

KEEPING IT UP

Buying your first Motorcycle

So you've learned your motorcycling basics, taken safety courses, and decided to take the plunge and buy your first bike?

Here are a few important factors to consider before you make that big purchase:

Don't underestimate your ability: One common mistake among newbies is to purchase a bike with far more performance than they can handle. Stay away from crotch rockets, especially anything with an engine larger than 600cc; when you learn how to ride on a slower bike, you'll become a better rider because of it. Plus, after you've honed your skills and gained experience, you'll be ready to upgrade and truly appreciate a faster bike.

Consider your needs: Will you be riding in lots of traffic? Traveling long distances? Motorcycles come in many shapes and sizes, and you must consider your individual needs when picking a bike. Consider how you'll be using your bike, and how riding it will impact your experience; for instance, if you're looking for a weekend toy, you might be more tolerant of a sexy bike that happens to be uncomfortable. Recognizing your needs will make choosing your future bike become infinitely easier.

Know your options: Bikes have become increasingly specialized in recent years, and the proliferation of different types of motorcycles offers a number of choices that can be both empowering and daunting. Once you have a better idea of what you want, take a look at our New Motorcycle Reviews before you visit a dealership. While interacting with different bikes, you'll probably develop distinct likes and dislikes, which will get you one step closer to making a purchasing decision.

Choose a bike that fits your body: This point is less obvious than it might sound. Bikes come in dramatically different shapes and sizes, and so does the human body. Try a bike on for size, and if possible, take it for a spin; you'll find that the ergonomic experience of riding will differ dramatically from bike to bike. That sport bike you thought was so cool, for instance, might strain your wrists to the point of discomfort. Conversely, that cruiser might win you over with its low seat and manageable center of gravity. You won't know until you try one on for size!

New or Used? There are a number of tradeoffs associated with both new and used bikes, and there is no single "right" choice; the choice is completely individual, and depends on personal preferences (not to mention finances.)

Used bikes are great for beginners because there's usually less worry about scratching or damaging something that's not already in perfect shape. They're also often better values, since they've already depreciated, though they might not be as reliable as new bikes, and cost more money in the long run. New bikes come with the comfort of reliability a warranty, though you'll pay a premium for that peace of mind.

Consider your long-term budget: When committing to buy a motorcycle, don't forget to estimate all the added expenses associated with riding. Before choosing a bike, be sure to check insurance rates with several brokers, and pick a plan that works with your budget; in general, the higher the deductible, the lower the premium. You'll want to budget the cost of safety gear. A quality helmet, jacket, gloves, and pants can add up to a substantial amount of money.

Also, don't forget to account for the cost of routine maintenance which can vary wildly, depending on make and type of motorcycle.

Though it may be tempting, don't make a rash purchase... Buying your first bike is an exciting endeavor, but don't get too swept away with the heat of the moment. If you see a bike and fall in love with it, make sure you'll enjoy owning it after the initial thrill fades. Have a used motorcycle checked out by a qualified mechanic. Read up about the model you're considering, and consider all factors-- economic, practical, and otherwise, before making your purchase. Chances are, you won't regret your forethought! ... and yet, choose a bike you'll be excited to ride! People rarely choose to buy a motorcycle because they have to; bike purchases are often guided by passion. In spite of the inevitable practical issues to consider, it's important to choose a bike that you'll be excited to ride.

Many experienced riders will suggest you buy a sensible first bike, and if you can find a motorcycle that fits all the logical criteria and also makes you excited to ride, you've chosen well!

Hein Jonker