



# Ditching The

# TRAINING WHEELS

It's not as easy as it once was to get your hands on a full motorcycle licence – but with a bit of guidance and some top training, you'll be blasting about on a 'big' bike in no time.

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I'm Chris! You may have seen me in these pages over the last year-and-a-half as I tackled my CBT, walked my fellow motorcyclists in training through what to look out for in your kit, and got lucky enough to try out a wide range of different learner legal machines to help you discover which 125cc ride was right for you.

I've just passed my various tests to earn the highly coveted 'A' licence,

and wanted to share with you all the steps you need to take to get out on two wheels, with no L plates.

## YOU'VE GOT TO START SOMEWHERE

The first step to becoming a fully-fledged motorcyclist is Compulsory Basic Training. It's essentially a day-long training course which drills into you all the basic skills you need

and information you'll want to know, to safely get out on the road on two wheels.

While technically you can't fail a CBT and they'll keep drilling you on any aspect you struggle with, there are only so many hours in the day, so if you're not up to scratch you'll have to go back another day to continue where you left off.

## REVISION WORKS WONDERS

The next step to getting your hands on a 'full' licence is your Theory Test. It can be done at any of the many, many test centres scattered across the country, for a grand old total of £23.

It's broken down into a multiple-choice section and a hazard perception test. For the multiple

choice, you'll be given 57 minutes to answer 50 questions, and you need to score at least 43 to pass. A lot of the questions are common sense. However, there is a good number which require more specific knowledge. If you've never read the Highway Code, make sure you familiarise yourself.

Once the multiple choice is out the way, you get to move on to a hazard perception test. You'll be shown 14 video clips of a vast range of everyday road scenes. The concept is simple. Watch the video and as soon as you see something that looks like it's about to turn into a hazard (a van driving rapidly up the layby with its indicators on; flashing lights coming towards you on a busy street; people

ambling about near a crossing), click the mouse. The earlier you catch each hazard the more points you'll get, starting at five points for noticing the hazard as soon as it starts to develop, all the way down to one point, or even zero, if you only notice at the last second. Out of 75 possible points you only need to earn 44 to pass this section, and as long as you keep your concentration focused it's pretty easy.

After you've finished the hazard perception, you'll make your way out to the desk where you'll receive a piece of paper, which will either let you know if you've passed or failed (and how you scored). Make sure you keep it safe; it's your Theory Certificate. Just like the CBT, it'll last for two years.

## TECHNICAL PROWESS

Now it's time for Module One. This is all about your technical prowess, and for me, it was the part I was dreading the most. To pass I'd need to prove I was confident enough to perform eight key skills.

But first I needed to brush up. I decided to spend the day before my test with the good folks at Phoenix Motorcycle Training, who were fantastic. My instructor took me through each step that would come up in the test and shared a bunch of hints and tips to help avoid any unnecessary minors. They also took me on a ride to the DVSA centre so we could see how it was laid out and walk us through what would be expected of us on the day.

Throughout the course our instructor was constantly offering improvements ranging from the larger points which could make the difference between a pass and fail, down to the tiniest nudges that simply helped tighten up our riding skills that touch more.

The test day rolled round, and I

met an instructor at the Phoenix training centre to pick up the bike I would be using and get warmed up for the trials ahead. A top tip passed on to me from the people at Phoenix Motorcycle Training: the test doesn't start when you ride up to the first test scenario, it starts the moment you get ready to get on your bike before you've even ridden in to the paddock, so make sure to park facing out of the bay you choose, and that you don't choose a parking bay which is going to give you an awkward angle for riding into the paddock. It's this kind of advice which makes booking in for training prior to your tests such a crucial step on your journey.

After riding in through the gates I was asked to stop in a marked bay before dismounting, and walking the bike backwards and turning it round, until I came to a stop in a different bay, facing outwards. The key with this manual handling exercise, and in fact every single one of the scenarios, is to treat it all as if you're doing it out on the roads: look both

ways before moving off every single time, perform your lifesaver over-the-shoulder checks without fail, and always make sure the bike is in neutral in between exercises.

The slalom and figure-of-eight came next, something I had been dreading beforehand, but which I now felt comfortable tackling, thanks to all the training and advice I had received the day before. The manoeuvres themselves are simple: a slow, smooth ride between a line of cones before diving straight into the figure-of-eight, where you'll loop round a set of cones two to three times (potentially more; you need to keep going until the examiner calls you to move on to the next area).

A slow ride and the U-Turn came next. I know a lot of people worry about the U-Turn, but as long as you keep the speed down, a healthy amount of revs on the engine, and remember to fully look at where you want to turn to, you'll nail it. I found it a lot easier on the multi-million-pound Tarmac than I had before in the training centre.

With those slow-speed skills demonstrated and out the way, it becomes time to move on to the three 'high-speed' manoeuvres. All three of these exercises start the same way. You ride along a line of cones before going round a large sloping corner, coming out of the bend into a long straight where you need to get your speed up before you get to a speed tracking pad on the floor. Once you've passed the pad you'll have to perform a controlled stop in a marked section, then you'll repeat the exercise, but instead you'll perform an emergency stop when your examiner raises their hand, before repeating the ride round the bend a third time, and once you've passed the speed pad you'll need to navigate your way past some cones to

demonstrate your hazard avoidance, before stopping in a marked area. For these last three scenarios, the most important thing is to get your speed up. You must do a minimum of 31mph on a motorcycle or 19mph on a scooter, so as soon as you come out of the bend, you'll find you need to pin the throttle back in order to get enough speed to pass the test.

