

THE SCOOTIST



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Index

Page:

3	Types of scooter
3	50cc Pop Fart scooters
4	60cc – 250cc scooters
5	250cc+ Super scooters
6	Scooter styles
6	What to wear on your scooter
6	What to and not to do on your scooter
7	Windy conditions
7	Scooter condition
7	Safety tips
7	Braking tips8 Balance tips
8	Insurance
8	Scooter grooming
8	Financing your scooter
9	Transmission types
9	Shades vs goggles
10	Helmets – types and preferences

Types of Scooter

So you've decided to buy a scooter. Its a good choice really when considering the price of gas and parking.

There are some things you should know about your scooter. Thy are primarily designed for rapid, cheap and highly convenient transport around town. That's not to say you can't ride further afield though since there are a few specialised scooters for this purpose too.

There are a few types of scooter.

The most common is the 49cc pop-fart type for zapping around town – these do approximately 60kph (some will go faster) and are extremely convenient if you plan to zap about on inner city streets and not among serious traffic. The price of vehicle registration on these is around \$70 NZ per year and there is no Warrant of Fitness required although you must keep it to a warrantable standard at all times. A motorcycle licence is not necessary. You can ride one of these on a New Zealand car drivers licence in New Zealand.

Price: Used @ \$400+ New @ \$1700 NZ to \$4500 NZ



There is the commuter scooter which ranges from 80cc – 250cc capable of speeds from 80km/h to 120 km/h. These are useful for commuting from suburbia to work in the city. At the lower end, the 80cc is better kept in town while the 200cc plus size can be used on a motorway. Don't expect to be able to overtake at motorway speeds though. These are less economical than 49cc models and require Warrant of Fitness and Registration of about \$280 NZ per year. A full motorcycle licence is required to ride one of these machines. Under seat storage is much greater than 49cc scooters and more can be added through GIVI accessory dealers on many models. Small wheels make them very unstable in deep shingle.

Price: Used @ \$1500+ New @ \$2995 - \$9000+



The third type is the Super Scooter. They are subject to all requirements for the over 49cc motorcycle or scooter. A super scooter will range in size from 400cc to 900cc+. This size scooter should be used out of town on long runs. Super scooters have heaps of power and can overtake easily at motorway speeds. They can be a handful in the city and tend to be quite large. Should you buy one then drop it, even lightly, much damage will be done to the plastic body. Usually, these scooters have large storage areas beneath the seat and accessory top box sets can be obtained from GIVI agents for many models. Avoid all shingle like the plague!

Price: Used @ \$7000+ New @ \$9000+



Styles

You can buy stylish or plain – the one thing there is no choice over is buy one which accelerates quick and stops quick! If you are on a slow scooter, you are in the way of other traffic at which point you are in danger of being run down. If you really must ride a 49cc scooter, keep as far to the left of the road as is humanly possible. If you are more than 80 kilo's in weight, buy a 125cc or larger. A 49cc scooter will get you into trouble that you can't get out of through lack of acceleration.

Most scooters will keep your feet dry in the rain!

What to wear:

Obviously there is a need to protect yourself in the event of a fall or in bad weather. The following items afford a certain amount of protection.

- A solidly constructed jacket, preferably leather.
- At least denim weight pants. Avoid lightweight synthetics.
- Robust footwear, not jandals (thongs), clogs, sandals or similar. Preferably riding boots.
- A new helmet to your taste – colour, style etc. Full face preferred with clear, unscratched visor.
- If you use an open face (jet) helmet, a pair of goggles.
- Leather gloves.
- A set of lightweight – waterproof, over-the-top wet weather gear to keep you and your riding gear dry

There are things you should and shouldn't do on a scooter.

- Always know who is behind you and how far away they are
- When following another vehicle, ride off to the right side of it so you can see past. If the vehicle brakes suddenly you will be able to stop beside it if you overshoot while trying to stop or through lack of attention, not into the back of it.
- Motorcycles are small and hard to see, particularly dark coloured or silver ones. Keep your headlight on at all times. **IMPORTANT!** It is recommended to keep your headlight on **FULL BEAM** if your scooter's headlight is below handlebar height. If you don't, there is no doubt that drivers won't see you.
- Wear a reflective vest.
- Car drivers are your enemy! They often can't and sometimes won't see you coming.
- Letting go of the handlebars is stupid. A friend once said to me, "When I let go of the bars, the front wheel wobbles. I think there's something wrong with the bike. What should I do?". The answer's easy – don't let go of the bars... duh!

There are things you can do on a scooter.

