

# 2

## You and Your Motorcycle

### Topics Covered

- The Motorcycle
  - Types of motorcycles
- The Gear
  - Helmet
  - Clothing
  - Gloves
  - Footwear
- Budgeting

In **Chapter 1, You in the Rider's Seat**, you learned the importance of making good riding choices. But before you start riding, you need to learn how good gear and a suitable motorcycle can add to your safety.

### The Motorcycle

#### *A Rider Goes Shopping*

*For a long time, you've been promising yourself that you'd learn to ride a motorcycle when you got your first good job. Well, that day is here. You're ready to shop for a motorcycle. The only trouble is, you're not really sure what kind of motorcycle to buy. And you're beginning to realize that you might not have enough money to buy the fancy gear you've just been looking at.*

*What should you do?*

Choose a motorcycle that suits your needs. You will have to consider several things when making your choice:

- **Your size and strength** – Choose a motorcycle you can control. Your feet should be able to reach the ground when you straddle the bike. You should also be able to handle the weight of the motorcycle. Can you push it back and forth and keep it balanced?
- **Your skill level** – Choose a motorcycle that fits your level of handling skill. If you are a learner, you might decide to buy a small motorcycle and trade it in later for a more powerful model.
- **Your riding goals** – Think about why you want a motorcycle. If you are interested in commuting to work, you will probably choose a different type of bike than if you are planning to use it for long trips.

Once you have decided what you need, take time to inform yourself. Search out as much information about models as you can, and weigh the pros and cons of each. Ask friends for their opinion. Go to motorcycle dealers, read about different motorcycles and talk to experienced riders.

### Types of motorcycles

There are several types of motorcycles available. All of them come with a variety of engine sizes and other options.



### RoadSense Tip

Limited speed motorcycles may be operated with any class of driver's licence. They must be registered, licensed and insured. To operate other motorcycles, you need a motorcycle rider's licence (see page 160).



## Cruiser

These have custom styling details such as pulled-back handlebars and a stepped seat for a passenger. Riders sit in either an upright or a more laid-back position.



## Sport, Sport touring

Sport models are street-legal versions of racing models. They are designed to be quick, fast and very maneuverable. Sport touring motorcycles combine features of sport and touring motorcycles and are often more comfortable for long-distance touring or for carrying passengers.



## Touring

These heavy motorcycles are designed for long-distance travel because they are comfortable and have a large cargo capacity. They usually have extra bodywork, or fairings, and a windshield. Both are designed to protect the rider and passenger from wind, weather, dust, insects and other debris. The rider and passenger sit in an upright posture.



## Dual-purpose

These combine some features of off-road motorcycles with the features of street-legal motorcycles. They are more rugged than street motorcycles and have higher ground clearance.



## Standard

These are general-purpose motorcycles that are good for learners. The rider usually sits in an upright posture, and the bike provides seating for a passenger.



## Motor scooter

Motor scooters have the engine mounted below and behind the rider, under an enclosure, and usually have an automatic transmission. Most have a platform for the rider's feet, which also provides some weather protection.



## Moped

Mopeds are 50cc or smaller and have pedals for assisting the engine on hills.

*If a motor scooter or moped meets the limited-speed motorcycle definition on p. 160, it may be operated with any class of driver's licence.*



## Off-road

These are not legal for street riding because they are built for off-road settings. They do not have extensive electrical systems, such as lights or horns, and have no emission controls. Most jurisdictions restrict where these motorcycles can be used. The rider sits in an upright posture.

### The Gear

Riding gear is more than a fashion statement – it is designed to:

- protect you from the weather
- help protect you from injury
- make you visible
- enhance your comfort



#### CrashFact

Helmets can prevent fatal injuries 29 per cent of the time. They are effective in preventing head injuries in 67 per cent of crashes. Wear your helmet every time you get on your motorcycle.

*National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*



#### RoadSense Tip

- Be cautious about using a damaged helmet. Check the manufacturer's information for guidelines and replace one that has been in a crash.
- You should replace your helmet every few years because of natural deterioration.

### Helmet

According to the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, one in every five motorcycle crashes results in head or neck injuries for the rider. Wearing a helmet is the single most important factor in preventing or reducing these injuries. In British Columbia, all riders and their passengers are required to wear approved motorcycle safety helmets. An exception to this requirement is made for people of the Sikh religion with unshorn hair who wear full turbans.

#### Checklist for buying a helmet

- Make sure it has a sticker to show that it meets current safety standards.
- A full-face helmet provides the best protection in a collision as well as protection from wind, dust, rain, insects and debris. It is the only type that protects the face.
- Be seen. Choose a bright colour. White makes you visible. Add some reflective tape to the sides and back for even more visibility.
- Go for fit. It should feel snug around the entire head and be tight enough to stop it from moving. However, make sure it is not too tight. Also, be aware that the padding may compress over time, and the fit may become looser.
- Avoid buying a used helmet. It may have been in a crash, and the damage may not be obvious.

