

WOMEN'S
Motorcycle
TOURS

10

OUT-OF-THE-BOX
ACTIVITIES
TO BUILD YOUR MOTORCYCLE
RIDING CONFIDENCE

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10 OUT-OF-THE-BOX ACTIVITIES TO BUILD YOUR MOTORCYCLE RIDING CONFIDENCE



As a motorcycle tour guide for nearly 20 years and the leader/founder of Women's Motorcycle Tours, I've found that gaining confidence when you're getting started riding motorcycles is an individual journey. Not all of us are born coordinated or good with mechanical things (yes, I was *that* rider who got on the highway for the first time and would not ride above 35 mph because it was waaaaay too scary!) But I did it. Finally. And with a lot of input from other riders, crazy amounts of motorcycle skills training, and the most important thing of all -- practice.

Listed below are ten out-of-the-box ideas to fast-track your motorcycle riding confidence. I appreciate you downloading this list, so I've spent a lot of time coming up with ideas for you which are out of the box and differ from what you could find just doing a quick Google search. Some suggestions come from my own personal journey of overcoming my fears and gaining skill in order to be a better and more confident rider. I've also drawn from my years of solo moto travel, talking to other riders, leading large groups of women, and having a heartfelt interest in you enjoying your motorcycling experience to the fullest extent you can.



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The most important thing to remember with any advice is to use what resonates with you and discard the rest. Yes, even if it comes from the lovely little list I painstakingly put together below. You alone know how you think, what your limits are, and what will work best for you. The balance (in motorcycle riding, as in life) is pursuing those activities which slightly challenge you and broaden your skill set, yet safely stretch your boundaries

and expand your comfort zone so that you grow in skill and confidence. Upleveling your skill is a key component of the enjoyment of riding, but never at the expense of safety.



Here's what I'm rooting for: that at least one item on my list will ultimately bring you to a new level of understanding of yourself, your motorcycle, and your self-perceived limitations. I am wishing you many wonderful miles and joyous experiences on two wheels.

DURING THE NON-RIDING SEASON

1. While driving your car, practice looking both ways at intersections and green lights for oncoming traffic. Look through all your turns as you drive, turning your head side to side as far as possible. Will you look ridiculous? Probably. But who cares. You're training yourself to look through the corners and become aware of everything that's going on around you at intersections without having to worry about clutch/throttle stuff. Plus, you'll start to learn how to anticipate what other drivers are going to do from the "safety" of your car. Why is this important? Two reasons: One - Turning your head and looking where you want to go helps you get there (you go where you look). Two - Most motorcycle accidents happen in intersections so the more you can increase your situational awareness in them not only will you become a better car driver, but also become a better – and possibly safer – motorcycle rider.

2. In the heart of winter, sign yourself up for a motorcycle training course for first thing in the Spring. Invest your money during the time when you're not riding regularly to increase anticipation, so when riding season rolls around you're committed no matter what. When riding season arrives and you feel too busy in your garden or too antsy to ride to spend a day in a class, you'll be committed because you already put your money down. Most importantly, attend the class even if the weather is bad. And if the class is cancelled for some reason, see idea #6 (unless it's icy or snowing or otherwise unsafe to ride a motorcycle).



ACTION-ORIENTED CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS - SKILL ENHANCEMENT

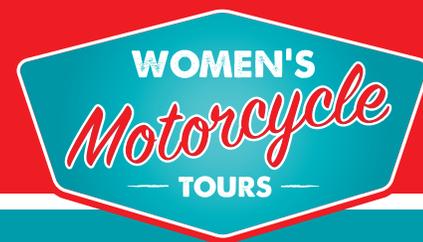
3. Ride a dirt bike. Even better, get some off-road training and take a dirt bike class. The experience of playing in the dirt translates directly to capability, confidence, and increased safety riding on pavement. If you become comfortable with riding off pavement, stopping hard, using aggressive throttle action, and throwing a lighter bike around, all those experiences help improve your confidence riding on the street. Not only will you be learning a heck of a lot about traction when riding on slippery surfaces (rocks, gravel, mud, toadstools), but also that will ultimately help you manage traction better when on pavement.

Bonus: When you ride a dirt bike you learn that it's okay to drop the bike and to fall over. This is incredibly liberating and helps make you a lot less self-conscious about dropping your heavier street bike. Ask me how I know this.



