

# Turning

STUDIES REPORT THAT OVER 40 PERCENT OF all motorcycle crash fatalities happen in curves. Additionally, those same twisty parts of the road are the main points where bikers have single vehicle crashes. And with the spring

riding season upon us, this might be a good time to review proper riding skills through those treacherous turns. Most of us yearn for a great set of twisties, but, unfortunately, too many of us are not living through the turns to enjoy others down the road.

The MSF and other riding organizations adhere to four basic steps for turning a motorcycle to properly execute a curve: slow, look, press, and roll. Performing each step correctly is important to achieving the greatest (and safest) outcome.

**SLOW:** This means just that — slow down! The possibility of an accident increases dramatically when coming into a curve too fast, due to the potential for losing control of the motorcycle. Always slow to an appropriate entry speed, and do so before the radius of the turn starts. Your speed prior to entering the turn should dictate how much you need to slow down. Rolling off the throttle, using both brakes, downshifting, or a combination of any or all options are prescribed methods for slowing to a safe speed. Whichever way you choose, decelerate as smoothly as you can to help keep the bike's suspension steady.

**LOOK:** Physically turn your head and look through the turn to where you want your bike to go. Keep those eyes up, and constantly adjust your line of sight through (and past) the turn as far as possible. When coaching riding students, MSF instructors tell them to look where they want to go and they'll get there. Where do you think you'll wind up if you look down at the road? There are only two things under those tires — pain and misery — so keep those eyes up! Also, set yourself and the bike up in the lane position that gives you the safest and best view of the whole turn.

**PRESS:** Leaning your motorcycle to get around that turn is where countersteering comes into play. To initiate a lean in either direction, press forward on the handgrip in the direction of the curve. If you want to turn left, press forward on the left handgrip; to turn right, press forward on the right handgrip. Moving at speeds above 12-15 mph, you can no longer turn the motorcycle like a bicycle; you need



to countersteer to make it safely through a given curve. This technique seems to confuse new riders, but if you've been riding for some time, you're experienced doing it — maybe not smoothly, but you're still making it through those turns. It's important to remember that you should lean with the bike through the turn. If you ride with a passenger, remind that person to lean with you. An easy way is to ask your riding partner to look over the side of your shoulder in the same direction as the turn.

**ROLL:** Roll on the throttle throughout the turn. You need to either keep a steady speed through the entire curve, or slightly increase it, to maintain stability and make the bike easier to control. This is why it's important to slow down prior to entering the turn. You'll need to use a little more juice in the turn; when the bike is leaning over, a tire's diameter at contact points decreases. So, due to physics, if you decrease the diameter on a spinning wheel without increasing speed, you're slowing down, which will lead to losing control.

Notice that I never mention the use of brakes while in the turn. Braking your motorcycle, especially from the front, can have serious consequences. Depending on the model, a bike will stand up from a lean when the brakes are applied, or be pulled down to the ground. In either case, it's going to hurt. There are some situations where you may use your rear brake in a turn, but that skill should be learned from a riding instructor.

With the spring season here for most of us, we're eager to get out and once again thunder down those roadways. Practice each turn by skillfully using the four steps of slow, look, press, and roll. Keep in mind that it's better to err by going too slowly into a turn; you can always give it more gas as you roll through that twisty. Practice these steps and you'll soon be carving through another riding season with confidence. Enjoy! **AIM**

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