

# Electric Scooters & Electric Motorcycles

A parent guide for helping kids understand what is legal, what is not, and why it matters.

PARENT EDUCATION

SAFETY FIRST

Based on CHP Redi-Ref: Bicycles, E-Bikes, Scooters, eMotos & Motorcycles

# Why this matters to parents

Most problems start before the first ride - at the purchase decision.

**A device can look like a bicycle or scooter online, but legally fall into a different category once you check speed, pedals, seat, power, and where it is used.**

- **Wrong device = wrong place to ride**
- **Licensing or helmet requirements may apply**
- **Some devices are for private property use/ off-highway only**
- **Unsafe use affects pedestrians, drivers, neighbors, and the riders**



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**Parents role: verify the device before buying, set family rules and legal, and teach kids that the roadway is not a playground.**

# Start with the category, not the brand name

The law is based on design and capability - not what the box or website calls it.

## Electric bicycle

**Pedals + motor 750 watts or less; class rules apply**

**Often allowed like bicycle if it remains within definition**

## Motorized scooter

**Handlebars + floorboard; stand-up design; electric motor**

**Class C license required; max 15 mph**

## Moped / motorized bicycle

**2-3 wheels; max 30 mph; pedals or electric-only; automatic transmission**

**M1/M2 endorsement; plate; DOT helmet**

## E-Moto / electric motorcycle

**Straddle seat, handlebars, no factory pedals, off-highway or motorcycle design**

**Not a bicycle; may be off-highway only or require motorcycle rules**

# Parent “RED FLAGS” before buying

These features often move a device out of the casual bike/scooter category.



**No pedals**

Likely not an e-bike if it has a straddle seat and no factory pedals



**Advertised over 20 mph throttle-only**

May be removable if operated unlicensed on a highway



**Looks like a dirt bike or motorcycle**

May be an eMoto or motorcycle, not a bicycle



**Passenger pegs or seat**

Scooters cannot carry passengers



**“For off-road use only”**

Not for streets, sidewalks, or bike lanes



# Motorized scooters: what parents should know

A legal scooter is still not a toy when it is used on public streets.



## Defined by design

- **Two wheels, handlebars, and a floorboard designed to stand on**
- **Not a motor vehicle: no registration or insurance required**
- **Requires a valid driver license or instruction permit**
- **Helmet required for operators under 18**
- **Maximum speed is 15 mph**

**Parent script: “If you ride it like a car, you must follow the rules of the road.”**

# Scooter rules parents can teach in one minute

Simple rules kids can remember before they ride.

## DO

- **Wear a fitted helmet if under 18**
- **Ride same direction as traffic**
- **Use bike lane when required**
- **Keep one hand on handlebars**
- **Use lights/reflectors at night**

## DON'T

- **Ride on sidewalks**
- **Carry passengers**
- **Tow, grab, or attach to cars**
- **Ride over 15 mph**
- **Ride under the influence**

## Electric dirt bikes / E-Motos are not electric bicycles

The biggest parent misunderstanding: "electric" does not automatically mean "e-bike."



### E-Moto indicators

- Straddle seat provided by manufacturer
- Handlebars for steering
- No pedals from the manufacturer
- Designed primarily for off-highway operation
- Powered by an electric motor

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**Parent takeaway: if it looks and performs like a dirt bike, treat it like a dirt bike - not a bicycle.**

# Where can eMotos and pocket bikes be used?

Street, sidewalk, and bike-lane use are the issue.

## **Off-highway electric motorcycle**

**Generally not driven on the highway unless a specific exception applies; must comply with OHV identification and equipment rules.**

## **Pocket bike / miniature motorcycle**

**Private property only; not for sidewalks, roadways, highways, bikeways, trails, or public lands open to OHV use.**

## **Motorcycle / motor-driven cycle**

**Street use requires the right license/endorsement, equipment, plate/registration, and DOT-compliant helmet.**

**Easy message for kids: "If the device is not legal for the place you are riding, do not ride it there."**

## **Mopeds / motorized bicycles: the middle category**

Some electric devices are not scooters and not bicycles.

