

Sharp Corners

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What the matter? The situation is explained this way by **Coach Fred Matheny**:

"A few years ago, my wife and I drove from Colorado to Ohio to visit relatives. I was lusting badly for a ride after 2 long days in the car. When I finally got on the bike, I felt like hammering. I chanced upon some curvy pavement and let it rip.

"Big mistake. I underestimated the severity of the corners and overshot one especially tight bend, heading straight for the trees, poison ivy and a barbed wire fence. With my tires chattering in a full-fledged 2-wheel drift, I saved it just before catapulting over the rusty wire and into the itchy undergrowth."

Sooner or later you'll probably make this mistake, too, and overcook a corner. What should you do if it feels like you won't make it through?

Here's the Coach's help:

- **Lean, lean, lean!** Generally, it's better to increase your cornering angle even though you may lose traction and fall to the inside. Consider the options: Either slide down or ride off the outside of the road and hit things like guardrails, trees or big air (for a while) -- assuming a motor vehicle doesn't stop you first.

Of course, if the shoulder is smooth and carpeted in plush grass, running off the road makes good sense. But you'll rarely have time to check and decide. In most cases, the normal reaction -- to stay upright for as long as possible -- can lead to worse injuries. Lean more and you might make it through.

- **Stand hard.** Give your tires the best chance of maintaining their grip by standing heavily on your outside pedal. Put virtually all of your weight on it. Press hard and push your bike into the turn. When you're doing it right, the machinery will be angled more than your body.
- **Brake, then don't.** Take off as much speed as you can before the turn, then release the levers. This is another technique that goes against instinct. But braking in a turn makes a bike want to straighten, the opposite of what you need it to do.

That said, you can usually feather the rear brake in a turn without dire consequences. It may slow you just enough to make it through. But be ready to let up if the wheel grabs, chatters and threatens your control.

Caution! Don't use the front brake while turning. This goes for normal cornering, too, not just panic conditions. Front braking when the bike is leaning will point you anywhere but where you're aiming. It can even cause the front wheel to wash out abruptly -- and down you go.