



# Skills clinic: Riding on motorways

Motorway riding requires specific skills, and making sure you have them is an important part of developing as a rider...

Motorways are the UK's safest roads, but they are also the fastest. Great for getting from A to B quickly, but as your speed increases, so does the potential for things to go wrong. Here are tips from Mark Iaffe, the chief instructor at Phoenix Motorcycle Training, about how to make the most of them, and how to minimise the risks.

**Don't make these mistakes**  
Riding too close is the biggest mistake you can make on motorways. The two-second rule is a surprisingly long separation when you're at high speeds, but it's important to maintain it. Exceeding the speed limit is an easy mistake to make on motorways, but again, it's important to stay sharp and resist temptation. It is scary how

much further your braking distance is at 80mph compared to 70mph. And it doesn't matter how good a rider you are, the laws of physics apply the same to all of us. Also, speeding links in with riding too close. Rear-end shunts are, unfortunately, a common scenario in motorway crashes. Filtering too quickly between lines of traffic is another issue that easily

arises out of impatience. While the ability to filter is a great advantage of riding a motorcycling, be careful not to ride much faster than the rest of the traffic moving. If you are zooming along between slow-moving cars, you don't have much time to slow down or make an avoidance manoeuvre if someone changes lane or swerves to have a look past a car in front of them.

This brings us nicely to the old rule that applies to all roads and should be remembered on motorways: never assume that other road users are going to do the right thing. Prepare for all eventualities and expect the unexpected. One of the unexpected things that people often do on motorways is changing lanes late and without



Phoenix Motorcycle Training is the UK's largest motorcycle training provider, with 25 local training centres. The company provides high-quality courses from CBTs to full licence and post-licence training delivered by fully accredited instructors, and designed to meet a range of customer needs, from complete beginners to experienced riders. Tel: 0330 223 4000 Email: bookings@teachmotoride.co.uk Web: phoenixmotorcycletraining.co.uk

warning, so try to put yourself in a position where you can anticipate and deal with such manoeuvres.

Under-taking (or overtaking on the left to be grammatically correct) other vehicles, particularly HGVs, is sometimes tempting, but should be avoided as drivers don't generally expect it and can move to the inside lane without warning.

**Here's how to get it right**  
Unfortunately, there is no magic shortcut to getting motorway riding right instantly. Nothing can beat proper training and practice, and your skills will develop over time. And while there are plenty of sources available to do some background research, remember that not everyone is always right, and consulting qualified trainers is your best bet for getting the right advice.

One thing that is easy to practice, and that will make a difference to your motorway riding, is looking as far ahead as you can. This will give you information about traffic and hazards much further away, and consequently give you more time to assess and react to anything that requires action.

As well as having early warning of what is likely to happen, you should also be aware of what other road users are doing now, anticipate what they might do next, and plan your manoeuvres early in relation to this.

This creates time and space around you, which is vital for your safety.

Having space around you is important, especially when travelling at motorway speeds. Try to leave enough space between you and others, and if you're wondering what that looks like, remember that the two-second rule at 70mph equates to approximately 14 car lengths.

When filtering, travel at a speed that allows you to stop if a vehicle changes lane without warning. This also gives those in front of you time to see you and move over to help. It's a good idea not to filter when traffic is moving at 25mph or more, and only filter past at a maximum speed of 15mph over the speed of other vehicles.

There's plenty more to think about when it comes to motorway riding, and depending on your abilities and riding style you may need help in specific areas, so the best way to advance your riding is to talk to a qualified trainer or a training school. Stay safe!

### Am I allowed on motorways?

Not all bikes and riders are allowed to ride on motorways. Your motorcycle must be above 50cc in capacity, and unless you obtained a car licence before 1 February, 2001, you will need at least an A1 licence or higher (a CBT certificate is not enough).

