

The System of Motorcycle Control

From Chapter 2 of "Motorcycle Roadcraft: The Police Rider's Handbook to Better Motorcycling"

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The need for a system of motorcycle control

These notes explain the system of motorcycle control, and show you how to use the system to negotiate hazards. A feature of nearly all road accidents is human error. The purpose of the system of motorcycle control is to provide a way of approaching and negotiating hazards that is methodical, safe and leaves nothing to chance. If you use it consistently with the right frame of mind, good observation and a high level of skill in bike control, you should avoid causing accidents yourself and be able to anticipate many of the hazards caused by other road users.

Using the system will help to give you calm control of your machine, and enable you to deal with hazards without getting flustered. Your progress will be steady and unobtrusive – the characteristics of a skilled rider.

Riding skills

Riding requires more than pure handling skills. Many hazards encountered by riders are unpredictable. You need an investigative approach to recognise and negotiate them safely. You should learn to expect the unexpected. Riding uses both **mental** and **physical** skills:

Mental skills

The ability to scan the environment, recognise relevant dangers or hazards, decide on their priority and form an achievable riding plan.

Physical skills

The ability to translate intentions and thoughts into physical action accurately and smoothly.

In using these skills you need to take into account:

- ability as opposed to perceived ability (what you can actually do as opposed to what you think you can do – in the average rider there is a significant gap between real and perceived ability. A key objective of rider training is to bring perceptions in line with reality)
- capabilities of the machine
- prevailing weather and road conditions.

There is much to anticipate and think about when riding. Road and traffic conditions continually change, requiring you to adjust course and speed frequently. You need to take many factors into account: the activities of other road users, where they might be and what they might do; the closeness of other vehicles; the need to signal your intentions; the road and surface conditions; the weather; and the handling characteristics of your bike. The system of motorcycle control simplifies this task. It provides a simple and consistent method of riding ensuring that you overlook no detail and leave nothing to chance.

The system of motorcycle control gives you that essential aspect of safe riding - time to react.

Hazards

A hazard is anything that is potentially dangerous. A hazard can be immediate and obvious, such as a car approaching you on the wrong side of the road, or it may be less obvious but just as potentially dangerous, such as a blind bend which conceals a lorry reversing into your path. Much of your road craft skill is in the early recognition of hazards – the situations that are potentially dangerous – and then taking the appropriate action to deal with them. One of the main causes of accidents is the failure to recognise hazardous situations – if you fail to see the potential danger you cannot take actions to avoid it.

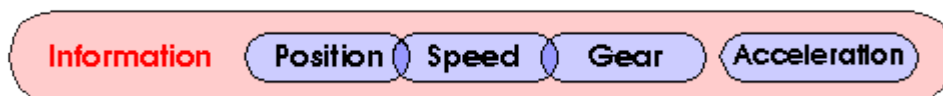
On the roads you will meet three main types of hazard:

- physical features such as junctions, roundabouts, bends or hill crests
- risks arising from the position or movement of other road users
- problems arising from variations in the road surface, weather conditions and visibility.

At the end of your next journey, look back over the way you approached and negotiated hazards and ask yourself the following questions:

- Did you always know what was happening behind before changing direction or speed?
- Did you always have the right position, speed and gear for the hazard?
- Were you able to negotiate all the hazards smoothly without any snatched last-minute adjustments?
- Did you always give yourself time to react?

The System of Motorcycle Control



The system promotes careful observation, early anticipation and planning, and a systematic use of the controls to achieve maximum machine stability. It is a systematic way of dealing with an unpredictable environment. It is