Traffic jams don't usually affect scootist's. You may be riding along a busy street, or even a crowded motorway during peak traffic – you can nip up the inside if there is a cycle lane or the outside of traffic if there is room. I personally prefer the inside on a motorway jam because if an emergency vehicle has to get through, they go up between the traffic on the outside.. Be aware though, all it takes is one annoyed driver to open a car door in your path to send you to hospital. If you wish to nip past in a traffic jam, do it slowly, keep further away from any vehicle than the length of it's door and keep your eyes open. Remember this: ***You don't buy a scooter to sit in traffic jams.***

Windy Conditions

When you are riding your scooter in an area which is very windy, on a scooter which allows you to stretch your legs out forward of the seat, fold them back to the rear of the running board and lean forward to counter balance the scooter. This will allow the wind to blow through the bike, not use your legs as a sail and blow you off. Cut down the wind resistance and you stand a better chance of getting home in one piece.

Scooter Condition.

It's important to keep your scooter in top condition. Make sure you regularly check tyres, brakes, steering yoke, lights etc. Adjusting rear hub brakes is easy. Simply turn the adjusting nut on the end of the brake rod clockwise until you reach the desired pressure on the brake lever. Since most scooters have disc brakes on the front, you will need to check the brake pad thickness and fluid levels each week.

Safety Tips:

Keep your eyes on the road. Make sure you take regular rear view mirror peeks so you know not only what's behind, but where it is in case you have to take evasive action. When stopping at an intersection, place and keep both feet on the ground. This will secure your scooter from being blown over. There are times when, if you only put down one foot and a side wind hits you, you can drop the bike – looks stupid at a busy intersection. When taking off again, first lift one foot, then the other onto the running boards. This will save your stomach muscles being injured.

If you can't put both feet flat on the ground with the scooter stopped, the scooter is too big or configured wrongly for you.

KNOW WHAT'S IN FRONT WHEN MOVING FORWARD – KNOW WHAT'S BEHIND WHEN STOPPING!

Braking Tips:

When braking in an emergency, hit the back brake hard, followed by the front – also hard in that order and **DON'T LET GO UNTIL YOU HAVED STOPPED** (including – dare I say it, impact). This will give you are far better chance when a collision is imminent.

When braking in dry weather on a dry road, apply brake pressure evenly between the front and rear brakes. Avoid the temptation to use only the front brake – if you suddenly strike shingle or slippery substance on the road, you will probably come off.

In the wet weather, afford much more pressure to the rear brake whilst gently feathering the front. It's easier to escape a rear wheel skid or slide than a front wheel, body busting, “go-to - hospital” mistake.

Skids:

Should you find yourself in a skid, wind the throttle off immediately and steer your machine purposefully in the direction the back of the machine is going. Hold on to the machine solidly with your feet and legs together until you stop.

Balance tips:

If you keep your feet as far apart as possible on the running boards, your balance will be enhanced and the leverage you need to control your scooter, particularly a heavier, larger one will be available. Try and avoid the dainty knees and feet together pose you often see. Not good for handling.

Wet Weather Tips:

- Avoid rapid acceleration on wet days as this can cause the rear wheel to lose traction and throw you on your butt on the road.
- Stay away from white painted lines and road markings in the rain. You will slip easily if you strike them awkwardly.
- If you begin to slip, turn the throttle off immediately and the bike should straighten up.
- Light drizzle makes the road dangerous for scooters. It wets oil residue from other vehicles and creates a skating rink for unsuspecting scooterists.
- No sudden steering movements.
- Gentle pressure only on the brakes, to avoid traction loss.

Insurance:

Look around for a good deal. Probably the biggest mistake to make when buying a scooter from a dealership is to use their usual insurer to insure your scooter. In New Zealand there is a group of companies who offer motorcycle – scooter insurance with insanely high excesses. I will not name those companies but I will tell you this...although their premiums are similar to almost all other companies, their excess is as follows:

1. \$700.00 for the first claim and...
2. \$1200.00 for any other claim in the same insurance period.

This is mental! If you have a cheap bike and do under \$700.00 worth of damage, they won't pay for it. Think about it.

Another, very large New Zealand company offers similar premiums with a \$100.00 excess. You do the math.

Look around before you purchase scooter insurance and don't let the dealers bully you.

Scooter Grooming

Scooters are indeed beautiful looking things. There are ways to keep them that way.

Armour all

Turtlewax triple wax

CRC so easy for wet look.

All scooters love a wash and a heaped helping of wax. Triple wax is preferred.

Financing:

Finance rates are usually negotiable. I have spoken to several motor vehicle dealers who have all told me the same thing. They buy their finance from major finance companies and on-sell it to vehicle purchasers. All quoted me about the 8% mark for them to buy finance. This all adds up to a profit for the vehicle dealers of anything they can get over the 8%

The last car I bought was to be 18% finance charge. I negotiated it down to 14%. You can too. Remember this. There are plenty of other scooters at other dealerships if the dealer won't negotiate.

