

- ▶ Have you ever had a problem whilst filtering?
- ▶ Do you think that you could have anticipated or avoided it?
- ▶ Were you travelling at a speed that you could cope with the unexpected?
- ▶ What does the law say about filtering?

Filtering past very slow moving or stationary traffic is one of the big advantages of riding a motorcycle. It brings with it some obvious hazards but if sensible precautions are taken it should not present a major risk.

This free Hugger Rider Skills sheet is not a substitute for training but it may point you in the right direction to make filtering safer without seriously detracting from the advantage of progress that it provides.

General overtaking issues are covered in a separate overtaking download. For a detailed analysis read Motorcycle Roadcraft – The police riders handbook published by TSO and available at all good bookshops.



Please note: THIS DOWNLOAD IS NOT AIMED AT LEARNER MOTORCYCLISTS who are discouraged from filtering for a very good reason. It is intended for post-test riders only and for general advice. Learners must follow their instructors advice until they have passed their test and gained some experience when these issues can be explained and expanded on by a qualified post-test instructor.

Disclaimer – The information contained in this download is based on established information laid down in the police Roadcraft manual and is intended as general advice only. Essex Casualty Reduction Board accept no responsibility for any damage or injury howsoever caused by following this advice.



filtering



Essex

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Filtering

One of the big advantages of riding a motorcycle is the ability to make progress when traffic is stationary or moving very slowly (making use of our narrow road space requirements and manoeuvrability advantages). This is generally referred to as 'filtering'.

In order to do this safely, remember:

'Move steadily with the traffic, not as fast as you can.'

A few things to consider

- Aggressive, impatient or thoughtless filtering is very likely to annoy and alienate other road users.
- Some people are unsure whether filtering is legal or not.

Filtering is not illegal as long as you do not cross a solid white line, go the wrong side of a keep left bollard or where overtaking is prohibited by signs, but it has to be done carefully. The Highway Code accepts that motorcyclists can and will filter.

Rule 88 of the Highway Code (2007) under rules for motorcyclists states... 'Additionally, when filtering in slow-moving traffic, take care and keep your speed low.

Remember: Observation-Signal-Manoeuvre'.

Rule 151 advises car drivers in slow moving traffic to 'be aware of cyclists and motorcyclists who may be passing on either side'.

There are pressures within the European Union to ban filtering. Don't add fuel to the fire, filter carefully and safely.



- If you filter on your way to work the chances are you will probably encounter the same people most days. If you filter in a responsible way, drivers are more likely to assist you again. If safety is not compromised, consider acknowledging someone who moves over to allow you through.
- Very few drivers will actively block your way. Most will be unaware that you are there or they may not be looking for you. Don't take it personally!



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If you are considering filtering past some traffic, ask yourself:

“Do I need to filter at all?”

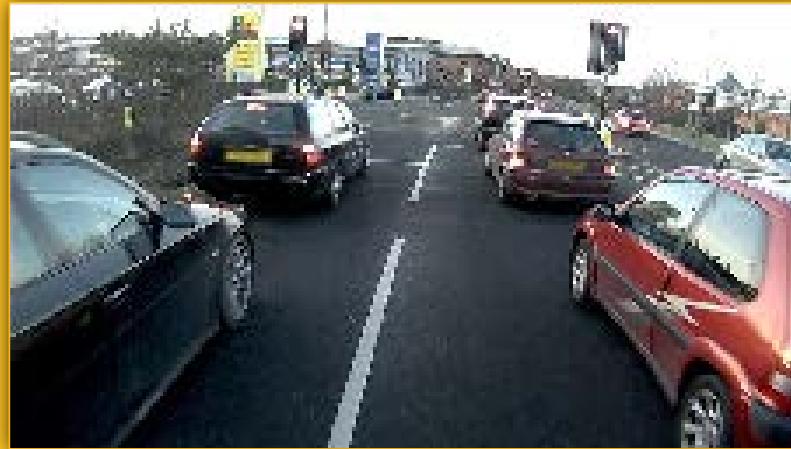
If you are turning left a short distance ahead and there are a small number of vehicles in front of you moving slowly, what will you achieve? What time savings will you make? Will you be able to get back to the nearside to make the left turn? Overtaking in close proximity will always carry an element of risk, no matter how small, so you have to weigh up the pros and cons.

