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Motorcycle Safety Tips

The New Rider in Your Group

by Stacey "Ax" Axmaker

Riding with others is great fun. Having new or beginning riders join your group or club is also fun. Sharing the joy of the open road is one of the things that make us a community of bikers. Let's give some thought to that new rider – how can we best help them have a comfortable, fun, and safe time while they get used to riding with the group.

What does the new rider need? Well, if they managed to get to the start point, they have at least some basic skills. What they need is practice/experience with plenty of space and without pressure. If they need more work on the basics, you can encourage them to take a Basic or Experienced *STAR* class.

“Ride your own ride:”

We've all heard this – most of us have said this. But what does it mean when we are with a new rider? Never push them to “keep up” – as soon as a rider is pushing beyond their comfort level, physical skills become less smooth and mental attention is diverted away from what's going on around them. The stress of wanting to keep up with the rest of the group takes over and judgment suffers. The peer pressure can be very strong.

Consider what happens if and when they fall behind and they have been encouraged to keep up. Not only do they have to ride as fast and hard as the rest of the group, but if they are behind, they actually have to ride faster and harder than the group in order to catch up. This is a recipe for disaster.

Here is how to create a successful and fun experience for everyone. With newer riders, plan shorter rides with frequent stops. Check-in with them frequently (how are they feeling, is the bike running right, are they comfortable, do they need to clean their goggles/helmet visor, are they getting tired/hungry/thirsty, etc.) Please don't make it an endurance contest or some kind of grueling “right of passage.”

They are looking to you – the experienced rider - for guidance and feedback. Help them to be successful. They are looking up to you; don't let them down.

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