

**F**IRST, BEFORE YOU read this article, we strongly recommend that you read the preceding article in this issue, on “Helmet Standards.” It is important to note that, in so far as we have been able to determine, all of the helmets featured in this comparison fully meet all of the DOT testing criteria described therein. Furthermore, you should note that though we consider a motorcycle helmet’s prime function to be protecting your head from impact, that is not the primary factor involved in this report. That may seem like a contradiction, but really it is not.

We do not consider ourselves capable of performing more rigorous or definitive scientific testing of a helmet’s protective qualities than the DOT or the Snell Foundation, and therefore cannot fairly assess which of these helmets might provide more protection in a given crash scenario. We can, however, take a hard look at a number of features that are not covered in normal helmet testing, and rate them according to our own testing criteria.

Though these criteria are obviously all secondary to a helmet’s primary functions of impact absorption and penetration resistance, they become of primary importance when comparing helmets that are, for the most part, fairly equal in other respects by normal testing standards.

### The Flip-Face Phenomenon

Though “modular,” or “flip-face,” helmets have been around for a long time, it is just recently that they have begun to enjoy widespread popularity. Why that is so, we really can’t say. However, several of our own staff who had previously never considered wearing a flip-face-style helmet became believers during this testing series, and now ride almost exclusively in one or another of the helmets featured here. We found the convenience of being able to flip up the front of the helmet at a gas stop, or when getting a quick drink, or needing to communicate with the rider next to you at a stoplight, was addictive. In addition, we found that most of this current crop of flip-ups were of equal quality to some of our best full-face units. Unlike some we tested about 10 years ago, that were flimsy, noisy, and not very confidence-inspiring.

### Testing

Much of the testing for these helmets was subjective, relying on the opinions of several professional riders, who rode various routes on various different types of bikes, using each helmet. However, there was also a somewhat scientific approach to certain elements.

**Price:** Prices listed are all manufacturer’s suggested retail.



# Modular Helmets

**Weight:** All test helmets were ordered in the same size (XL), and weighed on the same official postal scale.

**Vision:** Field of vision was measured by locking the helmet into a repeatable, fixed position on a raised bench. Riders inserted their heads in each helmet and were tested with eye charts for their maximum field of discernible vision to the left, right, up and down. Data is for comparison purposes only, and may not reflect your own actual field of vision. Scoring was weighted equally for all directions, as side views are important for detecting oncoming hazards, lower vision for reading instruments, and upper vision for seeing ahead when in a “sportbike-tuck.”

**Comfort:** Obviously, comfort is a very personal thing, and in the case of a helmet, can often be based on the shape of the wearer’s head. However, there are a number of factors that can contribute to your comfort level with any given helmet, and so those items were taken into account for this rating. Is the lining removable and/or washable? (A great-fitting helmet can still be uncomfortable if it stinks of sweat, mold and mildew.) Is the interior adjustable for different-shaped heads, with things like removable cheek pads? Is there a front (chin) air dam? And if so, does it sit uncomfortably close to the wearer’s chin? Is there a neck roll in the back? How susceptible is the helmet to wind buffeting? Wind noise?

**Added Features:** Extra points were given for non-standard items that could conceivably be of benefit. Things like the built-in sun visor on the Schuberth, or the use of retro-reflective material for night visibility. Another important factor, often overlooked, was whether or not the helmet could be removed with the chinbar down. This could be very important in an accident situation.

**Visor:** We rated the visor in the “vision” category. Visors were rated by perceived optical quality, ease of replacement, sealing against the shell, variety of locking positions, how “flush” with the shell when closed and cost of replacement.

**Chinbar:** Chinbars were rated on their ease of use when wearing gloves, the sturdiness of their latching mechanisms, and their profile height when raised. We also looked at the relative position of the chinbar when up, as we found that those that were carried farther back on the head tended to induce neck fatigue in a very short time.

**Retainer:** The chinstrap retaining mechanism was looked at for ease of use, comfort and strength of materials. A metal-to-metal latching system was considered best—at least in the case of quick-disconnect types. Though they’re a bit awkward, we still tend to trust old-fashioned D-rings the most.

**Venting:** We looked at the number and size of the vents, and particularly their efficiency in providing anti-fogging for the inside of the shield. Also scored was the ease of opening and closing the vents with gloves on, with the helmet on your head.

Obviously, much of this rating system is subjective—personal opinions, if you will—so we tried to get as many different opinions as possible, not only from our testers, but from people who owned and rode regularly with the same type of helmets we were testing. Just as obviously, the helmet that is most right for one person may be the most wrong on another. The best you can do is to try to make an informed decision for yourself, based on the most information you can possibly get. And that’s the purpose of this article, to simply try to add to your total knowledge base, and aid in your decision-making. 🍀