# NEW MOTORCYCLE RIDERS GUIDE

Hey girl! Congratulations on taking the plunge, getting your M1, and getting on two wheels! You are now officially a badass and part of an amazing community of women riders! This guide is a consolidation of advice from experienced women motorcycle riders for you to consider as you embark on this new journey! So here goes…

## THE GEAR

***ANY TIME*** you get on your bike, be fully geared up! It's an investment to buy all the right gear, but it's worth every penny! Never skimp on getting good gear. So what should you buy?

**Full Face Helmet with Visor**: Make sure the helmet is DOT (Dept of Transportation) and Snell certified. Go to a local motorcycle shop to try on the helmet before you buy it. Make sure it fits snuggly – it shouldn't move around when moving your head, and you

shouldn't feel any specific pressure points or "hot spots". Once you buy it, wear it around your house to break it in before using it on the road.

- ***Recommended Brands:*** *Top two brands are consistently Arai and Shoei. Other solid options include (but are not limited to): AGV, Suomy, ICON, HJC, Bell, Sedici, Scorpion*
- ***Additional Visor:*** *Purchase an additional tinted visor for riding during the day. The helmet will come with a clear visor, which is best for night riding. Another option is a transitional visor that darkens in the sun and is clear at night, so you don't have to switch visors back and forth for day / night riding. Make sure that you have a pinlock shield in your visor to prevent fogging.*
- ***Helmet / Visor Cleaner:*** *Purchase helmet / visor cleaner to help keep your helmet and visor clean and protected.*
- ***Communication System:*** *Consider buying a communication system for your helmet (e.g. Sena or Cardo). This will allow you to sync up and communicate with other riders in your group, listen to your GPS for directions, and listen to music.*

**Motorcycle Jacket and Pants**: Ideally, look for a CE 2 rated leather or textile jacket and pants. The jacket should come with shoulder and elbow protection. Make sure you buy a back protector that fits the jacket (they tend not to automatically come with the jacket). For extra protection, buy a chest protector for the jacket if possible. The pants should have hip and knee protection. *Note: CE 1 rating is also good, but not as protective as CE 2.*

- ***Air Bags:*** *There are now some companies offering air bags as part of their street jackets (Dainese / AlpineStars). These vests contain GPS and track your movement so that in the event of a crash, it will deploy and protect your torso (back, shoulders, collarbone, neck). If you can afford it, get it. It's your life.*
- ***Weather:*** *For very cold and very hot weather, you can also buy heated gear (for the cold) or mesh gear (for the heat). Try to keep the same CE 2 rating if possible.*
- ***PLEASE READ: Jeans and sweatshirts are NOT safety gear. If you crash, the friction from sliding on the road will go right through the clothes, exposing you to severe road rash.***

**Motorcycle Boots:** Find motorcycle specific boots that go past your ankle, ideally to your shin. Shoes are the first thing to come off during a crash (oddly enough). Don't wear tennis shoes, flip flops, high heels (we've seen it!). Protect your feet!

**Motorcycle Gloves**: Find “gauntlet” style gloves, which go past your wrist. Look for gloves with armor on the fingers, knuckles, and wrist – leather is your best and safest option.

**Base Layers:** Wear base layers under your motorcycle gear! These will help regulate your temperature when on the bike. You can get warmer base layers (similar to what you’d wear in the snow) to keep you warm or cooler base layers (VnM Sport) to keep you cool.

**Be Bright & Colorful:** When buying gear, be as colorful as possible! Try to incorporate lighter / brighter colors in your motorcycle gear. It will increase your visibility to other drivers on the road.

**REMEMBER! Wear All the Gear, All the Time! Dress for the Slide, not the Ride!** Wanna know what can happen if you’re not geared up? Read Brittany Morrow’s story.

## SAFE RIDING PRACTICES

**Earplugs:** Wear earplugs when you ride. You can find motorcycle specific earplugs, use disposable ones (from a retail or hardware store), or even have them custom made for your ears. The sound of the wind when you ride will eventually impact your hearing without earplugs. Don’t fear - you’ll still be able to hear things on the road with them on. So if you value your ability to hear, wear those earplugs!

