

ATV Riding and Common Sense

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Dirt bike / ATV riding isn't very difficult. The first requirement is some good ole' common sense:

Don't ride terrain beyond your ability. If you come upon a trail riding area or situation where you're truly unsure of how to handle your dirt bike / ATV or what you would do in a worst case scenario, stop one moment. Take a minute and consider: Is your ability up to it? What will happen if you suddenly have to bail? Are you by yourself? How far away is any help? Go ahead only after you're satisfied that you can deal with the consequences of your actions. Learning how to recover after a technical error, or knowing when to bail, is a delicate thing.

For young or inexperienced riders, it's best to ride with seasoned riders who have already experienced such extreme conditions and can share their expertise if needed. Another requirement is a respect for the environment. The simple truth is that without a healthy world environment you would soon have nothing to eat, and no oxygen either. Consider it 'virtuous self-interest'. Combine these principles with a few easy-to-learn riding techniques, and you've got the makings of a perfect adventure.



Where to Ride:

Regional websites provide information on specific states, and where different trails for dirt bikes and MX riding can be found. Do a search by state, county, and even national forest, to get specific information on your area from search engines like Google and Yahoo for tips on where to ride.

Crossing Obstacles:

Often you'll have more success climbing over obstacles by approaching them straight on. This holds true for stair step hill climbing, for instance. Don't give all-out throttle to your dirt bike / ATV, or you may end up doing an out-of-control wheelie. When your front wheel(s) passes over an obstacle, keep the momentum going so your rear tire(s) will make it also. Make sure you're aware of what your vehicle's ground clearance is, as well as your own capabilities.

Don't Traverse a Hill:

Always climb straight up or straight down a hill. Never try to climb at an angle. And do not try to traverse a hill. Depending on the steepness of the slope, sliding sideways can cause a dirt bike or an ATV to start rolling.

Don't Spin Your Tires:

Don't spin your tires in mud, sand, or soft soils. If you sense that your tires are just spinning and you're no longer making forward progress, stop. Spinning your tires will only dig you down deeper, and if you get buried down to the frame, it will be much harder to free your dirt bike / ATV. If you sense you are just beginning to lose traction, turn your front wheel(s) from side to side; this will sometimes give you a better bite. Some situations are simple to get into but can become a test of nerves, stamina and vocabulary. The best way to get free is to think your problem through, planning the steps you need to take. Planning ahead will save wear on yourself and your vehicle.



Stream Crossing:

Cross either at a 90 degree angle to the direction of the stream, or head slightly upstream.

Steep Trails:

Never attempt to turn around on a steep narrow trail. If the terrain is unstable and your vehicle gets sideways, there's a possibility it could start rolling. If you fail to climb the hill, grab your brakes very hard immediately. This is one of the most dangerous situations you can get yourself into, so if at all possible check steep climbs very closely beforehand by getting off your machine and walking ahead.



Don't Follow Closely:

When riding difficult terrain, don't follow the vehicle in front of you too closely. If the terrain is challenging, the dirt bike / ATV in front of you may need to stop and back up. Sometimes the vehicle in front of you may even slide backward.

Know What's Ahead:

If at all possible know what to expect from the trail you're riding on, and how difficult it is prior to your getting there. If you're not sure of the trail conditions, be prepared for the worst: tow ropes, winches, come-alongs, etc.

When coming up to someone on horseback, pull off to the side, stop your engine, and take off your helmet. A horse doesn't recognize you as a human when wearing a helmet; as a result the horse may be frightened by this weird 'animal'. Always offer assistance to somebody in need of it. And always be prepared for medical emergencies with a good First Aid Kit, and Ace bandage for wrapping compound fractures. Restrict your drinking of alcoholic beverages until after the riding is over. Wash your dirt bike / ATV after every ride. As you dry it off inspect all the fasteners and levers, ride the bike for a minute to dry out the brake pads. Apply WD40 to all the pivots, levers and exhaust pipe to prevent rust and premature wear. Check your tire pressures for every ride; ATV tires are inherently leaky. Run higher tire pressures for rocky conditions or for high-speed riding. Eat lunch or dinner before working on your dirt bike / ATV; concentration and patience diminish as hunger increases.