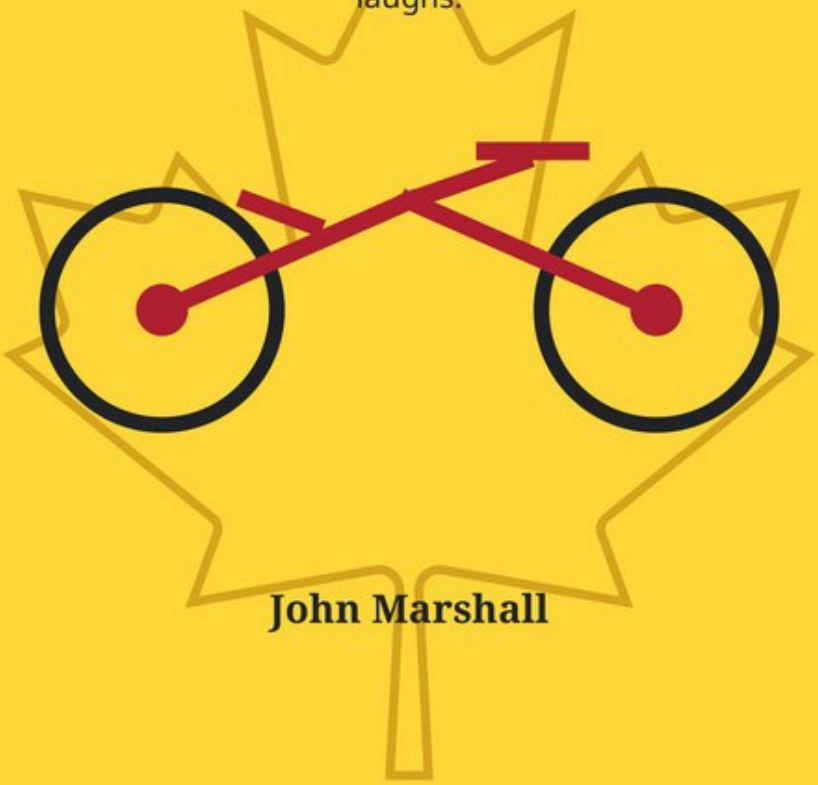
THE PROOF SERIES

A PLAYFUL GUIDE TO MOTORCYCLES

Motorcycle Proof

Choosing the right bike, buying smart, gearing up safely, and keeping it running — in plain language, with big type and a few laughs.



John Marshall

PROUDLY CANADIAN



PROUDLY CANADIAN

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

By John Marshall

www.buyproof.ca



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Returning Rider or Late Starter?

Maybe you ride in your twenties and sold the bike when the kids arrived. Maybe you never rode at all and the idea simply won't leave you alone. Both are fine starting points — as long as you start honestly.

Remember the thrill › Admit the gap › Take the course › Start fresh

1. Name your reason — Write down why you want to ride: the freedom, the scenery, the company of riding friends. A clear reason keeps you patient through the learning curve.

2. Admit the gap — If you rode decades ago, respect how much has changed: faster traffic, distracted drivers, and bikes with real power. Returning riders are overrepresented in crash statistics, mostly from overconfidence.

3. Talk to a rider — Find someone your age who rides and buy them coffee. Ask what surprised them, what they'd do differently, and what the first year really cost.

4. Promise yourself training — Before you spend a dollar on a bike, commit to a proper training course. It is the single best investment in this whole hobby — more on that in a few pages.

TALE

TALE STORY

Don, 68, rode a Honda in 1978 and hadn't touched a bike since.
After the training course he said, 'Muscle memory is real — but so is forty-five years of rust. I'm glad I admitted both.'

!

In Canada, most provinces let you ride a small motorcycle or scooter with a graduated motorcycle licence. Check your province's rules before shopping.

Take care: Nostalgia is a poor riding instructor. The bike you remember was lighter, slower, and ridden by someone with faster reflexes. Start as a student, not a veteran.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

The Honest Fitness Check

Riding asks for balance, grip strength, neck mobility, and quick reactions. None of these is about age alone — but all of them deserve an honest check before you commit.

