

# BMMC Rider Training

## Riding Two-Up

Riding two-up can be one of motorcycling's great experiences. However, whether you're riding with your spouse, your nephew, or the neighbor's kid, riding with a passenger is serious business, for all the obvious reasons. Remember, it isn't just you that you're responsible for, now. There's more to it than simply being extra careful. Making sure your passenger is "on board" psychologically is every bit as important as teaching him or her how to hold on properly.

### I. The Passenger

It always helps to be sure the person you're about to whisk away is willing and ready--really ready--to be whisked. Few things are worse than an uncomfortable or petrified passenger hanging on to the back of your bike. Determine first if they've even been on a bike before. Then, prior to riding, explain some ground rules and how motorcycles work. Be sure to cover the following:

- Point out what's hot and what spins.
- Remind them that their feet stay on the pegs/floor boards at all times unless they're getting off or on the bike.
- They only get on or off the bike when you say it's OK.
- Explain how to mount the motorcycle. Left hand on your shoulder. At your sign (maybe a nod), they put their left foot on the peg/floor board and swing their right leg over. Encourage them to try not to pull on you, which will pull both of you over onto the ground, but to get their weight in the middle of the bike by leaning in. You should brace yourself with your left leg and get ready before you give the nod. Sometimes, a curb makes this easier. When you stop, have your passenger put their left hand on your shoulder and say something like "ready?" before they get off. That way, you're ready and they can get off safely. These two routines, getting off and on, are vitally important to keeping your bike's bodywork off the ground.
- If you don't have intercom, agree on a few signals for the passenger. It's easy enough to speak with a passenger during around town riding, but it's tougher on the freeway, so work out a few basic hand signals. A couple of ideas that have worked well in the past are: "I need a bathroom stop", them touching the inside of your thigh; "too fast" is squeezing you with their legs; and "stop" is putting their right hand over

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your shoulder and making a chopping motion.

- Remind your passenger that the bike will lean and that failing to lean will make bad things happen. They need to stick with you, that is, to remain in line with the bike as it leans, even though it feels weird. Have them look over your right shoulder on right turns and your left shoulder on left turns. Remind your passenger to look up the road when you're cornering, they'll feel better than if they're staring at the pavement right in front of the bike, which is getting closer every time you go around a turn.
- If you have a backrest, install it. Passengers love knowing that they won't fall off the back.
- If your passenger is relaxed, they will help you be smooth. Spend a few minutes with them prior to start-up and give them the scoop on how to sit and hold on securely (and in a manner you're comfortable with). If the bike you're riding doesn't have grab rails or a backrest/sissy-bar, have them hold onto your waist and not your upper body; doing the latter will be far less secure for them (there is a "Buddy Belt" that straps on the rider's waist and offers passengers specially designed grab handles is perfect for two-up riding, especially when the passenger is a rookie [[www.buddybelt.com](http://www.buddybelt.com)]).

## II. The Rider

A passenger's weight can radically change a bike's handling behavior and stopping distance, so be sure you're familiar with the concept before you put someone on the back seat. Maintain an eagle's eye for errant cars and cell-phone toting drivers and practice "your scan and plan."

As the rider, you have a significant responsibility to be as absolutely smooth as possible. Feed the throttle in small increments and slow the bike using engine braking when possible. Shifts should be smooth and cornering lines should be the classic arcing line. You have added a significant amount of load to the bike (even for light passengers) and the bike will want to be treated smoothly. Shifting should ideally feel like an automatic transmission.

If possible, you should add preload to the rear shock to handle the additional weight. Be sure to remember how many turns, clicks, whatever you added so you can set it back to solo settings easily. Tire pressures may need to be increased as well, so be sure to check the bike's recommended inflation rates.

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If you and your passenger are clunking helmets, you need to step up your game as a rider and get smoother. You'll discover that your ability to ride smoothly with a passenger will bring you enormous benefits when you ride by yourself. If the bike isn't getting jerked around, up and down, fore and aft, you'll be faster and more in control.

Here are some general tips for riding with passengers (courtesy of MSF):

1. Be extra smooth in braking and accelerating (it can be harder for passengers to hold on).
2. Take turns slower and use less speed/lean angle. The extra weight works the suspension much harder and diminishes the handling of your bike.
3. Give yourself extra room for turns, the bike will feel quite different!
4. Communicate with your passenger to make sure they are comfortable and okay.
5. Take it easy on the speed. If you ever want the person to speak to you again, don't exceed your passenger's comfort level.

Above all, strive to give your passenger a good two-up experience; plenty of backseaters become riders themselves, and nothing kills the desire to ride more quickly than a bad backseat experience.

Hope this helps. Ride Safe.