

Yes, you looked... but did you see?

In other words, we look for objects coming towards us but as our attention is drawn towards looking for cars and vans, we do not see the rider. Our lack of attention makes us functionally blind as far as they are concerned.

And this is not just a problem of careless drivers who do not follow the rules of the road: it can also be that drivers just do not realise how easy it is to fail to spot powered two wheelers, particularly when checking it is okay to pull out at junctions.

So, take your time before pulling into traffic or manoeuvring. Don't just rely on a hurried glance to see if the road is clear: it's better to slow down and **take another look** to make sure there is not a rider approaching.

Let's double-check the road for riders: don't be left saying "I looked... but I just didn't see him"

I just didn't see them

If a driver looks, can they really fail to spot a rider? Yes, and research has highlighted a number of reasons why:

Obscuration

If you are sitting at a junction waiting for a gap in the traffic, ask yourself if your field of vision is clear. A bike projects a very narrow image as it approaches and if you only take a quick glance to see if it's safe to pull out, it can easily be masked from your view by street furniture at a crucial time. Are there lampposts, pedestrian crossing controls or A-boards outside shops that obscure the view? Are the A-frames in your car creating a blind spot? (This framework supports the roof and can sometimes obstruct your view). Double-check the road: is there a rider approaching?

Do my eyes deceive me...?

When you look at a car coming towards you, it is a large, wide block of moving colour. Your eyes become accustomed to spotting objects of this size and shape. That's a problem for motorcyclists

and PTW riders as their bikes offer a narrower silhouette that can be hard to pick out against a colourful and busy backdrop. It's so easy to look and not spot the rider. Bikes can also be hard to pick out if they are overtaking a larger vehicle, particularly a van or a lorry.

Hiding in plain sight

If a small object moves towards you in a straight line, it's possible for your eye and brain to fail to perceive any movement. The image of the motorbike becomes larger on your retina as it approaches but is not big enough to attract your attention. Literally, you look at the approaching object but don't see it. It's a phenomenon called **motion camouflage**. It breaks down as the object gets closer and the image size become larger but by then you may have already decided the way is clear and pulled out in front of an oncoming rider.

I've got plenty of time

Even if you spot the bike, you could still be about to cause a crash. Our judgement of the speed of objects approaching us is related to their size - this is known as size arrival effect. Car drivers often under-estimate the speed of a motorbike because of its small stature - and over-estimate the time it will take for it to reach us. So even if you spot a rider, be cautious when pulling out: and be confident you you've got time to complete your manoeuvre safely?

Look again for bikers

Keeping everyone safe on the road

To avoid being involved in a collision...

Understand the problem. Your eyes can deceive you. A quick glance is not enough. Double-check the road carefully.

With obscuration, blind spots and motion camouflage all playing a part in making riders hard to spot, drivers need to take extra care at junctions. A quick run through 'look right, look left and look right again' may not give your eyes enough time to pick up all the information they need before you enter the traffic stream. Take a

longer look: give your brain time to study the traffic and get used to its speed. Analyse the road: is there a bike emerging from a blind spot or slipping between larger vehicles?

Look for potential trouble spots. Modern streets are full of items that can block your line of sight - from lampposts and street signs to A-boards outside shops. Be aware that a bike could be obscured from view for a split second. The longer you take to check the road, the less likely it will be that you will miss anything.

Trouble in the spotlight: In poor visibility, or at night, with headlights on, a motorbike riding directly ahead of a car or van can be virtually invisible to other road users when looked at from straight on. Take extra care at night.

Distractions lead to mistakes. Advertising billboards, street signs and in-car distractions can all grab your attention and lead to you missing the slim silhouette of a motorbike. Even staring at a colourful street display for a fraction of a second can make it harder to adjust your focus to pick up a motorbike coming towards you.

Check the speed. Remember the size-arrival effect. Small objects coming towards you often fool you into thinking you have more time to act than you actually have. Be prepared for the motorbike to get to you quicker than you think, and act accordingly.

Take your time. There's really no rush. The less time you spend looking, the higher your chances of missing the bike.

It's important to care

Research shows that people who ride motorbikes, or those who have loved ones who ride, are involved in fewer car-bike crashes than those who don't ride or know anyone who does.

What does that tell us? Perhaps that people who understand a little about motorbikes are more aware of the problems two-wheeled road users face. Take the time to understand how bikers think and respond when on the road.