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**

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

M_1/M_2 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

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.

Passengers

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

Wrong direction

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

Stop signs/signals

Riders must obey traffic signs and signals.

Speed

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

Trespass / property damage

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

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.

1

Citation

Traffic or equipment violations may be cited.

2

Removal / hold

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

3

Costs

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

4

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.”**
Before riding	**“Show me the helmet, route, lights, and the rule for where you can ride.”**
When friends pressure them	**“My parents will take it away if I ride double, ride sidewalks, or ride where I am not allowed.”**
When it looks like a motorcycle	**“If it looks like a dirt bike, we treat it like a dirt bike.”**

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).