

**Ace Scooters & Motorcycles**

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# Buying a 50cc Scooter

## Comprehensive Buyer's Guide



**Important things to know when looking for a 50cc scooter, including checklist.**

## Contents

Important points to know .....	3
What Licensing do I need to ride a 50cc Scooter? .....	3
50cc Scooters are available from the age of 16.....	3
50cc Scooters can also be ridden on a Car License.....	4
What are the Advantages of a 50cc Scooter? .....	5
50cc Scooters are a great entry point into riding a larger Scooter or a Motorcycle .....	5
50cc Scooters are cheap to buy .....	5
50cc Scooters have low running costs .....	6
50cc Scooters are a lot of fun to ride.....	6
What to look for and what to avoid.....	7
Choose the right brand .....	7
Beware of Bait and Switch Tactics .....	7
Scooter Build Quality .....	8
Long Term Reliability.....	8
Scooter Security .....	8
Servicing Costs .....	8
What's there to know about the 50cc engines? .....	9
Two stroke vs 4-stroke .....	9
The Future of Small Scooters .....	10
Used Scooter Checklist.....	11

## Important points to know

### 50cc scooters are the most popular scooters in WA

Riding a 50cc scooter is not particularly difficult and there are a lot of advantages in them. In this document, we would like to answer a few questions around 50cc scooters we are most faced with from our customers.



### What Licensing do I need to ride a 50cc Scooter?

#### 50cc Scooters are available from the age of 16

With the age of 15 ½ already, a Learners License for a moped can (R-N) can be obtained at a Licensing Centre of the Department of Transport of Western Australia. The purpose of this is to allow taking lessons and get road practice, before doing the practical assessment with the age of 16. The learner needs to be shadowed by an Instructor or somebody who held a full license for at least 2 years, either on a separate scooter/motorcycle or on the pillion seat behind the learner. During this period, a Learner's plate needs to be displayed on the moped.

With the age of 16 the practical assessment can be done and the R-N license can be obtained. From then on, a "P" plate needs to be displayed. During this period, the rider is free to ride by him/herself, but special restrictions apply.

More information including forms & documents can be found [here](#) at the Department of Transport website.

**Note that scooters up to 50cc of capacity are commonly referred to as “mopeds”. While on an R-N license, the vehicle is not to exceed 50cc of capacity and 50km/h of speed.**

### **50cc Scooters can also be ridden on a Car License**

Western Australia is one of the few Australian states that allow riding a 50cc scooter on a car license. This means if you are holding a car license, you automatically qualify to ride a 50cc scooter. While no additional certification is required, we still recommend taking a few lessons with a qualified instructor as being on the road on a small capacity vehicle is vastly different than being in a car.

**Note that while on a car license (class “C”), the moped you are allowed to ride is not supposed to exceed 50cc in capacity and 50km/h of speed.**

## What are the Advantages of a 50cc Scooter?

### **50cc Scooters are a great entry point into riding a larger Scooter or a Motorcycle**

Compared to vehicles with a bigger engine, the 50cc scooter's performance is limited and they are not really suitable for longer distances on a regular basis. But 50cc scooters are great to start with: Many of our customers start with a 50cc and once they realise how practical a scooter is in daily life, they decide it is worthwhile doing the license and getting something bigger.

When you upgrade to a larger scooter later on, the controls will be the same, the handling will feel familiar and you will get used to a larger engine model with ease. Some scooter models also come in different engine sizes while the body is the same, that means you could eventually upgrade to the same model from a 50cc scooter to a 125 or even a 150cc engine. This makes it really easy as there is next to no additional weight to get used to and ergonomics are exactly the same.

Read more about different scooter by size and what they are good for on our website [here](#).

### **50cc Scooters are cheap to buy**

While 50cc scooters are generally cheap to buy, there are huge differences in quality and reliability between different brands. Some of them on the second hand market can also turn out to be a nightmare or be much more expensive in the long run than expected.

Scooters vary hugely in build quality and range from cheap imports around \$1500 up to a full steel body Vespa for above \$5000. As with everything in life, you need to be aware that you get what you pay for in the scooter world. A good brand with a strong dealer network will always guarantee a good quality product and a reliable machine that is backed up by a capable warranty process.

- A cheap brand scooter is not build to last and might cause you a lot of trouble short after purchase. They usually have very limited warranty (1 year) and might be difficult to repair if something breaks as no parts might be available for them anymore. They also have next to no resale value short after purchase.
- Middle of the road scooters or more expensive, but they usually come with a 2 years, some even a 3 years unlimited mileage warranty. They are of a very different build quality and are not unheard of mileage exceeding 30'000kms and above and are still being reliable and strong.

