

## The Art Of Cornering

Mastering the art of cornering will put you ahead of the game on trail, road or highway. The trick lies in knowing when to brake and when to pour on the power. In biking, power comes not only from your legs, but also from the momentum you've built up going into the turn. Keeping that momentum, then, is vital.

Perhaps you've seen pictures of racers on motorcycles going around a corner on the racetrack. Their bikes lean way over and their knees almost scrape the pavement. This lean is a way of using centrifugal force and gravity to keep as much momentum as possible on the turn. It works for both road and mountain bikes as well.

Here's how: While descending a hill you come to a fairly sharp corner. As you approach it get a feel for the lay of the land using the scanning method mentioned earlier. Find the line you want to use and get yourself set up to approach the line. You generally have two approaches you can use—the wide and the narrow.

Each approach works well. A narrow approach, though, is generally only for turns where you can keep an almost straight track through the turn.

On wide approaches, the trick is to carve the turn much like you would when skiing. The way you shift and place your weight as you head down the snow informs the turn you make. On a bicycle this is true as well, with the added complexity of the brakes.

### Set Up:

- Your feet should be in the platform position.
- Your balance fore and aft should be in the middle of both tires. (Got your center?)
- Get an idea of the line you want to ride and head for the beginning of that line.

### Going into the turn:

- Brake now, evenly and carefully. This is a critical part of your turn. You want to shave enough speed to take the turn, but you don't want to lose your momentum. You'll also need to watch your traction. Brake too hard and you could miss the turn entirely. As with cars, bikes are harder to turn when the wheels are involved in braking. And, as always, use your front brake judiciously. While it supplies most of your braking power, using it too much can throw you over the handlebars.
- Now, shift your weight slightly to the outside of the turn. This should be nothing more than a quick, small movement. When you do this, the front wheel has an opposite reaction and will actually move into the turn.
- Immediately after this first weight shift, lean your body in and drive down on the outside leg. This helps the rest of the bike line up with the front tire to grip the road or trail.
- Lean on the inside side of the handlebar.
- You are now in cahoots with centrifugal force and gravity and in a position to carve nicely through the turn.

### Once in the turn:

- Drift is a natural part of cornering. Let your bike go a little and try to ride it out.
- However, you may need to shave speed further. Be careful. Again, brake too hard and you could lose your traction, not to mention upset the balance you've created going through the turn. Your best way to shave speed, if you have to, is to feather the brakes with short, light applications.
- You can also lower yourself over the bike to pick up momentum (decrease air resistance). This interplay between braking and momentum allows you to use centrifugal force and gravity to your advantage. It takes practice to know how much momentum you can carry through a corner. It also takes practice to know how little you can use the brakes and carry out a successful turn. Beginner daredevil types see the brakes only as a method to slow down. This couldn't be farther from the truth. Judicious use of the brakes will help you stay on the very edge of control.

### Exiting the Turn:

- As you approach the apex of the turn, look for your exit.
- Just past the apex, grab as much of an aerodynamic shape as possible, or start pedaling. The key is to add momentum to pull you through the turn.
- At this point, stay off the brakes if you feel comfortable.

At no time while cornering should you allow your rear tire to skid. This not only lessens the control you have, on a road bike it's a good way to induce road rash.