



Cornering Confidence

*The Formula for
100% Control in Curves*

Jon DeVecchio

Street Skills LLC Publishing
2018

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Warning: Riding a motorcycle is
inherently dangerous and can result in
serious injury or death. The
author/publisher disclaims any liability
incurred in connection with the use of
the techniques and concepts described
in this book. Always ride within your
personal limits. Always wear full gear
head to toe and observe all traffic laws.

Right: Jon DelVecchio (left) teaching a
rider the “secret weapon”.



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Acknowledgements

As a 10 year old kid I couldn't have imagined being here today, from reading my first motorcycle book at the book fair to authoring one. It would be two decades after getting bit by the motorcycle bug before I'd actually go ahead and do it.

Like many, I started with the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Basic RiderCourse. My only goals at the time were riding around town and being cool. After a few years I discovered the adventures and thrills of sport touring. Since then I've been to countless places off the beaten path searching for the best roads. If it weren't for travel by motorcycle, my understanding of our great nation would be much smaller. True Americana cannot be found only on the boulevards.

Of course on a motorcycle, the journey is more exciting than the destination if you do it right. In order to enjoy excursions along the vast miles of pavement, you'll come across some twisty sections of road. It is for the full enjoyment of these roads between populated areas that this book was written.

Cornering Confidence wouldn't have been possible without the accomplishments of many others. Two people came along at the right moment in my life to set me on the right path.

If it weren't for Bill Scharvogel's Leaf & Bean coffee shop, I might have gotten into the bike show and bar hopping scene. Not meaning to diminish those activities, they just aren't for me. Hanging around the Bean I got a chance to meet riders that had cornering skills and an appetite for road trips. Bill would say something like "go to the Forksville General Store for lunch" and off I'd go discovering

the wonderful places connected by great motorcycling roads.

Around the same time I was exposed to sport riding I met Ron Hinz. Ron has been a riding instructor since the 1980's and operates Learn2Ride, Inc. I became one of his certified coaches in 2007. The best way to learn something is to teach it. I've been learning ever since.

With this book, I'm standing on the shoulders of giants. Although many individuals have influenced my teachings, the following experts have had the most impact. *Cornering Confidence* is a mix of techniques promoted by Keith Code, David Hough, Nick Ienatsch, Lee Parks and Reg Pridmore.

In 2015, I launched my riding school Street Skills LLC. That year I hosted my first course at the New York Safety Track. When photographer Bryan Finch heard the news he offered to shoot the event for me. At the time we were just acquaintances and didn't even discuss money until I handed him some cash afterwards. That's the kind of guy he is, genuinely interested in people and motorcycles. He's attended my track days ever since and all of the action shots in this book were taken by Bryan.

I'd like to give a shout out to Dave Playfair, my good friend who lent me his technical expertise on a few points.

Thanks to all of my students over the past ten years. I've learned right alongside of you.

Riding a motorcycle has been my guilty pleasure as a family man. I appreciate the patience of my wife and children when I so often choose to turn my attention to motorcycling.



Introduction

You're probably a pretty good rider. Maybe you're even a great rider. But how do you know for sure?

When it comes to operating a motorcycle, most people overestimate their skill level. We commonly refer to this as someone "in over their head". After several years of riding, I was fortunate to discover that increased knowledge led to more questions than answers. This isn't an easy awakening. Incompetent riders have little way of knowing they are incompetent. Their feedback loop is inefficient and distorted.

It's basic psychology. Incompetent people cannot recognize their lack of skill without effort. Because they don't know what good skills look like, they cannot recognize genuine skill in others. This is technically referred to as "unconscious incompetence". In simplest terms, this means

someone doesn't realize they are bad at something. Thankfully, individuals can recognize their lack of skill after exposure to educational activities. Realizing their performance is bad motivates people to improve. The very best riders achieve "unconscious competence". In other words, they perform at a high level without deliberate thought.

This competency continuum certainly describes my progression from beginner level to mastery (Fig. 1). Although the term "mastery" includes a firm command of something, it doesn't mean knowing it all. Masters aren't experts because they have learned everything there is to know about a subject. They are masters because they realize there is always more to discover on a topic. As Leonardo da Vinci once said, "Poor is the pupil who does not surpass his master."

For motorcyclists, understanding that there is more to learn fuels peak performance at any skill level. Knowledge provides something immediate to work on and propels us in the direction of mastery.

How can you become a master rider? Accelerate the transition by overcoming the human tendency to limit growth. Open-mindedness to different ideas is the key to success. Focus on precise control of your motorcycle.

Success is only a one shot deal, it's not a permanent condition. Examples of success can include a fun ride, years of experience, passing a skills course or remaining crash free. Mastery on the other hand is the constant pursuit of excellence. Just because a rider has been successful in the past does not guarantee future success.

It's not for lack of resources that riders become stagnant. There are many books written on riding skills. Authors agree on general concepts and there is some redundancy. However, they all stress different things and often share their own unique insight. Buy these books. Highlight the pages. Take notes and compare. Then try what you learned while riding your motorcycle.

