

Pocket guide

Motorcycle Safety

Staying safe on two wheels





International research shows that motorcycle riders are about 34 times more likely to be killed in a crash than other road users.

In NSW, motorcyclists are overrepresented in the number of fatalities and serious injuries on our roads each year. In 2023, motorcycle fatalities accounted for **18.6 per cent** of all road fatalities and over **4,000** injuries despite motorcycles making up only **4.4 per cent** of registered motor vehicles.

To protect yourself on your ride, you should understand and follow the road rules, look for potential hazards, have the right riding gear, and make good choices to help you make it home safely.

Before you ride

- Make sure you gear up, even on short rides
 - Check yourself and your bike are ready to ride.
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Practise safe riding

In addition to the standard road rules for all road users, riders need to understand a number of specific skills and techniques to ride safely. These include buffering, braking and riding curves and bends.

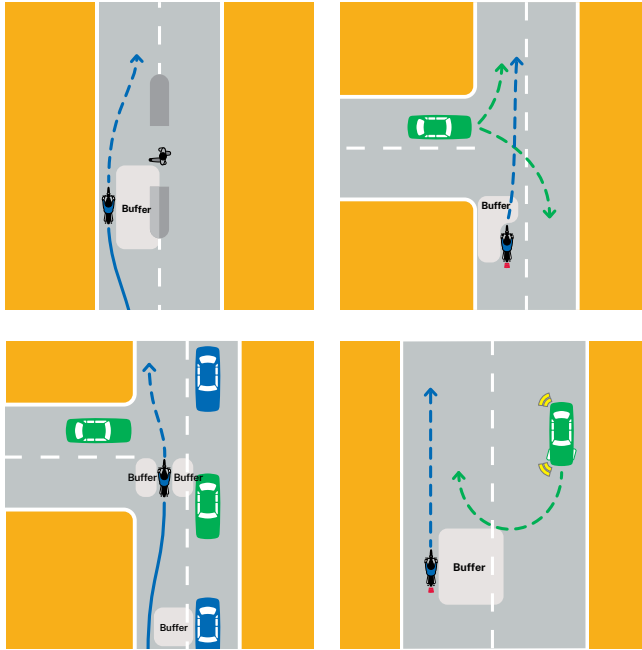
For the complete set of road rules that apply to motorcycles, make sure you read and understand the **Motorcycle Riders Handbook**. Copies can be found online or purchased from Service NSW.



Buffering

Creating space from hazards is referred to as **buffering**. As a motorcycle rider you have very little to protect you in a crash other than your riding gear. Moving away from hazards gives you a safety buffer and helps you to be seen.

Examples of buffering



Braking

Correct braking is done in two stages:

1. Put light pressure on the brake lever and pedal and pause (set up the brakes)
2. Progressively apply the necessary braking pressure (squeeze).

Two-stage braking makes braking more effective, reduces the chance of skidding, and gives you better control. Harsh or excessive braking pressure may cause skidding and a loss of control, particularly on wet or gravel roads.



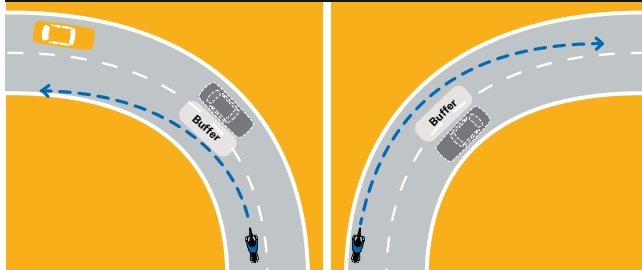
Riding curves and bends

When cornering, it is important to observe all road speed and advisory speed signs to assist you in making decisions as you approach them.

Starting curves wide will improve your vision. Planning to finish them in tight will help you get your speed right and leave you room for slight errors.

Most importantly, keep away from the area where oncoming vehicles are likely to cross the centre of the road (the head on zone). Taking curves and bends this way will slow you down a little on the approach but will allow you to accelerate out much earlier, when you have a clear view.

- ✓ Start wide for vision.
- ✓ Plan to finish in tight.
- ✓ Keep away from the head-on zone.