4. Ride a bicycle. Many of the above mentioned dirt bike skills are also sharpened by riding a mountain bike. And road bicycling, while carrying its own level of vulnerability, helps to heighten your sense of what traffic is doing around you, and will help immensely when riding in a group. Pushing your limits on a bicycle helps both your coordination and balance! Either kind of cycling also greatly improves your general physical fitness, which in turn helps your motorcycling.

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5. Make your motorcycle your primary transportation for one month. Hide your car keys, take an Uber/Lyft, or lend your car to a friend. Do whatever you have to do but don't drive your car unless your family needs you to use four wheels instead of two.

6. Make a point of riding your motorcycle to the grocery store in the rain. Even if you don't want to. I know it sounds silly, but you already know your neighborhood, where the potholes are located, and what the local traffic patterns are like. So all you have to do is focus on the feel of the bike and getting used to what your machine feels like on wet pavement. This will help you immensely when you are on a trip and get caught in the rain, which will inevitably happen at some point.

Bonus: Consider it a free waterproofing check on your riding gear. You'll find out whether the waterproofing works, the optimal way to layer your clothing underneath your riding rain gear, and how much rain your windshield and fairing deflect while riding. The best thing? You're not too far away from home if your gear isn't yet optimal and you do get wet and cold. You can end your ride at home with a nice hot shower.

7. Ride other motorcycles. Go to your local dealer and ask for demo rides on other models. Attend as many events as you can and sign up for an entire day of demo rides. Seriously, this is what I did the first few years I was riding and it made a HUGE difference in my confidence as well as my (eventual) flexibility as a rider. Each bike has a different seat height, body position, balance point, friction zone, breaking capacity, and throttle sensitivity. Oh, and demo rides are free. Motorcycle manufacturers are overjoyed when you come out and ride their newest models because they hope to convert you into a fan of the brand. (Unfortunately for my wallet this works a little too well and I now own four motorcycles...) I can't think of anything that will make you a more versatile rider more quickly unless you're rich and can fly to Southern California where it's riding season year round to rent every model of motorcycle in the EagleRider fleet.

In addition to demo rides, switching rides with trusted friends is a great idea too. Going on a group ride? Swap it up. Ask your pals if they'd mind switching bikes so you can learn about other makes and models. (I suggest you do a test run with the clutch, throttle, and braking action of the borrowed bike on your own before getting back into formation with a group.) Take any opportunity you can to try out and ride other motorcycles whenever possible. You'll find that motorcycles all work more the same than differently. You'll learn to appreciate different brands, models, and categories of machines, and in turn that will enrich your experience and awareness of what other machines are like to ride.

MINDSET

8. Train your subconscious rider. Sit on your bike, relax, put your hands on the handlebars, and start a positive dialog with your machine. You can say something silly like, "You and I are friends. I don't yet know all the people we'll meet, or the cool things we'll see, but I know it's going to be a grand adventure and I know you will take care of me." Then imagine all the glorious things you want to do on two wheels and in your mind's eye see yourself arriving at each place or event on your list safely, happily, and full of the joy of motorcycling.

Then imagine you're leaving the place or event with a sense of deep satisfaction, having a safe ride home, and parking your bike safely in your garage. Don't forget to smile throughout this exercise. Your mind doesn't know the difference between "real" events and the ones you "imagine", so start filling your mental cache with positive experiences because that really will support you when you're heading out on a new adventure.



9. Get your riding buddy to ride behind you. Early on in my riding life I met an avid motorcyclist at an MSF Experienced Rider Course (if I write a 10 dating tips list you can be sure this trick will be on that list!) We started dating (and riding together) and while I was great on the range, in a controlled environment, I was quite nervous riding in real world conditions. To get me up to speed, and to help me become a confident rider, he rode behind me when we were on local excursions. That simple swap made my (riding) job super easy because all I had to focus on was making the machine do what I wanted it to do, and go where I wanted it to go. Suddenly I wasn't worried about what was going on behind me, or whether someone was going to tailgate me, because I knew my guy had my back.

