

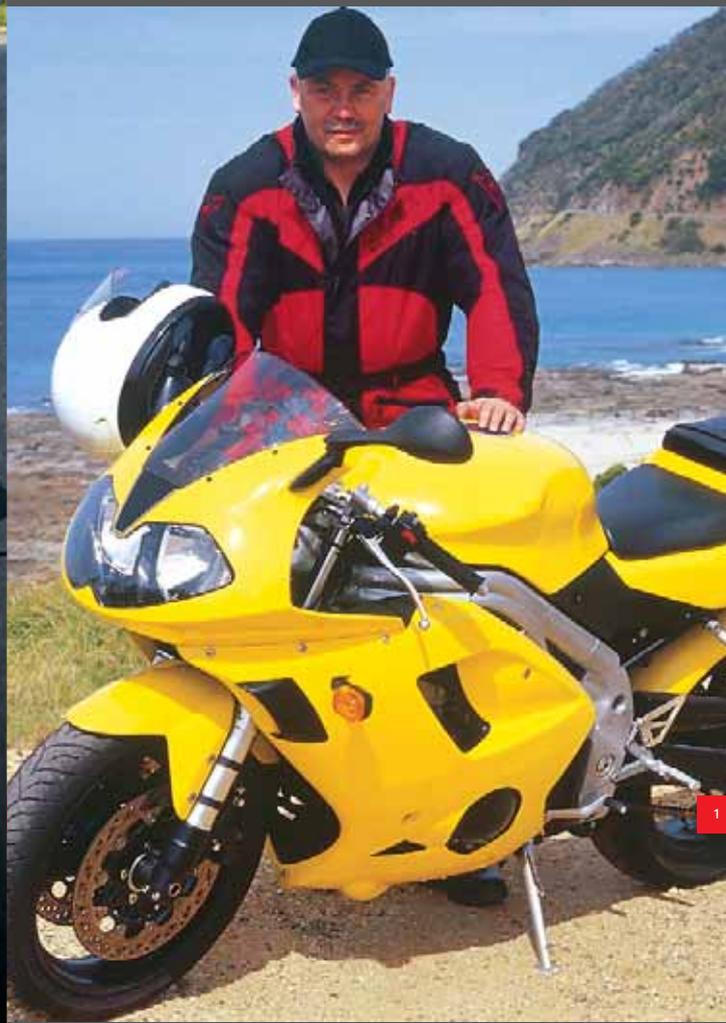
CHASING THE DREAM



ARE YOU OVER 30
RETURNING TO RIDING OR
NEW TO MOTORCYCLING?

Contents

<i>The difference between driving and riding</i>	2
<i>Choosing the right bike</i>	6
<i>Protecting your body</i>	10
<i>Updating your skills</i>	14
<i>Taking a pillion along</i>	16
<i>Maintaining your dream machine</i>	18
<i>Finding out more</i>	20