If you come through just under the required speed, you'll get a minor and move on, but if you come in a few mph too slow, you'll be asked to repeat the exercise, earning a minor

but getting the opportunity to try again to get your speed up to avoid a serious fault. Once these last tasks are completed you'll ride up to the gate, wait for it to be opened, and then ride to a parking bay before

### Important:

Your Module One pass certificate only lasts until your current CBT expires, so depending on how long you have left on your CBT, you could have almost two years to complete your Module Two test, or you could have a matter of weeks.





dismounting to go and find out your result.

Remember, you're still in test conditions at this point so make sure you're still riding as if your licence depends on it. It does. You're not safe until the moment you've pulled up in a bay, put your bike in neutral, switched off the engine, and put down the kickstand.

The entire test will only take around 20 minutes and you'll pass as long as you've earned zero serious or dangerous faults (you might know them as majors) or no more than five riding faults (or minors). When you go in to get your result, the examiner will let you know where you got any minors you might have picked up, as well as handing over your certificate.

### THE FINAL HURDLE

The last step: Module Two. You're on the home stretch. This bit's all about your road riding ability, and again, I cannot recommend enough that you seek out a training course in preparation for your test. I spent another invaluable day with Phoenix Motorcycle Training the day before my test.

Pretty much the entire day was spent out riding the roads and routes that might come up in my test, to help you familiarise yourself with those dodgy streets which can trip up the unaware. A huge part of the training is also focused on tightening up those real-world riding skills, from roundabouts to carriageways and everything in between, to make sure you're not just riding the way you need to in order to get that all-important pass from your examiner, but also embedding those lifelong skills which will help keep you safe on the streets. The day passed all too quickly, but by the end of my training I felt more than ready to take on my test.

The big day rolled round, and after meeting up with my instructor back at the Phoenix training centre it was time to head out to the DVSA test centre. As with the Module One, I made sure to pick a good parking spot and backed in, so I was in a perfect position to hit the road without any fuff. I made myself known to the examiner to sign in and get the necessary paperwork sorted (you'll need to bring your licence, CBT certificate, Theory certificate, and Module One certificate).

First up is the age-old eyesight test, reading a number plate from 20 metres away. Once that first step is taken care of, you and the examiner will stand around your bike while they ask you three 'Show Me Tell Me' questions. These are all easy enough and there are only about 13 potential questions they can ask you. Phoenix Motorcycle Training took care of

all the prep for this for me, and not only did we walk through all the potential questions the day before, but they also sent over a list to help prepare. Don't worry too much if you get the questions wrong though, the maximum number of minors you can earn from this exercise is still just one.

Questions out the way, it was time to fit the one-way intercom and hit the road. And the rest of the test is entirely on the road. For the most part you'll be given instructions over the intercom of which signs to follow or where to turn, but also there will be around 10 minutes of independent riding, where your examiner will tell you to follow signs for a certain location and then will ride behind you observing your ride.

An important note is to not worry if you make a wrong turn. Do not panic and stop, just keep riding safely along the new route, as your instructor will quickly give you new instructions; just try not to go wrong too many times. On top of the regular riding, you'll also be asked to pull up on the side of the road multiple times, and then demonstrate your ability to pull out normally, from an angled start or from a hill start, and they will likely ask you to do all these things multiple times.

The best advice I received is to simply try and enjoy the ride. The test will take about 40 minutes in total and providing you're riding safely and confidently, taking care to watch out for traffic conditions and pedestrians, and performing your lifesavers every time you turn and perform any kind of manoeuvre, then you'll find you'll settle into the swing of it and you'll be heading back to the test centre before you know it.

Following my examiner into the office, I was thrilled to discover I had passed with only two minors, one being for riding too close to parked cars down a narrow road, and the other because I had checked my mirrors, then started moving off from a stop before fully completing my lifesaver check (I was very lucky here as I was told that if I hadn't checked my mirrors it would have been a serious fault and automatic fail).

Delirious with excitement, I strutted out of the office to engage in a brief round of self-congratulations before heading back to the Phoenix training centre.

I'm fully aware that with the formality of training over, my real learning has just begun, so keep your eyes out for future issues as I'll be taking on various courses to improve myself as a rider and take on a whole bunch of new experiences. I hope this helps some of you get through your tests, best of luck, and enjoy those roads!

## AFTER SOME TOP TRAINING?



It's no surprise that Phoenix Motorcycle Training are the UK's largest motorcycle training organisation. They'll keep you on the right track right through the process, from CBT to Module Two – and they've even got advanced rider training and off-road courses to help you ride better once you've passed.

The centres are mostly based

down south, but it's well worth travelling for the right people and the right school. Have a look on their website and find your closest location and then give them a shout to chat specifics. They're a great bunch of people who'll be more than happy to help.

**VISIT:** [www.phoenixmotorcycletraining.co.uk](http://www.phoenixmotorcycletraining.co.uk) / **CALL:** 0330 223 4000.