

Filtering

The manoeuvre known as 'Filtering' if done correctly, allows the advanced motorcyclist to make progress whilst the motorist suffers delays. It can however, place the motorcyclist in a position of extreme danger if not done correctly and safely. This handout sets out some basic principles for making filtering as safe as possible.

Basic principles of filtering

Any filtering is tiring and requires the utmost concentration. Sports bikes riders may find the slow speeds encountered when riding in traffic create extra weight on their wrists due to the riding position. Prolonged filtering in traffic may also cause the machine to overheat if no fan is fitted to the cooling system. In these circumstances, it may be safer to stay in line for a short while to ease the pressure on the rider's arms and turn the engine off momentarily to prevent overheating of the machine (and rider).

The most important rule of thumb is to only filter when the surrounding traffic is moving at less than 20mph, and then only exceed that speed yourself by 10 to 15 mph maximum (if safe and legal to do so). You may have seen motorcyclists filtering between lanes of fast flowing traffic on dual carriageways and motorways. They are not filtering at high speeds, they are actually undertaking and overtaking traffic. There is a far higher chance of a collision occurring as you have less of a safety margin to stop or avoid anyone changing lanes in these circumstances.

Filtering to the offside of traffic

When filtering to the offside of a line of slow moving or stationary traffic, continually scan for side turnings and entrances to both sides of the road. If possible, try to keep a car door's width away from the vehicles you are passing, in case a driver or rear seat



passenger suddenly opens their door to take off a jacket or see what is causing the hold up. Obey all 'Keep Left' bollards and also be aware that temporarily stationary vehicles at traffic lights, pedestrian crossings etc are not classed as stationary for the purposes of solid white lines and therefore you cannot cross a solid white line to filter.

Where possible, look into the vehicles you are about to pass, or in the wing mirrors of the vehicles to see the drivers faces. Do they look like they are preparing to pull out of the line of traffic, to turn right or perform a U-turn to avoid the queue? Your riding plan must include your plan B and/or an escape route if necessary. Continue looking between vehicles for pedestrians and other motorcyclists/

pedal cyclists who may be looking to cross. Also look for gaps in traffic where vehicles may emerge into your path. Cycles and motorbikes engaged in aggressive filtering will sometimes weave in and out through a line of traffic attempting to find their route forward.



Using ‘Stepping Stones’

Whilst filtering to the right of traffic, consider the use of ‘stepping stones’ within your riding plan. Whilst you don’t actually have to move into the spaces, consider which ones would be suitable. If your riding plan changes, be prepared to move in. Consider the fact that when you do move into a gap, even though you do so on acceleration sense and don’t show your brake light, the driver behind may well brake anyway (often due to an over reaction). A polite wave of the hand is often sufficient to negate a sense of grievance by the driver behind, even though it may be unjustified.

Filtering between lanes

The potential for danger is doubled when you filter between lines of stationary or slow moving traffic. You now have two lines of vehicles that may well move into your path. Your scanning should include other motorcycles approaching you from the rear as well as those who may choose to filter along a differing path to your own. Be aware that this causes problems for the drivers of vehicles when they have motorcycles moving on either side of them. They can only move in one direction to help and they may well move into your path to assist those approaching them from the other side of their vehicle.

Other considerations

Never assume that you have been seen by any other road user. Headlamps and hi-visibility clothing are not a guarantee that you have been seen. Always look for evidence that the driver has seen you and comprehends that you are passing them. Be prepared to stop or change direction if necessary.

Whilst filtering, you may well be riding on a part of the carriageway that is used less often and therefore you may encounter debris or loose surface material. Scan for this and plan appropriately. Paint on a wet road has less adhesion than the tarmac road surface, only ride on it if you really have to and adjust your riding accordingly.

The practice of displaying hazard lights whilst filtering is not recommended. Apart from the fact that you may be committing a moving traffic offence, it reduces your ability to convey your intentions to change direction in the normal manner.

Many towns permit motorcyclists to ride in bus lanes, but do not assume you can do so in all bus lanes. Check the information signs as you approach the start of the bus lane for the motorcycle symbol, as well as the times of operation. Look out for offenders driving in the bus lane during the times of operation and ensure your safety is uppermost in your plan. Try not to overreact if a vehicle does not move over for you: you do not have a right of passage and besides, it may just be that the driver has not seen you for some reason.