

Working The Curve

ONE OF THE GREAT PLEASURES OF RIDING IS rolling on some familiar stretch of curvy, twisty road. Whether it's a group of tight technical turns, long sweepers, or a combination of both,

the sensation of systematically leaning side to side with a flowing motion is a feeling that may be hard to describe unless you've been there. Words like *exhilarating* and *satisfying* come to mind, yet one word that should usually appear doesn't: *dangerous*. With a high percentage of single motorcycle crashes and fatalities occurring on curves, we need to always consider that what may bring us joy can quickly turn otherwise if not addressed properly.

The most basic of rider courses to the most advanced ones stress one key technique: look through the turn to where you want to be. As much as this is always emphasized, the mental process is sometimes hard to adopt. This is not a skill that can be taught, it needs to be developed over time to recognize the way to address those paved twists of paradise. Looking through the turn and not at it is the first step to conquering an unwanted risk. Using search, evaluate, execute (SEE) to distinguish the elements of the upcoming curve is vital. SEEing whether it is a constant, increasing, or decreasing radius is important, as is your ability to look through the turn, or not (such as a blind turn), to set yourself up for success.

As part of setting up, keep in mind that motorcyclists divide their lane into three portions. If you consider that there are three primary methods of addressing a turn, you can have a saddlebag load of options to safely and skillfully execute the rolling pavement. Proper lane setup along with speed adjustment can make it far easier to focus on other points. If you enter a radius too slow, you can always adjust your speed as needed, but entering too fast may cause unwelcomed complications.

Once you have your lane placement and speed adjusted for the curve ahead, don't stop SEEing; there are other

factors to consider. You may need to take into account crowned roads, sloped turns, intersecting roads, and other surroundings. As much as you are processing information for fine-tuning, keep in mind that you're a moving object and circumstances can change quickly.

So we've realized that there is a lot to look at and adjust for without even entering the curve or considering what type of approach may work best. The three primary methods include the outside-inside-outside strategy, delayed apex path, and steady lane placement approaches. Outside means closest to the continuing arc of the turn. Outside-inside-outside is the technique taught in most basic classes. It's a route that makes the turn a little "straighter." Then there is the delayed apex path where you enter the curve a little farther on the outside portion and then lean sharper through the turn. This method may give you longer vision through the turn. Finally, there are the steady lane placement approaches, meaning staying constantly in the outside, middle, or inside portions of the lane through the turn. While each method can work, the ability to SEE what lies ahead is key for adjusting.

We also have to be aware of our skill level, the abilities of our motorcycle, and other conditions either before the curve or during it. Things such as road conditions (water, sand, or gravel, etc.), weather, and direction of travel. Riding into a sunset or sunrise can be blinding and hazardous in a turn, and these are all issues we have to think about. Furthermore, don't forget about that infamous oncoming traffic.

So now when you look at all the factors associated with rolling through those curves you can SEE that there is a definite need for constant adjustments and awareness to proficiently maneuver through them. Is there a best way to safely ride those twisty elements? Yes. Learn and practice them all. There are a lot of different venues to gain this knowledge and ability. Attending a riding course or multiple courses to learn how to competently tackle different methods of executing a curve will allow you the ability to adjust yourself and your machine to proficiently flow through, and stay ahead of, the curve. **AIM**



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