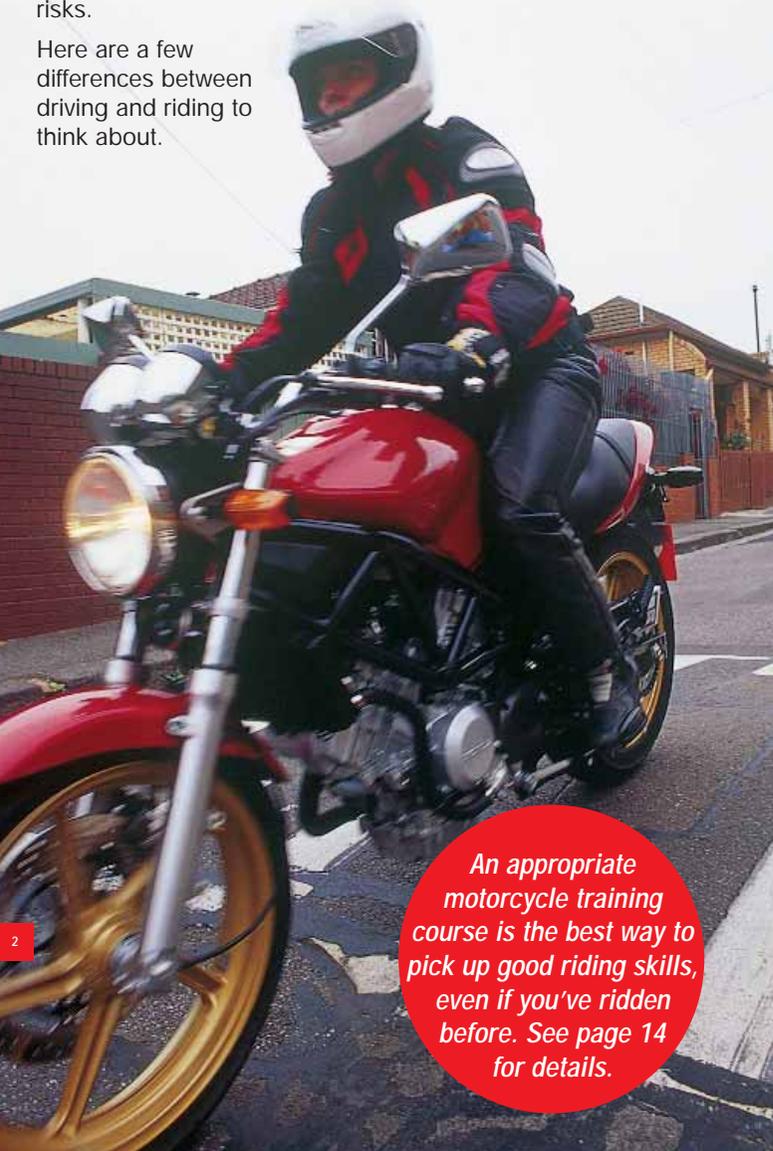


The difference between driving and riding

Riding a bike can give you a real sense of freedom. The experience is very different to driving, and so are the skills you need.

If you are getting back into bikes after a break, ease yourself in gradually and take the time to get your riding skills up to date. If you haven't ridden before you have a lot to learn, not only about how to ride, but also about how to manage the risks.

Here are a few differences between driving and riding to think about.



An appropriate motorcycle training course is the best way to pick up good riding skills, even if you've ridden before. See page 14 for details.

The whole body experience

In a car you sit and operate the controls with your hands and feet. On a bike you not only use your hands and feet, you use your whole body. Something like going round a corner is a totally different experience on a bike. It requires subtle body movements, good judgement and careful road positioning. Developing and maintaining the skills to ride well takes lots of time and practice.



Grip on the road

Small changes in the road surface may mean very little on four wheels. But something like gravel, a wet patch or a rough bit of bitumen can lead to real drama on two wheels. You need to watch the road conditions carefully and be ready to react. Making sure your bike's tyres are in top condition is essential.

Weather

On a bike you really experience weather conditions first hand. When it's wet and cold, it can be really wet and cold! No sitting back in comfort with the heater and wipers on. Wet roads can be very slippery on a bike. Effective riding gear and riding carefully helps. Taking more interest in weather forecasts and planning for the conditions is also a good idea.

