

Motorcycle Riding Safety Tips

You

- Remain warm and therefore alert. If you are cold it will draw your attention away from the important task of riding and concentration.
- Invest in good technical outerwear with armour. Wear layers to increase insulation. Quality technical fibre that fits to your body shape. Thermal underwear is a sound investment. Look after your feet, there's nothing worse than cold toes.
- Excessive cold will creep up on you and will affect your reaction times and ability to perform on your bike.
- Gloves: Go For a slightly larger size to allow air to circulate.
- Carry spare gloves for the journey home in case your others get wet and cold on the way in.
- Get boots that will fit under your trousers and if you can, go for 'real' waterproof boots; they'll pay dividends, wet feet = cold feet
- Avoid the temptation of two pairs of socks as the extra tightness in your boots means your feet will actually get colder quicker!
- A large one-piece waterproof over suit, that'll fit over your normal riding gear, will be a massive bonus when it's wet and cold. But don't leave it on if you don't need it as you'll sweat. Dampness inside or out means COLD!
- Invest in a pin-lock or similar visor lining as an airtight double-glazed effect means your visor will stay mist free and you won't have to open it and let in that nasty cold air.
- Get a good neck tube, it really keeps the cold off the chest and with the top just tucked under the chin piece means no nasty draughts!
- Jackets and trousers – double lined, man-made fibres are the way to go, not as flash as your race leathers but we're not riding in winter to win a fashion show.
- Zips on the legs and cuffs prevent draughts and allow gloves to go over the top of the cuff. If you can zip the trousers to the coat then that's great, but if not, ensure the jacket is long enough at the back (or the trousers are high enough) to get a good overlap, particularly when seated.
- Invest in a high visibility vest or jacket

Your bike

- If it's a real winter bike for commuting you're after, then go cheap but solid as it's going to get real abuse!
- Invest in a trickle charger to ensure batteries are ready every morning and for the last half an hour of your journey try and use as little current draw as possible, so consider switching off the extras like heated grips, heated vests (hopefully you're warm enough by now) sat navs, the radio etc. LED lights are better than standard ones for this as well.
- Talking of batteries: It needs to be in the best condition all winter. Winter riding works your battery harder due to the lower temperatures.
- Get a windscreen to fight the wind chill factors.
- Heated grips: A sound investment, just ensure that they have a battery protector, in case you forget to turn them off.

- Avoid any temptation to use loads of antifreeze. Only use enough for the conditions. Too much and the engine will overheat, because glycol has poor heat transfer capabilities compared to water.
- Protecting your bike; when you wash off the salt and dirt, consider using a water repellent spray. I have always used it, after giving my bike a wash, I would then liberally coat everything in the stuff. However, research which one is best.
- Tyres - make sure they have enough tread. The minimum in the UK is 1mm but this (in my opinion) is not enough, change them at 2mm!
- Ensure tyres are free from damage and that they are the correct pressure, check this when they are cold!
- Chain - Look after it! . Consider an automatic chain oiler but, whatever you do, lube it regularly and keep it adjusted. Salty roads kill chains! Remember to lube your chain after a ride to allow the lube to dissipate on a warm chain.
- Look after your bike, if you've coated it in a. water repellent spray you probably won't be washing it too often but make sure the important bits - lights, brakes, electrics, etc. - are working as they should be.

Riding Safely

- Slow down – accept this as a must! You cannot go as fast on wet, cold winter roads as you do on those same roads in the summer!
- Good anticipation skills and personal discipline on speed is a must, especially for the corners. Lose your speed before the corner or hazard
- Allow more time for your journey, you have to accept that your normal commute is going to take longer in winter.
- Allow more braking distance - the rule of thumb is a two second gap in the dry and a four second gap in the wet.
- Keep the bike upright where possible especially when you are crossing non tarmac areas such as painted lines, drain covers etc.
- Also look out for nasty leaves and mud clinging to the road in the 'dead areas' (bits of the road not normally driven over by traffic). Microclimates are more prevalent in the winter,
- Be aware that the cold conditions don't only affect you and your vehicle but others too.
- Think about the car driver who's still not got their car warm enough and windscreen clear enough at the start of their journey. Remember their stopping distances are affected also.