Check your balance › Test your strength › Mind your joints › Get the nod

1. Try the balance test — Stand on one foot for ten seconds, then the other. Riding a motorcycle is a constant small balancing act, especially at parking-lot speeds. Wobbly here means practice first.

2. Check your grip — Squeeze a tennis ball twenty times per hand. You will hold the handlebars and work the clutch and brake levers for hours. Weak grip means hand fatigue — and fatigue means mistakes.

3. Turn your head — Sit in a chair and look over each shoulder as far as you can, the way you'd check a blind spot. Stiff necks are common and fixable with exercises — but know where you stand.

4. Ask your doctor — Mention riding at your next checkup, especially if you take medication that affects alertness, balance, or reaction time. Doctors hear this question more than you'd think.

TALE

E STORY

Margaret, 71, told her doctor she wanted to ride.

He checked her neck rotation, her grip, and her balance — then signed off with one condition: 'No bike heavier than you are stubborn.'

!

Many riders manage arthritis with heated grips, a lighter clutch pull, or a bike with an automatic-style transmission. Ask the dealer what's available.

Take care: Be honest about vision and hearing too. Riding demands both. If you wouldn't drive a car at night anymore, think carefully about riding a bike in traffic.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Counting the True Cost of Riding

The motorcycle is only the headline number. Gear, insurance, training, maintenance, and registration add a second bill that surprises nearly every new rider.

Price the bike › Add the gear › Add insurance › Add the extras

1. Start with the bike — Decide your bike budget first, then subtract everything else from it. Most beginners are happiest starting with a modest used bike, not the dream machine.

2. Budget the gear — A good helmet, jacket, gloves, and boots will run $800 to $1,500 for quality gear. This is not optional spending — it is part of the price of riding.

3. Get insurance quotes early — Call for quotes before you buy, with the exact bike in mind. Sport bikes and big engines cost far more to insure; modest standards and cruisers are kinder.

4. Count the running costs — Add registration, an annual service, tires every few years, and winter storage if needed. Riding is cheaper than golf, dearer than walking — plan accordingly.

TALE

E STORY

Ron, 74, budgeted for the bike and forgot the gear, the insurance, and the course.

'The motorcycle was the cheapest part,' he laughs. 'Nobody warns you about that.'

!

A sensible first-year budget in Canada: a used bike ($4,000-$8,000), gear ($800-$1,500), insurance ($400-$1,200), and the training course ($300-$500).

Take care: Never stretch your budget so thin that you skimp on the helmet or the training course. Those two are the cheapest life insurance in motorcycling.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Licences and the Training Course

Every province requires a motorcycle licence, and every smart rider takes a proper training course first. The course teaches on small, forgiving bikes — and it might be the most fun weekend you've had in years.



1. Find your course — Search for the motorcycle safety course in your province — often run through community colleges or rider associations. Book early; spring classes fill fast.

2. Show up as a beginner — The course provides the motorcycle and usually a helmet. Wear sturdy boots, jeans, and gloves. Leave your ego at home; the instructors have seen everything.

3. Learn the real skills — You'll practice clutch control, emergency braking, swerving, and slow-speed balance — the exact skills that save riders in traffic. It's humbling and wonderful.

4. Pass and get licensed — Most courses include the road test or a certificate that simplifies licensing. You'll leave with real skills, a licence path, and a much better idea of what bike suits you.

TALE

E STORY

Edna, 69, took the weekend course at 68 and outscored riders half her age on the slow-speed drills.

'Patience,' she says, 'is a superpower they don't teach the young.'

!

Canada's courses go by names like the Motorcycle Safety Course, Gearing Up, or Rider Training — usually a weekend, with bikes and helmets provided.

Take care: A friend 'teaching you in a parking lot' is no substitute for a certified course. Bad habits learned early are the hardest to unlearn.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Setting Realistic Expectations

It's easy to picture yourself crossing the Rockies when what you'll really do is ride to the farmers' market. Match the bike and the plan to your real life, and you'll ride ten times more.

