



ATV Best Practices

Training

- This course is not a substitute for a certified training course! Take an ATV training course from a professional or a certified trainer.
- Practice under safe conditions: on normal terrain, away from other vehicles and people, and under supervision.

Personal protective equipment

- Protect your head with eye wear and a DOT-approved helmet.
- Protect your upper body with a long sleeve shirt and gloves.
- Protect your lower body with long pants and boots.

Pre-ride inspection

- Check tires for damage, loose bolts, and proper inflation.
- Check throttle and brake cables.
- Check fuel and engine oil levels.
- Check tool kit and first aid kit for necessary supplies and equipment.
- Check maintenance log for possible issues.

Fitting the ATV to the rider

When seated in normal operating position:

- Your fingers must extend beyond the brake lever to easily operate throttle and brakes.
- Your knees must be bent at least 45 degrees and sit level with your hips and your thighs parallel to footrests.
- With hands on the handlebars, your arms should be bent while you are sitting upright.
- You must be able to turn handlebars from lock to lock while controlling the throttle and brakes.

Starting the ATV

- Check the owner's manual for proper starting procedures.
- Make sure the ATV is in neutral and the parking brake is set before starting.
- Switch the lights on, and turn the handlebars to check for full throttle function in both directions.
- Check to see that footrests are secure and the suspension is sufficiently springy.

Riding on rough terrain

To avoid flipping the ATV, use "active driving" techniques to maintain your center of gravity while navigating terrain:

- **Uphill:** Lean forward, crouch low; shift the load to front.
- **Downhill:** Slide back in the seat and sit up; shift the load to back.
- **Side hill:** When crossing a hill, lean to the uphill side; shift the load to uphill side.
- **Curves:** Go slow, lean to inside of curve; press foot down on outside footrest.
- **Crossing water:** Scout your route! Even known water can change. Cross at a steady, slow rate. Test and dry your brakes with a few mild stops.

Traveling on roads

ATVs are not designed to travel on paved roads, but when necessary, follow these rules:

- Stay close to right-hand side of road.
- Use a lighted headlight and assume that other drivers don't see you.
- Display a slow-moving vehicle sign.
- Go slow (maximum 20 mph) to maintain tire traction.
- When crossing a road, stop and look both ways; cross at a 90 degree angle, or straight across.

Carrying loads

Remember that cargo shifts the ATV's center of gravity, making it harder to control and increasing braking distance. Follow these cargo guidelines:

- Attach the load to the front and back racks, spreading the load as evenly as possible.
- Secure the load according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Drive slowly.
- **Never** carry a passenger. The longer seat of an ATV is designed for active driving, allowing you to move back or forward to offset shifts in the center of gravity.



ATV Best Practices

Towing and transporting liquids

Towing shifts the ATV's center of gravity, and handling, turning, and braking become much more challenging.

- When towing, follow manufacturer's instructions for attaching trailer and limiting load size.
- Never use cables or ropes attached to the ATV's carrying racks for towing.
- Remember, it's safer to tow liquids than to carry them.
- Use baffled containers when transporting liquids to reduce sloshing/weight shifts.

Backing up and parking

- Always look behind you in both directions, even if your ATV has mirrors. Make sure that no one is about to enter your path of travel.
- Back up slowly and continue to check the path behind you until you stop.
- Use the parking brake whenever you park the ATV.
- Park on level ground whenever possible.
- If you are on a slope, park across the slope.
- If you are facing downhill, put the ATV in reverse and apply the parking brake.
- If you are facing uphill, chock the tires and apply the parking brake.

Loading and transporting the ATV

- Use a trailer whenever possible, instead of hauling the ATV in a pick-up truck.
- Use only experienced ATV riders to load and unload ATVs.
- Use a permanent surface (earthen berm or concrete surface) for the loading area.
- When using a ramp, make sure it is high-traction.
- Use a winch instead of driving the ATV up a ramp, especially if it is damaged or carrying a heavy load.

Supplies and emergencies

- Always carry a phone or radio; if you don't have access to one, tell someone where you will be and your estimated return time.
- Always carry water, even if you think you'll only be gone a short while.
- Always carry a first aid kit.

Riding safe

- Remember: One rider, one ATV. Never carry a passenger.
- Keep your feet on the footrests, your knees toward the gas tank, your hands on the handlebars, and your attention in the direction of travel.
- Ride at a speed that is safe for the terrain, the weather conditions, and your experience level.
- Look ahead for slopes, drop-offs, holes, ruts, and obstacles.
- Allow plenty of time for turning and stopping.
- Never pop the clutch: it can cause the ATV to dig in and back-flip.
- If you need to stop fast in an emergency, center your weight and apply both the front and rear brakes.
- Always let others know where you will be working and check in regularly.

Your role as an employee

- Follow your supervisor's rules for ATV use, including safety measures and best practices.
- Caution other employees who drive an ATV unsafely, and ask that they do the same for you.

Your role as a supervisor

- Require training, and supervise your employees during ATV practice.
- Ensure the manufacturer's tool kit and emergency supplies are on each ATV.
- Require that employees wear the appropriate PPE.
- Ensure that ATVs are kept on a service maintenance schedule and are working properly.
- Make sure employees know the ATVs weight limits for towing and hauling.
- Establish best practices for distributing and securing loads.
- Keep employees informed of hazards and road crossings nearby; they should also know areas restricted from ATV use.
- Require safe driving speeds.
- Never allow passengers.