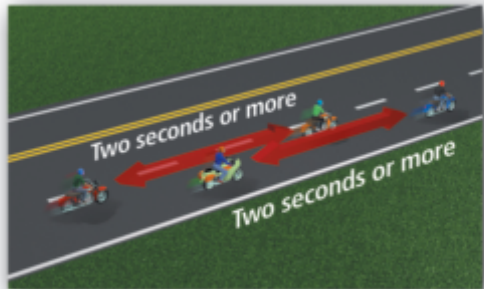
Lean into Curves

Explain to your passengers about leaning their body into curves and corners with you. If they lean the other way or try to keep their body upright they will make the bike unstable. Have your passenger look over the shoulder in the direction of the turn. Operate at a slower speed than usual, particularly on corners, curves, or bumps. Begin to slow down earlier than usual when you approach a stop. Allow more room between the motorcycle and the vehicle in front of you.

Group riding

Group riding is acceptable, but you have no special rights on the road. Follow these guidelines for making group riding a safe experience:

- Select an experienced leader, and put inexperienced riders behind the leader.
- Limit the size of your group to four or five bikes. If you have more than that, break into two or more smaller groups.
- Never ride side-by-side. Riding side-by-side in the same lane is very unsafe and could limit your ability to manoeuvre in an emergency situation.
- Use the two-second rule. Keep a safe distance between bikes.



Group Riding

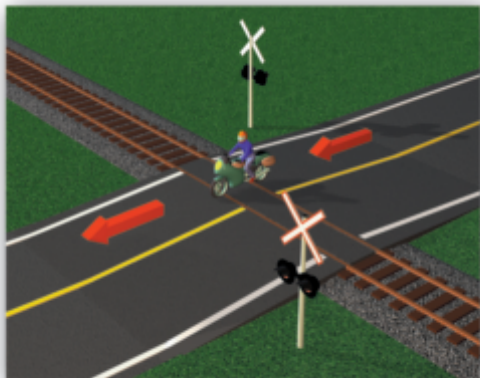
Plan ahead. Make sure everyone knows the route. Let the last bike set the pace. No one should have to race to keep up. Use your mirrors to keep an eye on the bike behind you.

8

Motorcycles

Railroad tracks

It is not necessary to change your path when crossing railroad tracks that are at an angle of 90 degrees or less to the highway you are travelling on. If the tracks are closer to parallel to your path, then make an angled approach. Don't try to edge your way across the tracks. Avoid heavy braking or swerving.



Crossing Tracks

Skids

Most motorcycle skids are caused by braking too hard. This braking usually affects the rear wheel, creating a skid.

To correct a skid:

Rear wheel aid: Steer slightly in the direction of the skid, letting up on the brake so the wheel can turn. It is best to have the motorcycle as vertical as possible when the brake is released.

Front wheel aid: Release the front brake immediately and smoothly.

If the rear wheel skid is caused by over-acceleration, correct it by gradually closing the throttle. Sudden closing of the throttle may make the problem worse.



Correct Skids

Wobble and weave

Wobble and weave are unstable reactions of the motorcycle, usually caused by an aerodynamic imbalance, a mechanical problem, or incorrect loading of the motorcycle. A wobble is a rapid shaking of the front wheel from side to side.

A weave is a slower movement of the rear end from side to side, usually with a bit of lean at the same time, often occurring at higher speeds.

Don't apply the brakes, as this could make the wobble worse. Never accelerate. Do not try to fight the wobble. Grip the handlebars firmly, without locking your arms. Ease off the throttle. This will help to reduce the instability. Pull off the road when possible and stop.

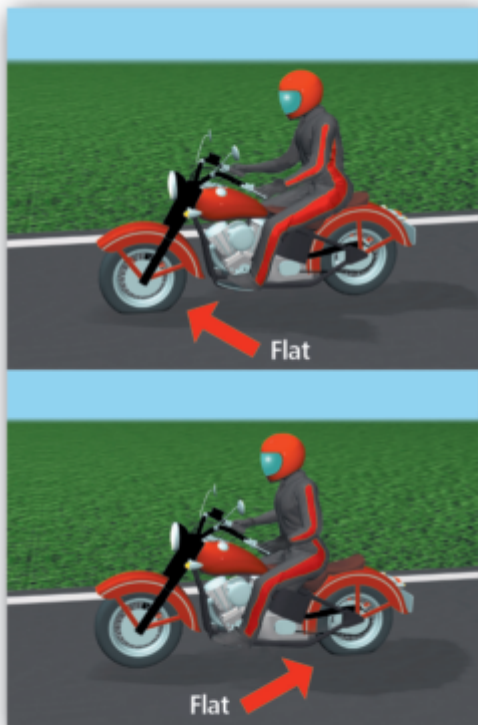
Check for unequal tire pressure or design, bent or misaligned wheels, loose spokes, an improperly mounted windshield or fairing, or an unbalanced load. Have the motorcycle thoroughly checked by a mechanic.

Blowouts

If you have a blowout, you will need to react quickly to keep your balance. A front wheel blowout is dangerous since it affects your steering. You cannot always hear a tire blow. You should be able to detect a flat from the way the motorcycle reacts. If the front tire goes flat, the steering will feel heavy. If the rear tire goes flat, the back of the motorcycle will tend to slide from side to side.

What to do if you have a blowout:

- Hold on tightly and try to steer straight ahead.
- Don't use the brake. Gradually ease off the throttle, letting the motorcycle coast.
- With a front-tire blowout, shift your weight as far back as you can. If the rear tire blows out, stay where you are.
- Wait until the motorcycle is going very slowly, then edge toward the side of the road and coast to a stop.
- If you must use a brake, select the brake controlling the good tire.



Handling Blowouts

Stuck throttle

If your throttle sticks, take the following steps:

- Immediately squeeze the clutch lever.
- Rotate the throttle back and forth several times.
- If you can't close the throttle, it is best to turn off the engine with the emergency shut-off switch or the ignition key.
- Steer off the road and stop.

Avoiding obstacles

Trying to stop quickly may not be enough to keep you from hitting something in your path. If a piece of debris or a pothole appears suddenly in front of you, the only way to avoid a collision might be to take quick evasive action. The trick to making a quick turn is to get the motorcycle to lean quickly in the direction you wish to turn. To get the motorcycle to lean quickly, counter steer. If you wish to turn right, push on the right handgrip. This will cause the front wheel to move slightly left. The result forces the bike to lean to the right. As the motorcycle begins to lean, turn the handlebars in the direction in which the bike is leaning to keep from falling over. Remember to be smooth.

8

Motorcycles

Riding over objects

Sometimes you may see an object in your path too late to steer around it. If this happens, follow these basic rules:

- Hold onto the handlebars tightly.
- Keep a straight course.
- Stand slightly on the footrests.
- Shift your weight back.
- Accelerate slightly as the front wheel reaches the object.
- Decelerate and move your weight forward as you go over the object.
- Resume your normal seating position and normal speed.

Tips

General tips for riding and controlling a motorcycle:

- Use high-speed highways only if you can keep up with the flow of traffic.
- Never lend your motorcycle to an inexperienced driver or to someone who does not have a valid motorcycle licence.
- For motorcycle models without daytime running lights, always turn on your headlights.
- When you come for your road test, make certain your bike is the right size. If your bike is too large, you may have difficulty controlling your bike and passing your test.