

RIDING A MOTORBIKE – THE 10 GOLDEN RULES



Over recent years, more and more people have been choosing to travel by motorbike. Riding a bike is an exciting experience, but for it to stay that way, safety must come first. The better trained and informed you are, the less chance you have of an accident. This brochure outlines the 10 golden rules that you must always bear in mind.

⇒ Did you know?

37% of accidents involving motorbikes are caused by the motorcyclist, as a result of inattention or lack of ability.



Human error is to blame in the vast majority of accidents involving motorbikes. These mistakes are sometimes made by the motorcyclist, sometimes by other road users. By following the 10 golden rules outlined below, you give yourself the best possible chance of avoiding an accident.

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A better awareness of motorcyclists in traffic can help car drivers make an active contribution to avoiding accidents. Here are a few points to note.

1) Think ahead

⇒ Did you know?

41% of accidents between cars and motorbikes occur at junctions.

When riding a motorbike you should always be watchful. Observe what is going on around you, assess what might happen and adapt your behaviour accordingly. You must be constantly on the alert, even more so than in a car. So look well ahead and keep an eye on other road users.

Always slow down when approaching a junction or crossroads, even if you have priority. Motorists can have trouble noticing a bike and gauging its speed. Be ready to stop.

2) Be seen

⇒ Did you know?

In 70% of accidents where the car driver was at fault, not seeing the motorcyclist or seeing him too late was the main contributory factor.

Be properly equipped

It is essential to be as visible as possible on a bike. So a choice of bright colours for your equipment and helmet is highly recommended. If you do prefer dark colours, at least make sure you have reflective bands on your clothing.

CAUTION: it is a legal requirement to keep your headlights and rear red light permanently on. However, riding with your full headlight beam on is strictly forbidden and also highly irritating for other road users.



Your position on the road

Unlike motorists, motorcyclists are not obliged to keep to the right. They can use the full width of their lane when the road is divided into lanes. This helps to give them a better view of the traffic and to be more visible to motorists in the rear-view mirror.

3) Follow the Highway Code

⇒ Did you know?

In a survey carried out in France, 69% of motorcyclists said they were more likely to take risks when riding a bike than in a car.

By following the Highway Code, you not only reduce the risk of being involved in an accident, you also encourage other road users to show you more respect.



Be especially careful about the following points:

- systematically indicate the slightest change of direction using your indicators

and do not pull out suddenly;

- keep to the speed limit. If your speed is excessive or inappropriate, you not only limit your ability to react to unexpected events but also increase the risk of taking other road users unawares;
- do not weave between cars, especially on motorways

4) Learn to brake effectively

It is better to use both brakes at the same time, applying the right pressure on the controls.

If you have to brake hard, keep your arms straight out on the handlebars and squeeze the bike between your legs to control it better and avoid going over the top. In wet conditions, you should brake less hard to keep control of the vehicle and maintain your grip on the road surface.

5) Beware of over-confidence

Even experienced motorcyclists can make mistakes. Always keep your speed down, especially in bends. Even though the biggest thrills come from those corners, you should remember to be careful.

Be especially careful of blind corners with reduced exit visibility. Adjust your speed and enter the curve as late as possible to get the best view. Always remember that a puddle of oil or diesel or even a handful of gravel on the road can easily send you sliding.



6) Be extra-careful when moving up a line of traffic

⇒ **Did you know?**

Under the Highway Code, you are only actually allowed to move up a line of traffic when the vehicles you are passing are stationary.



This practice is becoming more and more common. It does however remain highly dangerous because of the limited visibility (blind spot in other road users' rear-view mirror).

When you move up a line of vehicles that is travelling at a moderate speed (less than 50 km/h), adjust your speed and make sure that the difference between your own speed and that of the line of vehicles is small (no more than 10 km/h).

Move back into line as soon as the traffic reaches normal speed again (from 50 km/h) and don't forget to use your indicators when you pull back in.

7) Don't get caught out

Road markings, manhole covers, dead leaves, gravel and wet cobblestones make no difference to motorists, but they can be a major hazard for motorcyclists, causing you to lose your balance and fall.

Expect a gust of wind when you pass a lorry. Similarly, you can expect crosswinds to unbalance you when going over a bridge. The same phenomenon can result from gaps in roadside housing.

8) You may be on a bike, but you can't ride just anywhere

Keep off:

- hard shoulders;
- lanes cordoned off for roadworks;
- hatched zones and asphalted areas between the central reservation and the white line marking the left-hand edge of the motorway.

This kind of behaviour is dangerous and antisocial. Debris of all kinds is common and can cause a puncture or a fall.

Don't use your bike if you don't feel well. Riding a bike requires more physical effort and concentration than driving a car.

9) Don't hesitate to take extra lessons

It is important to be able to perform emergency manoeuvres properly (swerving, emergency stops, etc.). A screening session, or extra lessons, will make you more aware of your own possibilities and limits and is highly recommended. This doesn't just apply to beginners, but also to those who only ride during the summer months and need to get back in the saddle.

10) Be properly equipped

On a bike there is no bodywork to protect you. Whatever the season and the outside temperature, you must wear proper clothing (ideally leather) to protect each part of your body effectively in the event of a fall. Feet and hands are particularly exposed, so wear high boots and leather gloves. At the same time, avoid linings made from synthetic fabrics like nylon which could melt into the skin in a fall and cause severe injury.



BIKER LANGUAGE: A FEW POINTS TO NOTE



Greeting sign

Motorcyclists greet each other with the left hand (two fingers in a "V"). When one motorcyclist overtakes another, he uses his right foot, with his right hand on the brake and the accelerator. This sign also serves to thank motorists for letting them through. In urban areas, these signs may be replaced by a nod of the head.

Flashing your lights

Used to call attention to a hazard. If combined with a downwards hand signal it means "slow down".

D'après un document et l'aimable autorisation de l'ISBR - Belgian Road Safety Institute
Website: www.isbr.be

Another interesting site: jesuispour.be

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