



# **Beginner Rider Quick Start Guide**

**14 Steps to Proficient Riding**



- Are you *new* to motorcycling?
- Have you started riding *again*?
- Are you *thinking* about purchasing a motorcycle?
- Do you have *fear* when you ride?
- Do you wonder if you're too *old* to ride?
- Are you serious about reducing your *risks*?

If you answered YES... our **MotorcycleMentor.com Quick Start Guide** will help you:

1. Decide if motorcycle ownership is right for you.
2. Select a motorcycle and riding gear.
3. Make educated decisions that will help you reduce your risks.

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Before we begin, let me share a little about me.

### **When I started riding...**

Several years ago, after a long absence from motorcycling (career, family, etc.), I decided to reenter a sport that I was once passionate about... **motorcycling**.

During my absence from the sport, things changed.

With at least eight different **types of motorcycles** to choose from: touring, sport-touring, standard, sport-bike, scooter, dual-sport, dirt-bike, and cruiser, I struggled to select the “right” bike for me.

Add to that, so many choices in helmets, riding gear, and training opportunities... I quickly became **overwhelmed and frustrated**.

Luckily, I found an experienced, mature motorcyclist who agreed to mentor me through the daunting process of selecting a motorcycle and learning to ride again.

His wisdom and guidance was an incredible asset to me.

Hum, I thought... “All **beginner riders** should have a motorcycle mentor.”

The concept for MotorcycleMentor.com was born. To learn more about the site visit <http://www.motorcyclementor.com/>.

I hope this **Quick Start Guide** helps you make informed decisions. Do your homework, ride safely and enjoy the wonderful community of motorcycle riders.

**For more information:**

Visit our **Resources** section for additional training.  
<http://motorcyclementor.com/motorcyclementor-resources/>

Visit our **About Us** page to learn why I sold the site in 2011, and then bought it back in 2013.  
<http://motorcyclementor.com/about-motorcycle-mentor/>

Listen to the NEW **Motorcycle Mentor Podcast**  
<http://motorcyclementor.com/category/podcast/>

David Mixson  
Founder  
MotorcycleMentor.com™



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Please note that much of this publication is based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence. Although the author and publisher have made every reasonable attempt to achieve complete accuracy of the content in this Guide, they assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. Also, you should use this information as you see fit, and at your own risk. Your particular situation may not be exactly suited to the examples illustrated here.

Finally, use your head. Nothing in this Guide is intended to replace common sense, legal, medical or other professional advice, and is meant to inform and entertain the reader. So have fun with the **Beginner Rider Quick Start Guide**.

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**Step One:**  
Understand the Risks

So...

What can you do as a beginner or experienced rider to enjoy the sport of motorcycling? Here are some tips to get you started.

**14 Steps to Proficient Motorcycling**

The decision to own and ride a motorcycle should NOT be taken lightly. While I DO believe an educated, skilled rider CAN reduce their risks of injury... I also believe it's safer to ride in a car than it is to ride on a motorcycle.

*Frankly, if you don't believe this... I suggest that you reconsider your decision to own a motorcycle. Sound harsh?*

**Consider the facts.**

Data compiled by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) consistently shows that a motorcyclist has a higher chance of being injured or killed (per mile traveled) than someone riding in a car or truck.

Recognizing that riding a motorcycle is not the safest form of transportation is a critical step in taking ownership of your own safety.

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**Step Two**  
Don't Make Decisions in a Vacuum

While I'm not aware of many spouses that WANT their husband/wife to purchase a motorcycle, every rider should – nonetheless – consult with family and friends BEFORE purchasing one. Discuss your desires and try to reach an agreement.

If your **spouse is miserable** every time you go riding, will either of you enjoy your new hobby? No.

Truth be told, my wife wasn't excited when I told her I wanted a motorcycle. But she knew I would do everything I could to reduce my risks. I promised her that I would ride defensively, and wear full protective gear, including a full-face helmet. I did.

She said ok even though she didn't understand why I wanted to ride. It's difficult to describe the "why" to someone who has never ridden, and has no desire to ride.

