

Riding Within Your Abilities (Pt 1): Brakes

Now that you've made it out onto the road in the proper attire and with your own bike, it's time to go over maneuvers and situations where you can maximize your safety. Today, we'll cover proper braking and how to properly take turns on your bike. This information is provided, courtesy of the Missouri Motorcycle Operator's Manual: <http://dor.mo.gov/pdf/motoman.pdf>

Did you know that improper braking technique is a leading factor in motorcycle accidents? The brakes of a motorcycle are not handled like those on a regular old bicycle. If you learned to ride a bike growing up, you may remember braking the back wheel first, and then the front wheel—otherwise, you would fly forward onto the pavement. This is not so for motorcycles. In most motorcycles, the front wheel is much stronger than the back wheel, and can take about 70 percent of the total stopping power that your motorcycle needs to slow down. Here's a handy step-by-step way to brake your motorcycle:

1. Gently squeeze the front wheel brake, then gradually add more pressure.
2. As the weight of the motorcycle transfers forward, you can apply more pressure to the front brake, as it's gaining more traction with the sudden applied weight.
3. Keep your eyes up and your knees glued to the tank so you can make a straight-line stop.
4. Apply light-to-lighter pressure on the rear wheel. The forward moving weight puts most of the traction on the front wheel, leaving very little traction for the rear wheel. Applying the rear brake prevents rear wheel skid and optimizes your straight-line stopping. Maximum straight line braking can be accomplished when both brakes are applied, but not locked.

Braking saves lives. Familiarizing yourself with the proper order could save yours.

Another hazardous time for riders can be when they are turning. Turns are scientifically interesting to say the least. There are a lot of factors that must be in balance for a rider to make a turn safely. A lot of riders take turns too fast, and may end up in another lane of traffic or even off of the road. Others brake too hard and begin to skid and lose control. These four steps given by the MMOM will help you navigate tricky turns:

1. Reduce your speed, so your inertia doesn't pull you too hard out of balance.
2. Look through the turn. See where you are going by turning your head and not your shoulders.
3. Press the handle on whichever side you are turning. The tighter and faster the turn, the harder the lean needs to be.
4. Roll on the throttle to keep a constant speed that allows you to navigate the turn smoothly.

Now, you may be wondering, "How do I make a straight-line stop if I'm turning or moving in a curve?" It's true that sometimes, your weight isn't evenly distributed across the

motorcycle. You may be maneuvering a wide turnpike and placing your weight opposite your inertia. There are two things you can do. You can try to get your vehicle perpendicular to the road and then apply your brakes from there, but there could be a shoulder or median in the way. Your other option is to apply your brakes more lightly and adjust your weight as you gain more traction, allowing you to brake even harder and bring your vehicle to a full and upright stop.

While this is essential information, there is plenty to go over for your safety. Come back and read our blogs as we detail more ways for you to safely traverse the road on your motorcycle. Happy cruising!

Source: The Missouri Motorcycle Operator's Manual: <http://dor.mo.gov/pdf/motoman.pdf>