Picture your rides › Start embarrassingly small › Build the habit › Grow the dream

1. Describe your real rides — Be specific: how far, how often, alone or with a passenger, highway or back roads? A commuter, a Sunday cruiser, and a tourer are three different motorcycles.

2. Start with short rides — Your first month should be short local rides in light traffic. Stamina, like skill, builds gradually. A tired rider is a sloppy rider.

3. Ride your own ride — Never try to keep up with faster friends. The golden rule of group riding: ride at your own pace and meet at the next stop. Pride has hospitalized many riders.

4. Let the dream grow — After a season of happy local rides, you'll know whether you want longer tours, a bigger bike, or a passenger seat. Let experience — not the showroom — decide.

TALE

E STORY

Harold, 73, imagined cross-country tours and discovered he mostly loved Sunday rides to the lake, forty minutes away.

'The bike didn't care about my dreams,' he says. 'It just wanted to be ridden.'

! Most riders use their bikes for short local rides far more than grand tours. Buy for the riding you'll actually do, not the riding you fantasize about.

Take care: Beware the 'someday' bike: buying a huge tourer for a trip you may never take. Big, heavy bikes punish beginners in parking lots, where most drops happen.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Talking It Over With Family

The people who love you will worry. That's their job. Your job is to show them you're approaching this like a careful adult, not a midlife crisis on two wheels.

Expect the worry › Show your homework › Invite them along › Keep them posted

1. Lead with the course — 'I'm taking a certified safety course before I buy anything' calms most fears instantly. It shows seriousness, and it's true.

2. Show the gear — Let them see the helmet, the armoured jacket, the reflective vest. Safety gear is visible proof that you respect the risk.

3. Share the plan — Tell them where you ride and when you'll be back. Many riders share their route with family — it costs nothing and buys a lot of peace.

4. Invite, don't argue — Offer a ride on the back once you're skilled, or invite them to the course's graduation ride. Shared experience beats debate every time.

TALE

STORY

Bill, 70, announced his plan at Sunday dinner and watched three faces go pale.

Then he showed them the course certificate, the helmet, and the reflective vest. 'Oh,' said his daughter. 'You've actually thought about this.'

! Riding courses often welcome family observers. Watching you practice emergency stops in a parking lot reassures people more than any promise.

Take care: Don't dismiss their worry as nagging. People who love you get a vote on how much risk you take — at least a listening ear.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Rules of the Road, Canadian Edition

Motorcycles live under their own set of rules: licence classes, registration, insurance minimums, and helmet laws. None of it is hard, but all of it matters.

Know your class › Register the bike › Insure it right › Wear the helmet

1. Get the right licence — You need a motorcycle endorsement or class (often called M or Class 6, depending on province). The training course usually streamlines this — another reason to take it.

2. Register and plate it — Like a car, the bike needs registration and a plate. Dealers handle this on new bikes; private sales need a trip to the licensing office with the signed title.

3. Carry proper insurance — Liability coverage is mandatory, and given what's at stake, generous limits are wise. Ask about discounts for the safety course — many insurers offer them.

4. Know the helmet law — Every province requires an approved helmet, properly fastened. No novelty beanies, no exceptions. Your brain is worth the minor hat hair.

TALE

E STORY

Phyllis, 66, learned that her province requires a separate motorcycle licence class, a skills test, and — to her delight — no written exam retake at her age.

'The system,' she declared, 'wants me to ride.'

! Helmets are mandatory across Canada, and most provinces require daytime headlight use — which modern bikes do automatically.

Take care: Insurance follows the bike's risk profile: a 1000cc sport bike can cost triple a 500cc standard to insure. Get quotes before falling in love.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Try Before You Buy

Before you buy, get seat time on real bikes. Rentals, demo days, and friendly owners are worth more than a hundred reviews. Your body will tell you what fits.

