



Improving Cornering

Cornering is a skill that cyclists should work to improve. Having good cornering skills is not about riding through corners faster, but instead, safer.

In racing, cornering, especially in the last kilometer, may be the difference between winning and losing. This may not be the case on group rides, but nonetheless, all riders should learn cornering skills to provide safe riding for themselves and cyclists around them.

Practice the following 4 tips to improve your cornering.

Look Ahead As Far As You Can

Look as far through the turn as your eyes can maintain focus. Look “beyond” the turn, meaning your eyes must focus on what is appearing as you round the corner. This will allow you to more readily adjust your cornering angle and avoid upcoming obstacles.

Place your hands in the drops with bent, loose elbows as you approach a corner. Flatten your back by sliding back in your saddle. Lift your neck and head, so you are unable to see your front hub, but can see the road ahead. Turn your head and focus your eyes “through” the corner. Your bike will go where you look.

Proper Cyclist Position on the Bike

When cornering, think of yourself as setting up a tripod. The first portion of the tripod is the hand on the inside of the corner. The inside corner hand should place forward (not down) pressure on the handlebar. This forward pressure will help steer you through the corner, and keep good front tire traction. There is very little, if no, handlebar turning; instead you are leaning the bike to cause it to “carve” a corner. For example, when turning right, place forward pressure with your right hand on the handle bar and lean the bike to the right.

The second portion of the tripod is your outside leg. The leg to the outside of the corner should be fully extended; that is, the crank on the outside of the corner should be in the down (6 o’clock) position. Apply tremendous pressure to this down pedal, essentially “standing” on it. The pressure will provide rear tire traction and force it to carve through the corner. For example, when turning right, extend your left leg, and place pressure on the left pedal.

The third portion of the tripod is your buttocks on the saddle. Sliding back and placing pressure on the outside corner portion of the saddle will provide more rear tire traction. For more pressure, roll your buttocks onto the extended leg side so you lift more of your weight from the saddle and place it over the pedal. For example, when turning right, roll your buttocks toward the

left side of the saddle to allow more pressure on the left extended leg.

Proper Placement of Your Bike on the Road

When approaching corners think “outside to inside to outside.” Always stay within your lane and watch for other cycling or vehicular traffic. If turning right, move toward the double yellow line as you approach the corner (outside). Once the corner begins, move toward the road shoulder at the apex (and middle) or the corner (inside); when exiting the corner move back toward the double yellow line (outside). In actuality, you are taking the straightest line through the corner, thus requiring less leaning and maintaining more control.

Braking prior to the corner, not in the corner, will aid in control. If necessary, reduce speed using both brakes as you approach the corner; release brakes as you enter the corner to accelerate through and out. If necessary, pedal as you exit the corner once your pedals clear the ground. If you need to brake in the corner, using your back brake is a better bet, as it reduces the chance of losing control.

Attack the Corner

When a cat is scared, it arches its back away from danger, and extends its front legs and paws. When a cat attacks, it crouches low, keeps its head low directly over its paws, looks ahead, and focuses on pouncing on its prey.

Attack corners by being active, not passive. Focus and prepare like an attacking cat. The analogy may seem a bit silly, but visualize a cat’s attacking posture when cornering:

- Actively flatten your back to lower your head over your hands, thereby lowering your center of gravity to provide more stability.
- Purposefully look ahead and “through” the corner
- Aggressively set up for the corner using the tripod method
- Actively pick a line that straightens the corner

Conclusion

Cornering is a technical aspect of cycling, but it is part and parcel to its enjoyment. It is important that you learn, understand, and practice the skills necessary to corner in a controlled fashion.

Practice the above techniques in a parking lot with little or no traffic, using cones or water bottles to mark corners. Once mastered, attempt the techniques in corners on a flat road with little or no traffic. Eventually attempt these techniques on downhill corners.

Be safe by *never* attempting to corner at a speed, which you cannot handle.

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