

# How to enhance your defensive riding skills...

When you're on your motorcycle, it often feels like everyone else on the road is out to get you. That's why adopting a defensive riding style and a keen eye for potential hazards are essential. We talked to Mark Jaffe, owner and chief instructor from Phoenix Motorcycle Training, to see how to gain and improve these skills...



## Where to get the skills?

Phoenix Motorcycle Training is the UK's largest and highest rated motorcycle training organisation, with advanced riding courses available at

several locations. To find a course that suits you, as well as your nearest location, visit [phoenixmotorcycletraining.co.uk](http://phoenixmotorcycletraining.co.uk) or call 0330 223 4000.

handy systems to remember are the OSM-PSL and IPSGA acronyms. OSM-PSL stands for Observation, Signal, Manoeuvre - Position, Speed, Look. The Observation part means that you should look in your mirrors and all around you so you're aware of the traffic situation. You should Signal clearly and in good time, and you should Manoeuvre using the FSL routine to Position your motorbike correctly and in good time, adjust your Speed as necessary, and Look for other traffic.

IPSGA is short for Information, Position, Speed, Gear, Acceleration. The Information part of the system continues throughout the process with the rider taking, using and giving information about the situation. The other parts of the system are run in succession, starting with considering your Position on the road, the Speed you are travelling at, the Gear you are using, and finally Acceleration once you have dealt with the hazard. All of these are done to put you in the right position, at the right speed, and in the right gear to best negotiate the hazard, then accelerate away from it, whatever it may be.

In addition to the memory rules, there are other, more concrete skills to develop, too. One of them is continuously scanning your surroundings and prioritising the potential hazards that you can identify. It's a case of playing a game of 'What if?' in your mind while riding.

Also, it's good to be aware of times and places of high risk. You may know of a junction where visibility is restricted at certain times of year because of trees, or at certain times of the day because of low sunlight. Traffic volume, road condition and people's driving also can change very quickly.

Controlling your own speed and being aware of your reaction times is another key skill. You need to be able to slow down or stop if avoiding a hazard demands it. To be able to do this, you need to be travelling at the right speed in the first place, know how long it takes to stop your bike from that speed, and being able to apply emergency braking if required.

Weather and road conditions play an important part in not just how your bike reacts to different situations, but also how you are able to control your bike. Being wet, cold and tired on the bike never makes riding any easier.

Finally, you should try to avoid distractions. Your phone may be a great help as a navigation device, but taking calls while riding takes your concentration away from the job at hand - staying safe.

## Defensive riding

A common mistake that riders make is to expect others to do the right thing which, in reality, they don't always do. This is often shown when going through small gaps with oncoming traffic, following too closely, or not giving space when passing parked vehicles.

The challenges that motorcyclists need to deal with come in many shapes and sizes, but applying advanced riding techniques makes it possible to manage these risks better, and enjoy motorcycling more.

There are plenty of books and articles written about advanced riding, but you can make the process much quicker and easier by signing up to do a training day with a qualified and professional trainer. It doesn't cost the earth, and your money well spent. Here's to many happy and safe miles!

There's no two ways about it, riding motorcycles comes with risks, and it is everyone's responsibility to try to minimise them. As motorcyclists, we are vulnerable road users, but there are also several ways to reduce risk and improve safety. Among some of

the most useful safety skills for bikers are defensive riding and hazard awareness.

As our roads get ever busier, it is essential that you plan well ahead (see last issue of *MoreBikes* for our article about planning). Once the planning is

done, it's time to act, and just how you do that can make a huge difference to your riding.

A good starting point is to try to avoid putting yourself in a situation where you are trying to do too many things at once. As with most things, when

complexity increases, the chances of something going wrong somewhere along the way increase, too.

## Enhancing awareness

How do you get ahead of the game by spotting potential hazards early, and

not having too much to deal with at any point? Enhancing your awareness about other road users, including cyclists, drivers, animals and pedestrians will give you a better chance to anticipate what might happen next. It's almost like you are predicting the future.

Also, it's important to understand how the weather conditions affect you as a rider. Changes that might have next-to-no impact on drivers may have a much bigger impact on riders, and those changes can happen suddenly, making it more

difficult to stay in full control of the situation.

In addition to the 'normal' traffic around you, it is also good to have awareness of vehicles navigating the roads in a different manner. This includes emergency vehicles as well

as aggressive road users, and there are particular ways to deal with different situations like these.

## Skills and knowledge

There are many skills that you can work on to improve your riding. Two