

Motorcycles



What Type Is Right for You?

As the weather warms, thoughts inevitably turn to the open road, and how better to experience it than on a new bike?

If you're considering motorcycle purchase, be aware that several factors go into finding the correct fit, including speed, position and price. Here's how to tell what type is right for you.

STANDARD MOTORCYCLE

This design is just what it sounds like, a basic model. You'll find moderately sized engines within a user-friendly frame. Typical features include standard upright seating, and easy-to-reach foot pegs and handlebars. (That's why they're sometimes referred to as a "naked" motorcycle.) A standard motorcycle is perfect for new riders.

CRUISER MOTORCYCLE

By contrast, cruiser motorcycles allow drivers to lean back, a position that can be risky for beginners — in particular when facing hazardous road conditions or high winds. This larger bike would sport a V-twin engine for plenty of low-end power, forward-facing pegs for your feet and high handlebars. They take a while to get used to for the inexperienced.

TOURING MOTORCYCLE

If you're more interested in traveling than cruising around town, a touring motorcycle



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might be right for you. They too have upright seating, but also larger engines (meaning more fuel capacity) and ample storage for longer trips. Larger fairings help block weather and wind. But its sheer size and higher cost might be a deterrent to new riders.

SPORT MOTORCYCLE

Boasting a light frame and high-performance engine, sport

bikes offer quick acceleration for high-speed usage. Riders get parallel with the bike to help with aerodynamics, reaching further out than they would on a traditional bike. Sport motorcycles also have higher foot pegs.

DUAL-SPORT MOTORCYCLE

These are essentially street-legal dirt bikes, built to

handle rugged terrain but with enough riding smoothness to take on short highway trips. Also known as "dual purpose" or "adventure sport" bikes, the dual-sport's lightweight frame and smaller engine also make them ideal for beginners. The seats are a bit higher than you might find in other models, so make sure you can comfortably touch the roadway.

SCOOTERS AND MOPEDS

Lightweight scooters are uniquely suited for metropolitan areas where you won't reach highway speeds. They come in sizes from 50cc through 500cc, providing enough power to get you around town. Mopeds have a lighter bicycle-style frame, and a much smaller engine. They'll be 50cc at most; some even have an electric motor instead of an engine.

Hitting the Road

You've picked out just the right motorcycle. Now what? Here are some tips for smart ownership.

BUDGET WISELY

Getting a motorcycle with an eye on hitting the open road is an exciting prospect. But the costs don't end with a signed purchase agreement. Remember to factor in additional expenses associated with becoming a motorcyclist. That means shopping around for the best insurance rate, and then pricing out needed items like a helmet, a jacket, pants and gloves. Factor in routine maintenance when estimating your future costs, too, especially if you are buying used.

PAPERWORK

Long before you make a purchase, you'll have to have a special license. States require that you go through a separate qualification process in order to ride a bike, so that will mean a trip to the Department of Motor Vehicles before you sign on the dotted line. Insurance policies differ as well, so you may need to consult your agent about driving a motorcycle rather than a passenger vehicle. A special motorcycle policy is required by law in many states. Be aware that your rates may change.

SAFETY FIRST

If it's not already required, consider taking a course like



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those administered by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. They are modeled like a driver's ed course, but with a focus on the unique challenges presented to bikers. Consider a refresher if you're an experienced motorcyclist, but haven't taken a course in some time. Motorcycling can be one of the most exhilarating pursuits, but

there are inherent risks.

SPECIAL GEAR

Because motorcycles expose you to the dangers of other drivers and the outdoor elements, you'll want to load up on a special gear. Start with a Department of Transportation-approved helmet. Consider one with a

visor to block out some of the sun's rays. Helmets are required in a number of states, but not in others. Save yourself a ticket by researching these various laws before making any long trips. A good rain slicker is also recommended, since weather conditions can change without much notice.

SCOUTING THE AREA

Look for a good place to park your motorcycle, where it's away from punishing sun and rain — and also less likely to be the target of opportunistic thieves. Study up on nearby attractions, so you can begin making day trips when you become more comfortable on the bike.

The Latest Technology

Riding a motorcycle has never been safer, thanks in large part to the latest technology.

Add these new gadgets to a mix of rider training, defensive driving and a road-ready bike to stay out of harm's way out on the road.

SMART HELMETS

The latest helmets do more than simply shield your head. They can connect to a smartphone for hands-free calling or music selections, utilize an on-board camera and take advantage of noise-canceling features. Just make sure any helmet you may purchase meets the DOT FMVSS 218 standard, meaning it follows the U.S. government's minimum Department of Transportation regulations for protection in the event of a motorcycle accident.