In general, it's easier to follow someone than to lead, so I recommend using the riding-in-front trick when you're riding on roads you're familiar with. If you're headed out of town then it might make sense for you to follow. As I stated in my introduction, you know yourself best and you should pick the right scenario for your own safety and comfort. I just know that for me, where I was in my riding life at that time, it made a huge difference in my confidence when we swapped it up. I hope it will



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for you, too, if you're intimidated by traffic.

10. Okay, so #10 isn't out of the box, but I can't help myself. When you wear full safety apparel (boots, gloves, pants, jacket, helmet, the whole shebang) there's an unconscious feeling of "I've got this covered" -- and you are! For me, knowing that even if the worst does happen, and I come off the bike, I'll be protected as best I can be from head to toe. This gives me a huge inner sigh of relief and surges my confidence quite a bit. I've been writing an apparel column for a motorcycle magazine for a number of years, and I've read the research. I won't scare you with details, but I will tell you that if you wear a full-face helmet and motorcycle safety apparel with armor you're going to be **significantly** better off if something unexpected does happen. And I want to see your smiling face at an event, on a tour, or on



the open road, so protect your shiny bright self as best you can.

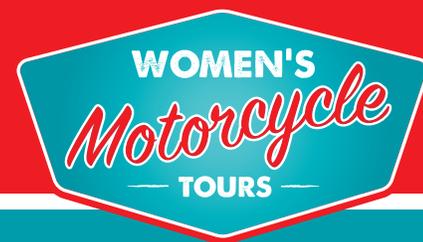
And since I made you suffer through my apparel rant I'll add two more ideas to boost your confidence:

11. Make a list of all the things that scare or intimidate you about riding and write them down on the left side of a piece of paper. Then figure out how to tackle each one and write down the solution on the right hand side of the paper. Mentally walk yourself through each scenario, envisioning solutions from the safety of your sofa. Then you can tell yourself to forget about these worries because you now have solutions. Subconsciously you know that you'll be prepared when, if ever, that particular thing or things ever come up.

Tuck those solutions away in the back part of your brain so that you can access them in case those worries resurface. OR take this written list and tuck it away in a re-sealable baggie inside your riding jacket or in your tank bag; then you can take it out and re-read your solutions list if your worry persists. Re-reading the solutions will remind you that you've got this. The trick with this confidence hack is to not focus on the big, scary might-possibly-happen; instead focus on the fact that you now have one (or many) solutions. Do whatever you think will work best for you.

12. Practice starting and stopping. Sounds easy, right? But I find there's always that little thing which I can improve. I personally think that a perfect launch is a beautiful thing. I practice them. I do it nearly every time I stop. I try to start up again being poised, perfectly balanced, avoiding the herky-jerky leg or body movements, and smoothly accelerating forward in a perfectly straight line with no bobble. Think on-bike ballet. I like to practice the same with stops. I'm not sure why, but this gives me a great amount of confidence...especially when someone comes up to me and says I look like such a smooth rider. Ha! Little do they know that my nickname when growing up was "Grace" because I am so clumsy. I have spent 20+ years practicing making it look easy. And I nail it a good portion of the time now.

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I wish you as much fun as I have had over the years practicing, learning, growing, and exploring on two wheels. There has been no other activity in my life which has taught me more about myself than motorcycling. It is my sincerest hope that I can pass a sweet little tidbit of that on to you. I'd love to hear your feedback or the fun stuff you're up to on two wheels. Be sure to leave a comment for me on the [@WomensMotorcycleTours](https://www.facebook.com/WomensMotorcycleTours) Facebook page.

You are invited to join our women-only moto mentoring group on Facebook. You can find us at [facebook.com/groups/MotoMentoring.ByWomenForWomen/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/MotoMentoring.ByWomenForWomen/).

If you'd like further support, or to gain confidence motorcycle touring while touring, Women's Motorcycle Tours offers an annual "Teaching Tour" with pre-trip video chats, on-tour training, and post-tour follow up. More information is on our website at [WomensMotorcycleTours.com/TeachingTour](https://www.WomensMotorcycleTours.com/TeachingTour).



Oh and if you're looking for an epic adventure, make history with us on the women's cross-country motorcycle ride of the century during the Suffragists Centennial Motorcycle Ride (SCMR2020) in August of 2020. More information is on our website at www.CentennialRide.com.

~Alisa