

# BRAKE *in a* CORNER

It's one thing to brake hard on a straight bit of road, but what happens when you have to do it while riding through a corner? This is what...

We've all been there: ridden into a corner a bit too fast, and found ourselves wanting to slow down while the bike is banked over. The corner is tightening, the verge coming closer, and it feels like there's nothing to do. It's not a pleasant feeling, especially if you are not sure what the most effective actions are and how the bike is going to react to your inputs. Visions of ending up in a heap are difficult to shake off.

The good news is that it can be done, to a degree anyway. You can't perform emergency braking in a corner quite like you can on a straight, but you can certainly slow the bike down a fair bit if you know what you're doing.

Braking in a corner is often considered an advanced riding skill, but because it is such an important one, there's no harm in starting to practice it as early in your riding career as you can. Just remember to find a safe place to practice, and don't try to run before you can walk.

#### Common mistakes

There are two main mistakes that people make when braking in a corner. One of them is braking too suddenly and too harshly with the front brake, which causes the front wheel to lose grip and wash out. Smoothness is key with many aspects of riding, but when you are going through a bend it's even more crucial.

Another mistake is not braking enough. It can be scary to brake in a corner, but if you apply the brakes correctly, it is possible to slow down quite a bit. You just need to know what you're doing, and do it very smoothly.

Generally speaking, it's not advisable to use the rear brake to slow down in a corner if you are riding at a reasonable pace as you risk losing grip on the rear tyre and sliding the rear. It's a different matter if you are turning very slowly, in which case a bit of rear brake can help you turn sharper.

#### How to get it right

The easiest thing to do is to try and do as much of your braking as possible before the bend. The less you have to do once you enter the corner, the less instability you are causing to the bike.

However, this is not always possible, so sometimes applying the front brake in the corner is needed. If you need to do this, do it smoothly. When you practice this, you will notice that as you apply the brake the bike will want to 'stand up' and go straight. To keep the bike turning you need to counter-steer to keep the line, but remember that there is only a limited amount of grip available: the more you use it for braking the less there is for turning, and vice versa.

In some situations one option may be to let the bike straighten the line

as you are applying the brakes as this will enable you to stop sooner, but the problem with this is that it will take you off your intended line, and depending on what's around you that may be more dangerous.

Your eyes are a powerful tool, and regardless of whether you are applying the brakes or not, looking where you want to go is important. Concentrating on anything that you don't want to ride towards, or 'target fixation', can have the unfortunate impact of leading you where you are looking rather than where you want to be.

#### And don't forget...

One option to slow down as you are entering a corner is to trail brake. This means braking hard as you are approaching the corner, and then gradually releasing the brakes as you steer into the corner. The idea is that as lean angle increases the braking forces decrease, leaving you with enough tyre grip through the whole corner. This is, however, a tricky skill to master, and will take a lot of practice to get right.

Ultimately, the best solution is to do the braking before the corner. The disappointment of running round the corner a little slower than you wanted to is a small chink in your armour compared to the fright and potential damage when you are hurtling through a bend too fast.

## OUR EXPERT

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