



# When I go into a corner too fast... ...what do I do?

Well, you could crash. Alternatively, Mike Abbott explains how to avoid target fixation, oncoming vehicles and hospital food...

Photography Chippy Wood

**I**F YOU FEEL as though you're going into a corner rather too fast, the first thing to do is look for the corner exit and tell yourself you can make it round. A good proportion of serious accidents happen with riders on their own out in the country and the accident investigators usually say the rider wasn't actually going too fast to make the corner, he just thought he was.

I've certainly seen riders panicking. They approach the corner fast, they brake hard – usually enough to easily get round the corner – but then panic and go straight on, or panic half way round the corner and grab a handful of front brake. We actually caught one of these on video when a guy came flying past a group of riders, then grabbed loads of front brake so the bike was snaking from side-to-side and he rode straight on into a ditch.

He was fine because he ended up going so slowly – the corner wasn't even sharp, so he could have got round it easily.

Looking for the corner exit stops this target fixation and has a couple of other benefits. You will find you naturally counter-steer in the right direction without having to think about it, and it will also help your balance because you can see the horizon which gives you an idea of how far you're leaning.

The big danger when you think you're going too fast in a corner is snatching the front brake. This is partly the fault of cars because we all drive really badly these days – slamming on the brakes round corners and expecting the ABS and stability control to sort everything out. And because most riders spend a lot of their time driving cars, they get lazy – I know I do. It's a good idea to try and drive your car like you ride your bike – get your braking done in a straight line.

If you use the front brake, but don't lock up, the bike will sit up. I don't think many riders realise that when you're cornering, your front tyre is further to the outside of the corner than the rear [because of the trail and difference in tyre widths], so it's not in line with the rear tyre any more. So if you use the front brake that will generate a force which tries to lift the bike up.

Corner, too fast, panic, front brake, ditch



## CORNERING TOO FAST? DO THIS...

» **Look for the vanishing point** This is where the two edges of the road appear to converge and is the fastest way of telling if the corner is about to tighten up. It also forces you to look at the corner exit, so you can't target fixate on trees, potholes, HGVs etc.

» **Use the back brake** This lets you scrub off speed without upsetting the bike's steering too much (as the front brake will). Even if you lock the rear wheel, the consequences are generally a lot less unhealthy than doing the same with the front brake.

» **Keep your fingers off the front brake** It is possible to use the front brake mid-corner, but it requires huge skill (note how many GP riders lose the front) and is difficult to do sensitively when you're panicking.

The other thing is to concentrate on the old racing adage of slow in and fast out. There's absolutely nothing to be gained by hurtling into a corner on the limit. In fact all it means is you will have to wait longer before you can get back on the gas again. I regularly see people doing what I call the wall of death, that is going in to a corner way too fast and then skating right round the outside of it, gritting their teeth and scrubbing off speed.

If you go in a bit slower, on a steady throttle, as soon as you get the chance you can turn the bike and get right on the gas. And if you get it wrong then, you've got a bit of a safety margin because you can throttle off or use the space you gained by turning tightly.

You can also cover the rear brake and practice using it in corners so you know what it does to the bike. If you're in a corner and you're looking at the exit but still feel like you are going a bit too fast you can push on the rear brake and that will scrub off speed without upsetting the bike too much.

» Mike Abbott runs the British Superbike School, which has courses at tracks around the country. You can book on 01777 818013