**When a device can reach about 30 mph and fits the moped/motorized bicycle definition, parents should expect more legal requirements.**

- **Requires M-1 or M-2 endorsement for two-wheel devices**
- **Requires a special license plate**
- **DOT-compliant helmet required**
- **Equipment includes lights, stoplamp, reflectors, brakes, mirror, horn, and muffler**
- **Modified motorized bicycles can create violations**



**Question to ask before buying:  
“Does my child have the license, helmet, plate, and equipment required for this device?”**

# Helmet and license requirements - quick parent view

Use this as a shopping and permission checklist.

Device	Helmet	License / endorsement	Street basics
Motorized scooter	Under 18: bicycle helmet	Class C license or permit	No sidewalk; max 15 mph; no passenger
Moped / motorized bicycle	DOT helmet	M1/M2 endorsement	Plate + equipment required
Off-highway E-Moto	OHV safety gear strongly expected; equipment rules apply	Not a street device unless lawfully registered/qualified	Off-highway/authorized use only
Motorcycle / motor-driven cycle	DOT helmet	M1 for two-wheel motorcycles	Registration, plate, equipment required

# Common unlawful behaviors parents can prevent

The device may be legal, but the ride can still be unlawful.

## Sidewalk riding

Motorized scooters may not be operated on sidewalks except to enter or leave adjacent property.

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## Wrong direction

Bicycles and scooters must operate in the same direction as traffic.

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## Speed

Scooters max at 15 mph; all riders must operate at a safe speed.

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## Passengers

Scooters are single-rider devices. Friends do not ride double.

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## Stop signs/signals

Riders must obey traffic signs and signals.

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## Trespass / property damage

Golf courses, school grounds, private property, and posted areas are not riding areas.

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## What can happen when the device or use is unlawful?

Use consequences as a teaching tool, not a threat.

**Possible outcomes listed in the Redi-Ref include citations, correction issues, vehicle removal/impound authority, storage costs, and safety-course requirements in some cases.**



### Citation

Traffic or equipment violations may be cited.



### Removal / hold

Certain electric devices can be removed and held at least 48 hours.



### Costs

Release may require payment of removal, seizure, and storage fees.



### Safety course

For some violations, proof of an e-bike safety course may be required before release.

# Parent buyer checklist

Ask these questions before the purchase, not after the first stop or crash.

- Does it have fully operative pedals?
- What is the motor wattage and assisted/top speed?
- Can it propel itself over 20 mph by throttle only?
- Is it designed with a floorboard or a straddle seat?
- Is it labeled off-road/off-highway use only?
- Does it require license, plate, or DOT helmet?
- Where exactly will my child be allowed to ride it?
- Can my child explain the rules back to me?

# Build a family riding agreement

A short agreement prevents repeated arguments later.

## Suggested family rules

- **Approved routes only**
- **Helmet every ride**
- **No passengers or towing**
- **No sidewalks unless lawfully entering/leaving property**
- **No riding after dark unless lighting rules are met**
- **Stop signs/signals are not optional**
- **Device comes home if rules are broken**



**Make the rules specific enough that a child knows exactly what “safe riding” means.**

# Words parents can use with kids

Make the safety message firm, simple, and repeatable.

**Before buying**

**“We are not buying it until we know what it legally is.”**

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**Before riding**

**“Show me the helmet, route, lights, and the rule for where you can ride.”**

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**When friends  
pressure them**

**“My parents will take it away if I ride double, ride sidewalks, or ride where I am not allowed.”**

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**When it looks like a  
motorcycle**

**“If it looks like a dirt bike, we treat it like a dirt bike.”**

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# The parent takeaway

**Do not ask only, “Is it electric?”**

**Ask: “What is it legally, where can it be ridden, and what rules apply?”**

**Safer kids. Fewer neighborhood conflicts. Fewer preventable injuries. Smarter purchases.**

## Questions / discussion

Source: CHP Redi-Ref, Bicycles and Electric Bicycles, Motorized Scooters, Mopeds/Motorized Bicycles, Pocket Bikes, Off-Highway Electric Motorcycles, Motorcycles (2026).