

Finding the Right Fit: Motorcycle Blogs Pt 2

In our last blog, we covered what kind of equipment you'll need when riding a motorcycle, but this time, we'll cover finding the right motorcycle for you.

Now, let's be clear: If you can, never borrow or lend a motorcycle., except under very specific circumstances. According to the Missouri Motorcycle Operator Manual, most crashes take place within five months of buying a new motorcycle. That's precisely why you shouldn't borrow a motorcycle unless you have extensive experience on it and why you shouldn't lend it to someone who is unfamiliar with the motorcycle.

If you plan on riding a new, unfamiliar motorcycle, here are some things you can still do to lower your risks on the road.

1. Make all the usual checks you would on your own motorcycle before heading out.
2. Familiarize yourself with the set-up of the motorcycle (turn signals, fuel-supply valve, engine cut-off switch).
3. Know the controls. Make sure you can operate the vehicle properly before hitting the road.
4. Ride very cautiously. Accelerate more gently, take easier turns, and allow yourself more room to stop if necessary.

While this is always good advice, all of these are assumed if you have owned the motorcycle for some time. Yet, checking your motorcycle before riding is one of the most important things you can do to minimize risks during your ride. Luckily, the Missouri Safety Foundation came up with the T-CLOCS system to help you remember what needs checking.

T- Tires: Check the tread and tire pressure often. Test your brakes before riding to guarantee that they are working.

C-Controls: Make sure the clutch and throttle work properly. The throttle should snap closed after you let it go and the clutch should operate smoothly.

L-Lights: The headlight, tail light, turn signals, and brake lights should all work. Adjust your mirrors before heading out, as well.

O-Oil and Fluids: Check the engine oil and transmission fluid levels often. Check the brake hydraulic levels weekly. Make sure the tank valve is open. Check for leaks.

C-Chassis: Check the front suspension. Ensure there is no binding. The rear shocks and springs should move smoothly. Be sure the chain or belt is adjusted according to the manufacturer's specifications and that the sprockets are not worn or damaged.

S-Stands: Make sure the stand works properly and retracts to a safe position while riding.

Now that you've checked your machine, it's time to prepare the last thing needed to ride: your brain. It's good to mentally prepare yourself before you get on your motorcycle. A good way to prepare yourself is to remember your responsibilities on the road as a motorcyclist.

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: Communicating your intentions clearly (using signals), maintaining an adequate space cushion between you and everything, planning your path a few seconds ahead, being visible (proper clothing), and being aware and ready to act at a moment's notice.

It's not always the safest out there for cyclists, but hopefully with these helpful lists, you can steel yourself for what happens on the road. In the next posts, we'll cover how you should ride within your abilities and what kind of things you should be aware of while you are on the road.