## **50cc Scooters have low running costs**

Indeed a 50cc scooter is one of the lowest cost vehicles you can buy that get you around at reasonable speeds with a propelled engine. Licensing cost amount to around \$120 per year and a tank of petrol that lasts for approximately 200kms sets you back just around \$10. Since they are quite small engines, servicing costs are also very low and if taken care of, there is not really much to them that needs regular replacing.

At time of writing, a basic annual service (or every 5'000kms) sets you back just \$160 while a large service (every 10'000kms approximately) is below \$300.

For an exact service quote of the day contact the team at Ace Scooters either via phone 08 9300 1719 or via email [team@acescooters.com.au](mailto:team@acescooters.com.au).

## **50cc Scooters are a lot of fun to ride**

Indeed, riding a 50cc scooter can be a lot of fun and get you around town easily without the hassle of getting stuck in traffic. Many of our customers starting with a 50cc scooters find it so practical that it becomes their main medium of transport for shorter distances while they save on mileage on their car. Be it going to the beach for a quick swim, a run down to the shops for a quick purchase or hop on it to go to the gym after work, a scooter becomes so handy you can easily understand why people like them so much.

However, while on a moped or any motor vehicle that does certain speeds, we recommend still keeping a few safety rules in place: Beside the mandatory helmet, dress in long pants and wear a rider jacket and a pair of gloves. In the unexpected case of an incident even at low speed it is worthwhile to be protected well. Most scooters feature reasonable underseat storage or you can even add a lockable top box to them, so your protective gear can be locked up at the destination easily and does not need to be carried around.



## What to look for and what to avoid

So you have come to the conclusion you want to buy a 50cc scooter. That's great but with this the fun just starts: There are heaps of options out there and some appear too good to be true. When buying a 50cc scooter there are quite a few things to consider and the team of Ace Scooters has put their knowledge together into this guide so you know what to look for and how to avoid trap falls.

### Choose the right brand

There are lots of options to go for, but not everything that looks good in the showroom is really good once on the road, especially after a while.

- Choose a known, established and reputable brand that has been around for some time and provides an established dealer network. The best warranty does not help you if you can't find a place to bring it to if it needs looking at and even worse no one has ever heard of the brand.
- Also check out what other scooters this manufacturer produces. Some that specialises on 50cc and maybe small 125cc scooters only might not have a business model in place that is sustainable and they might come and go over the years.
- Choose a brand with a reliable engine: It is not unknown for some cheap imported brands that the engine needs to be rebuilt every 10'000kms or even less than that. A good engine will do a multiple of this, a 4-stroke engine even more.
- Protect your investment: Resale value (in a competitive market) for a reputable brand scooter is always better. Cheaper brands are – cheaper – but you might also face a problem when selling it. Just a year old a cheap brand scooter could be worth next to nothing. The best here is checking a valuation of the same or similar model a few years older on [redbook.com.au](http://redbook.com.au) or even look up Gumtree what second hand scooters of that make go for and how many are there on offer for sale (and if you can how long they have been up there for sale (in case no one wants them it would also be telling)).

Here at Ace Scooters we stock quality scooter brands only because we know they are great brands, we know we can fix them because we can get parts and warranty is rarely ever an issue.

### Beware of Bait and Switch Tactics

Many scooter dealers (and motorcycle dealers) have a “cheap” scooter in their range. Their purpose is to draw the customer in, ideally so that they can then be bumped up to the model that the dealer makes most money on, or at least to stop them taking their business to another store. It's known as the “Bait and Switch”. So their value is only as long as they are the cheapest. Once a cheaper model comes out (and you can guarantee there will), then those cheapies are dropped, and the new cheapy is introduced.

Hence the long-term support problem when buying the cheapest available: Who is going to hold parts for a scooter that might not be available for sale in six months? This is why we commonly have to apologise to people who want to book their non-brand scooters in for a service – if we can't get the parts, we can't really service or support them.

## Scooter Build Quality

The other big problem with scooters that are brought in by the container load is that the quality is often debatable. Seriously, you can buy these scooters by the container for less than \$500 per unit, and sometimes a lot less. This isn't a cheap DVD player which if it goes wrong it's just a waste of cash. If one of these things let you down on the road, it's your backside that's on the line. But, aren't these tested to comply with Australian Design Rules (ADRs)? Well yes they are. But ADRs aren't a quality check, they are just to make sure that the vehicles comply with certain rules, such as that the indicators are a certain distance from the headlight, or that the vehicle has two mirrors etc. There is no test of quality, longevity or robustness. And just because you know someone that has got one and has had no problems with it, there is absolutely no guarantee that yours will be the same. The manufacturers are known to change parts at will with cheaper components so what you get might not be the same as your mates anyway! Moreover when they change parts they often leave the same part number – which can be very frustrating when the part you order turns up, but doesn't fit!

