

Enhance your planning...

Planning is essential: if you fail to plan, you essentially plan to fail. But how does that work with riding motorcycles? Here's Mark Jaffe, owner and chief instructor from Phoenix Motorcycle Training with more about what planning means for motorcyclists...



Having a plan is where it all starts. We all want to skip the dull learning and earning our stripes bits, but here's the thing: it's the same with motorcycling as it is with anything else - you can only make it look slick and effortless if you have spent long enough honing your skills. And what you need for all of that is a plan. Or rather, a whole heap of overlapping and intertwined, but structured, plans.

The reason we need a structured plan is that it helps us prepare for, and deal with, hazards in a systematic way. There are a couple of systems that you may have heard advanced riders talk about: *IPSGA* and *OSM-PSL*. Both equally dull acronyms, but both very powerful tools in providing the rider a system of motorcycle control to rely on.

OSM-PSL stands for *Observation, Signal, Manoeuvre - Position, Speed, Look*. This is a routine that you may have come across in your initial rider training. 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 *PSL* 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*. This is the system that police riders use to approach and negotiate hazards on the roads. It has also been adopted by most advanced riding organisations in the UK. 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. We could talk for hours about what is involved in each stage of the system in different situations, but without going too deep into it, suffice to say that it provides a system to deal with pretty much any hazard that you may face on your bike.

Naturally, just knowing what the acronyms mean doesn't make you an advanced rider. It takes a fair bit of riding, thinking, then riding again to appreciate what each component part of the system means in different situations, and even longer to make them a part of your riding. If you do an ERS training day, the trainer will look for correct and effective use of *OSM-PSL*/*IPSGA* for all road and traffic situations.

More experienced riders often ride with more confidence and assertiveness than those new to two wheels. Some of it comes with the miles you ride over the years, but also you can actively work towards improving your skills and knowledge, which in turn increases your confidence and helps you to be more assertive in your riding. Just be careful not to mistake this for riding aggressively - that's something that never leads to anything good.

Another area that is developed as part of becoming a better rider is hazard perception. The more you know about what might be a potential problem and how different situations might develop, the more you know to be on the lookout for them. Something that might look like possessing no danger at all to a new rider may be a reason for a more experienced rider to change their position, speed and gear to prepare for a potential hazard. Sometimes the hazards remain just that, potential, but if they become real and acute, you need to be ready to deal with them, and know exactly how to do that.

If all that sounds like a lot to take in, don't worry. It's not uncommon for riders to struggle with having a structured and planned approach to riding. The key is to recognise the value of planning and applying a system to your riding as best you can - we are all constantly improving. To give you a boost with your riding skills development, the best bet is to sign up for an advanced riding course with a reputable, qualified and trusted training organisation.

Getting better always takes some work, but the benefits of advanced riding - being safer, smoother and smarter - are worth it. Give it a go, and let us know what you think.

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 or call 0330 223 4000.