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**Step Three**  
Recognize That You  
CAN Reduce Risks

Riding a motorcycle is more dangerous than riding in a car. However, you CAN significantly reduce your risks.

I'll state this again:

**You can...**  
**Significantly reduce your risks of being in an accident, and the severity of your injuries if you ARE in an accident!**

It's important to recognize this so you'll take an active role to reduce your risks. This involves following the steps outlined below.

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**Step Four**  
Take a Motorcycle  
Training Course (or  
two)... Before You  
Purchase a Bike

***“What, take training before I own a motorcycle?”***

Yes, many beginner rider programs furnish a motorcycle as part of the course fee. These bikes are usually in the 125cc to 250cc class. Most are light, agile, and great motorcycles to learn the mechanics of **shifting**, **braking**, and **cornering**.

It's pretty easy to find hands-on motorcycle training. For riders in the United States, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) is a good place to start your search. Chances are they offer a **Beginner Rider Course** near you.

For course information and training schedules, visit <http://www.msf-usa.org>.

A riding buddy of mine and I took the MSF course with a private instructor. I outlined how to get the most out of your training in an article entitled, “Three ways to ace your first motorcycle training course.”

Read the entire article here:  
<http://motorcyclementor.com/motorcycle-training-course/>

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## Step Five

### Select the Style of Your First Motorcycle

Selecting your first motorcycle can be overwhelming. Here are just a few questions you might have:

1. What type motorcycle should I purchase?
  - touring, sport-touring, standard, sport-bike, scooter, dual-sport, dirt-bike, cruiser
2. What size engine should I select?
  - 250cc too small?
  - 1000cc to big?
3. What manufacturer?
4. What model?

Here are two tips to get you started.

#### 1. Plan to keep your first motorcycle for one year... not ten.

Regardless of how much time, effort and expense you expend on selecting the **perfect motorcycle**, IT WON'T BE!

With so many models available, finding the perfect motorcycle is darn near impossible. This is especially true considering the fact that most dealers/sellers won't let you test ride motorcycles before you buy.

As you become more skilled, you'll have more opportunities to ride other types and styles of bikes. Only then, can you really find the perfect bike for you.

Selecting your first motorcycle **should be fun**. Recognizing that it won't be your last helped me enjoy the process.

#### 2. Buy used!

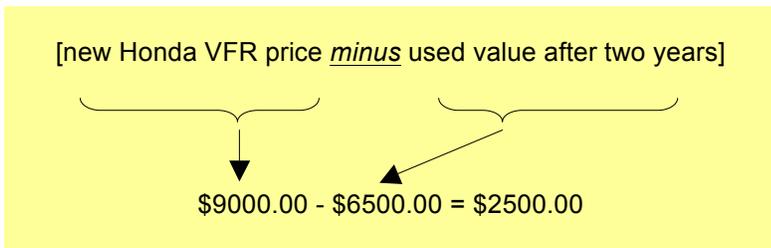
Ever seen how much damage can be done to a motorcycle simply by dropping it in a parking lot or your driveway? While a scratch or small dent won't usually affect the **roadworthiness**, it sure can change the **value**. Especially if it was the first scratch!

Buy a used motorcycle that has a clear title. Does it have a few cosmetic scratches? Great. You can negotiate a lower price than one that is blemish free. If you do manage to add one more scratch during the year, it will hardly affect the value.

Chances are, you'll have a few blunders during your rookie years. And like automobiles, the **greatest depreciation** occurs during the first couple of years.

As an example, I purchased a used Honda VFR years ago for \$4200 (new tires, new battery... great shape). Two years later, it was worth over \$3500. Not bad for two years and 12,000+ miles of pleasure. And, the only repair needed was a new chain.

Suppose I had purchased a new VFR instead. My cost of ownership for the same two years would have been over \$2500...