## Long Term Reliability

The next problem is reliability. Many of the cheap import vehicles are built for Asian domestic markets where parts are cheap and labour is plentiful and also cheap. If something goes wrong over there, the guy down the road can probably knock something together to fix it for a few dong. Over here you are paying full workshop rates, so a number of small fixes can soon add up. But you want to know that when you come down to your garage in the morning that when you turn the key and press the button that your scooter will start. Again here, a good quality brand with at least 2 years warranty gives you peace of mind and the assurance the vehicle is running when you need it.

## Scooter Security

Security isn't considered often enough in the excitement of getting a new scooter, and again it's another area where cheap scooters are vulnerable compared to the better brands. Check whether you can stick your hand up under the front cover above the mudguard. If you can reach the wiring, then so can a thief. You won't be able to tell that the steering lock is robust or not, but we know how flimsy they often are because we've seen them. And once broken, it'll never work again without a high chance of the ignition mechanism breaking. Locking mechanisms usually are locking up the steering column and are very sturdy built. On a good quality scooter they are almost impossible to break, but this is of course something you can't easily test out when looking at a scooter in the showroom 😊. However, Be wary of poor security that comes as standard: If the manufacturer saved costs in security, other components will be cheap as well.

## Servicing Costs

The ongoing support costs should also be taken into consideration. Many scooters that are cheaper to buy have lower service intervals and service parts are even more expensive. Ask the question how often does the scooter need to be serviced? Is there a running in service at 500km AND 1000km required? And what's the service interval after the running in period? Every 2,500km or 3,000km?? Some 50cc scooters need their first service at 1,000km, and thereafter every 5,000km or once a year, but this might reflect in a higher price. For most people, once a year is usually all that is required. And most of the 4-stroke scooters have even longer services intervals or they just need a basic service once a year.



## What's there to know about the 50cc engines?

### Two stroke vs 4-stroke

With 50cc the most important issue that has to be considered because of its implications, is that of power. If you've never wondered what 50cc's actually are, measure it out. Most people are amazed that an engine of that cubic capacity has enough power to move anything, far less a scooter and even up to 2 riders as well! But to maximise that power, manufacturers have to consider what engine technology is the most appropriate. Internal combustion engines fall largely into two categories, 4- stroke and 2-stroke.

The vast majority of vehicles on the road today have 4-stroke engines. They are robust and reliable, quiet and relatively fuel efficient, but relatively complex. Indeed almost every modern scooter larger than 50cc has a four stroke engine and with tighter emission compliance coming in Europe, more and more 50cc scooters are sold with four stroke engines. Compared to a 2-stroke engine, they don't quite generate as much power. And when you are constrained by engine size (as the legislation dictates), and you want to squeeze as much grunt into your machine as possible, then 2-stroke technology is the way to go.

So a lot of the 50cc scooters on the market today are 2-stroke powered, but they are on the decline. As are 2-stroke lawnmowers, whipper-snippers, and many outboard boat motors. There are a number of 4-stroke mopeds available today and their performance has increased a fair bit as well.

So if 2-stroke engines are more powerful, why don't all scooters have 2-stroke engines in them?

1. They are relatively inefficient. We have 500cc engined 4-stroke scooters which use less fuel than the majority of the 50cc scooters on the market. But they are ALL still a lot, lot better than every car on the road however, but would be much less so if they were in larger engine sizes.
2. They are comparatively noisy. Sounds like a hair-dryer? That's because it's a 50cc 2-stroke scooter.
3. The engines don't last as long. The general rule of thumb is that a 2-stroke scooter engine will last beyond 30,000km assuming a normal servicing schedule is being kept up. Having said that we have customers with over 50,000km on their little 50cc scooter and they still run fine! In most cases it comes down to regular service and good quality 2-stroke oil being used.  
In any case, a quality 4-stroke should last at least twice this, if not more. This can be extended by more invasive maintenance (such as regularly changing the piston rings and re-honing the bore), but this would push up servicing costs significantly and so is rarely carried out since it is almost cheaper to buy a new one at this stage. If you are considering buying second hand, don't forget this point.
4. Maybe most importantly, 2-stroke engines are much more fickle than 4-strokes. They can be hard to start, particularly if they aren't used regularly. Think lawnmower. Particularly if you are parking at the train station, at work, school or uni, and there isn't any other way of getting home. Reliability is vital. Nothing is more frustrating than getting on to your scooter after a long day at work, and being unable to get it going. So please, please, please go for a quality brand that you can rely on. The only brands that we will sell 50cc scooters of (new or second hand) are **Vespa, Piaggio, Aprilia, Yamaha, SYM and Kymco**. If Honda made 2-strokes, we'd add that to the

list too. And that is it. If its not on that list (and there are many brands out there we know of which we've purposefully excluded from the list) then proceed with extreme caution.

