

Motorcycle Safety Series Part V: Sharing the Road

If you've followed our last few blog posts, you may notice that most rules and advice for motorcycle riding are basically modified advice for driving a car. A lot of the same rules apply, but some tiny specifics make all the difference. Specifics matter, and nowhere do they matter more clearly than when passing is involved. Passing, while a basic maneuver, is considered a danger on the road. We're allowed to do it under certain conditions by law, and for good reason. Passing exposes both the passer and the passed to plenty of potential hazards.

It's especially imperative that you follow protocol while passing with a motorcycle. To safely pass while riding your motorcycle, you need to keep these things in mind:

- Ride in the left portion of the lane at a safe distance to increase your line of sight and make you more visible. Signal and check for oncoming traffic. Use your mirrors and turn your head to look for traffic behind.

- When it's safe, begin passing at a reasonable speed while still giving ample space to the other vehicle.

- Get through their blind spot as swiftly and safely as possible.

- Signal before re-entering the previous lane and overtaking the other vehicle.

Being passed is a bit of a different issue. You're recommended to stay in the center lane position and hold it while you're being passed. You don't want to stray too close to the passing vehicle's lane, because you may get hit by debris, a mirror, windblasts or the actual vehicle itself. You don't want to stay in the far away position, for the passing vehicle may enter your lane again too early, leaving you very little room to react.

These same rules apply to any merging vehicle. If a vehicle comes from the merging lane, they may not see you on your motorcycle. Move to a different lane, or give the merging vehicle ample room to get on the highway.

Overall, one must use a heightened sense of awareness when riding a motorcycle on the road. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation gives riders the SEE strategy to help them stay focused on the road. SEE stands for:

1. **S**earch- One must be aware of all hazards on the road. Looking ahead is one of the best ways to avoid upcoming dangers. It's recommended that a rider focus on what is 2 seconds, 4 seconds, and 12 seconds ahead of them in terms of hazards.
2. **E**valuate- Think about how the hazards may affect you. You must evaluate road signs and signals, the conditions of the road, and the other vehicles on the road. Thinking ahead and riding defensively will help this step.
3. **E**xecute- You must follow through on the decisions that you come up with after the first two steps. Communicate clearly what you intend to other vehicles on the road, while avoiding any hazards you've already mapped out.

Awareness is the bottom line while riding a motorcycle. You must be totally aware at all times, because the very nature of a motorcycle is risky. Train yourself to notice as

much as you possibly can on the road, and you will heavily reduce the risks you are prone to while riding your motorcycle.

Reference: Missouri Motorcycle Operator's Manual: <http://dor.mo.gov/forms/2332.pdf>