



6 Tips for Staying Safe on Your Motorcycle

Motorcycles can be thrilling to ride, but operating a motorcycle safely requires skill, practice and awareness. If you have a motorcycle or are thinking about buying one, it's essential to learn to operate it safely. Here are six tips to help you do just that.

Take a motorcycle safety course. Department of Defense regulations require you to complete a motorcycle safety course before you can register or operate your bike, on or off your installation. Check with your installation's safety office about [Motorcycle Safety Foundation](#) basic safety courses offered at your location. Ask your insurance company about any discounts you may qualify for when you successfully complete the course.

Use protective gear. When riding a motorcycle, only your protective gear separates you from the open road – literally speaking. The right clothing and gear protects you from the elements and flying debris, while offering some protection in the event of a crash. The DoD Installation Management Agency has established minimum criteria for protective gear, but individual installations may add requirements. Check with your installation's safety office for more information. The minimum safety gear requirements include the following:

- Helmet – meeting federal impact standards and fitting properly
- Protective eyewear – shatter-proof, scratch-free goggles; if your helmet does not have a full face shield
- Protective clothing – long sleeves and long pants along with a thick jacket; preferably leather, with zippered side-vents
- Gloves – thick and full-fingered; made for motorcycle use
- Sturdy footwear – leather shoes or boots that cover the ankles, with oil-resistant soles
- Highly visible clothing – brightly colored for daytime riding and reflective at night; with reflective tape on the helmet, jacket and backs of the boots

Stay alert. In nearly two thirds of motorcycle accidents, where a second vehicle is involved, the other driver is at fault. Be aware of your surroundings and drive defensively.

- Keep your eyes on the road ahead of you, checking your side and rear views frequently.
- Expect the unexpected, and be prepared to react when it happens.
- While driving, keep your headlights on so other drivers can see you.
- Use your horn, if necessary, to get the attention of other drivers.
- Keep a safe distance by allowing at least a two-second lag time between your motorcycle and the car in front of you. Depending on your speed, you may want to allow more space.
- Be aware of your blind spots, and make sure other motorists can see you in their rearview mirrors.
- Don't ride if you've been drinking or are too tired to stay alert.

Be prepared for bad weather. If you're riding and the weather turns bad, be careful.

- Practice driving in windy and rainy conditions; without putting yourself, and other drivers, at risk.
- Remember, the road is the most slick when the rain first begins. As the rain continues, and washes oil from the road, conditions will be less slick; but a wet road is always less safe than a dry surface.

Access

tips on how to [drive safely at home](#) after you return from

Keep your motorcycle tuned up. Regular maintenance heads off potential problems.

- Read your owner's manual.
- Check tire pressure before riding.
- Check brake light and turn signals.
- Check the cables for kinks and stiffness.
- Keep a toolkit and the owner's manual with you when you ride.

Know your resources. You can find more information on motorcycle safety on the following sites:

- [Army Motorcycle Information](#)
- [Marine Corps and Navy Motorcycle Rider Training Registration](#)
- [Air Force Rider](#)
- [Motorcycle Safety Foundation](#)

[Home](#) after you return from combat duty.