### Are you in the process of buying your first motorcycle?

You're in luck. I produced an entire podcast on the subject, "How to select your first (or next) motorcycle." Listen below <http://motorcyclementor.com/mmp05-how-to-select-your-first-motorcycle-podcast/>

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## Step Six

Obtain Proper Insurance

Insurance for motorcycles is a little different than cars. Some companies specialize in insuring motorcycles, while others don't. Make sure you discuss your coverage options with an insurance carrier you trust.

My insurance agent (that covers my house and cars) said motorcycle premiums (with her company) were outrageous. She suggested I get a quote from an insurance company that **specializes in motorcycles**.

I did... and I have been very pleased with their price and service. Ask your riding friends for recommendations.

I recorded an entire **Podcast** episode on motorcycle insurance.

Check it out here:  
<http://motorcyclementor.com/category/podcast/>

**Step Seven**  
Purchase Protective  
Riding Gear

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Don't put off buying/wearing protective gear! Your skills are low and even a low speed spill without protection can cause serious injuries.

The best way to find **protective riding gear** that fits properly is to visit a local motorcycle shop. Ask lots of questions and try on several styles and types of gear to find a comfortable solution.

Trust me on this one. I witnessed first-hand how gear protected a riding buddy of mine. Because he was wearing a full-face helmet, gloves, a jacket (with armor), riding pants (with armor) and boots... the only thing that was hurt was his pride and his beautiful silver Triumph Sprint ST. The **bike was totaled**.

If for no other reason, **wear protection** for your riding buddies and for your family.

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**Step Eight**  
Start Slowly and  
Gradually Expand Your  
Riding Experiences

Now is NOT the time for that trip **across the United States** you've been dreaming about! Keep dreaming... delay your trip for a few more years. The only way to improve your riding skills is to practice, practice, practice. This takes time, time, time.

**Ride frequently.**

It's far better to ride four times a week for a short distance, than it is to ride once a month for a longer distance.

Ask a piano teacher if it's better to practice for 15 minutes every day, or for 105 minutes once a week. Most will say daily. Consistent (frequent) riding (practicing) is a key component to improving your riding skills. After you practice enough, everything becomes automatic. This is called **muscle memory**. Once you get to this point the mechanics of riding gets easy. Then you can truly start enjoying the beauty around you.

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## Step Nine

Ride Solo...  
Avoid Riding in Groups

Riding with a group of motorcyclists can be one of the most enjoyable parts of riding... but it requires more skill. Until you master the basics of riding, **ride solo**.

After your skills improve, learn proper group riding techniques and discuss these rules with your riding partners *prior* to riding with them. If they roll their eyes when you initiate the conversation, find someone else to ride with.

When you're ready to ride in groups, start slowly with one additional rider. The more riders you ride with, the harder it is to ride safely.

Riding safely in a group is a complex task that involves more than just good mechanical skills. There are many **psychological** aspects too. Even experienced riders have to resist riding outside of their comfort zone when riding in a group.

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## Step Ten

Keep a Journal...  
Share Your New Passion  
with Others

Something special happens when you ride. It's hard to explain... familiar things look anew and the smells of spring bring back **memories from the past**. As one rider described it, "It's much better than IMAX."

It's common for new riders to want to share their new passions, experiences, and thoughts with others "who get it." If your spouse isn't participating in your new hobby, he/she might tire of the endless rants.

I still have these **feelings and thoughts** while riding today. But the early feelings were magical. Keep a journal, or find a friend who "gets it" that would enjoy reading emails documenting your new experience. Save those emails. I promise you'll enjoy looking back to this part of your life.

In my case, I documented my new journey via email with my motorcycle mentor. He enjoyed reliving the emotions of being a new rider.

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## Step Eleven

Seek Guidance from  
More Experienced Riders

Unfortunately, there's a plethora of information about motorcycle on the internet that's wrong. Be careful, and selective.

One of the best ways to improve your riding skills is to find an experienced, knowledgeable rider to mentor you.

Even better... join a community where you can share your experiences, learn, ask questions, get solid advice, and become a better rider. Find out how, here <http://motorcyclementor.com/>

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## Step Twelve

Continue to Develop  
Your Skills by Training,  
Practicing, and Reading

### Challenge:

Find an experienced rider, and ask him,  
*"When does the learning end?"*

His answer will be, "Never!"

