

81: a crash course in cycling

The only way you can have confidence that your bike is **roadworthy** is by conducting regular checks. Whenever you go for a ride, check seat **adjustment**, tyre **pressure** & brake **effectiveness**. If your seat is not properly adjusted, you will lose **power** & you run the risk of experiencing back or knee **pain**. When you are sitting on the seat with both feet out to the side, your **toes** should be just touching the ground. Under-inflated tyres are the major cause of **punctures**. The dangers of your brakes not being in good working condition should be **obvious**. For your own comfort, safety & protection, you should wear brightly-coloured tops, padded bike pants & gloves. Don't get on your bike unless your **helmet** is properly fitted. Like riding a horse, you should get on & get off from the **left** side. With your left foot on the ground, & your right foot on the pedal, the pedal should be in the "two o'clock" **power** position for maximum acceleration. The **ball** of your foot should rest on the pedal, not your **heel**. Riding with your heel on the pedal is about as *inefficient* as **running** on your heels. Make sure you **LOOK** before you take off. When you stop, make sure that your bike is not **obstructing** others.

When you ride, it is very important to ride **predictably** (which generally means in a straight line), continually **scan** in all directions, & show consideration for others. Make sure you use proper hand **signals** (when it is safe to take a hand off the handlebar). Don't ride in areas that are **prohibited** to cyclists. Don't **swerve** suddenly, or brake without warning. Take "blind" corners wide & **slow**. Legally, your bike is classed as a **vehicle**, & you are bound by the road rules. Good riders **anticipate** what is ahead. Riding in formation is an advanced skill that requires plenty of **communication**, in order to ride with enough control, for example, to maintain optimal space between bikes.

If you **abuse** your bike, it won't perform best for you. Doing slideouts can **buckle** your wheels & wear out your tyres. Hanging monos, riding around with one or both hands off the **handlebar**, or getting as much "air" as you can may make you look like a hero ... until you **stack**.

leaning is an important part of steering. When you are leaning into a corner at speed, keep your inside pedal **high** so you don't **catapult** into the air. When braking in the wet, remember to **squeeze** your brakes on earlier than normal because it can take 50% longer to stop. If you apply your front brake only, you could **flip**. When you are going down steep hills, you need to slip **back** on your seat, & keep **low**.

Many "gun" riders think they know more than they do, but riding bikes involves a **complex** set of skills that requires great **concentration** in order to have the best fun without **shredding** yourself.