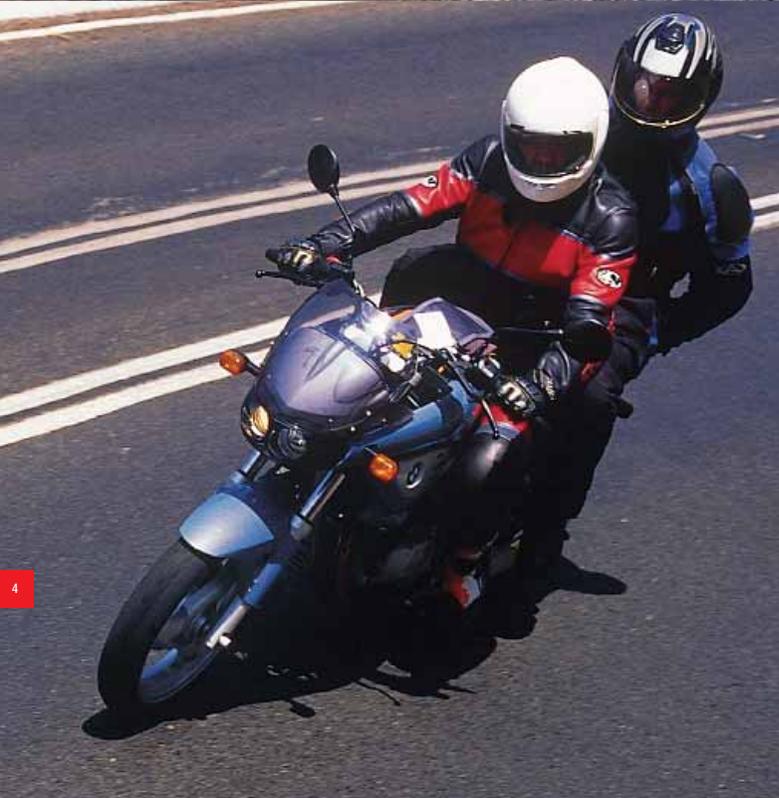


Braking

In a car the brakes operate from one foot pedal and are generally the first thing to use in avoiding a crash. On bikes the front and rear brakes are usually operated independently by the right hand and the right foot, although some bikes have integrated brakes. Modern bike brakes are powerful and need to be used correctly. Using the brakes is not always the best or only way of avoiding a bad situation. You need to develop your ability to assess a potential hazard, and have the skills to respond in the right way and brake safely.

Taking passengers

Having a passenger in your car generally doesn't affect how the car performs. But a pillion will significantly affect the ride and handling of your bike. No special clothing is required to travel in a car, but with a bike a pillion should also wear the same full protective riding gear as the rider. For more details see *Taking a pillion along* on page 16.



Crashes hurt

In a car you are belted into a protective capsule. A small fender bender crash may hurt your wallet a little, but not you. On a bike even a small crash can leave you badly hurt. As you get older you tend to become more fragile (easily injured) and you will take longer to recover from an injury. So you need to be ready to see hazards early and be ready to respond in time to avoid them. Good protective riding gear is essential.

Remember a new bike will take some getting used to - make sure you take it easy for a while!

Choosing the right bike

There are many different types of bikes to choose from - tourers, sports tourers, cruisers, sports bikes, naked bikes and motor scooters. The choice is very much a personal one based on what your dream is. However, there are some critical things you should think about before you buy.

There is nothing worse than finding out too late that your dream bike is hard to live with, and an early 'divorce' could cost you a lot of money!



Make sure your dream bike is the right bike – do your homework before you buy.

Get advice

Be prepared to listen to advice. Do a motorcycle training course before you buy and ask the rider trainers for their advice. Talk to other riders and read up on bike tests in magazines.

Bike shops want to sell you a bike you'll be happy with because you'll come back again and recommend them to others. So listen to the sales people. They are mostly experienced riders themselves and will have some useful suggestions.



Match the bike with the type of riding

Think about the type of riding you plan to do. Make sure the bike is practical for what you'll mostly be doing. For instance will it mostly be:

- long distance highway riding
- commuting to and from work in traffic
- short runs on the weekend
- all of the above?

Don't just take a quick test ride on your dream bike. Try out different bikes. Spend plenty of time sitting on each bike and getting an idea how comfortable it is. Wear your riding gear, rather than just sitting on the bike in normal clothing. Consider your riding position and:

- how much weight this puts on your wrists
- whether your legs feel cramped
- how bent over you are (a real problem if you have a bad back)
- how long you can stay in this position and still feel comfortable.

Being uncomfortable on a bike is a real pain and distracts you from riding safely.



Bikes today are very different to what you may have ridden when you were younger.



The comfort and fatigue factor

Once you get into your 30s and older, you are liable to be less fit. A bike that you felt comfortable on when you were in your 20s might not feel right any more.

Being physically or mentally tired (or fatigued) is a real danger, especially when riding for long periods. You'll also get tired more quickly if you aren't comfortable on the bike. Think about whether you'll choose a bike with or without a fairing. Wind resistance can take more out of you, especially on long rides at highway speeds. A bike without a fairing can be more tiring for riders than one with a fairing. If you have problems sleeping then fatigue is an even greater risk for you.

