

Bike prep 101: here are some basic tips for making your first ride more enjoyable:

- You need **knobby tires** for all Midwest dual sport rides, and good ones, plain and simple. The stock dual sport tires (if they're mostly street) that came with your dual sport bike will be useless in wet weather off road. Soft or intermediate compound is up to you, but they need to be knobbies!
- **Sound:** Bike must be 96dB or lower in WI dual sport rides and 94dB or lower in MI dual sport rides and it will be checked. There are some great aftermarket pipes to buy if yours is old, beyond a good repacking, and too loud. They sacrifice no power and make your bike sound great. The FMF "Q", for example, is a great pipe with no loss of power and may even be lighter than your stock pipe! Keep our riding areas open. Nothing's more obnoxious than a loud pipe. Don't be "that guy".
- **Headlight/taillight and street-legal stuff:** That headlight and taillight/ brakelight needs to be working. No flashlights or any crazy set-ups are allowed for these rides. There are some great aftermarket dual sport conversions out there from the likes of Baja Designs and Enduro Engineering. A working horn and mirror is required by WI state law, A working high and low beam are also required by state law and signal lights are not mandatory but they are nice to have.
- **Gas tank:** Check the ride information as some of the rides can have 65 miles between gas stops. Make sure your bike can go that far. If not, you may have to carry some or use your buddy's. If you have a 2-stroke you will definitely need to pack some 2-stroke oil.
- **GPS:** While not absolutely necessary for most rides, they're definitely helpful. Become familiar with it before the ride. In some areas of the country you cannot ride without one. If you want to use the tracks provided by some DS promoters you will need one with mapping capabilities.
- **Roll chart holder:** Pretty much a "must-have" unless you are staying with a group that has them or you are using only GPS tracks. Good Idea to have one in case you get separated from your group, or you trash/lose your GPS.
- **"Bark busters" or handguards:** While not mandatory, these could save your knuckles, hands, levers and bars!
- **Basic maintenance:** Your bike will be under some heavy stress when riding off road. Make sure the chain, sprockets are good, bearings are good, bolts are snug (and threadlocked), suspension is set and air filter is clean. Make sure oil and filters are fresh. Old oil wreaks havoc on the engine. When in doubt, change it. Bring along an extra air filter and put it on after a full days ride. Your bike will breathe better! Bring a few extra parts along on the trail including a new front inner tube (can be used in the rear tire in a pinch) and some tire changing tools. The parts we see fail most on the trails are: tubes, front/rear bearings, chains, fuses, spark plugs, levers/cables and the occasional bolts vibrate off. Not necessarily in order of frequency here. Visit our sponsors for parts; they'll get you hooked up! That said, we see more riders wear out before their bikes do! So that's a good segue into.....

Rider Prep 101; here are some basic tips for helping you to enjoy your ride- safely. You have probably read the dirt bike riding tips in the first part of this segment, right? So now lets' take a look at how *you* should be set up:

- Make sure you have a map of the area. Carry your cell phone in a plastic Ziploc. While cell phone coverage is not always the best in the woods it's better and better all the time in the Midwest, and it's pretty rare that you cannot get a signal now.
- **Gear:** Get some good, breathable riding gear. Yes, it's expensive, but you will like your ride more, and the material is so good now you'll get a few years out of it. Just a quick plug: **Moose** and **Klim** make some great riding gear!

Boots: without question, get quality and do not skimp here.

Helmet: Duh. Don't even think about riding without one of these. As a matter of fact, dual sport organizers will not let you participate without one. You will probably fall, and it will save your life.

Goggles: Yep. Without eye protection you might as well be sitting at the campfire. Some ride with just their glasses on, I wouldn't advise doing this. The entire area of the eye needs to be protected. You can get the "quick strap" so in slow areas you can quickly (and safely) remove your goggles if they fog. These are really helpful on the tight or slow trails. If you wear glasses there are plenty of "OTG" goggles available.

