

Safety Tips, by Ben Hochberg, ABATE of Colorado's Rider Education Division

Choosing Your Path in Turns

Motorcycles are lots narrower than cars. (DUH! We're talking about the 2-wheel kind of motorcycle again, because 3-wheelers can be as wide as some cars.) This has drawbacks as well as benefits; one of the benefits is that we have traffic lanes that are lots wider than our bikes, so we have the ability to move to the left, right or center if it behooves us, and still be in our own lane.

Choose your path of travel.

In turns this can help us immensely. A common technique is to start the turn toward the outside of the lane, counter-steer towards the inside of the turn, and then exit the turn towards the outside again. This technique enables us to "straighten out" the turn, thereby using up less of our available traction and demanding less lean angle. It also yields line-of-sight benefits, for both ourselves and for other traffic. There are potential drawbacks, though, such as left turns with oncoming traffic crowding the center of the road.

That point at which our bikes are closest to the inside of the turn is what we call the apex. We have the option of selecting an apex anywhere along the path of the turn. But, the plot thickens! There are many factors to consider when choosing an apex. Is the turn a constant-radius turn, or is it an increasing- or decreasing-radius turn? Can we see all the way to the end of the turn before we enter it? (If not, we have to allow for the possibility that there is an obstacle ahead, one that we just can't see yet.) What is the camber of the road? Is the road crowned? Is there debris? Does the road have usable shoulders? Is there traffic which enters into the decision? Does another curve follow the one immediately ahead?

A good exercise would be to take a pen and paper and draw various types of turns, and then trace what you feel would be a good path of travel through each type of turn. Give consideration to all of the above situations for every turn you can think of.

Then, and here's the fun part, go out on your bike, find some turns, and practice!