Consider whether your desire to achieve the objective of making progress past vehicles impacts upon your attitude to risk taking.



Where there is no benefit to filtering.

Filtering: the dangers



The following list of potential problems to look out for will be well known to anyone that filters on a regular basis.

You need to consider a variety of hazards when filtering but it is essential to ride with a defensive mindset and actively expect the things listed below to happen.

If you observe and anticipate the problems, expecting something to happen, it will regulate your speed and the manner in which you filter. If your mind is set on progress at all costs, assessment of the hazards will become secondary to your progress and problems are inevitable.

filtering

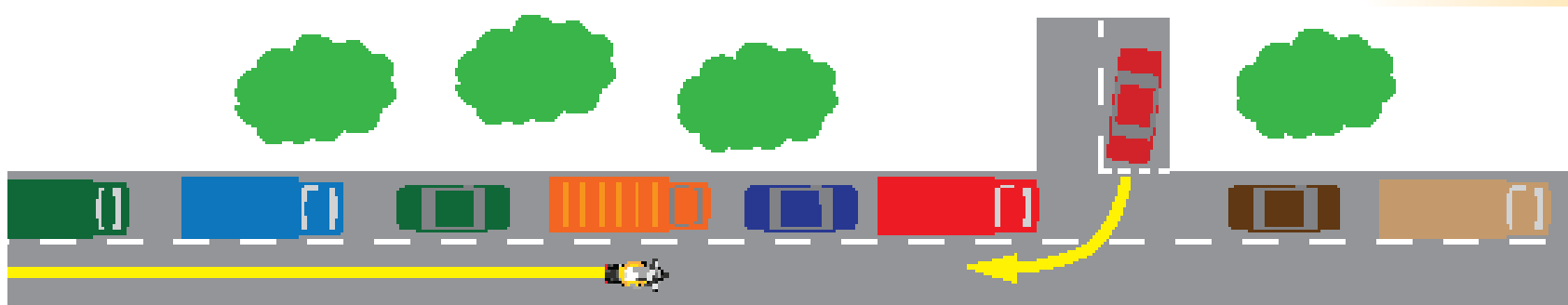


Pedestrians crossing between vehicles

This is a regular problem in urban areas whether you are filtering down the middle of two lines of traffic or down the offside of a single line of vehicles. Pedestrians may not be expecting or looking out for a motorcycle filtering. This is real danger with children that may be hard to spot, or with large vehicles or vans that obscure your view.

Vehicles pulling out of nearside junctions or driveways

This problem is easily solved by following the simple advice 'don't overtake near junctions' but is a regular crash scenario with bikes filtering down the offside of traffic. A vehicle in the queue will often correctly leave a space for a car to pull out of a nearside junction or driveway. The vehicle emerging from the junction may believe that it is all clear from the right and only look left for the danger. In the best case scenario it will have to edge forward to get a view beyond the vehicle line but some drivers will not consider the likelihood of a bike filtering down the offside. You are in trouble if you are not looking for this problem area.