Chest protector: Definitely helps. While you don't encounter a ton of roost in dual sport events since everyone is pretty spread out, your buddies will roost you and if you fall it certainly makes rolling around on rocks and stumps less painful.

Gloves: always, even bring a spare pair in your pack.

Knee/elbow protection: Two of the most exposed areas in a crash, also useful when passing those "moving" trees. You decide.

Riding shorts: Chaffing sucks and your boys will be happier. That's all I have to say about that.

Kidney belt: Rider preference, but it is nice to keep your insides from moving around. Your spleen just does not want to visit your liver and vice versa. Also offers nice lower back support and after a long day of riding your back will thank you.

Backpack w/ tools mentioned previously and hydration system: Bring the tools necessary for emergency repairs. Also, if Jethro in your group is carrying the vice grips, sledge hammer and duct tape, (for example only, kidding about the sledge hammer), no need for you to have them, right? Maybe you can carry something else of importance, safety wire, 8 and 10mm wrenches, etc.

Food: While there will often be food available on a ride, you are expending a great deal of energy. Pack some carbs along power bars; things like that to keep your energy high. Bonking (low blood sugar-extreme case) or even close to bonking with low energy sucks and if your body does this your chances of getting hurt go up quite a bit.

First aid: bring along some basic first aid in a small kit to help with any minor issues on the trail for you or your group: Bandages, Neosporin/antiseptic, ibuprofen, etc.

So, this is a lot of money invested here, right? It is, and while it's nice to have- *you do not need it all at once*. Each riding season get one or two things new. In the meantime find out what others are plugging/wearing/using/breaking/shredding and it may help you with some informed decisions. Most of the gear and parts last a long time depending on how much you ride and, well, what you ride into.

Ok. So now that you're dressed like stormtrooper, what's next? Should you get 50 feet of bubble wrap for added protection? Not necessary but it would be fun to watch. Really though, get used to what works and what doesn't, what feels comfortable and what doesn't by trying things out on shorter rides with less time commitment. Lastly and important enough, if you get winded walking out to your mailbox you might want to reevaluate your decision to ride a 300 pound piece of machinery over rocks, logs and through the woods. You will get tired, so prepare yourself physically for what will take place.

Don't worry, in many of the Dual Sport rides in the Midwest there are easier ways around a tough area. In most rides you can opt out of the very technical stuff and ride the two-tracks and gravel roads until you feel more comfortable with the tougher sections.

Some basic etiquette

If you are slower than the rest in your group it may be best to hang last or second last. They'll wait for you at the next trail crossing or main intersection. Well, we hope they will! If the trail is wide enough let others pass you if you feel comfortable doing so. However, if it's unsafe, wait until you get to an area where there is room.

When approaching bike/ATV traffic head on stay to the right. Most ATV'ers will put up their hand to show how many is behind them in their party. A closed fist does not mean, "power to the people", it means he's the last one. You should indicate also how many is left in your party behind you.

When approaching hikers or horses, slow way down and even come to a stop. Turn off your bike, take off your helmet and say hello. With horses, let the rider tell you what is the best way to overtake them. Most of the time just riding slow and quiet is all that is required.

When approaching parked cars ride slow; there may be animals or children around. Often, hunters, sightseers, etc, will wave you past. That's fine but do it slow with no roost. Don't be "that guy". People will remember the one jackass and it will take more than 150 "good" riders to make up for it.

Next, (assuming you've practiced riding, and heck even if you didn't, you can do this, right?!) you're ready for your dual sport ride. What do you need to do?

- If possible, arrive early to get a lay of the land, learn about last minute roll chart/route/track changes and have time to chat with friends. That's what it's all about isn't it?
- Go over the bike once more make sure it's all set.
- Eat a big breakfast
- Ride!
- Eat lots of small high carb/protein snacks, hydrate and take short, frequent breaks

Hope this helps, there's a lot more but it's just details. You have the info you need now get out and ride! See you on the trail!