

# **Picking Up A Big Bike - By Yourself**

**OK, so most motorcyclists go to a parking lot to practice riding skills, not to dump their bikes so they can have the pleasure of picking them up again. I guess my sister and I are not exactly 'normal' - we like to think of ourselves as 'odd ducks' - because last summer we did just that. Also, while attending the Black Bike Week I witnessed a few dropped bikes in the parking lots and on the street. It's not hard to do and I have done it myself several times in the motorcycle history, and it's never a joy, especially in front of people. However, if you learn the correct way to recover from the drop you will also prevent injury to body, can't help you with the injury to the ego.**

**I visited my sister Nean in KY last year because at 56 years old she took up motorcycling. So I took a leisurely ride through the Appalation Mountains to train her on riding, but first she had to learn to recover from a fall. After Nean practiced driving the Wing by herself I had her dump it on its left side for me. Though she was not going to try to pick it up herself, since she had never dumped the Wing before I wanted her to learn how without ending up under the thing.**

**She dumped it on grass covered firm ground and then I approached the bike and considered all I had heard about how to pick up 900 pounds of bike by myself. I weigh in at 240 Lbs as you are all well aware, and its all muscle, well maybe not all of it. Frankly, I have picked up many a bike in Police Motor School and after learning the technique it's not all that hard, even with a wing.**

**Virtually everything I had read in the past on the subject argued that you are not to try to lift the bike with your arms or back - that you should use the largest muscles in your body instead - your legs. So that is exactly what I intended to do - and this practice event would be more learning than practice for me as I had never before tried to pick up a down Wing by myself.**

**Let me tell you that a dumped bike on grass is harder to pick up than one on the street for two reasons:**

*The case guard and rear guard dig into the ground just a little, but that makes the lean angle of the down bike significantly more than it would be if it were lying on pavement.*

*Getting good traction with your feet on grass can be iffy at best.*

The significance of the fact that the bike rests lower when on ground versus pavement is that you are often unable to get a low enough purchase on it to bring it up without lifting. That is, the secret to 'picking up' a big bike by yourself is that you *PUSH it up rather than LIFT it up*, and if it is laying over at more than a 45 degree angle you will have to do some lifting!

The smaller the angle of lean (relative to vertical), the easier it is to make that angle still smaller. In other words, it is the first inch or so of movement that is the hardest. So, the very first thing you should do is try to get the lean angle to be as small as possible. If you are on an incline, for example, twist the bike until its tires are facing downhill.

The next thing you do is to turn the front wheel as far as possible TOWARDS the ground. If possible, turn it to its stop and lock it in place. (I found that on the ground I could not get mine turned all the way - perhaps I am not strong enough, or the bike was leaned too far over.) You may have to jerk hard on the handlebar to get the wheel turned, but this is a very important step. Why? Because by turning the wheel towards the ground the frame of the motorcycle is lifted off the ground. This means you are reducing the lean angle before you even begin to try to pick up the machine.

If the bike happens to be on its left side, you should check that the side stand is up, if possible. If it is on its right side, you MUST make sure the side stand is down (before you pick up the bike!)

If possible, insure that the bike is in a low gear or, in the case of some GoldWings, in reverse, so that there is minimal chance of the bike rolling when you get it back on its wheels.

Next, you are going to plant your butt (not your hip) on the seat. So, face away from the motorcycle and lean against the seat such that the top half of your cheeks are above your contact with the seat and the bottom half are pressed solidly against the seat. Your feet should be spread no wider than your shoulder width and planted FIRMLY (you are wearing RUBBER SOLED boots, right?)

**on the ground away from the bike by about three feet. Your knees should be bent at about a 40 to 50 degree angle - anything more than that and you will probably not be able to straighten them. Indeed, though you want some bend, the less bend in your knees that you can manage, the easier this effort will be - what limits your choice is the length of your legs.**

**Now you need to grasp your motorcycle with your hands on both sides of your body. You need to hold onto firm structures, but because you should not be doing anything with your hands other than guiding and possibly a little lifting when you start, they can be parts of your fairing, a firmly mounted part of your backrest, a passenger handrail, under your seat, or handlebar. What you hold is not very important except that it is firmly attached (no give) and is conveniently located.**

**Now simply walk backwards as you PUSH against the seat. (I remind you that if the bike has a lean angle of 45 degrees or more you must also LIFT - be careful!)**

**As you approach vertical the vast majority of the bike's weight will be on the tires. Proceed slowly so as to prevent going too far and causing it to fall over on its other side. Once vertical, still facing away from the motorcycle, fish for the side stand with your left foot and bring it down. Then just let the bike lean over onto the stand.**

**If the bike had been on its right side when you started you already made sure that the side stand was down. So, in this case you simply ease the bike past vertical and let it come to rest on that side stand. Please note that if you are on an incline, my earlier instruction had you twist the bike such that the wheels face down slope. In this case you will need to be VERY careful about how fast you let the bike go past vertical or you may find yourself having to pick it up again from the other side! Indeed, it may be impossible for you to ease it past vertical without losing control of the bike again. (In this case I would try to change my body position so that it is facing the front of the bike (while it is vertical) and try to push the bike to a more level location - but REMEMBER that your side stand is down!)**

