



What's the best way to learn from scratch

Part 1: why the traditional teaching system is flawed. Hksjdjh kfjhd kfjhs
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LIKE MANY PEOPLE, when I was taught I had half an hour in a car park and then we went straight out on the road. It was a macho thing - the instructor said 'come on, you'll be fine'. But I was thinking 'I really don't think I will be fine, because I don't know what I'm doing.'

As an instructor, it's something I've been campaigning against for years, because it doesn't matter if you're a 6ft 4in, 18 stone rugby player and hard as nails, if you're not in control of a motorcycle out amongst traffic which has no patience for you, that is a dangerous place to be. It's like taking helicopter lessons and after half an hour the instructor says, 'f*ck it, let's see how high you can go and then see if you can land it.' It's dangerous.

To learn how to handle a motorcycle competently you need to remove yourself from the public roads until you are of a standard when you genuinely know you can handle various hazards safely. The CBT is fine, but it's exactly that - it is Basic. It doesn't cover cornering technique in any detail, which is where the majority of accidents happen (along with junctions). You need to practice cornering in a safe environment, otherwise you're going to get scared and not be able to learn anything. It's very difficult to learn it safely on the road.

You also need to be taught counter-steering. It needs to be explained so people understand why they're doing it and again, this needs to happen before you get on the road, which does not happen at all at the moment. I get people who come to me after they've crashed because no-one has actually showed them how to go around a corner.

I can't believe all the fuss about the 31mph swerve test, with people saying it's dangerous. What a load of bollocks. We do a 70mph swerve test with our clients on the track. If people are going to ride on dual carriageways and A-roads at that speed, they need to know how to avoid trouble and they need to know how it feels.

So we set up some cones and get them practicing until they're happy swerving



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3 STEPS TO LEARNING FROM SCRATCH

» **LEARN THE THEORY** of how motorcycles go round corners. It's important to understand what counter-steering does and why you should actively do it.

» **PRACTICE CORNERING AWAY** from traffic, ideally on a clear race track or airfield. Practice swerving at high speeds, so if you have to do it on the road you're confident.

» **PRACTICE EMERGENCY BRAKING** from the speeds you would realistically ride at. It's as important to know how to stop as it is to learn how to go.

around them. And then we start moving the cones on each lap, so they have to arrive at speed and start assessing and having to plan ahead. It's an important lesson - people don't usually plan ahead for hazards.

This exercise sets people up for faster cornering and gets rid of any anxiety about dual carriageways and motorways - a lot of beginners are very rigid on the bike on motorways because they're not relaxed. And when you're rigid, you can't react. It really enhances their confidence, and when it comes to the Mod 1 test at 31mph, it's child's play for them.

Next we practice emergency stops from 70mph and teach beginners how to use the front brake hard and safely while going round corners. But more of that

» Sean Hayes is one of Britain's most experienced and innovative instructors. He's an ex-racer, and runs Circuit Based Training. You can book a course by ringing 01455 840645.