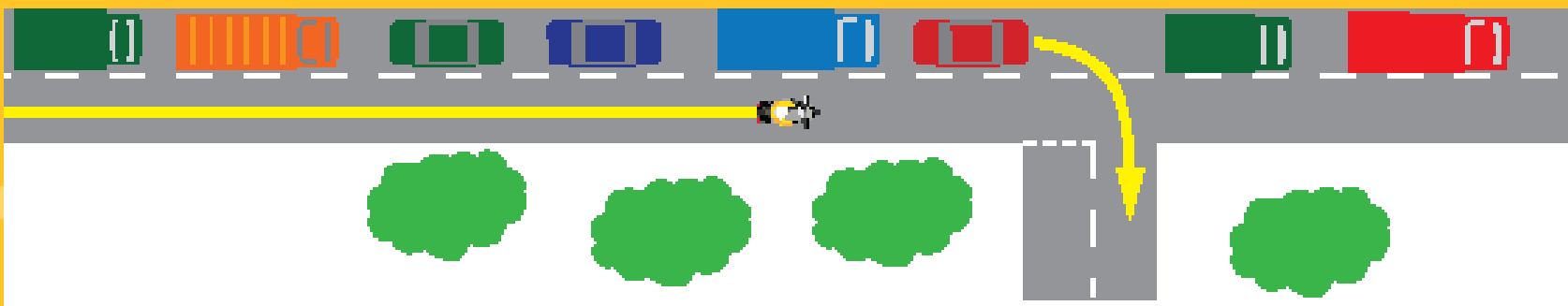


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● Vehicles turning right

Again, don't overtake at junctions! It may sound rather obvious but it is surprising how many people are killed and seriously injured each year with this manoeuvre. If you are filtering down the offside and there is a junction, or petrol station forecourt beware! The car driver may not indicate, they may become frustrated at being stuck in the traffic and make a snap decision to take an alternative route. They may make rear observations but you could well be in their blind spot. You need to be extremely careful near junctions, commercial entrances, petrol stations and driveways. Look for the clues.



● Vehicles switching lanes

If you are travelling between two lines of stationary or very slow moving traffic, vehicles can change lanes without indicating. They may not be looking out for bikes. Moving vehicles can change lanes very quickly.

Identify whether there is a gap that a vehicle could move into. If there is a gap in the traffic there is always the potential for a vehicle to suddenly change lanes so if you are passing a gap, in either lane, you must be particularly alert to this possibility. Don't expect a signal, most will, some won't.

Clues: There will be clues that the driver is considering changing lanes such as head movement or a drift towards the other lane but you will only pick them up if you are thinking defensively, observing well and not preoccupied by making as much progress as you possibly can.



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● Traffic Islands

Traffic islands normally have keep left arrows or bollards on them. If you have no idea where you are coming back into the traffic line you can easily find yourself stuck at a traffic island relying on the cooperation of other vehicles to allow you back in. You will be prosecuted if you are caught going to the right of the island.



● Oncoming traffic

An obvious danger but if you have no idea where you are going to rejoin the traffic line you could be stranded on the wrong side of the centre line in the face of oncoming vehicles. On a narrow road in particular this could be very uncomfortable or even dangerous. You must know where you are coming in and not rely on the cooperation of drivers to assist you.



'Don't filter in conflict with oncoming traffic'



'The bus was visible in the previous photo. There was always going to be insufficient room to filter and nowhere obvious to come back in'

● Lane marking paint, cats eyes and surface irregularities

Often road surfaces are re-dressed with tar and granite chippings on top of the existing surface and markings and then more thermoplastic marking material laid on top. Over time this continual building up of the surface layer can create a ridge on the centre line which can cause your bike to wander.

Cats eye reflective studs can have a similar effect. As your tyres square-off with use, this effect becomes more pronounced. If the space that you are filtering through is restricted, this could be uncomfortable.



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- **Car Doors Opening**

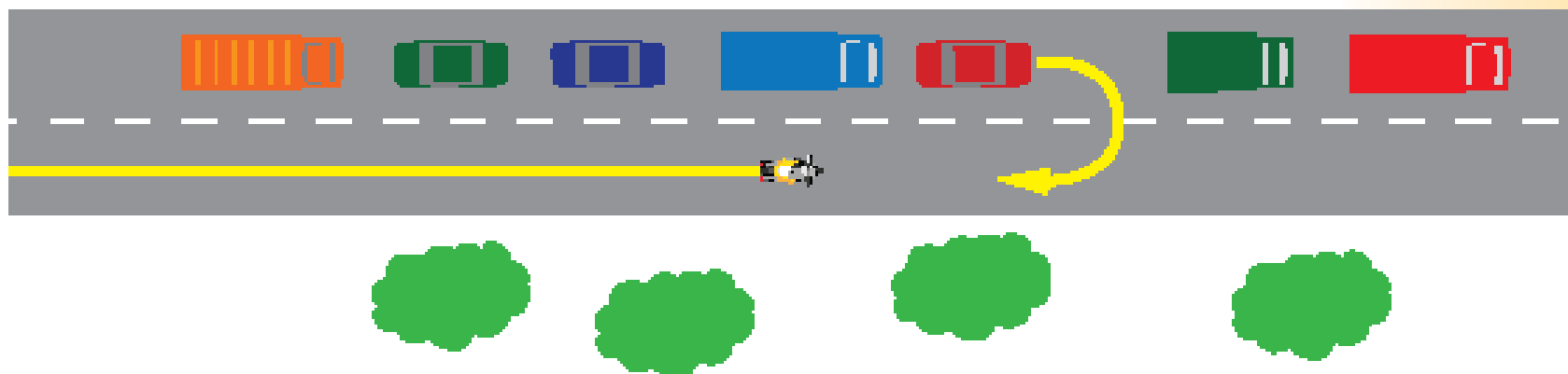
In an urban queue there is always the possibility that a passenger will decide to get out and walk to their destination without looking before opening the door. They may be a non-driver and will not have the advantage of mirrors anyway. They will probably not be expecting a bike to be filtering.

