

ASK THE RIDING COACH

With Rapid Training Coach Ryan Decarteret

‘Do I need to do some work on my throttle control?’

Q I’VE HAD A great summer on my BMW R1200GS and my riding has really come on. However, downshifts can still feel clunky, and my pillion does moan about the bike ‘being jerky’ in and out of corners. I’m wondering if my throttle control needs some work?

Bob Hudson, email

A FIRST THING TO say is well done for not just blaming the bike. Pre-R1250GSs haven’t got the slickest of gearboxes, but they can certainly be ridden more smoothly than you’re describing, so perhaps you could improve your throttle control.

Starting with the basics, the first thing to check is whether you’re using the throttle as a handle rather than a control, and holding on too tight. That can play havoc not just with downshifts,

but almost everything else because your throttle is an important way of controlling how weight is transferred between the front and rear tyres.

There’s lots of advice about how to hold the throttle – like a screwdriver, for example – but I’m a fan of doing what’s comfortable. So, experiment and find the best grip that allows your wrist and arm to feel loose.

Once you’ve cracked that, you may find your downshifts improve dramatically because the little blip of revs you need to raise the engine speed to suit the lower gear will be crisper and more accurate. In case you’re not clear on the order: you need to pull in the clutch, blip the throttle while selecting the new gear, then let out the clutch.

If your grip is light, the slickness of downshifting then comes down to practice. You can do this on every ride – whenever you’re in a 30mph limit, change up and down the box while maintaining the same speed. You’ll soon see improvements.

As for ‘being jerky in and out of corners’, this could have several causes. The first thing to check is how far ahead you’re looking and how well you’re planning. If you keep getting surprised by corners (and other hazards) and have to slam the throttle shut, I’d suggest you need to work on your vision and planning before thinking about anything else.

However, if it is purely a throttle control problem, a good start is to understand what the objective is. For anything other

than a fast, open, sweeping bend, your aim is to turn into the corner on a closed throttle – ie, you’ve smoothly closed the throttle on the approach, perhaps using the brakes to help set the right speed for the corner.

This allows weight to get over the front tyre, so when you confidently turn the bike you’ve got plenty of front grip and steering feel.

With the turn executed, then it’s a case of applying a positive throttle – just enough to maintain speed until the bend opens up when you can progressively open the throttle, increasing revs as the bike becomes upright.

By the sounds of it, you might be too aggressive at either end of the throttle movement, chopping it closed on corner approach then jerking the throttle open when you see the exit. On a dry day it’s not the end of the world (though annoying for pillions), but in the wet it could be disastrous.

You may even be jerking the throttle open on corner entry, as a lot of riders believe they should go into corners with some throttle on. In fact, it’s far safer (and faster) to let the engine slow you down into a corner and then pull you out, rather than having the engine pull you in. I know I bang on about it a lot, but slow in, fast out is the way ahead... **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



BMW R1200GS doesn’t have the slickest gearbox so practise throttle control on downshifts


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