

Headgear: Choosing the Right ATV Helmet

You have already taken the time to choose the right ATV for you or a family member. You did your research, maybe test drove a few to make sure the vehicle had the right "fit" and found one that matched both your budget and your personal sense of style. Your shopping isn't over yet. Along with having the right ATV for either the trails or working out in the field, you're going to need the proper safety gear to go along with it. Gloves, jackets, pants and boots are definitely on the list, but the most important piece of safety gear you will own will be your helmet.

How do you go about finding a helmet that fits properly? How tight is too tight? How loose is too loose? Are all helmets the same? Starting with the last question, not all helmets are the same. You want to get a helmet specifically designed for use on a vehicle like an ATV or a dirt bike. You don't want to get a helmet that someone might use on a regular street motorcycle. Most ATV helmets cover your head completely and have a face guard that extends over the mouth. When you first put the helmet on it might feel tight because of all the padding inside. If you can slip the helmet over your head without it feeling snug, then you know that it's too big. Try shaking your head side to side and going through as many movements as you can to see if the helmet shifts or slides when you move. Also try to decide how heavy the helmet feels. Does it feel cumbersome? Do you think you would be able to wear it for longer than 15 minutes without getting tired of it?

The second thing to look for is how easily the helmet comes off. If you're in an accident or get thrown from your ATV, you don't want your headgear to go flying off in one direction and you in another, which totally defeats the purpose of having a helmet. Now that you've got the helmet on, adjust the chinstrap and cinch it tight under your chin. Grab the helmet from the back and try to take it off by pushing it to the front. Does the helmet slip down over your eyes and come off? Now try moving the helmet side to side. If you can feel your skin shifting with the helmet and the foam padding then you know you have a good, solid fit.

Women have one more thing to consider when they go to look for a helmet. The way a woman wears her hair on the trail will make a big difference in what size helmet she gets. If she has short hair that won't need to be braided or tied up, then there's no problem. If every time she goes riding she French braids her hair or tucks it up under the helmet, then she might need to go with a larger size than she would if she didn't put her hair up. The hair takes up extra space and if you don't account for that your helmet won't be the right size.

Children's helmets are another issue. So many parents are very money minded when it comes to getting clothing and gear for their kids that they might be tempted to get a helmet a size larger for the child to "grow into". Unfortunately you can't cut corners when it comes to buying a helmet. It has to fit snugly with no exceptions. As mentioned before, a helmet that is too large is as dangerous as having no helmet at all.

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