

## ***STOP IT !***

How many times have you listened to the “experts” tell you how to stop your motorcycle? How many times has the safety article in your favorite motorcycling magazine been devoted to “proper” use of your brakes? How many times have you listened to fellow riders tell you stories of their “harrowing” experiences involving braking? (or the need to?) We talk about braking a lot, don’t we?

Do you ever wonder why? There are really good reasons and I hope, in the next few minutes, to help you understand and to “stop it” better.

In its most basic analysis riding a motorcycle has two distinctive dynamic forms – moving and not-moving. If you are participating in one, you are going to transition to the other. So it can be said that half of your transitioning skills involve using your brakes. It certainly seems logical that you want to be able to use them properly.

There are two general scenarios where you are going to transition from moving to not-moving – planned and not-planned. As far as braking is concerned, your skill requirement is the same in both cases. They differ only in the amount of space and time you have to apply those skills. In any transition from moving to not-moving you are dealing with the same laws of physics, the same mechanical requirements, and the same mental applications. Here are the basics you are working with.

1. 70% of the braking power is in the front. **Use it every time.**
2. 30% of the braking power is in the rear. **Use it every time.**
3. Check your mirrors before you apply your brakes.
4. Apply brakes with smooth motion – never “stab” or “grab” the brake lever.
5. Keep your eyes focused ahead and up (horizon). Do not focus on what you are trying to avoid.
6. Keep the motorcycle vertical and straight. If you are in a curve, try to straighten before applying brakes. If that is not possible, straighten as you apply brakes and the motorcycle slows.
7. If the rear tire begins to skid – keep the brake on and steer straight.
8. If the front tire begins to skid – release the brake and gradually reapply.

9. Maintain your brakes – pads, shoes, fluid level, etc.
10. If the road surface is not dry and clean, be more gradual in your application
11. Practice quick stops. Practice quick stops. **Practice!** If you frequently carry a passenger, practice both with and without. Be sure to explain to your passenger what you are doing and why.
12. Take a motorcycle safety course. I recommend the ERC (Experienced Rider Course) as it will put you on your own bike for training.
13. If you have just taken your bike out of storage be conscious of the fact that your skills are not as sharp as they were when you put it away. Refer to #s 11 and 12 above.
14. Riding in a group changes nothing except that you **KNOW** that there are other vehicles close to you and that **SHOULD** help you give your braking skills more attention.

That's it. Fourteen key points that you need to assure are in your safe riding repertoire. Hope this helps.

Mike, the safety guy.