Bikes have changed

If you are getting back into bikes after a lengthy break you may be surprised at how much bikes have changed. Performance has improved incredibly. You'll find that new bikes accelerate quicker and are equipped with a range of new technologies that weren't available in the past. Developments like ABS and integrated brakes are worth considering. Do your homework so you know what you are looking at - all the bike manufacturers have websites with lots of information.

Room for two

If you are planning to ride with a pillion, check out how much room there is for one on your dream bike. Even better, take along anyone who is likely to be a regular pillion and let them try out the different bikes you are considering. See *Taking a pillion along* on page 16 for more details.

New or used?

This will probably be a budget decision. Make sure you check out the service history of any used bike you are thinking of buying. A well cared for bike will have been serviced regularly by a qualified mechanic. Arrange a safety and mechanical check on any used bike before you buy.

Protecting your body

When it comes to riding gear you'll find the good stuff doesn't come cheap. But when you think about the damage you can do to yourself in a spill it is money well spent! Be prepared to spend the dollars needed to buy the right gear.

If you've ridden before, resist the urge to just dust off your old gear and get on the bike. Chances are your helmet, for starters, will not be as safe as those on the market today. The same will no doubt go for the rest of your riding gear. As with bikes, times have changed and so has the technology of protective gear – new materials and features offer improved safety, visibility and comfort.



Helmets must display an Australian Standard AS1698 sticker. Don't wear one without it!

The right helmet

Motorcycle helmets are designed to work for one impact only. Even a small knock, like dropping it accidentally, means it is time for a new one. Helmets deteriorate with use and even when they are stored. If you have an old helmet, or someone has offered you a second hand one, forget it and get a new one.

Don't rush your choice. Go for one that:

- will give you good protection
- is in a colour that can be easily seen, especially in bad light conditions (white is best)
- has a clear visor that meets Australian Standard AS1609
- above all fits well and can be securely fastened.

The shape and size of heads vary so make sure you try different brands and models to see how they fit. When you first pull the right size helmet on, it can feel too small. Move it around on your head -

side to side and up and down.

If it fits well your skin should move with the helmet. It needs to be a snug fit when new because it will loosen up. Fasten the chin strap and leave the helmet on for a few minutes to make sure there aren't any pressure points.



Boots

Boots are often the last thing considered when buying riding gear, but a really essential piece of equipment. Don't think you can get away with something not designed for the purpose. Serious foot, ankle and lower leg injuries are very common in bike crashes. Only ride in quality motorcycle boots.





Drivers sometimes don't see riders. Think about how visible you will be on the road. Go for gear with bright colours and reflective panels.

Gloves

Motorcycle gloves are important equipment. The gloves you should wear will be made of strong leather or high-quality synthetic material, and will be waterproof. They need to be snug fitting so that they can't come off in a crash. The best gloves have extra reinforcement and inserts for greater protection.



Clothing designed for the task

You'll find there is an incredibly wide range of jackets, pants and one-piece suits available. There is now a choice between leather and high-tech synthetic materials. Which will be best for you depends on the type of riding you plan to do. Talk to other riders and look for features like:

- built in body armour
- strong seams and zips
- good abrasion protection - something denim can't offer you
- bright colours and reflective panels/stripes for good visibility.

Think about riding in the wet:

- How waterproof will the clothing you've chosen be?
- Do you need additional wet weather riding gear, such as a one-piece rain suit to go over your normal riding gear?

When you shop for riding gear take the time, before you buy, to put on everything from head to toe. Walk and move around for some time. Then most importantly, try sitting on your dream bike (or one similar) to make sure it all fits comfortably.



Updating your skills

Whether you are new to riding or returning after a break you should do some motorcycle training. Think about doing a course before you buy your dream bike. There are training courses now available to suit anyone from a beginner to more experienced riders. It really depends on where your riding skills are at.

