

Jay Van Loenen:

With gas prices where they are and a wedding on the horizon, my wife and I decided that two SUVs and a jeep were a bit over the top. To pare down expenses, we came to the decision that we should sell one SUV and get me a motorcycle.

In order for me to get on a motorcycle with my wife's blessing, I was going to have to do more than simply buy a cycle and start riding.

She pointed me to CDOT's (Colorado Department of Transportation's) motorcycle safety Web site that lists 12 MOST (Motorcycle Operator Safety Training) trainers and offers a ton of great safety tips, including safety gear and sober riding pointers. MOST is a statewide program and provides high-quality, low-cost motorcycle training. Successful training even allows you to walk into the DMV and get your motorcycle endorsement without any additional tests (though you still have to wait in line...) I checked out the site (comotorcyclesafety.com) and located the list of MOST training organizations. After selecting one, I found that the prices were reasonable, the class meeting times were flexible and there were lots of convenient locations to choose from.

After looking at the calendar, I got registered for a rider skills class. I signed up for a two-day course that met from 8 AM to 5 PM, but many others were available.

On the first day, we began with standard introductions, and I was pleasantly surprised to find out that I was not the least experienced rider there. In fact, there was a wide range of riders at all skill levels. Even though this was a beginner class, there were some who had ridden for years, but never got an endorsement. Others wanted a refresher. Others, like me, were beginners.

We started into the book work. The instructors reinforced the book learning with videos that demonstrated what we had just read about. In addition to learning how to maneuver a cycle, we got important safety tips like protective gear and the importance of riding sober.

Next, it was outside to ride. After some preliminaries, we were finally decked out in our safety gear and straddling our bikes.

At the end of the second day, we ended with a bit more bookwork, and then the written test: 50 questions straight from the book that we had so thoroughly examined.

Finally we had a little graduation ceremony. A hand shake, a card, a little packet of stickers and patches, and we were on our way to becoming full-fledged riders.

I was excited to get to the DMV to make my motorcycle endorsement official.

It's a big step. I feel confident, now, to get on a motorcycle and take it for a spin. And I also learned just how important safety gear can be. I'll always wear it. And I'll always

ride sober... for me, my wife and for all my new riding buddies. One last problem, though... I still don't own a bike. Guess maybe it's time to call my friend and take him up on his offer of a test-ride..."