**So now you know what I learned out there on the parking lot with Elaine. I was successful in picking up my GoldWing by myself after she dumped it on its left side - but because of the very severe lean angle caused by the fact that the guards dug themselves partly into the dirt I had to do considerable lifting at the beginning. This left my upper thighs sore from the effort. Still, I had done it and the feeling of success was more important than the slight quivering of my thigh muscles.**

I had Nean dump the bike again, this time on its right side. After insuring that the side stand was down and locked I successfully repeated the lift maneuver by myself. Again, my upper thighs were sore as a result. But let me tell you how happy I was to discover that I could actually pick up a dumped Goldwing by myself!! It was not easy, but nobody expected it to be - though it was easier than I expected it to be.

This is after all why we went out to the parking lot - to practice what we each felt was hard for us individually - so that whatever it was would become easier.

## Do you have a plan to stop in time?????

It takes most people about 4.5 seconds to read this sentence.

4.5 seconds is not a lot of time - but it could be the rest of your life. 4.5 seconds is also (not really a coincidence) about how long it SHOULD take you to stop your motorcycle after applying your brakes at 60 MPH!

Stopping a motorcycle as fast as possible requires that you master only a few fundamentals:

**Alertness** - No matter how fast your reflexes are or how skillful you are with your brakes, if you don't see the need to stop, you won't.

**Reflexes** - First you need time to recognize a threat and decide to react to it, and then your fast reflexes take over and make the difference.

**Skill** - Under-utilizing your brakes is just as dangerous as over-doing it. **Don't believe the hype Use both front and rear brakes!!!!!!**

Let's get a feel for magnitudes.

It usually takes about .7 seconds to recognize a threat. A person with normal reflexes takes about .3 seconds to start braking from the moment he realizes he has to do so. Combined, that's about 1 full second from the time a threat presents itself to you and you begin to slow down.

At 60 MPH you travel **88 FEET** in 1 second!

That it takes you about .7 seconds to recognize the threat is a mental reality. But it does not necessarily take .3 seconds to react to it. The simple practice of

**always covering your front brake can shave a full tenth of a second (1/3!!) of that time away. That's almost 9 FEET!**

Assuming you have read my February braking tips, you have a good idea about how to use those brakes. Now let me try to give you a sense of magnitude associated with the skill part of braking.

Traffic Engineers have some rules-of-thumb they developed over time. They, for example, have found that if the street surface is dry, the average person can safely decelerate an automobile at the rate of 15 feet per second per second (fpsps). That is, an average person can slow down at this rate without any real likelihood that they will lose control in the process.

If the surface is wet they assume a deceleration rate of 10 fps is safely attainable by almost anyone.

Let's assume a wet street surface and that you are moving at 60 MPH. At a 10 fps deceleration rate it will take you 8.8 seconds to stop after you begin applying your brakes. (A total of 9.8 seconds from the time the threat we earlier talked about presents itself.) The distance you would travel before coming to a complete stop is 475 feet.

If, however, the road is dry, it would take you only a total of 6.9 seconds to stop, (including the 1 second recognition/reaction delay.) and the distance traveled until you came to rest would be 346 feet.

Clearly the more effective your braking, the less time it takes to stop, and the less distance traveled.

I think most of you know that your motorcycles can stop more quickly than can an automobile. Indeed, a professional motorcycle racer can obtain a 1g deceleration rate, or more, on his motorcycle. (1g deceleration is 32 fps.)

With practice, your braking skills should easily allow you to attain deceleration rates in excess of 20 fps. What would that mean in our example threat scenario?

It would mean that you could stop your motorcycle in a total of 5.4 seconds (including the 1 second delay.) and your total stopping distance would be only 281.5 feet!

By enhancing your braking skills with practice you can shave 64.5 feet and 1.5 seconds off 'normal' results. And you could shave off another nearly 9 feet just by covering your brakes. That brings the distance traveled before stopping down by about 73.5 feet.

73.5 feet is about four car-lengths!

The message is clear: You only hit that car if you don't quite stop in time. You might not hit it at all if you cover your brakes and practice your braking skills. Practice braking to the point of locking up the brakes. Meaning, full and hard braking practiced in a controlled environment will save you when the braking is a real emergency. Find a parking lot and bring a friend, safety reasons. Ensure the area is clear of debris and obstacles, and then start slowly and work your way up to 30-40 mph hard braking. Know the limitations of your bike but don't stop there. Brake and escape and always plan your escape route no matter what area you ride in. If on a two lane busy roadway you should understand that escaping into oncoming traffic may not be the best course of action. However, escaping off road into a clump of trees or guard rails may result in serious injuries. I can't predict what you need to do, but you can, based on the terrain. So look, plan, and mentally practice saving your life and the life of your passenger.

**Always have a plan.**

*Spider*