Choose the course to suit your needs

Even experienced riders can benefit from a motorcycle training course that improves skills and picks up on bad habits. A good motorcycle training course will provide you with a refresher on skills like braking, cornering and responding to hazards. Some training providers are now offering courses that are specifically designed for returning riders or newer riders moving up to a larger bike. Contact a few training providers and talk to them about what the best options are for you.

Some contacts for training courses

- **Armstrong's Driver Education**
Tel: 9464 6464 Web: www.armdrive.com.au
- **Aust-Link**
Tel: 5023 8581
- **Baylink Motorcycle Training Academy**
Tel: 5971 9312
- **DECA Training**
Tel: 1300 365 400 Web: www.deca.com.au
- **HART**
Tel: 9335 2766 Web: www.hartridertraining.com.au
- **Motorcycle Motion**
Tel: 9532 0509 Web: www.motorcyclemotion.com.au
- **Motorcycle Training Academy**
Tel: 9706 9733 Web: www.motorcyclctraining.com.au
- **Neil's Driving School**
Tel: 5033 1496
- **Rider Bros Motorcycle Training**
Tel: 9217 8825 Web: www.riderbros.com.au
- **Ride-Tek Motorcycling Training**
Tel: 9701 7304 Web: www.ridetek.com.au
- **South West Institute of TAFE**
Tel: 5564 8967 Web: www.swtafe.vic.edu.au
- **Stay Upright Motorcycle Techniques**
Tel: 1300 366 640 Web: www.stayupright.com.au
- **Swan Training**
Tel: 5033 1334

Talk to a few training providers about what they can offer you before you make a choice.

Taking a pillion along

As a rider you are responsible for any pillion you take for a ride. Taking a pillion requires planning and preparation.



Take some time to ease back into riding, and get familiar with your new bike, before you try taking a pillion.

Dress them right

A pillion needs to wear the same protective gear as the rider. In a crash they are as much at risk of injury as you. A pillion needs:

- a helmet that fits properly and this is required by law (don't think you can just use an old spare one)
- motorcycle jacket and pants or a full suit
- boots and gloves (just as critical for the pillion as for the rider).

If you have someone who you know will be a regular pillion, take them along when you buy your bike and protective riding gear. Get them to try on riding gear at the same time, and to sit on the back of your dream bike to check for comfort.