Transmission Types

Twist and go;

If you're not the type who enjoys changing gears and using a clutch then the Twist and Go is for you. The easiest by far for both learner and experience scootist's. Use could hardly be easier. Simply put the key in and turn on the ignition, press the starter and wind on the throttle and the scoot moves off. This type changes ratios itself. I personally ride and prefer this type for a satisfying scoot experience.

Clutch and gear (Vespa).

Tools you should carry:

Tyre repair stuff, plug spanner, tyre repair Pando - though this usually renders tube bugged, 12mm 14mm spanner, crescent wrench, Philips tip and straight screwdriver, pliers.

First aid kit.

Purchase and carry a first aid kit on your scooter. You never know when you or someone else may need it. Bikes are potentially dangerous as we all know!

Shades vs. Goggles

This is one of those items which comes down to a matter of choice, though both have their pro's and con's. Goggles provide great protection from rain, wind and pesky bees and things which fly into your eye at 50kph, rendering you blind. They can look either dopey or cool, depending on the style you buy. It's a great idea to buy a set with polarized or dark lenses. They look good and protect from the sun's rays. There are two basic types. Single, plastic lens and the pilot type with two separate lenses.

As far as I'm concerned, I use the *single, wide lens type*. Although they provide an excellent range of visibility and high degree of wind protection, they become hard to see through in the rain and tend to fog up both in the rain, and the cold.

The twin lens type are very similar in almost all respects but for one thing. The range of visibility can be very limited, forcing the user to turn their head to see hard left or right.

Shades look great and there's no doubt about it! Your eyes water from the dust and wind, and the rain pelts you in the eyes mercilessly, but they look great!

I use shades on fine, sunny days when I'm traveling in the city at city speeds, and goggles in rainy or windy weather. At speed, I use goggles.

Here's a tip... When stationary on a cold or rainy day, breathe in through your nose and blow the breath out your mouth. Your goggles or shades should not fog up.

Helmets:

Another item that's a matter of personal choice. There are a few types and the price range is from around ninety bucks to horrendously expensive.

Dot mark or S mark NZ is a must.

Never buy any helmet without these approvals or you may not live to regret it should to crash out on your scoot and hit the road with your head! These marks should be on the back of, or inside the helmet and on its label. If there is no safety standard on that cool helmet, no matter how awesome – DO NOT USE IT!

Brands

These are all excellent brands with high level references for safety as well as style.

Shoei
Bell
Hjc

Types and preferences.

Certainly, you want to look cool when out and about on your scoot but there are things to consider!

Level of protection is the reason for having a helmet in the first place. For the purposes of this booklet, I will concentrate on the most common helmets – obviously you won't be wearing specialized off-road or motocross helmets so it comes down to these two types.

1. Open face
2. Full face

Open Face Helmets – Chin Grinders

I, personally prefer open face helmets with drop down visor and sun visor. After 55 years of riding I still prefer these and have never had incidents requiring change of type. Having said that, I rode for nearly a decade as a mechanised postman on a Honda CT110 postie bike – excellent unkillable machines!

An important thing to remember about open face helmets is this – that's exactly what they do to you face if you come off your scooter and smack you kisser into the road – you will not be protected and will suffer severe facial injuries – even if you are wearing a scarf over your face while riding!

The reason many prefer these helmets is they can't handle suffocating in a full face type, that's me too! I like to be out in the wind and rain with the pinging stab of rain and the warm embrace of sun on my face! I'd prefer no helmet at all but it's the law so, bumner for me.

All that said, open face helmets will protect your head to a reasonable degree and that's better than dying on the road because you weren't wearing a helmet at all right?!

Open Face helmets



GLOSS BLACK



Full Face Helmets

The proper choice if safety at speed is your thing. I personally do not like the weight of them pulling on my neck and I can't feel the wind or weather – the main reason we ride in the first place

They are fully enclosed with the added benefit of saving your face and chin in a road kissing crash but in a car v bike, it's really going to hurt as your head gets snapped back with that extra weight on it.

Rain will stay off you but your helmet will fog up in cold weather and rain and you will probably need to open the visor slightly to clear it – you can also use spray on or wipe products such as Fog-Off to prevent the condensation in those cases.

These helmets do have vents to help but you usually find they don't help that much.

Here's something that bothered me when I came across it. It's the flip front helmet and it's cousin, the clip on chin guard helmet. Police often used the flip front type but they are not safer than open face in my humble opinion! Avoid!

Full Face Helmets



BLACK/RED "WICKED"





MC1



MC2



MC3



MC4



MC5