## **The Future of Small Scooters**

The tendency is clearly going towards 4-stroke engines due to increased emission standards in most markets. Euro 4 emission laws came into force in January 2017 in the European markets and 2-stroke engines now have a few years grace period before they might eventually completely disappear.

We might even see more and more electric scooters coming onto the market in the near future, especially replacing the 50cc combustion engine scooters. The technology is there and with battery prices dropping dramatically in the last years we are sure that we are not far away (2017) to see the first models' appearance in the Australian market.

## Used Scooter Checklist

Quite often people are looking for cheaper options to the quality brands in the well below 2000 dollar price range. While some of the cheap imports are priced below this price bracket, their quality is inferior in many ways and warranty is limited (usually one year and if you are lucky the brand will still be around by then).

We always recommend buying a good quality brand second hand over one of the cheap imports. These are made to last and if regularly serviced and treated well, they last many times longer than one of the cheapies. However, there are a few things to be aware of when buying a second hand. While you can indeed snatch up a bargain, it pays doing a bit of research online to know what the brand/model you are looking at is worth in the market. If one is offered well below the market value, there is usually a reason for it.

Do your due diligence before committing to buy and consider the following points below. Some points appear to be very common sense, but we have seen everything and it pays undertaking all these steps to avoid later disappointment:

- 1. Is the vehicle licensed?**

Check the license of the vehicle, if it is currently still licensed. It might have a number plate on it but the if the license is expired, it will be costly and time consuming as the vehicle needs to go over an inspection. You check the license status online following this link [here](#).

- 2. Check Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR)**

This will cost you a few dollars but is highly recommended to see if the vehicle would have been written off or even more important if there is any finance owed on it. Keep in mind that if there is finance owed and you acquire the vehicle, you will also be liable for the outstanding debt on it.

- 3. Check vehicle valuation**

You can check what the bike is worth in the market online on Redbook (use the link [here](#)). While this is a national average, local market values can vastly differ but it will give you a rough indication.

Another option to check the vehicle's value on the market is searching through the usual websites that have vehicles up for sale and see what their asking prices are.

- 4. Check Service History**

This is very important as a vehicle that is not serviced regularly will either have a high bill outstanding or might even have problems that come up sooner than later. A good quality brand motor vehicle – be it a car, a motorcycle or a scooter – lasts for a very long time when it is serviced regularly according to the manufacturer's schedule.

Here it is important that you know the normal service schedule of the vehicle you are looking at and what their rough service costs are. Feel free to call a dealer that sells this brand and ask.

Also when checking service history, ask for receipts and check if the vehicle has been serviced at an authorised dealer that sells this brands. There are a lot of non authorised repairers out there who claim to know everything by heart, but they are usually not in possession of the correct service procedures nor do they get easy access to genuine parts.

## **5. Check overall vehicle condition**

An experienced person can tell straight away when looking at a vehicle and test riding it how it has been treated over its lifetime. But since we are not all experts, there are still a few main points everyone can check easily without being an expert:

- a. Tyre wear: Are the tyres worn to the wear indicators or beyond?
- b. Functioning of lights: Check them out including indicators
- c. Brake pads wear: Check how much worn brake pads are and if they need replacement soon
- d. Check for crash marks, panel damage etc
- e. Check suspension, road holding and play in steering head.
- f. Ask to take the vehicle for a test ride and see if brakes work properly
- g. Brake fluid & coolant change: Brake fluid in hydraulic brakes as well as coolant in liquid cooled engines should be changed every 2 years. This should be part of service history and if it has not been done within at least 3 years, long term quality of the vehicle might be affected

## **6. Fuel Injected Engines**

Also important, if you are looking at a fuel injected, with some there is a master key coming with the vehicle that is coded to the injection module. It is important to receive this key, otherwise it is not possible to get a second spare key re-programmed unless the ECU would be changed (costs can exceed \$1000). This might apply more to 4-stroke scooters that are usually bigger than 50cc as there are not many 50cc models around that are fuel injected – but it is one of the main trapfalls and you might be buying a stolen vehicle if the owner can't produce the master key.

Ace Scooters as one of the leading Perth scooter dealerships offers an affordable workshop check on vehicles customers want to buy from private. We can assist you for a small fee in making sure there are no hidden surprises on a second hand scooter you are planning to buy. If you want to have peace of mind, ask the seller if he would be happy if you bring the scooter to us and we check it thoroughly.

**Call us on 08 9300 1719 to arrange an inspection in our qualified workshop.**