

# HOW TO FIT A HELMET PROPERLY

There are five key steps in determining proper helmet fit:

1. *Measurement*
2. *Try on*
3. *Horizontal and movement check*
4. *Retention check*
5. *Pressure point check*

**1. MEASUREMENT.** Measuring the head is a starting point for the entire sizing procedure. Due to varying shapes heads that are apparently the same size when measured by a tape may not necessarily fit the same helmet size.

The circumference of the head should be measured at a point approximately one inch above the eyebrows in front and at a point in the back of the head that results in the largest possible measurement. Take several measurements to make sure you have the largest one.

**2. TRY ON.** Once you have determined your preliminary tape measurement, ask your customer to try on a helmet. Select the helmet that is closest in hat size to the tape measurement. If it is between sizes, round up to the next largest one.

If your customer is not familiar with helmets, you should give instructions for putting one on. The customer should: A) Grasp the helmet by the chin straps, with the front of the helmet facing him/her and the top of the helmet facing down. B) Place the thumbs on the inside surface of the straps and balance the helmet with the index fingers. C) Spread the helmet apart with the hands, and slip down over the head.

If the helmet slides down on the head with no resistance, you have your first indication that it may be too large. Obviously, if it will not slide down over the head at all, it is too small. Many people unfamiliar with helmets are reluctant to pull down if they meet resistance as the helmet goes on. A trained eye can tell if it is really too small, or just snug going on, and you should encourage the effort to get the helmet on. Only if the helmet is impossible to put on should you move up to the next size, as helmets that go on snug generally fit very well once all the way on. Remember, most people will select a helmet that is too large for them if left to make their own choice. The eyes should be approximately in the center of the eyepoint with the top edge of the liner padding just above the eyebrows.

### **3. CHECKING HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL**

**MOVEMENT.** Now that the customer is wearing the helmet, look carefully at the way it fits. Check to see if the cheek pads are in contact with the cheeks. Is there excess pressure on the cheeks? Look for gaps between the temples and the browpad. Check the back of the helmet where the neckroll (if the helmet has one) makes contact with the neck. Does it touch at all? Or is it pushing the helmet away at the rear, causing it to roll down over the eyes in front? After you have made your visual check, grab the helmet in your hands-one on either side- and try to rotate the helmet from side to side. Note any movement of the skin while doing this, as well as the amount of resistance to movement. If necessary, remind your helmet buyer to hold his/her head steady.

Next, check movement up and down, again, noting skin movement and resistance. If in either test there was little or no skin movement, and/or the helmet moved very easily, the helmet is too large. A properly fitted helmet will cause the skin to move as the helmet moves. And, it will feel to the wearer as if evenly distributed pressure is being continuously exerted around the head. NOTE: Helmets are a little like shoes, in that they do break-in a little. For this reason, the best attitude to have when fitting is that the helmet should be as tight as the customer can stand to wear it.

**4. RETENTION CHECK.** Now we ask the customer to fasten the chin strap, so you can check it. After the strap has been tightly fastened, ask the customer to hold his/her head steady, warning that this test may be a little uncomfortable, but that it is very important. Reach over the top of the helmet, grabbing the bottom edge with your fingers. Then try to roll the helmet off the customer's head. If it comes off, it is undoubtedly too large.

**WARNING: Do not sell a customer a helmet that can be rolled off the head with the strap fastened.**

**5. PRESSURE POINT CHECK.** Finally, we ask the customer to unfasten the chin strap and remove the helmet. Immediately after the helmet has been removed, observe coloration of the skin on the forehead and cheeks. A reddening of the skin in a small area may indicate a pressure point. Pressure points sometimes are not noticed by the wearer for several minutes, or even hours later. They sometimes cause headaches, and are at the least, uncomfortable. If you notice a pressure point, ask the customer if he/she experienced discomfort there while wearing the helmet. If he/she cannot remember, have them put the helmet back on for a few minutes, paying particular attention to the anticipated pressure point. If the customer complains of pressure point discomfort either time, go to the next larger size, repeating steps four and five.

**CONFIRM PROPER FIT.** One way to compare our evaluation of proper fit is to have the customer try on helmets that are one size larger and one size smaller than the one you think is right. Keep in mind some people gravitate toward larger sizes.