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RIDE has teamed up with Rapid Training to give you the chance to win a full day of training with an expert riding coach. The training – worth £495 – will identify habits that may be holding you back, along with those elements of your riding style that can take you forward. You'll learn how to consistently carve late-apex lines, plus how to see and interpret detail at speed, how to develop an intuitive response to whatever comes your way and how to handle your bike with precision and ease. All Rapid's coaches are trained to Police Class 1 standard and can adapt the course to suit all levels and experience.

You can enter the competition at [rapidtraining.co.uk/ride-rapid-competition](http://rapidtraining.co.uk/ride-rapid-competition)



▼ Okay, so the bird's got the best view – but you can improve yours too

# SEEING EVERYTHING

How brushing up on your visual skills – and learning to take in everything that your eyes REALLY see – will make you quicker, safer and feel more in control

Words Ryan Decarteret Pictures Too Fast Media

▼ Look where you're going: sounds obvious, but it's a skill to be learned



**O**NCE YOU'VE GOT your lines, steering and throttle control up to a reasonable standard (see previous Masterclass episodes), it's time to hone the one skill that could completely transform your riding: vision. Accomplished riders can see and interpret far more detail much earlier than novices, and at far higher speeds, which allows them much more time and space to react and effortlessly handle whatever comes their way. It may look like a freakish talent when you're trying to keep up with a faster rider, but it's most definitely not – these visual skills can be learned.

But, like any other skill, your ability to read the road will develop in proportion to the amount of focused practice you dedicate to it. Riding experience alone can only get you so far – so, no matter what level you're at, the following pages could dramatically improve your riding. ➔

# SUMMER RIDING MASTERCLASS: PART 4



**EMPTY JUNCTION - OR IS IT?**

▲ Take your observation to the next level: if a car arrives at the junction, you want to have spotted that

## Improve your observation

There are three ways of improving your observation. Firstly, if you see hazards earlier, you'll have more time to process the implications and develop a plan. Keeping your eyes up and looking further ahead is a good start and most riders – even experienced ones – don't look far enough ahead. The trick is not to be complacent and to keep checking where you're looking – it's easy for your gaze to be drawn in by hazards as they approach.

Secondly, learn to see more detail. With focused practice, you can take in more detail ahead and behind you. By consciously noting exactly what you see – perhaps saying it out loud to focus your brain – you can force yourself to be more attentive. So instead of just seeing a corner, you see a right-hander under some trees with a van approaching from the other direction.

Thirdly, you get in the habit of continuously observing – we call it 'rolling road vision'. This means you continuously scan and update your observation rather than fixating on any particular hazard. So, with our corner example, we might update the observation when we realise the van will arrive at the corner at exactly the same time as we will, and that the right-hander is followed by a junction.

## Supercharge your interpretation

Highly developed observation skills are not enough. If you want to achieve your potential you must learn to make sense of what you see, and assess the implications accurately and almost instantly. It's no use seeing the van in our example nice and early if we don't realise that it may cut the corner.

The easiest way to make sure you do this is to continuously apply the 'so what?' test. Say you see an adverse camber. *So what?* It could affect your traction and throw you off line. You see a bike in the rear-view mirror gaining quickly. *So what?* It may affect your decision to use your brakes. You see an empty side road. *So what?* A car may suddenly arrive as you approach and are past the point of no return.



**EYES UP - LOOK FURTHER AHEAD**



**SPEED, POSITION, GEAR. ALL PLANNED**

▼ Forward planning is important - but be prepared to improvise

**'A car might arrive as you approach and are past the point of no return'**

## Make a plan

Once the 'so what?' test has thrown up a potential hazard, you have to decide what to do about it. This is the planning stage, when you decide where to position the bike, what speed to go, and what gear to be in. You may also need to consider what signal to give other road users, and when to do it.

In the real world, we're often juggling position, speed and gear relative to multiple, simultaneous hazards, and making decisions based on our view of the best balance between them. This is where complexity creeps in and why we can't ride by a simple formula.

As we found when talking about lines (RiDE, June 2023), there is rarely one single best way to do anything. We may need to compromise our view and move to a more central position to stay clear of a hazard, for example. The truth is, no two bends are the same; and even if they were, no two rides through them would be the same. Planning decisions are dynamic and complex, involving trade-offs and prioritisation. And the faster we ride, the faster they have to be made, and the more important it becomes to get them right. 🧠



NEW TO THE UK FOR 2023



# SUMMER RIDING MASTERCLASS: PART 4

## Vision in corners

Registering early that there is a bend is the first step because then it's on your radar and as you get closer you'll start to pick up warning signs – chevrons, road markings, other hazards and cross-views (over hedgerows etc). The basic rule is: the more paintwork and furniture, the more severe the bend (councils only pay for all that if enough people crash).

As you get closer you'll have information on which way the bend appears to go, its severity, and if it is a single or double bend. Closer still and you'll see the road surface and camber, which may require last-minute adjustments to your plan.

By this stage you'll start using the limit point, or vanishing point. This is the furthest point you can see into a bend, and is where the nearside kerb appears to meet the far kerb from your viewpoint. That spot is the limit point, and how it moves relative to you gives useful information about whether your speed is about right, too fast or could maybe be just a bit faster.

So, if the limit point remains static as you ride into the bend, the bend is likely to be a tight one and you should consider slowing down. The longer it stays static, the tighter the bend is likely to be. If the limit point moves away from you as you approach, then it's likely to be a fairly loose bend.

Once the limit point begins to move away from you at the same speed as you approach it, that confirms you're at the correct speed. Then, as the limit point starts to move away from you faster than you are approaching it, the bend is opening up and you can begin to consider smoothly rolling on the throttle.

A word of warning about the limit point (and why 'likely' crops up so much above): it is only one tool and fixating on it can stop you searching for other crucial information. For example, the limit point may be moving away from you, but if you haven't also observed that there's a junction coming up, you could well be accelerating into danger. **R**

► Thanks to the rider's peripheral vision, he has that junction in his sights until he's clear of it

▼ Long white lines/short gaps: that's a hazard warning, so he's riding accordingly



## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

### ✔ Start slowly

The key to developing road reading skills is to start slow and go for detail. Knock 10% off your usual speed and use the extra time you've given yourself to focus on how early you see new information and how much detail you gather. Don't forget that this is a continuous process (rolling road vision) and you need to get into a habit of doing it, so make sure you keep practising.

### ✔ Talk to yourself

Once you're confident you're beginning to see more detail, focus on interpreting it by adding the 'so what?' test. This is where adding a commentary can help – by verbalising the question and answering it yourself, you're forcing your brain to shift information into the conscious part of the brain. Doing it can be tiring, so try short bursts of practice on every ride. Consistent practice can have a huge effect here, and you'll notice your speed picking up naturally – don't force it.

### ✔ Watch racers

If you're in any doubt about the advantages to be had from looking a long way ahead, note where top racers look. It's most obvious at hairpins, where their heads swivel towards the exit almost as soon as they enter the corner, but you sometimes see it on fast corners, where they're clearly looking way beyond the apex that they're about to hit with millimetric precision.

### ✔ Practice using your peripheral vision

This is perhaps the most advanced vision skill. To develop this, log a hazard as you see it (an empty junction, maybe) then monitor it in your peripheral vision – you won't see detail, but you will see movement or change, which is all you need. It sounds tricky (because it is), but if you crack it with practice, you can spend more time looking further ahead, giving you more time to plan. Your natural riding speed will inevitably increase.



**KNOW YOUR LINES**

### NEXT MONTH

Braking. How using your brakes to their full potential can unlock your riding and make every ride-out a pleasure.