

We have several ladies in our group who have either recently begun to ride or have expressed an interest in riding. The question always comes up: What kind of bike should I buy? Well, there is no single answer for this question, but there are some guidelines that I would suggest in making the selection of a first bike.

The first step is recognizing that no one is born to ride a motorcycle. It is a skill you have to learn. To do that, take the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Rider Course. The MSF is a non-profit organization that has developed a training program to teach you skills and techniques that could very well save your life, and if that's not worth the time, then what is? There are other reasons why you should take the MSF course. Passing the class can save you ten percent on your insurance premiums. Many states also waive the riding test for your motorcycle license if you complete the MSF program. But one great reason isn't mentioned often. Because the MSF supplies the bike, it's a terrific way to get a taste of riding before investing in your own motorcycle.

Your first bike probably won't be your last, so it doesn't have to be everything you want in a motorcycle. The purpose of a first bike is to allow you to master basic riding skills, build confidence and develop street survival strategies. You don't grow into a bike. You develop your skills on it. As your skills develop, so does your confidence and with it, your willingness to explore what the bike is capable of.

"A beginning pilot would not expect to learn to fly in an F-16 fighter or a wide body jetliner, so why do beginning motorcyclists expect to learn to ride on a 750cc sport bike or a 1200cc cruiser?"

If you buy an inappropriate bike it may well be your last bike. Starting out with a bike that's too heavy, too fast, or handles awkwardly, could deter you from even wanting to ride at all. When your first motorcycle intimidates you by its weight or by its awkward handling, it is easy to get trapped in a downward spiral, where you ride tensely, which results in a bike that is even more awkward to handle.

It's better to focus on a smaller displacement 'standard' bike. They are set up for more compliant handling and ride and they are more comfortable, an important point while you're learning. Smaller bikes are also usually lighter - weight can be a big deal in gaining confidence on the first bike. Smaller and lighter bikes are easier to handle. There's a lot to think about until you're comfortable about turning, stopping, gear changing, and acceleration. The more relaxed you sit on the bike, the better the bike will behave. Starting on a smaller bike makes learning proper brake technique easier. Most new riders cannot judge how to use brakes effectively, intuition tells us that using the front brake will "flip" the bike or make the tire slide out. It's common for new riders to thus make the mistake of depending on the rear brake and the faster you are going the deadlier it can be. Standard or "naked" bikes are competent at everything. Having little or no plastic to break when you drop one, they are an excellent choice for a beginner.

Entry level bikes depreciate at a notably lower rate than more advanced models, and the biggest hit comes in the first year. The rate of depreciation for the three or four years after

that is almost flat, and then it begins to fall again after the fifth year. Financially, your best bet is in a bike that is one to three years old. If you buy a bike in this range and keep it in good condition you could probably sell it in a year or two for close to what you paid for it. Starting with a new bike and keeping it for two years can cause a much greater depreciation hit.

Even after training, you're still going to be scared to death to ride on main roads and highways. That's okay. Take it slow and easy at first. Practice in some empty parking lots and quiet side streets with little traffic. Take as much time as you need. Don't pressure yourself. If it takes 2 days or 2 weeks, just practice until you are comfortable. It's not a contest. You don't need to prove anything to anyone.

Portions of this article were taken from:

Your First Motorcycle by Donald Ray Burger Attorney at Law

Your First Motorcycle – Old Guy's Beginner's Guide to Motorcycle Riding

The Exquisite Agony: Buying Your First Motorcycle -*Brian Igo*

How to Buy Your First Motorcycle by Jeremy Heiser