



accidents don't have to happen

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

Ride Safe

How to Avoid Common
Motorcycle Crashes



Common Types of Crashes

Riding a motorbike safely requires both skill and good judgement. This is why many of us ride bikes. The successful use of these abilities makes us feel good and we are keen to be the best.

This is a short reminder about the most common types of motorcycle crashes and how you can avoid them.

Accident studies show that the most common types of motorcycle crashes are:

- **failure to negotiate bends, especially on country roads**
- **other vehicles pulling out into the path of motorcyclists**
- **collisions at junctions**
- **collisions while overtaking**
- **loss of control, due to poor road surface or high speed.**



Bends on Country Roads

Most of us do our training on town, not country roads. Country roads are different so we need to apply our skills, knowledge and ability in a different way. Some bends are smooth and even, opening up with a good line of sight once you are into them. Others can tighten up dramatically. If you enter a bend at too high a speed you will find yourself with a major problem. If the road gives you clues about how it bends, then use them. You may see the:

- **curvature of white lines**
- **path of telegraph poles**
- **line of trees or hedges at the side of the road.**

But, take care and remember things may not be as they first appear (the trees may go off over a field rather than follow the road). If in any doubt, lose more speed before the bend so you have greater room for manoeuvring safely, without having to brake on the bend itself.

Collisions at Junctions

These most often happen at T-junctions but can happen at other junctions too, often because drivers fail to give way or stop. Sometimes, drivers do not see a rider (even though they were in plain view, properly positioned and wearing high visibility clothing) or misjudge the time it takes the rider to arrive at the junction. Research shows that drivers have difficulty spotting a bike approaching, judging its speed correctly and estimating its time of arrival.

As you approach junctions, try to see where the driver's eyes are pointing and whether its wheels are beginning to turn. Consider how you would deal safely with the vehicle unexpectedly pulling out in front of you.



Collisions while Overtaking

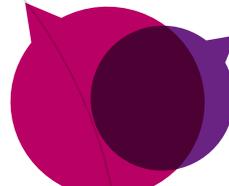
Overtaking requires the skill to judge speed and distance, good sightlines and a good knowledge of your bike's acceleration. When riding a bike you are not used to, before doing any overtaking, take time to learn how it reacts when accelerating and braking in different gears.

To overtake safely you need a view of everything going on around you and places where a vehicle may be hidden from your view, such as over the brow of a hill, in a dip, around a bend or approaching from a junction. There could be a high-speed vehicle coming the other way, hidden from view.

You also need to consider how the driver or rider you are overtaking, or one who is coming the other way, will react. You can't assume they will slow down to let you in. They may do the opposite.

Don't overtake when approaching:

- bends
- junctions
- lay-bys
- pedestrian crossings
- hills or dips in the road
- where there are double white lines or other signs prohibiting overtaking.



Filtering

If filtering past stationary or slow moving traffic, do it with care. Closely packed vehicles in a queue reduce your visibility, your room to manoeuvre and your reaction time to a minimum.

Many drivers do not use their wing mirrors well and will not know that you are there, so may move across in front of you or open a door.

Or pedestrians may suddenly dart out from between stationary vehicles.

If you are riding with others, plan everything for yourself calmly rather than automatically follow in a convoy. Snap overtaking decisions are dangerous.

Loss of Control

The two main reasons for loss of control collisions are shunts and failure to take account of road surface conditions.



Shunts

These are usually due to riding too close to the vehicle in front, or the vehicle behind you being too close.

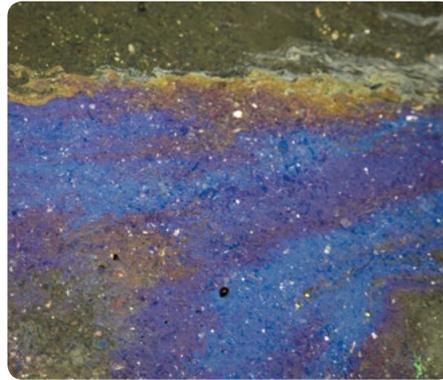
To protect yourself:

- **leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front**
- **make sure you can always stop safely on your side of the road in the distance you can see to be clear**
- **if the vehicle behind is too close, try to give yourself more room in front.**

Road Surface Conditions

Part of the challenge of riding a motorbike is adjusting your riding to deal with different road conditions. The most common ones that lead to riders losing control of their bikes are:

- **poor weather conditions**
- **diesel spills**
- **mud**
- **manhole covers**
- **painted road markings.**



Look out for these conditions and for road signs warning you of hazards ahead. There may be other clues to hazards; for example, where lorries turn, there may be diesel spills, where there are building sites, or farm and field entrances, there may be mud. Even new road surfaces can be slippery under certain conditions.

Make sure your tyres are in good condition and are always at the correct pressure.

Always allow yourself sufficient time and space to see what is ahead of you so you can always take avoiding action. Your safety will depend on the circumstances around the hazard, such as road conditions, weather, the limitations of your bike, and your skill and fitness as a rider.

A Skill for Life!

Motorcycling is a skill for life and like any skill, it needs to be practised, honed and developed. If you haven't been out on your bike for a while, ease yourself back into riding gently and think about refresher training.

When you've had a good safe ride, think back to how your skills and knowledge made it good. But where it wasn't so good, or perhaps you had a near miss, did other issues like group pressure, lack of practice, tiredness, distraction, anger, or stress get in the way?

Try to learn lessons from experience to improve your skills and your enjoyment of motorcycling. An assessment ride, such as BikeSafe or an advanced driving group, will reveal any problem areas. Make sure you are the best rider you can be and ensure that you have the skills and ability to deal with any situation by getting further training from an accredited provider.

Further Advice

BikeSafe:
www.bikesafe.co.uk

British Motorcyclists Federation:
www.bmf.co.uk

Driver and Vehicles Standards Agency:
www.dvsa.gov.uk

IAM RoadSmart:
<https://www.iamroadsmart.com/>

Motorcycle Action group:
www.mag-uk.org

Motorcycle Industry Association:
www.mcia.co.uk

Motorcycle Retailers Association and
Motorcycle Riders Training Association:
www.rmif.co.uk

Police Scotland:
www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/road-safety/motorcyclists

Road Safety Scotland:
<http://roadsafetyscotland.org.uk/road-safety-topics/motorbikes>

The Royal Society for the Prevention
of Accidents:
www.rospa.com

RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders:
www.roadar.org

Wales By Bike:
www.walesbybike.com

Photos taken from and courtesy of:
Motorcycle Industry Association
www.geograph.org.uk/
(1) Phillip Perry - geograph.org.uk/p/682366
(2) Pete Chapman - geograph.org.uk/p/59874
(3) N Chadwick - geograph.org.uk/p/1403575



accidents don't have to happen



RoSPA Head Office

RoSPA House
28 Calthorpe Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1RP

RoSPA Scotland

43 Discovery Terrace
Heriot-Watt University Research Park
Edinburgh
EH14 4AP

RoSPA Wales

2nd Floor
2 Cwrt-y-Parc
Parc Ty Glas
Cardiff Business Park
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5GH

www.rospa.com

Registered Charity No. 207823
VAT Registration No. 655 131649

General Enquiries

 +44 (0)121 248 2130
 help@rospa.com
 [twitter.com/@rospa](https://twitter.com/rospa)
 facebook.com/rospa

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents