

# Learning to Survive

WHEN MOST OF US HEAR THE WORDS *MOTOR-cycle Safety Foundation* (MSF), we think of a local school or training site where new riders learn how to ride for their license endorsement. Some of us may even think about the Experienced

RiderCourse (ERC, now named BRC2) that we have taken or have heard a fellow rider talk about. Well, contrary to popular belief, the MSF is so much more than that. Besides being a national entity and a globally recognized organization that promotes motorcycle safety and skills, the MSF also develops programs to achieve these goals. It is a motorcyclist's source to becoming a better rider.

More studies are showing that a high percentage of motorcycle crashes (whether single or multivehicle) are a result of rider error. The statistics also indicate that a majority of these crashes involve riders with no prior formal riding education. It's hard to say that we need to watch out for the other guy when in reality we need to check ourselves. When riding, our first line of defense in minimizing risks and managing them starts with us. We need to understand that motorcycle skills can diminish if not used or practiced on a regular basis. For many of us, the skills we have may actually be bad habits that can become even worse. Proper riding education is the key to our survival. Developing a lifelong commitment to continuously improving, plus practicing learned skills, is the way to reduce those risks.

We should not rely on "I know how to ride" and "I've been riding for years" as a platform to think we're safe. The physical and mental skills required to ride a motorcycle far exceed what is needed to operate an automobile. Just riding around (even for many years) does not help develop the proper skills to safely control a motorcycle. As hard as it may be to acknowledge that you can benefit from taking a RiderCourse, finding one to fit your needs is a lot easier than you may think. The hardest thing is being honest with your self-assessment; once you pass that, you'll be on your

way to becoming a better rider.

Besides the two courses mentioned, the MSF has a plethora of skill courses to improve your riding. Some have a combination of classroom and range information, and some are strictly riding exercises. It even offers a track-oriented course based on the riding skills of Kevin Schwantz. Okay, that may be pushing it a bit, but the MSF does offer a range of curricula that include basic bike bonding, street rider courses, advanced, ultimate bike bonding, and much more. Bike bonding may sound like some politically correct term, but it's not. Bonding with the bike you ride and learning how it reacts, as well as how you react, during specific exercises develops better riding postures, skills, processing, etc. These are major points in becoming a safer, more skilled rider. Some of these courses work on improving slow speed operation which, for many of us, is the Achilles heel of riding. Spending a day with coaching on those slow tight turns also minimizes some of the fear we have of dropping the bike, which in turn boosts confidence, and, before we know it, we want to learn even more.

Other classes incorporate street skills and riding that enhance the basic skills and strategies that are put to use as you ride in a local area. This program is for riders who wish to explore more deeply the perceptual strategies of street riding. From there, you can learn even more. As much as we love our Harleys and love to ride, it only makes sense to be the best rider you possibly can. Besides the fact that skills can be learned and safety increased, your enjoyment will increase. You probably never thought that you could get more pleasure from riding, but learn how to do it skillfully, and you'll see how much you missed before — I know I did.

Don't take for granted that you know how to ride; tell yourself that you can learn more than you know. Then, head to the MSF web site, [MSF-USA.org](http://MSF-USA.org), and check out the listings and descriptions of the RiderCourses. Also check your state and local motorcycle safety programs to see what's available to you. Finally, keep practicing those newly learned skills and become a lifelong learner. I guarantee that you will not be disappointed. **AIM**



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