Every rider, regardless of his or her current skill level, can improve their riding skills and ride more defensively. Training classes are everywhere. Take advantage of them.

My **motorcycle mentor** was a retired NASA engineer. He started riding when he was a kid. Decades later he still consulted with his motorcycle mentor.

Cool. My mentor had a mentor. Wow! What a great way to learn.

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## Step Thirteen

Constantly Assess Your  
Pleasure to Risk Ratio

Recall in **Step One** that we agreed riding a motorcycle is more dangerous than driving a car? In light of this fact, it makes sense to choose two-wheel transportation over four-wheel **ONLY** if riding a motorcycle is enjoyable for you.

In other words, does the pleasure you have riding a motorcycle outweigh the **increased risk** of injury or death?

Think about this again. If riding your motorcycle turns out to be anything short of **thrilling**, sell it and don't look back. If you followed my advice and purchased a used motorcycle, chances are you can sell it for close to what you paid for it.

From the emails I receive, there's a reasonable chance you'll decide that **riding isn't for you**.

Be open-minded and constantly assess your enjoyment factor.

**If/when the enjoyment of riding no longer justifies the risk...**

**STOP RIDING!**

Ride if you must, drive if you can.

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**Step Fourteen**

Listen to the Motorcycle  
Mentor Podcast



I started the Motorcycle Mentor Podcast in 2013 to help beginner riders, just like my mentors helped me. As it turns out, most of the listeners are **experienced riders** looking to improve their riding skills. See I told you... the best riders never stop learning.

**This is a sample of what listeners have said on iTunes:**



**Good Information for Beginning Riders**

“Great source of some excellent insights. These podcasts give info for beginners, and folks just thinking about starting to ride, that I don’t think can be found anywhere else online. Really fills a gap!”

By: 50 years in the saddle – Oct 15, 2013

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**Great Information**

“This podcast contains very valuable information for a beginner motorcyclist like myself. I particularly like the information David has on the MotorcycleMentor.com web site. Thank you and please keep it coming. Looking forward to the future episodes.”

By: Vinko – Nov 6, 2013

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**Incredible, Informative and Very Well Done**

“I just found this podcast and every episode has been a fun and informative investment in my motorcycle safety and general riding knowledge. Keep up the great work! It is such a well-done “professional” sounding podcast!”

By: BanjoDaniel – Jan 16, 2014

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**Praise God! Finally a Quality Motorcycle Podcast!**

“Yes, I understand the title is hyperbolic, but after wandering in the motorcycle podcast desert listening to amateurs produce completely vamped shows, lacking structure, suffering from “shiny objects on the yard” syndrome, and often recorded while hosts are under the influence of alcohol, I am relieved to FINALLY find a non-commercial effort that is well produced, organized, stays on point, and does a solid job covering the topic.

The positions made are effectively communicated, cogent, and reasonable. There is no brand agenda under-current thereby giving the show broad appeal to all motorcyclists. We don’t hear

any of the “cuts” or “club brotherhood” nonsense that tends to paint motorcycle riders having the social structure of a third grader’s playground.

This is a fantastic listen and I highly commend to anyone seeking a quality two-wheeled subscription.

By scootfoens – Jan. 25, 2014

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**Excellent and Insightful**

We need more podcasts like this one. Even after 30 years of riding on and off, I push myself to never stop learning even if it is just a reminder. The podcast will help new and old riders alike.

By: MotoSage – Feb 11, 2014

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You can listen to the Motorcycle Mentor Podcast FREE via iTunes. You can also listen one the site here:

<http://motorcyclementor.com/category/podcast/>

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I hope you’ve enjoyed this **Beginner Rider Quick Start Guide**. Please take a look around the Motorcycle Mentor site for additional resources and tips.

Ride Safely,

David Mixson  
MotorcycleMentor.com

Owning and riding a motorcycle can be a wonderful experience. But, it can also be dangerous. This guide is not meant to offer specific advice. Always seek professional motorcycle training.

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