BUILT-IN AIRBAG

Car and truck drivers have been protected by air bags for decades, and now their counterparts on motorcycles can be, too. Jackets with a built-in airbag system were initially bulky and uncomfortable, but the latest innovative models are far more user friendly. A lanyard tethers riders to the bike. If disconnected after being thrown during a crash, the cushioning deploys to keep the neck and spine supported on impact. Honda has also pioneered an airbag system that's bike-mounted.



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USB MOTORCYCLE CHARGER

In many cases, your smartphone is a life line back home, a trusty map, a weather forecaster and a music source, all wrapped up in one shiny plastic case. Keep it charged with handy new gadgets that get power from your motorcycle battery. You can also use them to power up other USB- fea-

tured devices like tablets, cameras or a GPS.

REARVIEW CAMERA

More recently, so-called backup cameras have become a regular feature for passenger vehicles. They can now be added to motorcycles at your preferred service center for a relatively affordable price. Upgraded versions include

expanded waterproofing, night vision and larger monitors.

GPS NAVIGATOR

Take your road trips to the next level with a bike-mounted GPS, and you'll never have to stop to pull out a map or smartphone again. These latest systems are specially designed for motorcycles, which require a more durable

design that those found in typical passenger vehicle interiors. They also provide a safety overlay, since some will alert riders to upcoming hazards like railway crossings or sharp curves.

Check local ratings and reviews with an eye on how they perform against vibrations, temperature changes and moisture.

Maintaining your Motorcycle

Like any other engine-powered vehicle, a motorcycle only runs as well as it's maintained. Here's what to look out for.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Motorcycles come with a recommended manufacturer's maintenance schedule, which should be followed to the letter. If you bought used, a printed version of these schedules may not be included — but you can typically find them online. Being vigilant as a motorcyclist is arguably more important than it is for those with passenger vehicles since bikes don't have a cabin to provide protection in the event of an unexpected breakdown.

Also keep in mind that most motorcycles don't provide storage for additional oil or other important fluids. So check your levels before starting up for your next trip.

CHECK YOUR TIRES

Improperly filled motorcycle tires can lead to life-or-death situations out on the road. Recommended PSI levels can be found in the owner's manual, along with heavy-load pressure recommendations. Since motorcycle tires wear down faster than others, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that pressure levels are checked before any



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ride. Look for molded arrows on the sidewall of your tires; they'll point to built-in tread-wear indicators. If the tread has worn down to those set levels, immediately replace your tires.

OIL CHANGES

Oil changes are typically done every 3,000 miles or so, while the filter should be switched out every other time,

or at 6,000 miles. But motorcycle manufacturers also determine the specific frequency and sometimes the recommended brand for these changes. Refer to your manual for more details. If you don't have a printed version and can't locate it online, consult a local dealer. They'll help you find a manual for your make and model, or provide you with any needed

information. Remember to use specially formulated motorcycle oil, rather than fluids meant for passenger vehicles. They're designed to better protect your bike's internal parts, including the sensitive clutch that transfers power to the drive train.

OTHER FLUIDS

There's more to monitoring the bike's fluid levels than

keeping an eye on the oil. Riders should routinely check coolant levels to avoid major damage, even in more temperate places, since motorcycle engines operate at high heat levels. Low brake fluid might lead to difficulty in stopping at the worst possible time. Motorcycles with separate gear boxes also require their own fluids, and they'll need to be monitored.

2022 Motorcycle Trends

As with so much else in our modern world, technology has been reshaping the industry. Here's what's next in motorcycle trends for 2022.

STATS AND PROJECTIONS

Motorcycle sales in 2020 were up 67% from the year before, while pricing remained stable. That's helped the industry mount a quick recovery from pandemic-era lows. On-road motorcycles led other segments like scooters and off-road in 2021, with more than \$4.5 billion in revenues. The global market for all bikes, whether run by internal-combustion engines or electricity, is expected to grow 4.4% through 2022, according to the Freedonia Group.

ELECTRIC BIKES

Major improvements have followed the advent of electric motorcycles, including longer battery life, reduced charge times, cool new designs and improved safety options. More importantly, pricing has gone down since they first hit the market. Sales spikes have followed. The electric market is expected to grow at a compound annual rate of 7.4% through 2030, reaching as much as \$30.5 billion.

RETRO DESIGNS

Talk about the best of both



COZMCRAE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

worlds: A series of retro-inspired motorcycles has hit the market, but with impressive new technological advances that bring them into the modern era. The Kawasaki W800 was created in tribute to the 1966 W1, while BMW's R 18 recalls the Motorrad and 1923 R 23. (The latter is meant to compete with Harley-Davidson among cruiser-loving buyers.) But not everything is a super-old throwback: The Suzuki

Katana recalls their 1982-era superbike.

