

CALIFORNIA MOTORCYCLE LAST-MINUTE CRAM

High-yield rules, numbers, signs, and riding techniques for a final review before the California motorcycle knowledge test.

1 • Numbers Worth Locking In

80% — Passing score

California DMV currently states that the motorcycle knowledge test requires an 80% passing score.

2 seconds — Minimum following distance

Use at least a two-second cushion behind the vehicle ahead; increase it when conditions demand more stopping room.

10–15 seconds — Scan ahead

Look at least 10 to 15 seconds down your path of travel so hazards do not become last-second surprises.

100 feet / 5 seconds

Signal during the last 100 feet before a turn. At highway speeds, signal at least five seconds before changing lanes.

$\frac{3}{4}$ — Front-brake stopping power

The front brake can provide about three-quarters of total stopping power. For normal and quick stops, use both brakes.

45° — Parallel tracks/seams

If tracks, ruts, or pavement seams run parallel to you, move away enough to cross them at an angle of at least 45 degrees.

0.08% BAC — Age 21+

California's per-se illegal BAC threshold is 0.08% for drivers age 21 or older. Impairment can occur below that.

0.01% BAC — Under 21

California's under-21 alcohol rule is much stricter: driving with a BAC of 0.01% or higher is illegal.

2 • Motorcycle-Specific Must-Knows

- **Helmet:** Every rider and passenger must wear a U.S. DOT-compliant motorcycle safety helmet. Look for manufacturer-applied DOT lettering.
- **Turns:** Remember **Slow** → **Look** → **Press** → **Roll**. Slow before the turn; look through it; press the handlegrip in the direction of the turn; roll on the throttle smoothly.
- **Quick stop:** Apply both brakes at the same time. Squeeze the front brake firmly and progressively—do not grab it. If possible in a curve, straighten the motorcycle before maximum braking.
- **Swerve vs. brake:** Separate the actions. Brake before or after a swerve, not while swerving.
- **Lane position:** There is no single “best” lane position. Choose the position that maximizes visibility, space cushion, surface quality, and escape options.
- **Lane splitting:** California recognizes lane splitting—riding between rows of stopped or moving vehicles—but it requires heightened awareness and space management.

3 • California Colors & Signs

RED CURB

No stopping, standing, or parking (except a bus at a red zone specifically marked for buses).

WHITE CURB

Stop only long enough to pick up or drop off passengers.

GREEN CURB

Limited-time parking. Check the sign or curb for the time limit.

YELLOW CURB

Load/unload passengers or freight; obey the posted time. Noncommercial drivers usually must stay with the vehicle.

BLUE CURB

Parking reserved for a disabled person or a driver transporting a disabled person with the proper placard/plate.

RED reflectors facing you

A strong wrong-way clue at night. DO NOT ENTER / WRONG WAY signs also indicate you are traveling against traffic.

- **Yellow/black circular or X-shaped sign:** railroad crossing ahead—look, listen, slow, and prepare to stop.
- **5-sided sign:** school area.
- **Diamond-shaped sign:** warning about road conditions or hazards.
- **White rectangular sign:** regulatory rule you must obey.
- **Red circle + slash:** the pictured action is prohibited.

4 • Hazards & Situations

- **Railroad/trolley tracks:** Usually ride straight within your lane across tracks. Do not make a dangerous last-second turn merely to hit them at 90°. For tracks/seams running parallel to you, cross at $\geq 45^\circ$.
- **Slippery surfaces:** Reduce speed before wet curves, avoid sudden inputs, and use both brakes smoothly. The front brake is still effective when applied gradually.
- **Wind blast from large vehicles:** Keep room for error and maintain a stable lane position rather than being pushed toward the lane edge.
- **Visibility:** Use lane position, signals and brake light deliberately. Flashing the brake light before an unexpected slowdown can help following drivers notice you.

5 • 60-Second Final Review

- ✓ 80% passing score.
- ✓ 2-second minimum following cushion; increase when conditions require it.
- ✓ Scan 10–15 seconds ahead.
- ✓ Signal last 100 feet before a turn; at highway speed, signal ≥ 5 seconds before a lane change.
- ✓ Front brake $\approx \frac{3}{4}$ of stopping power; use both brakes.
- ✓ Parallel tracks/seams: cross at $\geq 45^\circ$.
- ✓ Slow → Look → Press → Roll for turns.
- ✓ Brake and swerve separately.
- ✓ DOT-compliant helmet required for rider and passenger.
- ✓ Curbs: Red = no stop; White = passenger pickup/drop-off; Green = time limit; Yellow = loading; Blue = disabled parking.

Important

This is a last-minute review aid, not a replacement for the current California Motorcycle Handbook or California Driver's Handbook. Rules and testing policies can change. Readyward is independent and is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or connected to the California DMV or CHP. No passing score is guaranteed.