Check your gear

Research shows that riders who do not wear protective gear while riding are up to **twice as likely** to end up hospitalised after a crash.

When you are shopping for a bike, be sure to factor the cost of your gear into your total budget.

If you take care of your gear well, it will last you for years of safe riding, but should be checked regularly and replaced if it is ever damaged or in a crash.

It's important to dress for the slide, not the ride – even if it's just a short trip.

Helmets

In Australia, riders and their pillions must wear a helmet while riding. The helmets used must comply with either the:

- Australian Standard 1698 (AS 1698)
- Australian/New Zealand Standard 1698 (AS/NZS 1698)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Standard 22.05 (ECE 22.05) and 22.06 (ECE 22.06).

It is suggested to replace your helmet every 3-5 years. Additionally, if you are involved in a crash or there is any visual damage to your helmet, you should replace it.

White or other bright coloured helmets make it easier for other road users to spot you.

TIP: Get the safest helmet for your budget and comfort – visit [motocap.com.au/products/helmets](https://www.motocap.com.au/products/helmets) to compare different models.



Jackets and pants

When choosing jackets and pants, ensure that they have tough materials in high abrasion risk areas, such as the elbows, shoulders, buttocks, sides of the leg and knees.

While leather and protective denim typically offer the best protection from abrasion, textiles can be more appropriate for all-weather riding. Pants should be comfortable on and off your bike.

Gloves

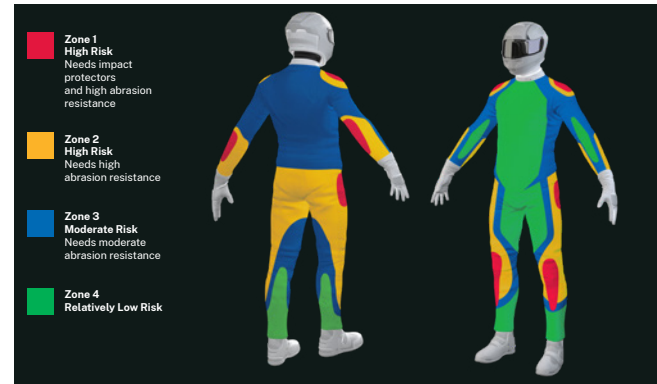
When choosing gloves, ensure there is knuckle and palm impact protection, and the wrist restraints are secure, so the glove does not come off in the event of a crash. When trying gloves on, check the fit and feel by moving your hands as you would operating your bike.

Boots

When choosing boots, ensure they fully enclose the foot, ankle, and lower shin with impact protection to the ankle and shin.

TIP: Always wear protective gear, even if you are only going for a short ride. Research shows that **nearly half** of all motorcycle fatalities and serious injuries happen in the riders' local government area, in other words, when they're close to home.

Choosing the right gear for your ride



Research has found that more than **25 per cent** of protective gear worn by Australian riders is poor quality and can fail under crash conditions.

Transport for NSW has worked in partnership with other government organisations to develop two programs (MotoCAP and CRASH) that independently test and assess motorcycle protective gear for safety and comfort or breathability, so you can be sure to wear the right gear every time you ride.

For more information on the programs, and to see how your gear rates, visit [motocap.com.au](https://www.motocap.com.au). Price guides are also included so you can find the best gear for your budget.

Motorcycle Clothing Assessment Program (MotoCAP)

The world-first MotoCAP rating system provides motorcycle riders with information on the safety and breathability of their jackets, pants and gloves.

On average, around 150 garments are tested and published each year.

Consumer Rating and Assessment of Safety Helmets (CRASH) program

The CRASH program evaluates the relative performance of motorcycle helmets in the Australian market.

Helmets are tested for protection (the helmet's ability to withstand impacts) and comfort (wind noise levels, anti-fogging, water tightness and weight). Around 30 helmets are tested each year and added to the **website**.

TIP: Get the safest and most comfortable gear for your budget – **visit motocap.com.au** to compare a wide range of garments.

Check your bike

Check your bike regularly to make sure you stay as safe as possible while riding.

