

## Lane sharing tips



**Note:** These include some of the original Guidelines that the CHP issued and I helped write at the very first Motorcycle Safety Lane Sharing Summit. There is no guarantee these will keep you safe. Your safety depends completely on you and your good judgment and motorcycle skills.

The term lane sharing, sometimes known as lane splitting, filtering or white-lining, refers to the process of a motorcyclist riding between lanes of stopped or slower moving traffic. Example: Moving between lanes of vehicles stopped at a traffic light.

Skilled motorcyclists should consider these general guidelines if choosing to lane share. Newer riders should consider that Lane Sharing requires a high degree of mental and physical skill. The amount of experience you have plays greatly into applying the practice as safely as possible.

### 1. Speed:

- Travel at a speed that is no more than 15 MPH faster than other traffic – danger increases at higher speed differentials.
- The greater the speed differential, the less time and space a rider has to identify and react to a hazard.
- A speed differential of 15 MPH or less allows an alert, competent rider more time and space to identify and react to most dangerous situations that can occur.
- For a new rider learning how to lane share It is typically not advisable to lane share when traffic flow is going 30 mph or faster --- danger of greater injury from a crash increases as overall speed increases. However very experienced riders can share between cars specifically to get to a safer gap.
- Do not linger between cars.
- At just 20 mph, in the 1 or 2 seconds it takes a rider to identify a hazard, that rider will travel approximately 30 to 60 feet before even starting to take evasive action. Actual reaction (braking or swerving) will take additional time and distance.
- Braking and stopping distances vary greatly based on a multitude of factors (rider skill, type and condition of the motorcycle, and environment).

## **2. Where to share:**

- Typically, it is safer to share between the #1 and #2 lanes than between other lanes.
- Other road users are more accustomed to motorcycles sharing between the #1 and #2 (furthest left) lanes.
- Avoid sharing in lanes near freeway on-ramps and exits. HOV entry/exit points. When HOV access is limited, expect lane changes where it opens up.
- Convergence/divergence where freeways split or join. At a split, expect last-second merge to make the almost-missed exit. At a join, expect a quick merge to get to the fast lane or an upcoming exit.
- Avoid sharing lanes when another motorcycle rider is sharing between other nearby lanes as cars may make additional room for one rider and accidentally reduce space for another.

## **3. Your Environment:**

- Consider the total environment in which you are sharing, including the width of the lanes, size of surrounding vehicles, as well as roadway, weather, and lighting conditions.
- Some lanes are narrower than others, leaving little room to pass safely. If you can't fit, don't share. Construction zones, or on an older freeways with an additional lane squeezed into the available space. The combination of a wide vehicle and narrow lane can be deadly.
- Some vehicles are wider than others -- it is not advisable to split near wide trucks. If you can't fit, don't share. Even a small collision with a truck next to you is life threatening.
- Know the limitations of your motorcycle --- wide bars, fairing and bags require more space between vehicles. If you can't fit, don't share.
- Be aware of larger mirrors on pickup trucks and SUV's.
- Avoid sharing on unfamiliar roads to avoid surprises such as poor road surfaces. Seams, reflective dots in the pavement or concrete between lanes can be hazardous if they are wide or uneven.
- Gaps in traffic in one lane that invites a lane-change. Riding between lanes of bumper-to-bumper traffic gives you some protection because vehicles can't change lanes.
- Poor visibility, due to darkness or weather conditions, makes it difficult for riders to see road hazards and makes it more difficult for drivers to see you.
- Help drivers see you by wearing brightly colored protective gear and using high beams during daylight.

#### **4. Be alert and anticipate possible movements by other road users:**

- **Be very aware of what the cars around you are doing. If a space, or gap, opens up next to your lane, be prepared react accordingly. Cars will typically change lanes more often at slower speeds. Those gaps in traffic create a higher risk level for the rider in those conditions.**
- **Always be prepared to take evasive action if a vehicle changes lanes.**
- **Sudden lane change by multiple vehicles. This suggests debris or a stalled vehicle ahead.**
- **Account for inattentive or distracted drivers.**
- **Watch for problem drivers weaving or making multiple lane changes. You can spot them a few hundred feet away. Drivers who are thinking #1 looks good. Nope, it's #3. It was #2 all along!**
- **Riders should not weave back and forth between lanes or ride on top of the line.**
- **Riders should avoid lingering in blind spots.**
- **There's a major off ramp ahead, and he's boxed in. His head's is on a swivel, and he's squeezing into the splitting corridor.**
- **Slowing traffic ahead. As traffic slows, drivers anticipate bumper-to-bumper traffic and try to make needed lane changes while it's still possible. Ride with your head and eyes UP so you can spot a slowdown before the chaos begins.**
- **When a motorcycle is sharing ahead follow at least two seconds behind. If you want to go faster, find a way when safe to do so.**
- **When you see another rider approaching from behind, get out of the way as soon as possible. A tailgating rider puts YOU at risk if you have to brake to avoid a hazard.**
- **Never ride while impaired by drugs, alcohol, or fatigue.**
- **Constantly scan for changing conditions.**

#### **5. Tells – Things that help you know a driver is going to do something:**

- **Driver's head is moving rapidly.**
- **Driver's eyes are in the mirror.**
- **Driver appears to be following navigation and is looking at a GPS device.**
- **Driver's eyes are down and traffic is slowing ahead.**
- **Driver and passenger are arguing.**

- When a passenger is pointing out something off the side of the road.
- Driver's blinker is on – yeah!!

## 6. Stoplights and around town:

- Splitting at stop lights - make sure you can safely leave ahead of the cars you are next to. If you are still stalling your motorcycle you should not be in this position.
- Splitting at stop lights –
- Watch for aggressive drivers who don't want to let you go before them.
- Watch for red light runners before you leave.
- Watch for fast left turners who are trying to make the turn ahead of you.
- Watch for people opening their doors.
  - Be aware of the timing of the lights. If the light turns green, slow and safely merge into traffic
- At an intersection or crosswalk watch for the late pedestrian or bicycle sprint.
- In city traffic, in addition to lane-changers, you have cross-traffic to worry about. A vehicle, bicyclist, or pedestrian could be crossing through stopped traffic, not expecting a lane sharing motorcycle to come along.
- Remember that large trucks may not be able to see you and even a small tip over when they are stopped could be deadly.

## “Be-Attitudes” of Lane Sharing:

Be Reasonable, be Responsible, be Respectful, be aware of all Roadway and traffic conditions.

- Reasonable means not more than 15 MPH faster than traffic flow.
- You are Responsible for your own safety and decisions.
- Don't put yourself in dangerous positions.
- If you can't fit, don't share.
- Be Respectful --- sharing the road goes both ways.
- Don't rely on loud pipes to keep you safe, loud pipes often startle people and poison the attitude of car drivers toward motorcyclists. Revving your bike to let them know you are there is not well accepted or respectful.
- Other vehicles are not required to make space for motorcycles to lane split.