

Are you fit to ride?

Even before you get on a bike, you should always assess whether you're fit to ride.

I AM SAFE checklist

Do a self-check using the I AM SAFE* checklist. Ask yourself these questions:

- Illness – Do I have an illness or symptoms that might affect my ability to ride?
- Attitude – How do I feel about this journey? Am I fully focussed on the riding task? What human factors do I need to take into account?
- Medication – Am I taking any medications that might affect my performance ?
- Sleep – Am I suffering from lack of sleep/fatigue?
- Alcohol – Have I had a drink? Am I still affected by alcohol?
- Food – Am I hungry or thirsty? Could low blood sugar or dehydration affect my judgement?
- Emotion – Am I angry, depressed or stressed?

Is your machine fit to ride?

If you haven't ridden the motorcycle before, refer to the machine handbook.

Roadworthiness/pre-riding checklist

Before you start to ride a motorcycle for the first time each day, you should ensure that it is roadworthy. Always carry out the following pre-riding checks. Identify the type of motorcycle you are going to ride.

- General patrol/surveillance/specialist (escort group)/light weight (3 wheels)
- Gearbox type (manual/automatic)/number of gears and position
- Safety features – anti-lock braking system (ABS)/combined braking system (CBS)/electronic stability/traction control
- Position of controls and auxiliaries
- Glass/plastic – mirrors and lenses are clean
- Security of carried items – panniers (weight restrictions/balance).

POWDDERSS Checklist

Petrol Ensure that you have sufficient fuel for your journey

- Visual check
- Fuel gauge (if fitted)
- Re-set trip meter

Oil Oil levels/type – follow manufacturer's recommendations

Engine oil

- Dipstick/sight glass – secured/clean
- Secure oil filler cap – top up if required

Brake/clutch fluid

- Levels and colour correct
- No water intrusion/bubbles
- Visual check for leaks on reservoir, hoses and connections

Water Radiator water level including coolant/anti-freeze mixture

Visual check for damage to radiator fins/top and bottom hoses

Damage/Driver Visual examination of machine

- Insecure panels and/or damage
- Panniers/luggage – secure and balance

Visual examination of drive mechanism

- Chain – oiled and correct tension
- Sprockets – no hooked or missing teeth
- Shaft – no leaks, gaiters in place and not damaged

Electronics Verify operation of electrical systems

- Lights – mandatory running lights (main and dipped beam)
- Brake light
- Indicators and hazard warning lights
- High intensity lights front/rear (if fitted)
- Number plate light
- Interior instrument warning lights
- Audible warning systems (horn)
- Ancillary systems (heated grips)

Rubber Wheels – free rotation

- Tyres – tread depth/free from cuts, bulges, tears/pressures/compatibility
- Valves – caps in place and free from damage
- Handlebar grips – secure
- Throttle (twist and release)
- Footrest rubbers – rider/pillion

Steering/Centring

- Headrace bearing – free movement lock to lock and self-centring

Suspension

- Trapped cables (engine tone increases)
- Suspension set for weight – damping/rebound
- Pillion/luggage adjustments
- Fork seals – clean and no leaks

Switch on the ignition. Note the warning lights. Ensure gear is neutral. Neutral light illuminated. Disengage the clutch. Start the engine. Release the clutch slowly.

- If any checks could not be completed prior to ignition or start up, do them now
- Carry out a static brake check – front and rear brakes (see next section)
- Visual check of brake discs and pads
- Adjust seat – if required
- Visual inspection of all gauges and warning lights
- Remove machine from centre stand – ensure full retraction
- Check operation of side stand
- Emergency engine cut-off switch – check and reset

As soon as possible after moving off and in a safe place carry out a moving brake test (see next section). Check gauges and warning lights at intervals during all subsequent journeys, taking action if necessary.

Testing the Brakes

Brakes are a very important part of the motorcycle. Check the brakes both before you move off and when the bike is moving.

The stationary test

Check that the hand lever and foot pedal move freely and give a firm position pressure that can be maintained for 3 to 4 seconds.

The moving test

The purpose of the moving brake test is to:

- Check that both brakes are working efficiently under running conditions
- Learn how much to apply the brakes on that particular bike
- Identify any unexpected problems

A moving brake test is vital when you move off on an unfamiliar machine which you may need to ride in demanding conditions at higher speeds. Test both brakes as soon as possible after moving off.

Always consider the safety and convenience of other road users before doing a moving test:

- Choose a flat, level road with good surface conditions
- Check the road is clear behind you
- Apply both brakes gradually and progressively – not harshly
- Feel for anything unusual (e.g. tendency to pull to one side, any vibrations pulsing) and listen for anything unusual (noise from the brakes could mean they are binding).

If you are on the same machine all day and there's no reason to suspect the performance of the brakes, only need to do this test once in the day.