

A Guide to Buying a Used Motorbike

Is the smell of leather, the noise of the engine, and that feeling of freedom on the open road simply too much to resist? Well, now's the time to do something about it!

Competition in the second-hand motorbike market is fierce. Prices are sharp and the choice has never been bigger - or better. Here are a few pointers in your search for the dream machine.

Which bike suits you?

Cheap commuter runabout? Chrome-laden cruiser? Or fast and furious sportster? The first thing to do is think about what you want from a motorbike.

Is it solely for weekend fun, or do you want to tour Britain and beyond with a pillion? Maybe you're after something cheap and reliable to avoid rush-hour traffic?

Tip: Decide what you want before you start looking. There's a vast range of motorbikes out there, so narrowing down your choice will make the buying process simpler. [Buying a motorbike? Get to know the 7 Basic Types.](#)

Licence to thrill

Your licence may restrict what you're allowed to take on the road. There are three types in the UK:

- * A - Unrestricted: You can ride any size or power motorbike.
- * A2 - Restricted: The only licence available to those aged 20 and under. You can only ride bikes up to a maximum of 33bhp.
- * A1 - Restricted: For those not wanting to ride anything bigger than 125cc and up to 14.6bhp.

Your licence type might also impact your motorbike insurance. Compare policies before buying.

Clever bike buying

Always view a motorbike in daylight and dry conditions. Raindrops can hide poor paintwork and other horrors. There are two ways to buy a used bike; through a dealer or private sale.

Dealer

You receive:

- * Peace of mind should anything go wrong
- * Some kind of warranty on the motorbike
- * Better legal protection under trading laws
- * Convenient finance deals
- * A trade-in for your old bike if you have one
- * The opportunity to haggle over the price

Buyer beware: You will pay more than you would through private sale to cover the dealer's costs and profit.

Private sale

You receive:

- * A chance to cut out the middle man
- * The opportunity to haggle
- * A cheaper price

Buyer beware: You lack the safeguards of a dealership sale, so it's important to make a few simple checks to avoid being conned. Check the seller's ID and buy it from their home address. If they want to meet in a car park or garage forecourt, forget it.

Paper trail

- * Before you buy a used bike, ensure the paperwork is in order before handing over that cash. Use this check list as a guide

- * Is there a V5 registration document? Genuine ones have a watermark.
- * Do owner's details match the seller's? Do the bike's details correspond to the machine - is it the same colour, engine size etc?
- * Do engine and frame numbers match the bike?
- * Visit www.motorcyclecheck.co.uk to check the registration against a database of stolen or written-off machines.
- * Is there an MoT certificate? If the bike's over three years old it needs one.
- * Has the bike got a full service history stamped by the garage?
- * Are bills available to back up the service history?
- * Is the motorbike taxed?

Close inspection - what to look for

- * Mileage - does it match the service history/bills?
- * Bodywork and tank - is it scuff and scratch-free? Bent or marked handlebars, footrests and exhausts may signal the bike's been dropped. Stickers are sometimes used to hide damage too. Remove side panels on a faired bike to check the frame and engine for damage.
- * Wheels - any cracks, dents or scuffed paintwork?
- * Tyres - do they have plenty of tread? Are there any cuts or sidewall damage?
- * Steering - does it move freely? Check there's no back and forwards play when you rock the forks.
- * Suspension - bounce the bike separately at the back and front to check the damping action works.
- * Brakes - check discs are unscored and pads have plenty of material.
- * Chain and sprockets - are they well lubricated and free from excess slack? Ensure the sprocket teeth are in good condition and not hooked.
- * Exhaust - is it original? If not, is it legal with an approved manufacturer's or European mark?
- * Lights, indicators and horn - do they all work?

Faults with any of these give you good reason to bargain over the price or walk away from the deal.

Road test

Before taking the motorbike for a test ride, make sure you, or the owner, have the correct [motorbike insurance](#). If they say you're insured, ask to see their policy to be sure. Another insurance matter worth noting is that your policy may be affected if any of the parts are not legally road worthy.

About the Author

Visit <http://www.confused.com/motorbike-insurance> to read more about [motorbikes](#).

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