



Body position and weight distribution

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Body position and weight distribution are two main components of riding that will assist you in being able to make your motorcycle go exactly where you want it to go and how you want

it to get there. Of course you'll need to combine this with other skills such as throttle, clutch and brake control and line selection, and also practise to master the right position for each situation.

At the end of the day you're looking for balance. Balance equals more control.

Optimum body position will provide improved traction, cornering and overall control.

Many non-riders think you just sit on a bike and twist the throttle, but most of us know there's a lot more that goes into riding a motorcycle well. Really good riders are very active on their bikes, always adjusting their body position and input to the handlebars and footpegs. Sometimes this is very obvious and sometimes it's so subtle you can't tell.

Adventure riders come from all sorts of backgrounds and have a broad range of riding goals. Some are very relaxed when riding off-road and are happy to sit down much of the time, while others are more into attacking off-road terrain from the standing position. At the end of the day you need to know what suits you based on a few factors – your bike, the remoteness of your ride, your level of fitness and even how much you want to risk your bike or body. You don't need to be the fastest rider out there, but it's a very reassuring feeling to know you have a good grasp of the right skills to use when required.

Weight distribution

The first thing to think about here is if you were to stand beside your bike with the sidestand up and simply hold it with one hand on the grip, you'd notice it doesn't take much effort or strength to hold it up when it's vertical. But to turn, motorcycles need to lean, and this is where correct positioning can make or break this nice, neutral balance.

As a rider you have forward-to-back and side-to-side weight distribution to think about. You need to think about when you need to sit and when you need to stand. Then there's the blending of all of these movements in a smooth, instinctive way to get the ideal result. This takes a lot of practice and can take many years. If you're always thinking about your riding this way you're probably always improving, which is part of the buzz of riding for many riders.

Standing position

The standing position is typically used for any off-road terrain that isn't relatively smooth. If you stay seated over rough ground you'll immediately become a passenger because with your bum on the seat you have a high centre of gravity. Your weight will be over the back wheel and you'll feel every bump though your body, losing your ability to move your weight around effectively for maximum control.

If you stand in what is known as the central standing position all your weight is through the footpegs and this gives you a lower centre of gravity.

What does this all mean, you might be wondering?

When you're standing on the footpegs in the centre of the bike you can work as one with your bike, using your arms and legs as extra suspension, complementing your bike's suspension.

Standing up will allow you to move your weight forward as you accelerate and backwards as you brake, and that really gives a lot of extra control as well as saving a lot of energy.

When standing you can also lean forward up a steep rise or alternatively push your weight towards the rear on your way down to keep the bike well balanced.

Cornering is an interesting one. Whether you're riding on- or off-road there are many techniques. But let's just say many road riders lean off the inside of the bike because the high grip levels make this possible. But don't try this off-road or you'll taste dirt! This is because the grip levels are much lower. Weighting the outside of the bike through body position and footpeg pressure can create massive traction benefits and give a lot more cornering control whether standing or sitting.

There are six main points that will assist you in getting into the correct standing position. ▶



Adventure-riding tips

- ❖ Position your feet so the footpeg is roughly in the centre of your foot for balance.
- ❖ Have your legs slightly bent and lightly gripping the motorcycle from your ankle to your knee for increased control.
- ❖ Arch your back over forwards not straight for comfort.
- ❖ Keep your elbows up for extra control.
- ❖ Keep your head up and looking forward, roughly over the handlebars for optimum vision.
- ❖ Avoid the 'death grip' and try to have one or two fingers over your clutch and front brake at all times for efficiency and easy, subtle control inputs.

For adventure riding there will always be a compromise between standing and seated position, but you'll find over time and with practice the standing position will become quite natural

and comfortable. Once this happens it'll become second nature to you when to stay seated and when to stand.

Carrying luggage

You could almost put money on it that we have all been guilty of overdoing it with the packing at some stage. This is one point you need to put some thought into before heading off. Of course there are essentials you need for your adventure, but if it's just a luxury that's going to add weight to the wrong area of your bike, you may be better off without it. The difference between riding a nude bike versus an overloaded bike off-road is massive and multiplies as the terrain becomes more challenging.

One of the main problems we've seen with carrying luggage is having way too much piled up on the rear, hindering how far back you can get

your body weight. Also, if you're taking panniers, make sure they're packed with similar weight on each side. The more challenging the ride, the more important it is get your luggage packed properly.

The wrap

You and your bike are a team. You need to feel comfortable and balanced in a range of situations. If standing feels alien to you, it makes sense to work on it so you have it in your bag of tricks when needed. Find an area where you can practice slow-speed exercises, see how much you can move forward, backward and side to side. Make a little obstacle course and practise. Start off fairly flat with turns, then throw in some slopes and work your way up from there. For inspiration get on YouTube and watch some trials, enduro or even BMX competition.

Happy trails!