- **Vehicles U turning**

If you are coming down the offside of a line of traffic there is always the possibility of vehicles U turning, so travel at a speed that you can stop and actively assess the situation continuously as you go along the line, don't make it your main objective to get to the front of the queue. Lengthy hold ups at road works, road crashes or busy summer routes have classic U turn potential.

- **Be careful of other bikes filtering**

This could apply to bikes filtering in the opposite direction or someone that is travelling in the same direction as you that is intent on getting past you to filter faster. In the case of the latter, pull over and let them pass, don't be pressured into going faster than you are comfortable with.



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How can we make things safer?

- **Ride carefully with a defensive mindset** – expect people to change lanes, U turn or pull out from the nearside. If you are actively looking for these problems, you are well on the way to dealing with them.
- **Keep your speed low so that you can stop if necessary.** Ideally you should probably avoid filtering at all above around 20mph, just go with the flow. Speed differential varies according to the hazards but should probably be no higher than 15mph to keep everything under control. You must be travelling slowly enough that you can react if the situation changes. Don't force the pace, move steadily with the traffic.
- **Know where you are coming in** – Don't get caught out on the wrong side of the road with oncoming traffic, identify your return gap before you go out and be ready to use it.



Filtering down the middle of two lines of traffic



Filtering past a single line of vehicles

- **Make yourself seen** – If your bike has switched headlights make sure they are on, bright clothing helps even if it's not reflective material.
- **Be ready to use the brakes** – In an area where there are so many potential hazards, use good observation and planning skills but be ready to act if the circumstances demand it.
- **Consider a horn warning** – This is a bit tricky as use of the horn is often perceived as aggressive. The duration of the use of the horn has a great bearing on this, a prolonged blast will probably sound like a rebuke rather than a warning to another road user that you are there.
- **Don't filter between the cars and the kerb** – This is asking for trouble, passengers opening doors, drain covers, debris and getting squeezed against the kerb with no escape route. A daft idea, don't do it!

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Hatched areas



- If the area is bordered by a broken white line you SHOULD NOT enter the area unless it is necessary and you can see that it is safe to do so.
- If the area is marked with chevrons and bordered by a solid white line you MUST NOT enter it except in an emergency.

The second point is straight forward, it is prohibited and you will be prosecuted if you disregard the solid white line bordering the hatched area so don't do it!

The first point though is more interesting as it is not illegal to do so. Motorcyclists would probably argue that it was necessary to enter the hatched area in order to make safe progress past stationary cars, others may disagree.

At this point we could hide behind the official Highway Code advice and say 'You shouldn't do it' or we can be realistic, accept that most motorcyclists will continue to do it anyway and examine how riders can do so safely.

Rule 130 of the Highway Code states...

Areas of white diagonal stripes or chevrons painted on the road. These are to separate traffic lanes or to protect traffic turning right.

Things to consider

We are looking here at urban areas because in rural areas it is unlikely that it could be described as filtering, unless it is a stationary queue of traffic, it will just be overtaking and bring with it a whole host of discussion points, hazards and problems. The separation lane has been put there for a reason, because of a history of incidents.

