How to How to Start Riding an ATV: A Complete Beginner's Gui

Cars & Other Vehicles · about 16 minutes · 2026-11-09

From your first helmet fit to your first slow loop — 25 illustrated steps covering the rules, the gear, the pre-ride check, the basic controls, and a safe first hour on dirt.

Things you will need

- An ATV sized for the rider, with its owner's manual
- DOT- or Snell-certified full-face helmet
- Shatter-resistant goggles or a face shield
- Full-finger riding gloves
- Long-sleeved shirt or jacket and long trousers
- Sturdy over-the-ankle boots with tucked laces
- Low-pressure tire gauge reading roughly 0–15 psi
- Small pump or portable compressor
- T-CLOC pre-ride checklist, printed or saved offline
- Fresh fuel and the engine oil specified by the manual
- Basic tool kit, spare spark plug and a small torch
- Tow strap or recovery rope
- Compact first-aid kit
- Water, a snack and a fully charged phone
- Trail map plus any required registration or OHV permit
- A buddy, and a written plan left with someone at home

Choose the Machine, the Place, and the Training

1. **Pick an ATV That Fits Your Age, Size, and Experience**
   Before anyone starts the engine, match the machine to the rider.
2. **Read the Owner's Manual Before Touching the Ignition**
   Find the manual for your exact model — download it from the manufacturer if the paper copy is missing — and read the sections on controls, tire pressure, break-in, load limits and the pre-ride checklist.
3. **Check the Rules for the Exact Place You Plan to Ride**
   Permission and legality come before skill.
4. **Book a Hands-On RiderCourse Before Your First Real Ride**
   Reading is not the same as balancing a 250-kilogram machine.
5. **Write Down the Non-Negotiable Rules**
   Make a short list you will actually follow when nobody is watching: no paved roads except a lawful, brief crossing; no passengers on a single-rider ATV; no alcohol, drugs or sedating medication; no riding after dark as a beginner; no stunts, wheelies or jumps; and no solo trips in remote country.

Gear Up and Run a Pre-Ride Inspection

6. **Fit a Certified Helmet Properly, Every Single Ride**
   Use a full-face helmet certified to DOT or Snell standards and sized to your head, not borrowed from

whoever is nearby.

7. **Dress for a Fall Rather Than for the Temperature**
   Even at five miles per hour, a slide off a footrest can put a hand, ankle or forearm on gravel.
8. **Run the Five-Minute T-CLOC Inspection**
   Before each ride, work through T-CLOC: Tires and wheels, Controls and cables, Lights and electrics, Oil and fuel, and Chain/driveshaft and chassis.
9. **Check Tire Pressure With a Low-Pressure Gauge**
   ATV tires run at a fraction of car pressure — ASI notes a typical range of 2 to 10 psi — so an automotive gauge is too coarse to be useful.
10. **Verify the Throttle, Brakes and Stop Switch While Stationary**
    With the engine still off, squeeze each brake lever and pedal and feel for firm, consistent resistance; roll the machine a few centimetres by hand to confirm the brakes actually bite.

Learn the Controls on Flat, Open Ground

11. **Choose a Flat, Empty Practice Area With Long Run-Outs**
    Your first classroom should be a level, open patch of grass or hard-packed dirt with no trees, fences, ditches, rocks, other vehicles or people for at least 30 metres in every direction.
12. **Mount From the Left and Settle Into an Active Posture**
    Approach from the left side, set the parking brake, swing one leg over and sit centred on the seat with both feet firmly on the footrests.
13. **Start the Engine With a Repeatable Sequence**
    Use the same order every time so nothing gets skipped: hold the brake or set the parking brake, turn the fuel valve and ignition on, confirm neutral, start the engine, then look all around before releasing the brake.
14. **Roll On the Throttle as if an Egg Were Under Your Thumb**
    The classic beginner drill is to imagine a raw egg between your thumb and the throttle lever: squeeze gently enough that it would not break.
15. **Practise Straight-Line Stops at Walking Speed**
    Put a cone, a stick or a light-coloured stone on the ground as a target.
16. **Shift Your Weight Before You Ask the ATV to Turn**
    Once straight stops are boring, ride a large oval at walking pace.

Ride Your First Slow Loop

17. **Set a Walking-Pace Speed Limit for the Whole First Hour**
    Agree on a ceiling before you move — about five to ten miles per hour — and keep it there for the entire session, even when the machine feels easy.
18. **Look Where You Want to Go, Not at the Obstacle**
    Your machine follows your eyes.
19. **Read the Ground Early and Slow Before Rough Sections**
    Scan two or three machine lengths ahead for ruts, roots, rocks, holes, soft mud and standing water.
20. **Stay Off Side Slopes and Paved Surfaces Altogether**
    Two situations are genuinely dangerous for a beginner and are not skills to improvise.

21. Ride With a Buddy and Leave a Plan Behind

Do not take a first ride alone.

Shut Down, Maintain, and Build Skill Over Time

22. Park, Shut Down, and Let Hot Parts Cool

Finish on level ground, come to a complete stop, set the parking brake, shift to neutral or park, switch off the engine and remove the key so nobody can start it accidentally.

23. Wash Off Mud and Inspect for New Damage

Back at the shed, hose or brush off caked mud — especially around the radiator, suspension arms, brakes and air intake — and let the machine dry.

24. Respect the Break-In Window and Book the First Service

If the ATV is new to you, treat the first hours as a controlled running-in period.

25. Progress in Short Sessions and Keep a Skill Log

Plan the next two or three outings rather than one ambitious day.

Sources

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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/How-to-Start-Riding-an-ATV. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com/corre