Motorcycle maintenance

While modern motorcycles are reliable, some parts should be checked frequently to keep you safe on the road:

- > Tyre pressure and tread
- > Fluid levels, engine, coolant and brakes
- > Nut and bolt tightness
- > Lights and indicators
- > Brake pads
- > Chain and sprockets

If your bike needs a service, do not risk taking it on a ride. Ensure that it is serviced regularly and properly.

TIP: Check your tyre pressure weekly if you are a regular rider, or before every ride if you ride less frequently.

Check yourself

Personal assessment

NSW crash data has shown that the motorcycle rider was speeding in just **over half** of all motorcyclist fatalities from 2018 to 2022 and fatigue was a factor in **10 per cent** of these fatal crashes.



Before you start your engine, go through the following checklist to ensure you are in the best shape to be riding.

- ✓ Are you well rested and alert?
- ✓ Have you planned the safest route?
- ✓ Have you had a meal? Do you need to take any snacks?
- ✓ Are you well hydrated, and do you have water?
- ✓ Have you planned where you will take rest breaks during your journey, if needed?
- ✓ Have you checked the **Hazards Near Me App** for any current weather conditions you need to be aware of?

TIP: Think you only have to be extra careful when it rains? Research shows that **86 per cent** of motorcycling fatalities and serious injuries occur in fine weather – so even if the sun is shining and you are only riding locally, ensure that you are prepared for your ride.



Training for riders

Motorcycle rider courses and refresher courses

Even if you have been riding your whole life, it's a good idea to have an occasional refresher on good riding habits. You can find a list of rider trainers on the **NSW Government website** (or use the QR code on page 21).

First aid

Basic first aid can be a critical help to you and your riding companions in the event of a crash, especially in regional areas.

If you're riding in a group, it's a good idea to have at least two people in your party be first aid trained. You can find more information on how to become first aid certified from organisations such as the Australian Red Cross or St John Ambulance which has a specific course for motorcycle riders.

Where to ride

New South Wales has some of the most beautiful and scenic rides in the world.

The Gwydir Highway, the Waterfall Way and Oxley Highway are all great motorcycle rides that connect the New England Highway to the Pacific Highway on the coast.

Closer to Sydney, the Old Pacific Highway, the Putty Road and Bell's Line of Road can make you forget you're even near a city.

Further south in the state are Macquarie Pass and Kangaroo Valley, and even further south again are Brown Mountain and the Mount Imlay Road.

All these roads have something in common – they are hilly, twisting, and demand a rider's full attention.

Be sure to check **Live Traffic NSW** for real-time information about roads and changed traffic conditions that may affect your journey, as well as the Hazards Near Me app that shows current information about local emergencies (floods, bushfires, and landslides).

Trail and adventure riding

With the increase in popularity of off-road riding, it's important to remember that while you may not be on the bitumen you are still operating a motorised two-wheeled vehicle and it's important to be safe, prepared, and follow the rules.

Before you go off-road, ensure you're wearing full protective gear including a helmet, jacket, pants, boots, and gloves. When you are riding, remember that it takes longer to stop and it is more difficult to turn on trails. They can be more susceptible to weather conditions with mud and debris, so always check the weather before you head out.



TIP: Looking for your next ride?
Visit ridetolive.nsw.gov.au/trips

Let's all get home safe

Road safety is a shared responsibility – so whether you are a rider, driver, or pedestrian we all have a role to play to help each other get home safe.

Are you ready to ride?

- ✓ Always wear your helmet, jacket, pants, boots and gloves when you ride – even if you are only going a short distance.
- ✓ Regularly service your bike.
- ✓ Check out the safety rating of your gear, and purchase gear that is made for Australian road surfaces.
- ✓ Ensure that you know the road rules, and what is applicable to you as a rider with different licences.
- ✓ Stay under the posted speed limit.
- ✓ Always adjust your riding to the conditions.

Helpful links for safe riding



Motorcycle Riders Handbook



MotoCAP and CRASH



Motorcycle Safety



Live Traffic NSW



Find a rider trainer



Hazards Near Me App

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