

ASK THE RIDING COACH

With Rapid Training Coach Ryan Decarteret

'Can some YouTube technique videos really help you ride better?'

Q A MATE OF mine watches loads of riding technique videos on YouTube and says he's learned a lot. But I think he's actually more dangerous. He now trail-brakes into almost every bend and rides very close to oncoming cars on left-handers, saying he's in the right place and is being 'inch perfect' accurate. What do you think?
Lawrence Green

A THERE IS SOME interesting stuff online, but everything is 100% dependent on the quality of the source. Your examples are classic cases of someone taking a principle and sticking to it, no matter what.

Yes, the best position to be in when approaching a left-hand bend is as far to the right as possible, to open up your visibility - he's right about that. But an

expert rider assesses hazards such as traffic, road surfaces and junctions and takes these into account when choosing their line.

When there's oncoming traffic, the oncoming car or lorry only needs to cut the corner slightly and you're suddenly dealing with a serious crash - the combined closing speed means there's usually no time to get out of the way.

Similarly, the presence of pedestrians, junctions and poor road surfaces all mean we may have to sacrifice the ideal line for more safety or better grip.

Fundamentally, your mate needs to remember why we move to the middle of the road: to open up the visibility and see danger earlier. And if you see danger, you need to react to it. It's not much consolation knowing you were riding accurately right by the central white line if you get clobbered by a lorry.

He also needs to ask himself - if he has to move away from the middle of the carriageway by a foot or so, as I'm suggesting, what is he actually compromising? Is he really travelling so quickly that moving that distance will mean he has to slow down radically? I wouldn't have thought so.

The same applies to right-handers, where I often see riders hugging the far left of the road, riding where all the potholes and dead badgers are. It's usually better to move a foot or so nearer the middle of the road to the

clean tarmac where there is better traction - and less chance of picking up a nail in your tyre.

It's a similar story with trail braking, where you drag the brakes as you turn into a corner. There are any number of videos on YouTube saying that this is essential for fast road riding, when it most definitely isn't.

The key problem on the road is that by combining braking and cornering forces, your front tyre traction can easily be maxed out when you may need some in reserve if something unpredictable happens or you cock up.

There are certainly times when an expert rider will use trail braking on the road, but understanding when and where to do it is key.

Motorcycling is a practical skill and thinking in terms of rules is too rigid - you have to be flexible. That's why at Rapid we coach riders to understand not just what to do, but why and when as well. It means they can adapt and flow, rather than apply rules.

I realise all of this puts you in a tricky position, because your mate is unlikely to be easily dissuaded from his internet wisdom. I suggest you book both of you on to a riding course with a reputable company such as Rapid and leave it up to the coach to sort him out! **R**



Having spent seven years as a surveillance rider with the National Crime Agency, Ryan Decarteret is one of Britain's most skilled, safest and most qualified road riders



▲ Videos can be useful but there's always a 'but'



The Rapid team includes TT racers, a BSB squad, and police and surveillance riders. They are the most highly qualified professionals in the business and their unique, no-nonsense courses are designed to help riders be the best they can be. **More info at www.rapidtraining.co.uk**