**Alcohol & Drugs:** Don’t mix alcohol / drugs with riding! This applies even if you are technically taking them legally (e.g. blood alcohol count below the legal limit, using drugs prescribed to you that can impact your senses / function, etc). You need all your reflexes when on a bike – don’t dull them with substances.

**Physical / Mental State:** If you are not feeling your best, don’t get on the bike! Always make sure you’re fully rested, emotionally calm, nourished, and hydrated. Being upset is not a good reason to go on a ride! Calm yourself before getting on the bike.

**Proactive & Defensive Riding:** Ride like no one can see you...because they probably don’t! Proactively scan the road for hazards so you have enough time to react. Don’t confront drivers who are being assholes – let them pass. Don’t ride in cars’ blind spots. Don’t split lanes at high speeds – you should only really be going 5-10 mph (at the most) faster than the flow of traffic. All it takes is one driver to suddenly move over and cut you off and hit you. Don’t box yourself in - always have an out. Assume that vehicles will turn in front of you (especially oncoming left hand turns) and not see you

approaching. Also, look out for vehicles to the right of you making sudden U turns or turning in front of you, which can cause a T-bone crash. Keep an eye on your mirrors to see what hazards could be coming up behind you.

**Group Riding:** Ride in a staggered formation when riding with other people. It increases your visibility to other drivers and protects you on the road. Make sure you ride with people who will let you *ride at your own pace*. NEVER feel pressured to go faster than you're comfortable. It's normal and safe to *gradually* increase your ride duration and difficulty over time based on your comfort level. The worst thing to do is go on a ride that is way above your current abilities.

**Solo Riding:** When riding alone, ride to the left or right side of the lane. The middle of the lane has the greatest amount of oil / grease / residue from cars and can be slippery. On the freeway, ride in the furthest left lane (#1 lane) as you only have to worry about cars to your right side (as well as front and rear). Riding in the right lane is also an option if you want to go slower, but you'll need to deal with cars entering and exiting the freeway. Riding in the middle lanes makes you quite susceptible to cars surrounding you.

**Braking:** Flash your brake lights when slowing down. Frequently, we use engine braking to slow down (downshifting and / or releasing the throttle); however, engine braking doesn't flash your brake lights to notify drivers you're slowing down. If you flash your brake lights, it will help give drivers behind you a heads up that you're slowing down so they don't run into you.

**Stopping:** Use your rear brake when stopped on a hill - this will allow you to start using your throttle and clutch without rolling backwards. In addition, stay in 1st gear at a stoplight so that you can quickly take off if cars behind you do not see you.

**Slow Maneuvers:** It's really important to be able to ride your bike slowly and with control. Get yourself into a good size parking lot and practice slow maneuvers, such as emergency braking, slow turns, feathering your clutch, starting and stopping, slow riding (gently drag that rear brake a bit!), U turns, starting on an incline, etc. Riding is all about being smooth with the throttle and brakes – gradual, not sudden inputs into the bike.

**Weather:** Be as prepared as possible based on the weather. Have rain gear if it's going to rain (or avoid riding in it if possible). Avoid riding your bike during the first rain of the fall / winter season. The first rain brings up all the oil to the surface of the road, making the streets very slick and dangerous.

## YOUR BIKE

**First Bike Purchase:** Buy a smaller bike for your first bike. Ideally something with a lower displacement (300-500cc), with a seat height that lets you get both feet on the ground simultaneously (at least the balls of your feet), has ABS (anti-lock brakes), has handlebars that allow you to easily reach the controls, and a windscreen / fairing to block the wind (or get one installed if it doesn't have one). This type of bike will be more manageable to control while learning (easier to turn, limited power, easier starting and stopping, etc). Ride it for AT LEAST a year. Some good options are Yamaha YZF-R3, Kawasaki Ninja 400, Honda Rebel 500, Honda CBR 300, Honda CBF 500, KTM 390, Ducati Scrambler Sixty2, and many more. Many motorcycle crashes in the first year of riding come from being on a bike too big and powerful for the rider. You wouldn't buy a Porsche when first learning to drive, right? The same applies to motorcycles.

