



Driving Safely Around Motorcyclists

Accidents and injuries involving motorbikes are a serious issue on British roads with research showing that an average of 6 motorcyclists died and 111 were seriously injured (adjusted) per week in reported road casualties between 2016 and 2021. Read our guide for some helpful tips on how, as a driver, you can help make the roads safer for motorcyclists.

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1. Always check your blind spots

This is possibly the number one reason for accidents involving motorcycles and cars. Motorcycles are smaller than other vehicles and can be even more difficult to spot whilst merging or changing lanes. It can be difficult to locate a motorcycle in your car's blind spots so take your time before merging lanes and devote several seconds to checking your blind spots before proceeding with your intended manoeuvre. Be especially careful at junctions, as this is where most accidents happen because of blind spots.

2. Be extra cautious when passing

It is legal to pass a motorcycle in the same way you would a car or van, assuming that you are driving on a section of road which allows passing. However, be aware that the gust of wind that results from your increase in speed as you pass could potentially cause the motorcycle to become unstable and even blow the rider off the road. Make sure to clearly signal your intention to pass a slower motorcyclist by using your indicators. Always make sure you are several car lengths ahead of the motorcyclist before returning to your lane.

3. Do not tailgate

Make sure that you maintain a healthy following distance behind motorcycles. Do not tailgate! Keeping a respectable distance between you and a motorcycle in front of you is essential to helping prevent accidents. Giving yourself room will give you time and space to react if the motorcyclist makes a quick, unexpected turn.

4. Dim your headlights

Night-riding can be treacherous for motorcyclists as headlight beams from other vehicles can be blinding. Help riders stay safe after dark by increasing your following distance, ensuring that your headlights are dipped when you notice an approaching motorcycle, and refraining from passing.

5. Weather warning

Bad weather has more drastic effects on motorcyclists than it does on car or van drivers. Rain and winter weather in particular can make it almost impossible for motorcyclists to continue to travel and windy conditions can make it difficult for motorcyclists to control their vehicle on the road. Be aware that you will need to give motorcyclists even more room in wet weather conditions.

6. Stay in your lane

Motorcycles are legally entitled to their own lane of traffic. In no situation are you allowed to drive your vehicle in the same lane and in close proximity to a motorcycle. No matter how small these vehicles are or how much extra room that there appears to be, sharing a single lane with a motorcycle is a recipe for an accident and is illegal.

7. Use your indicator lights

Whilst this is a basic rule of driving, it's shocking how many people only do this after they are already turning or don't do it at all. Indicator lights are meant to tell other drivers what you are about to do so that they can take the necessary action. Motorcyclists are more difficult to see but regardless of whether motorcycles are on the road or not, you should use your turn signals to help others on the road anticipate your next move.

8. Be careful taking right turns

A motorcyclist may look further away than he or she actually is. It may also be difficult to judge a motorcycle's speed so when checking traffic to turn at an intersection or onto (or out of) a driveway, estimate that a motorcycle is closer than it looks – do not immediately rely on your perceptions.

9. Anticipate that motorcyclists may slow down without any visual warning

Motorcyclists sometimes slow down by downshifting gears or simply rolling off the throttle, thus not activating the brake light. Remember to not tailgate motorcyclists and at intersections, anticipate that motorcyclists may slow down without giving you any visual warning.

10. Leave motorcyclists room on the road

Manoeuvrability can be one advantage for a motorcycle, but don't just assume that a motorcyclist can always steer or swerve out of harm's way. Please leave motorcyclists room on the road, whenever they are around you.