

FILTERING

This is best described as when a rider uses the benefits of a motorcycle's size and agility to make progress past other road users in queues of STATIONARY or SLOW MOVING traffic. It is one of the perks of being on a motorcycle that you can pass in this manner. It is perfectly legal and when carried out properly can be quite safe but, as with all things, there are considerations to be made before commencing a filtering manoeuvre.

Filtering is effectively an overtake and if you think of it in this way there are a lot of the principles of overtaking that apply to filtering. The main benefit is that you can make progress when others cannot and that also becomes the main problem because the car drivers that you are passing become irritated at the fact that they are stuck in a queue and some will become quite obstructive and aggressive towards you. Some do not think that it is a legal manoeuvre, hence their aggression. The secret is to be completely safe, do not put yourself or anyone else at risk and be considerate and courteous. It is sometimes better to miss the chance of filtering rather than put yourself in a confrontational situation. Having completed the filtering manoeuvre be courteous and acknowledge other road users that you have passed. If you do it right, the next time the person you overtake is confronted with someone filtering he is much less likely to give them a hard time.

If the traffic is stationary and no gaps are left you could consider stopping alongside the front offside of vehicle two or further back in the hope that the driver will let you in but don't force your way back into the gap when the traffic moves off. You will have to be prepared to wait for someone to let you in but you do not want to be in this position if it means you are on the wrong side of the road especially in the face of oncoming traffic.

By observing the type of vehicle and /or the driver you could stop alongside a vehicle that will be slower to move off for example a bus or HGV. You may think that certain types of driver may give you precedence but try not to stereotype or pre-judge what will happen. If you are in any doubt stop further back or do not filter.

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As with overtaking the golden rule is that you should always have somewhere to go. Try and identify a gap that you can pull into before you filter. You may find that as you are filtering other gaps may appear or your identified gap disappears so be prepared to alter your riding plan accordingly. When you are filtering on a multi-lane road there is nothing wrong with beginning your filter or overtake in one lane and completing it in another adjacent lane. Be careful as you do so to ensure that you are still in the appropriate lane for your intended direction of travel. When filtering, consider the width of your machine relative to the available gap and make sure you give yourself a wider margin if you have a pillion in case you wobble a bit. Tell your pillion what you intend to do so that it does not come as a surprise.

If you can improve your conspicuity by positioning or using dipped beam headlights or riding lights then do so. If you decide initially not to filter leave yourself sufficient gap behind the vehicle in front so you can filter if the situation changes.

THE MAIN POINTS TO NOTE ARE AS FOLLOWS

Only filter past STATIONARY or SLOW MOVING vehicles. Some advanced trainers try to put a maximum speed on filtering, for example 30 mph, but you really have to use your own discretion and I would say that once the traffic starts to move at a speed appropriate to the circumstances at that time then you should slot back into the line of traffic. Sometimes even 10 - 15 mph can be sufficient to get back into the traffic flow. Normally you should only filter to the offside of a line of vehicles, except where overtaking on the left is permitted by the Highway Code. This would mean:

- a) to the offside only of a line of vehicles on a single carriageway
- b) between lanes 1 & 2 on a dual carriageway
- c) between lanes 1 & 2 or between lanes 2 & 3 and to the offside of lane three on a three-lane road.

Do not filter where you would commit an offence - i.e.

- a) along the hard shoulder of a motorway, which is contrary to the advice given above anyway.
- b) contrary to 'Keep Left' signs or 'No overtaking' signs or if it means crossing a solid white line in the centre of the road.

You should already know when you can cross centre white lines as carriageway markings will be broken white lines or hatched areas bordered by broken lines. In the case of filtering past traffic on the approach to a roundabout, a junction or where you have to 'Give Way' or traffic lights do not go to the front of the queue. If you do, it will put yourself in competition with the vehicle alongside you when you set off as you both go for the same space. In the case of temporary traffic lights you may find that you end up past the lights and cannot therefore see when they change. More importantly you may narrow the gap for oncoming vehicles to get safely past. Slot into or wait alongside the gap behind vehicle one or further back if appropriate. You should always be able to stop within the distance you can see to be clear. I would suggest that when filtering the furthest point you can see to be clear is the front of the vehicle that you are currently overtaking. Be prepared to stop at that point and check that it is safe to continue, particularly if the vehicle you are overtaking has stopped in the proximity of a junction. As soon as the traffic begins to move freely again slot back into the line of traffic.

WATCH OUT FOR

Vehicles turning left or right at junctions. Vehicles changing lanes.
Vehicles doing 'U' turns to avoid the traffic delay.
Other motorcyclists behind you who may also be filtering.
Doors opening as drivers or passengers alight.
Drivers pulling in front of you purely to prevent your progress.
Arms and heads emerging from open windows, litter, particularly cigarette ends.
Vehicles emerging, from junctions left and right or vehicles waiting in central reservations waiting to turn.

Be particularly careful at junctions or crossovers where vehicles on your left or right may have stopped to allow vehicles to emerge from junctions or central reservations.

Oncoming, traffic that may not be aware of your presence. If possible try not to be alongside the vehicle that you are overtaking when the oncoming vehicle passes you (commonly known as the "Meat in the Sandwich".) You can relax this rule a little if the oncoming vehicle is aware of your presence, is also travelling at low speeds and there is sufficient safety margin. You should not cause the oncoming vehicle to alter course or speed.

FINALLY

BE COURTEOUS AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE DRIVERS OF VEHICLES THAT YOU ARE OVERTAKING, PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT GIVE YOU PRECEDENCE OR EASE YOUR PASSAGE.

IF IN DOUBT - DO NOT FILTER

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