

KEEPING IT UP

Emergency Stops and how to avoid them



1. Some of the most gut-wrenching moments while riding occur when something magically appears in front of you and you have to jam on the brakes to avoid a collision. You can make life easier by learning how to avoid these situations altogether, or knowing exactly what to do when it comes time to stop suddenly. The quickest way to stop is by using a combination of both front and rear brakes. The front brake should be applied gradually, rather than grabbed suddenly. This will decrease the chance of it locking up. The rear brake should be used firmly, to the point of impending lock up. Both tires will howl on the verge of lock up, and that's when the quickest stops are made. Find an empty parking lot and practice different scenarios including bumps, while turning, and in the rain.



2. While riding, you should be scanning the road ahead, looking for anything that may cross your path unexpectedly. Note the characteristics of the surface you're riding on and be ready to use the brakes accordingly. Keep one or two fingers on the front brake lever and your foot over the rear brake pedal. If you can't see the road ahead for the distance you'll need to stop at the speed you're traveling, slow down. Check your mirrors regularly. Be aware of what is around you and try to avoid being followed too closely. In a panic situation, the last thing you need is to be rear-ended. Observing your surroundings and planning escape routes for any possibility should be a constant exercise while riding.



3. There are times when it may be best to do something other than brake to get out of a bind. For instance, in this photo the rider can either stop suddenly to avoid a collision with the car or—since he's been paying attention and knows there is no other traffic around—simply pull a quick countersteer to stay out of danger. A panic stop leaves you open to other dangers during and after the stop. If it's at all possible, use a safer alternative.



4. When you must brake, don't panic and grab everything you can. Use the brakes just like you've practiced. Try to get a look in the mirrors while braking to see if there's danger behind or to the side. This can help you find an escape route. In this example a truck is in the oncoming lane, but the rider can brake hard momentarily and then, when the truck is safely past, move to that lane. Try to avoid turning while on the brakes, especially if the surface is bumpy or wet. With practice and forethought, you can make your daily ride safer and less stressful.

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