

# Body Language

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There's a large lump of weight attached to your motorcycle that will often be at least half the weight of the bike itself and has a large effect on your bike's handling. Here's a clue – it's mobile and organic. You guessed it, it's you. GW breaks this weighty subject down for us.

## BODY BASICS

Positioning your bodyweight on the bike to maximise available tyre grip or to improve the bike's overall stability will allow you to ride faster, smoother and safer. Some styles of bikes suit the following techniques more than others, Cruisers and some touring bikes tend to lock you into a more-or-less fixed position and will make some of these techniques impractical to apply. However if you are planning a day at the track or are going for road-ride through your favourite twisties on a sporty-ish bike, then many will apply to you.

## THE STRAIGHT BITS:

For the longer straights your body position will place your backside well to the rear of the seat with head and shoulders down as low as possible. On a racetrack your chest will often be resting on the top of fuel tank with the goal being to have the spine of your back as close to parallel to the road as possible. This "flat back" position reduces the size of the low pressure cavity that forms in the air behind you as you travel along (causing drag). Masters of this are the 125GP racers whom you will often see raising their bum off the seat by literally squatting on the footpegs.

Exceptions to this technique might be if the straight is only a short piece between corners, where you may not have time to assume this position as doing so may spoil your riding rhythm which is never a good thing.

## ARRIVING AT THE TURNS:

With the straight bits coming to an end, the next challenge is the corner approach and entry. This can be broken down into two parts, the section where you are more-or-less upright and braking and then the corner entry section proper.

Firstly, before you've even thought about touching the brakes, you'll be wanting to slide about half of your backside off to the side of the seat that matches the direction of the pending corner. This fairly innocuous "sideways slide" movement is in fact a fairly major weight shift and it is best to get this weight movement done whilst on the straight, rather than doing it closer to the corner and upsetting the machine's balance when



The balance between drive and wheelie

the bike's suspension already has to deal with brake force and cornering loads.

Next up is the moment before grabbing the brake. In one clean and smooth motion you will be sitting up from your crouch and moving your upper body into the air-stream, the wind pressure now hitting your chest will assist with slowing the bike. At the same time you will be applying the front brake and tightening your grip with the inside of your knees/thighs onto the bike's tank or bodywork to help prevent you placing too much "push force" through your arms into the handlebars whilst slowing. Your backside will need to be moved into position along the length of the saddle to suit the particular corner you are about to negotiate. For medium to slow speed turns your weight will generally be well to the rear of the saddle to initially counterbalance the heavy braking loads. For faster entry corners where bike stability and balance is more important, you will likely position your backside midway or even forward on



GW on the big Bimota



