

4 steps to corner a motorcycle like a pro



There are some skills in riding a motorcycle that seem counter-intuitive. One of these is rolling on the throttle through a corner, but if you are going to corner with precision it is a skill you will need to get familiar with. New riders and some experienced riders are surprised when they learn that in order to corner a motorcycle smoothly you need a smooth roll on of the throttle through out the corner.

The MSF teaches riders the steps to a successful corner are: slow – look – press – roll. Let's briefly break each of these steps down.

1. Slow:

Before approaching the corner slow down using both brakes to an appropriate entry speed. What is an appropriate entry speed? It is best defined by whatever speed is slow enough for you to be able to roll on and slightly increase throttle through out the corner. If you feel like you are going wide mid corner and have to roll off the throttle, your entry speed was not slow enough. It is impossible to define a set entry speed for every corner because no corner is the same. Slowing to an appropriate entry speed as defined here will save you those heart flutters of panic when you think you are going too wide.

2. Look:

This is another step in cornering that seems unnatural, but you need to turn your head and look in the direction you want the motorcycle to go. I am not talking about turning your eyes in the direction of travel, I am talking about pointing your nose in the direction you want the motorcycle to go. Look at the photo at the top of this page, it is a photo of 6 time Moto GP World Champion Valentino Rossi. This is a photo I took at Circuit of the Americas race in Austin, TX. Notice where one of the best riders in the world has his head and nose pointed as he rounds the corner. That's right, if the best riders in the world are doing it maybe you should too.

3. Press:

Motorcycles turn by leaning, you make a motorcycle lean by pressing on the grip in the direction you want to go. Press the left grip – lean left – turn left, press the right grip – lean right – turn right. It really is that simple but I see new riders and some bad experienced riders try all kinds of physical gymnastics to turn a motorcycle. It is really as simple as pushing on the grip on the side you want the motorcycle to lean to. It should be smooth and with very little effort. Once you get the feel for the “press” it will take a lot of effort out of your ride.

4. Roll:

The final step is to roll on the throttle. By rolling on the throttle though out the corner you will allow the motorcycle to settle in to the turn and remain balanced as you smoothly complete the turn. Applying the brakes or rolling off the throttle will make the corner choppy, out of balance and will require a lot of input from you to get through the corner. If your entry speed is correct you should be able to roll on or maintain throttle through out the entire corner. At the end of the corner rolling on the throttle a little more will help stand the bike up and help you exit the corner looking like a pro.

The steps in proper cornering are subtle, remember my favorite saying for motorcycle control is this: technique + smooth = control. In this article I talked about technique. Technique are things you learn from reading, watching or instruction. If you take technique and apply it properly you will get smooth, getting smooth with a technique can only happen with practice. If you take technique (knowledge) and add that to smooth (practice) you get control. Once you get control your ride not only becomes safer it becomes more enjoyable.

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