Every motorcycling magazine has a skills or safety column. These are generally short articles prompting readers to move in a certain direction. Take action from them.

There is a variety of advanced riding courses available. I'll bet you can find multiple course offerings close to home if you look into it.

Refresh

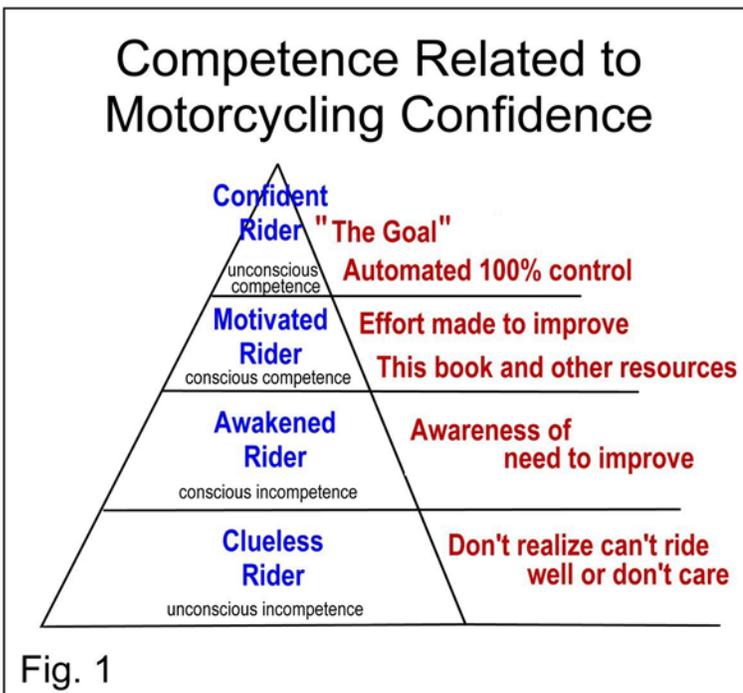
Develop a previously introduced skill that has eluded you.

Experience needs to intersect with an appropriate technique. A novice's exposure to an advanced skill may be difficult to acquire. But as a rider's abilities increase, it becomes easier to attach higher level information to previous learning. This explains why some people take the same advanced skills course repeatedly, yet still come away with satisfying improvements.

There are no shortcuts. There is no magic wand. With time and experience certain techniques become more relevant. It's not possible to be exposed to a technique once and master it. Sometimes people reject a technique at first, only later to find value in it. Don't assume that because you are aware of counter steering or trail braking that you fully benefit from it. Riding skills are not like on/off switches, but more like the dimming style. We progress along a spectrum. Revisit advanced techniques as your miles accumulate.

Affirm

Discover that you have solid riding skills, as confirmed by the information presented in books read and courses taken. This validates your confidence level.



In order to defeat incompetence, a motorcyclist must realize the difference between past and future performance. Since skill development activities lead us to improvement, a personalized self-discovery program is a good start. "Learn, Refresh, Affirm" is a useful mindset as you pursue riding excellence.

Learn

Learn something new that increases your enjoyment, control or safety.

The Street Skills Mindset:

*"Learn,
Refresh,
Affirm"*

Who is this Book For?

Many riders equate high performance motorcycles with top riding skills. As if owning a proper motorcycle separates the best riders from the rest. An elite group of riders are never satisfied with *their performance* on a motorcycle. They are motivated to get more control and enjoyment. These riders strive for a perfect ride, like bowling a perfect game. You can't get a score of 300 if you knock down only 9 pins in the fifth frame. That's why a perfect ride is so elusive. There are so many potential moments for even slight errors.

This book was written for the special type of motorcyclist in the pursuit of precise cornering ability. Those that understand riding well isn't something that can be bought or handed to them. Operating a motorcycle at the highest level requires skills that must be acquired through effort and determination.

Riding to certain individuals is more of a personal journey than a pastime. In order to do it well and for a long period of time, attention must be focused on self-reflection and growth.

Regardless of the years or distances ridden, mastering the ride has more to do with a positive attitude toward learning than simply racking up the miles. Time in the saddle does provide valuable experience. However, without a learning mentality riders are simply reinforcing mediocre skills or limiting their abilities.

Cornering Confidence Goals

I ask my student groups if it's possible to ride a motorcycle with 100% confidence in curves. This question catches them totally off guard. It forces them on-the-spot to evaluate their true cornering comfort and how effective they are at controlling the motorcycle.

Some answer "yes" or "no", but most are silent. The way I see it, the "yes" responders believe full control is possible and want to know if I can teach it to them. "No" responders are doubtful and expect me to reinforce the idea it's all a crapshoot. The quiet people seem dazed by the concept.

Of course, the answer is "yes". It is possible to corner with absolute 100% confidence. Accepting any less is a dangerous proposition.

Confident riding cannot be acquired spontaneously. Knowledge and experience are essential. However, this book and its action steps can get you there quicker with purposeful practice.