**Basic Motorcycle Maintenance:** Learn some basic motorcycle mechanics so you can perform your own safety checks. Take a motorcycle maintenance intro class (check out MotoGuild). Check your tire pressures often and ensure they are set accordingly (motorcycle tires lose air much faster than car tires!). Check that your lights are working. Change your oil regularly. Clean and lube your chain every 500ish miles. In the long run, you'll save money and feel more confident in your bike's performance.

**Filling Your Gas Tank:** Learn how to put gas in your bike. You think it would be simple, but it's not always intuitive. Check out this link for a demo! Also, your bike likely doesn't get more than 100-150 miles on a tank, so make sure you plan ahead on where you will fill up, especially when going on a longer ride. Don't end up stranded in the middle of nowhere because you didn't plan on where to get gas along your journey!

**Picking Up Your Bike:** Oops! You dropped your bike! Don't feel bad if you do – most everyone does when they're learning (Even the pros!) You can always fix the minor damage to the bike if it's dropped. But it's important to learn how to pick it up in case you drop it, especially if you're alone.

**Additional Bike Accessories:**

- ***Phone Holder****: Buy and install a phone holder for your bike (e.g. RAM mounts, Quad Locks, etc). This will be helpful when using GPS when riding. If you can, find one with a USB port (or install a USB port) that will let you charge your phone while riding. No one wants their phone to die when they're on a bike - you might need it in an emergency.*
- ***Tail Bag / Top Case:*** *When you go riding, you'll most likely have things you'll want to carry with you (wallet, keys, tools, visor cleaner, snacks, water, extra*

*jacket, etc). Getting a tail bag is a great little option to put on your bike to carry your essentials. If you are considering doing some overnight excursions / longer adventure rides, consider getting a top case installed on your bike. There are a plethora of options at Revzilla.com*

## ADDITIONAL ADVICE

**Continuously Educate Yourself:** Motorcycle riding is a sport that requires continuous education. Read or watch "Twist of the Wrist" and "Twist of the Wrist II" by Keith Code, take classes to learn and apply new skills: (e.g. Motorcycle Safety Foundation, Cornering Schools, Road Rider 2.0, Yamaha Champions Riding School, California SuperBike School, etc). Doing some track days is also a great option to learn a lot once you have the basics of riding down (Z2 Track Days is the best provider to onboard new riders to the track). Besides becoming a better and safer rider, your motorcycle insurance company may give you a discount for taking safety classes! Just ask them!

**Be Patient With Yourself:** Learning to ride a motorcycle takes a lot of seat time and practice. Don't expect that you're going to be an expert rider in a few months.

**Towing / Roadside Assistance**: Make sure your insurance / AAA / roadside assistance plan covers towing your bike. You usually have to pay extra and / or ask the company for motorcycle towing coverage. It typically doesn't come standard with your plan.

**Helicopter Insurance:** It's highly recommended to buy *helicopter insurance* (or ensure that your health insurance plan covers helicopter rides). If you're in a crash – especially if you're in a remote area – a helicopter is sometimes the fastest option to get you to a hospital and could save your life). A helicopter ride out of pocket can cost upwards of $85,000. However, a year's helicopter insurance coverage is ~$100 and gives you peace of mind. Check out: AirMedCare. Note that coverage typically applies to everyone in your household and for any need (not just motorcycle crashes).

**Find Your Community!** Last, but not least, the motorcycle community is large and diverse and you can always find awesome people to ride with. Check out Facebook for groups you can join (New Motorcycle Riders, Bay Area Lady Riders, S.F. Bay Area Motorcyclists (SF BAM), Bay Area Riders Group, etc). Or come ride with Curve Unit!