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Photos: BRM

TRAINING MORE CORE COMPETENCIES

Over the past couple of issues, we've been talking about the competencies that you will need when you do your CBTA, where we've mentioned observations and hazard awareness/avoidance as they are the "biggies". But there are quite a few others that you need to have in your "tool chest", because you will be assessed on them, too.



SPEED CONTROL

We all know how easy it is to gain speed on our modern bikes; and, frankly, the rapid acceleration can be quite intoxicating. But we do have to exercise self-control when riding on the road and never more so than when we are doing our CBTA. The requirement is to travel at the speed limit or just below it, unless conditions such as congestion, bad weather or people on the road and the like mean that it would be unsafe to do so. Your judgement on this is being assessed, too. If you exceed the speed limit, it is a fault and if you exceed it by 10km/h or more, you will fail.

It's not going to work for you to be constantly looking at your speedo.

So what you need to do is practice and know by the sound of the bike and other things like wind pressure, what speed you are doing. You should travel around and take a guess what speed you are doing, check the speedo and see how good you are. Be sure to practice this until you can be quite accurate with your guesses. Try it at different speeds and in different conditions, day and night, nice weather and bad weather. It really is something that comes with time and practice.

LOOKING

Now this is a strange one and something that many experienced riders aren't doing particularly well. So, what does it cover? There's LOOKING through a corner. As we travel around a corner, we need to keep our head up and our eyes searching ahead for hazards and for the exit of the corner. Many people don't do this and the result is that they take the corner in a series of steps, looking down at a point on the road, reaching it and then looking at the next point. The result of this process is a corner taken with short almost straight lines followed by an adjustment, repeated again and again and in some instances a crash to finish. This poor looking is called "Low Aim Steering" and the result is called "50 pencing".

Then, there's LOOKING at intersections, checking the side streets, looking left before turning right at traffic lights. This is part of our Hazard Awareness process. There's LOOKING in your mirrors. There's LOOKING for hazards ahead. Looking or using your eyes to best effect is really important in so many ways, especially as the old adage "You go where you look" on a motorcycle is absolutely true.

STABILITY

When you do your assessment, your assessor will be looking at how stable you are on your bike. As you move off, do you paddle along with both feet sticking out, disconnected from the bike and wobbling along. Or do you move off smoothly, get your feet up on the pegs and become connected and stable?

Do you come to a stop with the bike flapping around underneath you, sticking one or both feet out while stopping on an aggressive front brake with front of the bike bouncing up and down? Or do you smoothly stop on the rear brake, with your left foot going down as you stop? Do you nearly fall off when turning at an intersection, when reversing the bike into a parking space, or when getting it on the stand?

Of course, stability is an important part of riding. As bikes can be heavy, as soon as one starts to fall over, the weight increases dramatically. Remember, their natural position is flat on the ground – or, in some instances, flat on top of the rider. But being unstable increases risks throughout many of the tasks that we do when we are riding. It distracts us, makes us nervous and increases our risk of injury, either by the bike

falling on us, hurting oneself by hitting the ground or by us falling under some other vehicle. For example, you are in creeping traffic on the motorway, it's very congested, you lose balance and fall over in the lane because you couldn't control the bike properly – a small incident turns into a big one very quickly on a motorcycle.

Your assessor is looking at your stability throughout the entire assessment.

Instability indicates to the assessor that you haven't had enough time riding and haven't practiced the core competencies, making them aware perhaps you just aren't ready to progress to the next stage in your license.

These things all come with "time in the saddle". And your confidence and competence increases every time you ride. So, every time you ride, ask yourself if you had any difficult or scary moments? Always ride within your limits and don't be pressured, enjoy your riding, since it's for the enjoyment that we ride. Every good experience increases your confidence "bank balance" a little bit, while every bad experience decreases your confidence "bank balance" a lot. ■■■



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