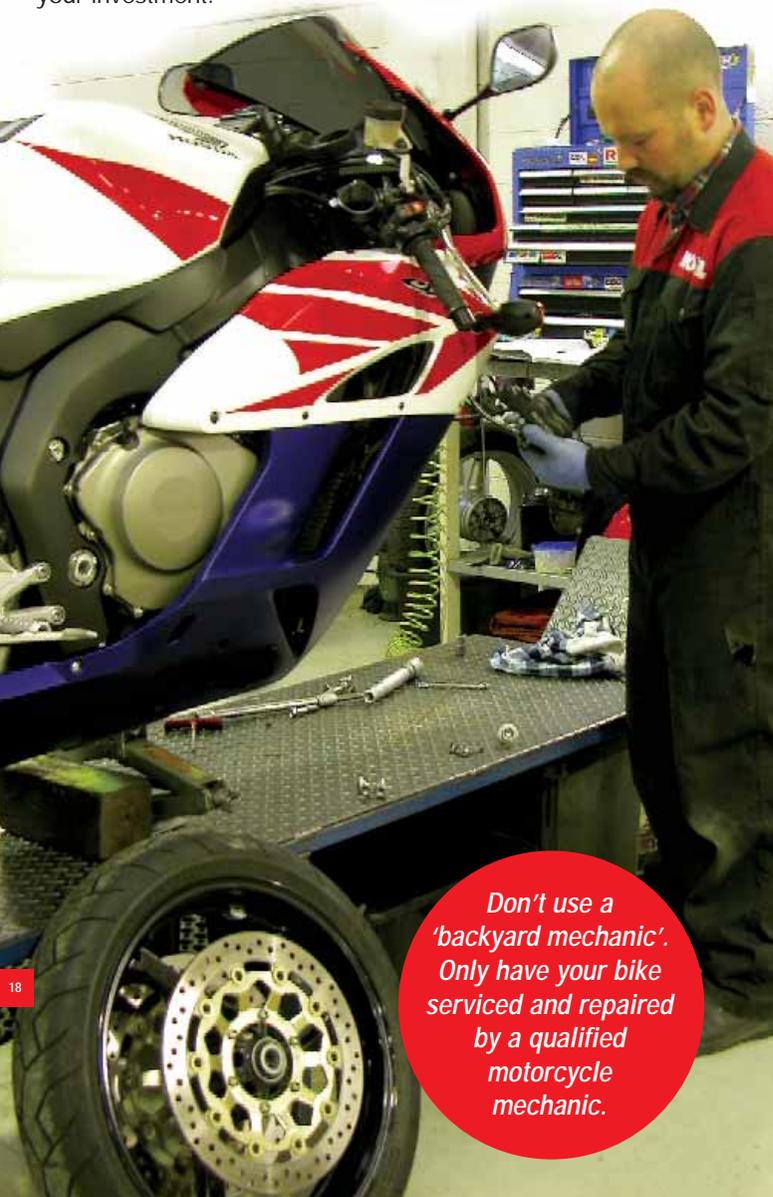


Tips for riding with pillions

- Pillions must be big enough for their feet to reach the footpegs. Taking children for a ride requires careful thought and planning for their safety.
- Check the owner's manual or ask at a bike shop about adjusting the pre-load on the suspension to allow for the extra weight. You may also need to add air to the tyres.
- Don't think that your pillion will know what is expected of them. Before you take off explain that you need them to relax, hold onto the grab rail or your waist, and to follow your lead when you lean into a corner.
- Concentrate on riding smoothly. Take it more slowly and carefully because the bike won't perform or handle as well as when you ride solo.
- Plan your route to avoid heavy traffic or difficult situations.
- Avoid talking to your pillion while riding. Communication is difficult and can really distract you from your riding.

Maintaining your dream machine

Maintenance is a key part of owning and riding bikes. Ignoring simple safety checks before you ride can have dramatic results. Similarly regular servicing is the only way to keep your dream machine in tip top condition and protect your investment.



Don't use a 'backyard mechanic'. Only have your bike serviced and repaired by a qualified motorcycle mechanic.

Checks before you ride

- Give the bike a quick look over every time to check for anything loose or damaged.
- Tyres need to be checked every time you ride. Under-inflated or worn tyres can be a disaster in corners or if you have to brake heavily. Inspect the tread of the tyres and check they are inflated correctly.
- Once you are on the bike squeeze each of the brakes to check they are working before you ride off.
- Test that indicators, brake, tail and headlights are working.
- Check chain adjustment and oil and fluid levels at least once per week, or more often if you are riding daily or long distances.



Regular servicing

Keeping your dream machine in great condition is essential. Servicing needs to be done by a qualified motorcycle mechanic and regularly as recommended in the owner's manual. Poorly maintained bikes can be unpredictable and dangerous to ride.

Make sure you keep your bike clean. Take the time while you wash it to look for:

- loose or missing nuts and bolts
- cracks or dents in wheel rims
- loose spokes
- leaking oil seals
- signs of rust or wear.

Finding out more



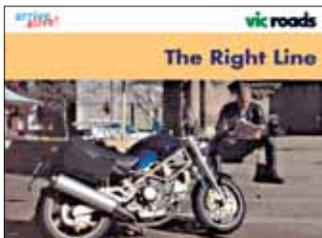
Ask around, talk to other riders and do some research to find out what you need to know to get the most out of your dream bike.

Useful booklets and brochures

Available from VicRoads offices, Bookshop (Tel: 9854 2782) or website.



Discover Safe Riding - useful practice manual for new and returning riders



The Right Line - information and riding hints



Victorian Rider Handbook - laws and essential information for obtaining a motorcycle learner permit and licence



The complete skin care range for motorcyclists - guide to motorcycle protective gear

Websites

www.spokes.com.au - motorcycle safety from TAC and to order your free Ride Smart CD-Rom

www.vicroads.vic.gov.au - follow the link for Motorcyclists