ALERT SYSTEMS

Motorcycle fatalities have doubled in the U.S. since 1975, with one report placing the number of bikers at 25 to 33% of all accidents. Huge advancements have followed, like the Advanced Rider Assistance Systems for Powered Two-Wheelers, created by Bosch and BMW. Motorcycles may

also come equipped with stability control options, anti-locking brakes and backup cameras. BikerSOS can detect accidents. Electronic monitors for tire pressure and temps also aid with regular maintenance. Any one of these improvements can have life-saving implications.

ERGONOMICS

The typical motorcyclist piles up about 1,800 miles per

year if they ride to work. Add in various road trips or vacation time, and you may be on the bike for 5,000 miles a year or more. That's a very long time to spend in a consistent position. Manufacturers are rushing to help, as adjustable seat heights and rider positioning advances have become a hot topic. Look for still more ergonomic improvements to address issues of comfort, safety and fatigue.

Motorcycle Safety Tips

Almost half of all motorcycle accidents involve a passenger vehicle, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Here's how to keep yourself safe.

STAY ALERT

Motorcyclists are, of course, granted the same rights as any other driver on U.S. roadways. But sharing the road as a biker nevertheless often involves an attention to defensive driving. Some 40% of motorcycle accidents, for instance, happen because other drivers turn left in front of the biker without noticing, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports. New technology can bring distractions like phone calls and music right into your helmet. Don't let yourself become indifferent to the dangers lurking in every-day traffic situations.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Blind corners are a particular danger for bikers. Sand or loose gravel can lead to a loss of traction. Give yourself plenty of reaction time, and swing out as widely as possible when turning. Try to avoid snowy or rainy conditions, if possible. If you find yourself in a down-pour, keep your speed at a



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manageable pace until you find shelter to pull over until the storm passes.

REMAIN VISIBLE

Motorcyclists should make sure they are visible to others on the road, a difficult prospect given your bike's smaller profile. Keep your headlights on at all times, and consider wearing reflective strips if you ride at night. Limit lane chang-

es, while keeping a sharp eye on turning vehicles. Give others a lead of three-to-four seconds, so you have enough time to react if something goes wrong. If you're riding in a larger group, stagger your positions to increase noticeability.

DO YOUR PART

Motorcycle turn signals don't always self-cancel as they do in passenger vehicles. Forgetting

to turn them off can create confusion around your bike, which might lead to a mishap. Remember to stay out of obvious blind spots, and be wary of following too closely. You'll need plenty of space to maneuver around every day road hazards like potholes that cars can drive right through.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

The risks for motorcyclists

are very real: After all, over 80% of reported crashes result in injury or death, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Bikers die about 28 times more frequently in these crashes than those in passenger vehicles.

At the same time, Department of Transportation-compliant helmet use hovers around 65%.

The Best-Selling Motorcycles

Wondering where your new bike fits in among other buyers in America, the world and across the annals of history? Here's a look.

IN THE U.S.

Milwaukee-based Harley-Davidson remained the top-selling motorcycle manufacturer as of 2020, based on an American market share of roughly 31%. The long-standing company was one of just two major U.S. motorcycle manufacturers to emerge from the Great Depression. Honda, the world's largest maker of motorcycles, was in second with about 21%. Fellow Japanese manufacturers Yamaha and Kawasaki both held roughly 12% of the U.S. market share. Suzuki was fifth with 5.4%. Yamaha is the world's second-largest by sales, while Suzuki is Japan's third-largest manufacturer by sales. Among U.S.-only companies, Polaris (makers of Indian motorcycles) actually edged Harley-Davidson in annual estimated revenue.

IN THE WORLD

Honda actually lost some market share in 2021, which experts attributed to scooter sales in China. But the company remains the global sales leader by a wide margin, with 2021 receipts surging some 15%. Second place was Yadea,



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the pioneering Chinese e-scooter manufacturer. Indian Hero Motor and Yamaha were third and fourth, followed by India's Bajaj Auto. The Top 10 for 2021 was rounded out by India's TVS Motor, China's Haojue, Suzuki (which had an impressive annual sales increase of about 26%), Mexico's Italika and Niu. The

latter company, based in China, is one of the fastest-growing manufacturers worldwide.

ALL-TIME

The most popular motorcycle of all time is the Super Cub from Honda, with more than 100 million sold since its introduction way back in 1958 — and counting. A pioneering

scooter-like design, what was said to be the first-ever clutchless transmission, and its every-day affordability weren't the only reasons this bike became a groundbreaking cultural force.

A 12-year campaign begun in the early '60s was built around the slogan, "You meet the nicest people on a Honda," and it likewise

became one of the advertising industry's best known. Honda manufactures the bike in the United States as well, with sales in more than 160 countries around the world. The Super Cub was later showcased in 1998's "The Art of the Motorcycle" exhibit at the Guggenheim. Honda has since introduced a EV-Cub model.