

# BMMC Rider Training

## A little paranoia's not all bad...

**they really are out to get you!\***

It's all about you! And that should be your mantra whenever you ride your motorcycle; urban or rural. Who better to look out for you than you? (Do you really think your financial advisor looks after your money as closely as you would?) It's your skin in the game, so to speak, and if anything happens, you're the one most affected.

Here are few things that you might keep in mind while you ride. Good stuff.

### I. Be Paranoid:

Learn to rely on one person, and one person only: yourself. When you see a dented, dirty or neglected car, be paranoid. Dents are a rolling history of mistakes, and you don't want to be involved. Dirt and neglect show disinterest, and that disinterest probably bleeds into that person's driving as well.

Watch out for particular car types, too. Volvo works hard to promote the safety of its cars, and that means some owners of Volvos buy them because they know

they're going to be in an accident. It's an unfair generalization of Volvo owners, sure, but it's an acknowledged observation. Watch for minivans.

They're usually purchased to carry the kids, so the driver is often dealing with much more than the road. Beware of high-performance cars in a hurry; a modern car can accelerate and change lanes surprising-

ly quickly, so give them room if they're driving aggressively. Give four-wheel drive pickups some room because (another unfair generalization) they're often driven by aggressive young men who confuse wheel size with testosterone levels. What car types can you trust?

None.



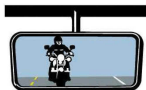
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## II. Avoid Blind Spots:

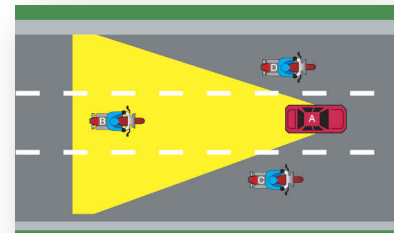


If you have only one thought while riding, please let it be this: Stay out of blind spots. If you can't see the driver's face in the car's mirror, that driver can't see you. To him, you simply don't exist. Place blind-spot avoidance on top of your priority list for survival. Use acceleration, deceleration and lane position to "ride in the mirrors" of the vehicles around you (and that includes other motorcycles).

Develop a mental blind-spot warning buzzer that blares every time you approach a blind spot. The Highway Patrol teaches its patrolmen to constantly move through traffic, to ride slightly (slightly!) faster than traffic and move through blind spots rather than sitting in them. Primo advice.



Of course, just because you're riding in the mirrors of a car doesn't mean that driver will use that mirror before changing lanes into you. Position yourself so that if the driver fails to see you in the mirror, you still aren't in danger of getting hit. You will know when you're riding well and staying clear of blind spots because you are no longer using your horn to warn encroaching drivers of your presence; they've already seen you in the mirror, alongside or ahead.



## III. Be Defensive, Be Aggressive:

Combining defensive tactics and aggressive riding will serve you well in most situations. *The secret is knowing when to use each of the tactics.* For example, blasting aggressively down Scottsdale Road is an open invitation for trouble. On the other hand, creeping slowly down Scottsdale Road invites a different but still deadly kind of trouble, putting you at the mercy of other drivers' skills - or lack of.



Defensive riding means situation awareness of your space and maintaining that space by positioning yourself within the surrounding traffic. It's nothing more than looking at traffic to predict its effect on you... and making sure that effect is minimal.

Riding aggressively is not as much a way of riding than an applied technique to



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be exercised *only* occasionally. As riders, we must put ourselves in view, and sometimes that means a bit of aggressive throttle use to come up even with a

driver's window. Simply put, sometimes slowing down is extremely dangerous, and some aggressive acceleration or lane changing is called for.

Create your own traffic destiny using the tried and true Scan and Plan technique. Put yourself in a position with an escape route if your worst-case predictions come true. Look for traffic patterns and try to move through traffic, rather than sit within a knot of traffic. Things usually happen at the time when you become complacent (TIC).



## IV. Make Room For Others' Mistakes:

In case you haven't noticed, drivers make mistakes. Dozens of them, from no turn signal to last-minute freeway exits to locked brakes at a yellow light, talking on a cell phone, etc. etc. These are here for the foreseeable future, so the secret is to plan on and predict the mistakes and make sure you're not affected. In other words, give 'em room to screw up. You won't change the mistakes being made out there, but by recognizing and giving them room to happen, you won't be negatively affected by them either.

There's no reason to get upset, violent, aggressive or reactionary; once you begin to make room for mistakes, it becomes almost humorous to watch the stupidity around you because you will no longer be taken by surprise or be put in danger.



## V. Slow Down In Town:

Basically, too much speed makes us unreadable. The car driver looks down the street, sees a headlight approaching at what he guesses to be the speed limit, and proceeds through the intersection. Unfortunately, the bike is doing double the speed limit and slams into the side of the car. Whose fault is it? Not the car driver's. Slow down to be seen; slow down to avoid being misread.

Slowing down also allows you to stop before becoming involved in someone else's mistake. Even if you're Mr. ABS of braking, it takes more distance to stop a bike



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from 50 mph than it does from 30 mph; that extra distance usually isn't available to in-town speeders.



Slowing down gives your brain a chance to notice things and more time to react. Your peripheral vision widens and you relax enough to read and predict traffic. There are plenty of places to go fast, but in and around traffic isn't one of them. If you can't slow down in town, may I have that new HDTV of yours now that you won't be needing it anymore?

## VI. Practice:

When everything goes wrong and the above five steps fail to keep you in safety's arms, you'd better be a good motorcycle rider. A couple of suggestions:

- ✓ Get to an empty parking lot and practice braking; normal and panic stop.
- ✓ Take the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Experienced Rider Course.
- ✓ Experiment with quick lane changes.
- ✓ Become intimately familiar with the effects of countersteering, experimenting with differing pressures on the handgrips.
- ✓ Practice quick glances in the mirrors and hurried looks over your shoulder, as if you were initiating an emergency lane change.
- ✓ Use your turn signals in all conditions.
- ✓ Become familiar with your local traffic patterns and congestion zones, and formulate a plan for negotiating each.

Hope this helps.

\*Much of the subject matter may be found in Sport Rider Magazine Sep 1998