In some locations you will find coloured tarmac onto which the hatched lines have been laid. The council have made a big statement by using coloured tarmac to highlight the area as high risk, probably without the statutory right to impose solid white lines because visibility is not sufficiently restricted. Nevertheless, the material is expensive to put down and not done lightly. The decision will have been made because of crash history so it would be prudent to leave these areas alone.

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Some hazards to consider if filtering within hatched areas in the urban environment

The decision to filter through the hatched areas is yours and yours alone. If you have a collision whilst doing so, the Highway Code advice could be cited, seeking to question whether it was necessary (as outlined in rule 130) to filter at that point.

“It’s your call!”

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If you have nowhere in mind to return to the traffic line you may find some drivers reluctant to assist you, incorrectly believing it is illegal to enter the cross hatched area.

Identify your return gap.

Ridges in the road caused by a build up of thermoplastic road paint.

Repeated application of road paint can cause ridges that can make the bike wander particularly when the tyres become worn.

Keep out of the hatched areas protecting turning lanes.

It is quite possible that a vehicle will unexpectedly enter the turning lane, be patient, you will soon be on your way again.

Contamination and debris.

Items such as glass, flint, dust, nails, screws etc will accumulate in the hatched area and will not be moved by the car tyres.

Legal outcomes related to filtering

There are numerous case law decisions that are quoted in settling claims resulting from filtering type motorcycle crashes.



This is a very small sample of some of the more commonly quoted cases.

Powell v Moody (1966)

This is probably the most frequently quoted case in settlement of filtering crashes where a vehicle has pulled out of a nearside junction as the motorcycle is filtering down the offside of the traffic queue.

In this famous, if very old case, the lorry that the bike was overtaking had waved the car out. The judge concluded that the motorcyclist must be incredibly careful overtaking when he or she cannot see all that is in front of them. The case was settled 80% in favour of the car driver.

Later cases with similar circumstances found the rider to be between 33% & 66% at fault.

Davis v Schrogin (2006)

This case involved a motorcycle overtaking a stationary queue of traffic when a car in the queue performed a U-turn. A collision occurred resulting in serious injury to the rider. The driver was held to be 100% to blame.

Pell v Moseley (2003)

Motorcycle overtaking queue of traffic. A motor cycle event was taking place in a field on the right and a car in the queue decided at the last minute to indicate and turn right into the field from the queue. Contributory negligence was attributed to the rider who knew that the event was taking place and should have anticipated that a vehicle might turn into the gateway.

Split liability 50/50.

Hillman v Tompkins (1995)

The motorcycle was overtaking a slow moving line of vehicles with temporary traffic lights ahead. A car within the line reached an offside junction and, having failed to see the motorcyclist approaching from the rear, indicated the intention to turn right and proceeded to do so. A collision occurred. The judgement was that the car driver should anticipate such actions by motorcyclists but equally the motorcyclist was overtaking on the approach to a junction.

Split liability 50/50.

These examples are not included to provide any form of legal guidelines but to illustrate that each case is different, that Judges accept the motorcycles will filter but also that motorcyclists must do so with great care.

Being legally or morally in the right will be cool comfort from your hospital bed and financial compensation is unlikely to compensate you for life changing injuries or permanent pain. Easy does it!

Remember:

'Move steadily with the traffic, not as fast as possible!'

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Summary

Filtering does not need to carry significant risk. Correctly observed, planned and executed, the risks should be very low. Make your progress safely and smoothly.

We would recommend you read 'Motorcycle Roadcraft' for more information on rider skills and how to apply the police 'system of motorcycle control' to dealing with all hazards.

Why not get some expert skills development to expand on the points covered?

To improve your rider skills and get more fun out of your riding, why not take the three part 'Hugger' challenge which comprises: Bikesafe with Essex Police or Firebike 'Better Biking Day' with Essex Fire and Rescue, a day with one of our Advanced Rider Trainers and your riding at an Advanced off road skills day

Details are available on www.drivingcasualtiesdown.org or you are welcome to email us on road.safety@essex.gov.uk.



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