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*This is a full-face helmet. Will it restrict you? Numerous studies have shown it will not. A helmet may actually improve your hearing by screening wind and engine noise. A helmet will not make you less alert.*

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## Protect your eyes and face

You need to protect your eyes and face while riding. Constant wind can make your eyes water, which can prevent you from being able to see hazards. Flying insects, dust and debris can hurt your eyes and face. Eyeglasses or sunglasses do not provide adequate protection for your eyes because they can fly off, move or shatter.

Most motorcycle windshields do not give adequate protection for your eyes or face. The best protection is a full-face helmet with a built-in face shield because it protects both your eyes and your face.

If you choose a helmet that doesn't have full-face protection, you will need goggles to protect your eyes. Remember though, these will not protect the rest of your face. And if you wear glasses with a helmet that doesn't have full-face protection, you should wear goggles over your glasses for protection from the wind.

## Checklist for eye and face protection

- Choose shield material that is scratch and impact resistant.
- Check that the shield will give you a clear view to either side.
- The space inside a shield should have enough room for your eyeglasses or sunglasses.
- The shield should fasten securely to the helmet.
- Check that air can flow freely. This prevents fogging.
- Beware of tinted materials. It is unsafe to use them at night or in the rain because they can obstruct your vision.
- Wearing contact lenses while riding can irritate your eyes. Be prepared by carrying your glasses at all times.



### RoadSense Tip

Even on warm days, the motorcycle's speed creates a wind that can lower body temperature to the point of hypothermia. Always be prepared. Even on very hot days, you should wear a jacket to prevent dehydration.

## Clothing

The correct clothing can give you some protection during a collision. It also protects you from the weather and from debris. Being warm and dry will help you stay alert and maintain coordination. Choose clothing that is designed for motorcycle riding and wear it in layers so you can adjust to changing conditions. Jeans give only minimum protection. Never ride in lightweight pants or shorts.

## Checklist for clothing

- Jackets and pants should fit snugly but comfortably, and should not balloon out or puff up while you are riding.
- Leather and good-quality synthetics, such as Kevlar and Cordura nylon, offer good protection from abrasion.
- Choose visibility. Fluorescent colours are best for daytime riding. Reflective strips make you visible at night. You can increase your visibility by adding extra reflective material to your clothing or by wearing a reflective vest.

- ❑ Check for good ventilation as well as warmth.
- ❑ Check that sleeve and leg cuffs are long and snug enough to keep out the wind and rain.
- ❑ Choose to be dry. A good rainsuit doesn't balloon out at high speeds or tear apart, and it will keep you warm and dry. It has long sleeves and legs and extra room to fit comfortably over regular riding gear.



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*The well-dressed rider*

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2 - 2

### Gloves

Use gloves to protect your hands from injury and from the cold and wet. It is best to use gloves that are designed for motorcycle riding. These will give you good protection while allowing you to make precise hand movements.

#### Checklist for gloves

- ❑ Check the fit. Gloves should be comfortable and flexible.
- ❑ Make sure they have good grip.
- ❑ Gloves should cover your wrists and overlap the sleeves of your jacket. This prevents cold air from flowing into your jacket and protects your skin from injury in an accident.
- ❑ One pair of gloves may not be enough. You may need some

that are suitable for summer riding and others that are suitable for rain and cold-weather riding.

## Footwear

Your boots should protect your feet and ankles and keep them warm and dry.

### Checklist for footwear

- Leather provides the best protection and strength. However, it is not waterproof so you may also need waterproof overboots.
- The soles should be slip-resistant and flexible. This will allow you to effectively manage the controls with your feet.
- Footwear should cover the ankles and not slip off easily.
- Heels should be low so that they do not catch on controls.
- A good fit is important.
- Tuck laces in securely, otherwise they may get tangled in the bike.

## Budgeting

Will you be able to afford to ride? You need to ask yourself this question early. Don't be caught with an expensive motorcycle and no money left over for insurance, maintenance or training.

### Budget checklist

- Motorcycle** – Your largest cost will likely be your motorcycle. Make sure you buy a motorcycle that is comfortable and suitable for your riding needs.
- Gear** – Set aside enough money for the best helmet you can afford. Browse in a few shops and price the riding gear you will need. Remember to think about the different weather conditions you will encounter. You may need several outfits.
- Insurance and motorcycle licensing** – Insurance costs vary with the engine size of the motorcycle and the type of coverage you choose to buy. You will also need to pay to licence your motorcycle. Phone your ICBC auto insurance broker and ask for rates.
- Licence and test fees** – You will need to pay for your motorcycle driver's licence and riding tests. Check **Chapter 11, Your Licence**, for details.
- Running costs** – Consider the cost of tires, fuel and spare parts. Will you do your own maintenance, or will you take the bike to your dealer?
- Training** – Riding a motorcycle is a complex activity. Don't put your safety at risk because you have not budgeted for riding courses or for acquiring the necessary information. Your life (and the lives of others) is priceless.