Cornering Confidence provides riders with a simple progression of skills to elevate their riding within a short period of time. These techniques can take years to discover separately, but have been condensed into a nice simple formula.

Stages of Motor Learning

How are you going to acquire the techniques presented here? While this book or any other resource can provide information, the end result is based solely on the rider. You have to make the connections between the content, your brain and your muscles.

The three stages of motor learning are cognitive, associative and autonomous (Fig. 2). The goal of confident riding is to reach the autonomous level. In this stage, a person automatically performs a skill with little effort. Few errors are made internally; therefore more attention is placed on external perception. Unfortunately, you cannot reach this third level before the first two.

In the first cognitive stage, learners are presented with what needs to be done. Sequential steps to accomplish something are sought. Learners are motivated and possess high focus. This book can be connected to this stage.

Experimentation and practice represent the second associative stage. Applying what you learn in this book to your riding represents this level. Through experience, a learner in this stage makes subtle adjustments seeking the most effective way to accomplish a task. Proper timing of actions requires time and practice to become aware of what works and what doesn't.

Stages of Motor Learning Related to Motorcycling Confidence

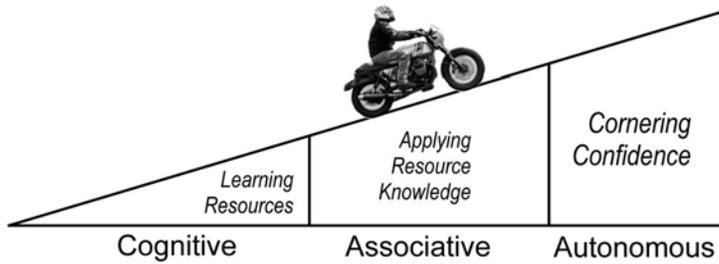


Fig. 2

techniques that work for them. This book is a mosaic of techniques. I have handpicked the techniques best suited for street riding and present them in a sequence making them easier to acquire. Consider it a how-to resource best kept in a tank bag.

Cornering Confidence is not meant to duplicate or compete with more detailed books by motorcycling experts. Keep in mind that there is no definitive authority in the riding skills debate. Various riders may choose this or that from certain experts. Something that works well for one may not for another. There isn't just one path to advanced riding for everyone. Exposure to different ideas improves the odds of finding what works for

you.

While I would rather steer away from engineering concepts, discussing certain motorcycle characteristics makes it impossible. This book uses common language and explanations to communicate points. Try not to get distracted on any particular scientific theory. These techniques work with only a basic understanding of how a motorcycle operates.

Although some valuable situational awareness techniques are presented, the focus is on physical motorcycle control.

How to Use this Book

Each chapter begins with performance objectives followed by a rationale section. Related techniques and exercises are presented next. The chapters end with action steps for practice and self-evaluation.

This book uses a part-to-whole instructional strategy. Think of it as a simple formula for motorcycling confidence and control. Techniques are presented in isolation for targeted development. Work on the individual techniques with the understanding that using them together is the ultimate goal.

Achieve the chapter objectives and then move on to the next. The skills are sequenced to build upon those previous. While some of the techniques may seem trivial, they have been specifically

What's in this Book?

With the exception of a few things I've discovered, most of what I'm teaching isn't new. After studying various techniques for over 15 years, I admit that several presented here are controversial. I've tried to catch lightning in a bottle and share what has brought me excitement on two wheels.

Cornering Confidence is not a riding fundamentals book, however some basic skills are presented or expanded upon. Learning advanced techniques requires a solid understanding of basic skills and when to deviate from them. I once worked with a chef who made the most bizarre and unusual recipes. After asking him how he learned to create such interesting meals, his response was simple: "You have to know the rules before you can break them." Part of being an excellent chef or motorcyclist is knowing under what circumstances to apply certain fundamental rules and understanding the purpose of any variations.

There are various methods of controlling a motorcycle. Regarding confidence and enjoyment, these techniques have been chosen for their simplicity and effectiveness. The skills presented are for self-evaluation and experimentation. They work for me, but may not be right for you. That's okay.

No practical resource can include the entire body of work related to motorcycling. There isn't a single piece of information that is going to make you a pro. Riders should build a collage of different

included and arranged to accelerate your learning. Trust the progression.

Are you ready to ride?

In order to ride with precision, you'll need a precision instrument. Your motorcycle is your scalpel, therefore regular maintenance and tire replacement should be a top priority. Comfortable riding apparel also gives you an advantage against mediocrity. Overall health and fitness make a difference in rider performance, especially when the miles add up. Save the celebratory beer for after the riding day is over.

Disclaimer: For good measure, please allow me to express that you are responsible for your own safety when practicing the techniques in this book. Motorcycle operation and control should be your number one priority when practicing new skills. Do not ride beyond your comfort or skill level at any time.

Most importantly, have fun building your skills. The knowledge acquired in this book can bring many miles of enjoyment. Contact me with any questions or clarifications. Join the Street Skills community at streetskills.net. There you can sign up for a monthly newsletter and follow on social media.