

Chapter Educator

VISIBILITY

Part of riding safely is making sure that you and your bike are visible to other drivers at all times.

There is a lot more to riding safely than you might think. Even riders who have logged thousands of miles on the road can benefit by brushing up on their safety skills. The conscientious rider will have visibility, positioning, and S.E.E. strategies so ingrained in his or her mind that they become second nature. That's when the riding really gets good.

POSITIONING

Maintaining the proper lane position is a crucial part of an effective street strategy.

Maintain a space cushion on all sides of your motorcycle. This helps provide adequate reaction time if evasive maneuvers are necessary. It also helps create an "escape route."

In general, when riding alone on a straight road most people prefer to ride in the left third of the lane. It provides you the best line of sight for the road ahead, and makes you most visible to oncoming traffic. However, always be prepared to make adjustments based on road conditions and traffic patterns.

Always leave a minimum of two seconds between you and the vehicle in front of you. The ideal following distance will vary depending on road conditions and other factors.

S.E.E. (SEARCH, EVALUATE, EXECUTE)

Search, Evaluate, and Execute – the mental process for making judgements and taking action in traffic.

Recently, the MSF introduced a simplified version of the mental process for making judgments and taking action in traffic: S.E.E., for Search, Evaluate, and Execute, which is used in the MSF Basic Rider Course.

SEARCH

As you ride, scan the area aggressively, including the areas along the road and behind you. Check your mirrors frequently to maintain a constant awareness of your surroundings.

EVALUATE

Use that information to evaluate the situation, predict what unexpected hazards and challenges may arise, and actively formulate strategies to deal with them.

EXECUTE

Adjust your speed and positioning accordingly, while communicating your intentions to others.

STAYING SHARP

Know your own riding limits, and keep in mind the basic rules of motorcycling safety.

For some, knowing your skill limits may mean keeping your bike at home when the weather is threatening. For others it may mean choosing a route that avoids congested areas or timing your departure to avoid rush hour traffic. It all depends on your own skill set and comfort level.

KNOWING YOUR LIMITS There are some rules that apply to all riders, no matter the skill level. Riding in an overly aggressive manner is never acceptable. There's no excuse for jeopardizing others by pushing your limits on the street. Riding while tired is another risk that no rider should take. When you're tired, your reflexes are slowed and your judgment is not as strong - a combination that no motorcycle rider can afford. Other, more obvious examples of behavior that should be avoided under any circumstances are talking on a cell phone while riding and looking at a map while you're in the saddle. If you get off course, pull over to a safe area to consult your map. Remember, out on the open road, you must take responsibility for all your actions, and keeping yourself safe should always be your number one concern.

ALCOHOL LIMITS

Using alcohol or other drugs can have a deadly effect on your ride.

A MATTER OF TIME

Contrary to popular belief, drinking strong coffee, splashing cold water on your face, or "getting some fresh air" will not help you sober up. These things may help you temporarily feel less impaired, but the only thing that eliminates alcohol from your system is time. That said, there's only one sure way to keep alcohol from affecting your riding ability: If you're riding, don't drink - period.

BAD CALL

It's easy to tell yourself, "I'm only going to have one drink." But after that first drink, it becomes even easier to convince yourself that "one more won't hurt." With each successive drink, your self-evaluation abilities diminish - not to mention your riding skills and judgment. The best way, therefore, to avoid ending up drinking more than you wanted to is to ask for a soft drink instead of that first serving of alcohol.

Better yet, leave the bike at home if you or others are going to be drinking and arrange for a designated driver. Don't risk your own and others' safety by putting yourself in a situation where you may lose control of your better judgment.

RIDE SAFE!

Bob & Ginny Schattschneider
Chapter Educators