Rent first › Borrow wisely › Sit on everything › Decide slowly

1. Rent for a weekend — A weekend rental costs a few hundred dollars and answers the only question that matters: do you actually enjoy this? Cheaper than buyer's remorse by a factor of twenty.

2. Try a demo day — Manufacturers run demo events at dealerships where you can ride several models back to back. It's like speed-dating for motorcycles, minus the awkward silences.

3. Sit on everything — Visit showrooms and simply sit on bikes. Feet flat? Reach comfortable? Can you push it upright off the side stand? Your body votes first.

4. Sleep on it — Never buy on the first visit. The right bike will still be there tomorrow, and so will a clear head. Impulse buys gather dust; considered buys gather miles.

TALE

REAL STORY

Stan, 72, rented a bike for a weekend before buying.

By Sunday he knew two things: he loved riding, and he hated the bike he'd almost bought. 'Best four hundred dollars I ever spent,' he says.

! Many dealers and rental shops offer weekend rentals that can be credited toward a purchase. Ask — the worst they can say is no.

Take care: Beware the showroom spell: chrome, lighting, and a charming salesperson. Decide your budget and bike type before you walk in, and stick to it.



FIND YOUR FIT

Meet the Bike Families

Cruiser, standard, touring, adventure, scooter — each bike family has a personality. Learn the family traits and you'll recognize your match across the showroom.

Meet the families › Match your riding › Sit on each › Narrow it down

1. Cruisers: low and relaxed — Feet forward, low seat, easygoing engines. Cruisers are the armchairs of motorcycling — comfortable, confidence-inspiring, and the most popular choice for returning riders.

2. Standards: the all-rounders — Upright seating, neutral handling, honest engines. Standards do a bit of everything and forgive a lot. If you're unsure, start here.

3. Tourers: built for distance — Big, comfortable, with windshields and luggage — but heavy. Wonderful for long trips once you have the strength and skill; a handful for beginners.

4. Scooters and trikes — Maxi-scooters offer twist-and-go simplicity with real highway ability. Trikes trade leaning for rock-solid stability. Both are dignified, practical choices — never apologize for them.

TALE

RIDE STORY

Gordon, 75, can name every bike family like hockey teams.

'Cruisers are the defensemen,' he says. 'Big, steady, hard to knock over. Sport bikes are the rookies — all speed, no patience.'

!

For most senior riders, the sweet spot is a standard or cruiser between 300 and 750cc — light enough to handle, strong enough for the highway.

Take care: Sport bikes — crouched, twitchy, and brutally fast — are the worst choice for returning or new senior riders, whatever the salesperson hints.

FIND YOUR FIT

Engine Size Without the Ego

Bigger engines impress at coffee shops and terrify in parking lots. For your first bike back, modest power you can actually use beats big power you must constantly restrain.

Forget the number › Start modest › Feel the power › Grow later

1. Learn what cc means — CC measures engine size — roughly, its muscle. More cc means more speed and more weight. A 400cc bike today is quicker than the 750 you remember from 1975.

2. Aim for the middle — Between 300 and 650cc suits most returning riders: enough power for highways, light enough to manage, cheap to insure. This is the wisdom zone.

3. Respect the throttle — Modern bikes, even small ones, accelerate harder than old ones. A gentle throttle hand matters more than engine size — the course will drill this into you.

4. Plan your second bike — Nobody says your first bike is your last. Start modest, build skill for a season or two, then step up if you still want to. Used starter bikes resell well.

TALE

STORY

Alf, 71, bought a 250 and his friends teased him mercilessly — until they watched him glide through traffic while they wrestled their heavyweights at every stoplight.

'Who's laughing now?' he asks, gently.

!

Engine size is measured in cc (cubic centimetres). For reference, a 300-500cc bike cruises happily at highway speed; 1000cc is far more than any beginner needs.

Take care: Avoid the 'I'll grow into it' trap with a 1000cc-plus machine. Excess power doesn't wait for you to grow — it punishes the first clumsy throttle twist.

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