

This information is provided free of charge By Jim Gibson's MotoXcross Training inc.

The following information in this form is about motorcycle safety in off road and motocross track riding situations. Comments and suggestions are based on Jim Gibson's experiences in off road and motocross riding over the past 35+ years.

This information is intended as reference material only. Any use or application of this information is at the discretion and risk of the user. I intend to update and improve this form periodically.

Feel free to E-mail comments and or suggestions about this page.

Jim Gibson

### **Safety**

A little bit of common sense can go a long way. Riding a motorcycle initially can be a simple prospect in itself, but riding off road or at a track can present many serious issues. To ride a motorcycle off road at high speeds with near perfect control demands a very complex riding system. To achieve this kind of control it can and will take years of concentrated effort and practice. You cannot shortcut this process.

### **Safety / Track etiquette**

Know the track rules and follow them. Use common sense, take time to figure out how things work on and off the track.

### **Be aware of your surroundings**

- Look up (heads up), make good use of your peripheral vision.
- Know the limitations of you and your motorcycle.
- Don't ride over your head or out of control.
- Pay your dues with seat time and practice, not injuries.

### **How to ride in the pits**

Slow / 1st Gear / 5 miles per hour / Only slow riders ride fast in the pits.

### **How to get on and off the track**

- Make sure you get on the track going the right direction
- Use designated entrances and exits.
- If there are no designated exits or entrances, get on and off on a slow part of the track where you can be easily seen, Not on the back side of a jump or on a fast straight of way.
- Don't make sudden track crossings.
- If your going to get off the track merge way ahead of time to the side of the track that you are going to get of at.

- If you feel you have enough control you can raise your hand to let other riders know that you are getting off the track.
- If you are coming up on riders you should learn to read their body language I.E.
- If the turn coming up is to the left and the rider in front is going straight or leaning right (in the opposite direction) you have to yield to him I.E. go in his direction until you get slowed up enough to avoid a collision.

### **On the Track**

- Always Take one slow lap for viewing the track, checking track layout, track conditions and track changes.
- Hold your line, don't make sudden direction changes. Let the faster riders behind you find a way around you.
- Try to leave adequate space between you and the rider you are passing. If you accidentally get too close it's better to lean into the other rider with your shoulder and push the handlebars away from the other bike so the bars don't lock and cause you and or the other rider to go down.
- Learn to read the riders directions or body language, I. E. does he look out of control, does he look like he's going to fall, is he making unpredictable moves, is he going to get off the track some where ahead.
- For instance if an upcoming corner turns left and the rider up ahead is not leaning left but going straight or leaning right you can bet he's not going to turn.
- The rider behind must always yield to the rider ahead. In my opinion it's always the rider behind's obligation not to run into the rider ahead, and yet the rider in front should not make sudden moves that even the best rider may not be able to avoid a collision.
- Try to ride on tracks and in practices with riders of your size and ability and general speed.
- It is dangerous to consistently not be clearing jumps that other riders are clearing. You want to avoid jumping on or being jumped on, I.E. collision while jumping double jumps.

### **What to do when you fall**

- Get off the track before someone runs into you (if you can)  
(In areas where you can be seen)
  - Pick your bike up and get going quickly if you can't restart your bike in two or three kicks push the bike off the track.  
(On a blind jump)
  - 1) Look back up the track to oncoming traffic and get off the track without getting hit
  - 2) run up the side of the jump to the top so that you can flag down other riders until you can get someone to flag for you so you can recover your bike.
- Get to know the track and its surroundings before going full speed.

## **Assess a potentially dangerous area**

- Immovable features
- Is there anything at all surrounding the track that I would hit if I were to lose control and go off the track I.E. Tree, pole, fence, car, bldg., ECT.
- This kind of danger is very common in trail riding I.E. trees, rocks, cliffs, wash outs, ditches, road crossing.
- By being aware of your surroundings you can be more care full and or be able to react better to any potential loss of control.
- Double jumps: What kind of landing surface are you looking at?
- Will you and or your motorcycle be able to handle the landing if you come up short or over jump?
- Whoops: Are they deep and are the faces steep? If I get a little out of shape is my front wheel going to catch and or turn, causing me to dismount?
- Inconsistencies in track  
Ruts, potholes, bumps, mud, deep soft soil, dry slick, muddy slick.

## **What do you do if you spot a potentially dangerous situation?**

If you have a problem with something, bring it to the attention of an official.  
At the very least make yourself and your group aware of the problem so that you can avoid an incident.

## **Protective Gear**

- The more protection the better
- Helmet, Boots, Kneepads and or braces, chest protector with neck brace, elbow pads, long pants, and sleeves clothing.
- Size fit and adjustment
- Condition / Brake in period
- Gear should be in good condition to insure good protection.
- Make sure your gear is not to stiff to be able to control the bike properly.
- New boots may need to be broken in before you can ride normally.
- Keep goggles and lenses clean and without scratches.
- Use tear offs so you can keep your lenses unobscured.

## **Physical / Mental conditioning**

- The Better condition you are in the less likely you will be to get injured.
- If and when you do get injured it will probably be less severe and you will also recover faster.
- Always keep full concentration on riding and what's going on in the surrounding area.
- Riding is fun but at the same time it's serious business.
- When your riding it's never a good time to fool around.
- If you find yourself getting fatigued to the point where you cannot fully concentrate and your judgment may be impaired, get off the track and take a break until rested.

## **Learn to fall**

- Get gymnastics training, "tumbling" is probably the easiest way to learn.
- When you "low side", sometimes it's best to "lay the bike down".
- When you "high side", you have to step off, tuck and roll, tumble or slide. Don't try to stop the fall by "straight arming" or "straight legging" it.

## **Bike Maintenance**

- If your bike breaks at the wrong moment you could be in serious trouble.
- Read your manual and do all your basic maintenance.

## **Before every ride:**

- Check bike completely for loose nuts, bolts and spokes.
- Check your bike completely for stress cracks.
- Adjust and lube, chain and controls.
- Make sure motor and suspension is in smooth and consistent working condition.
- Any unpredictable reaction from your motorcycle could result in a crash and possible injury.

## **Riding Techniques**

### **Concentration**

- Focus intensely at the task at hand.
- Let the subconscious do its thing.
- Although you are relatively aware of everything going on around you, only focus on the things important to performing the task at hand.
- Don't ride too slow or easy or fool around on the track.
- Most accidents and injuries occur with a momentary lapse of concentration.

### **Visual**

- See everything, look ahead and anticipate the effect of the upcoming terrain.

### **Body form**

- Position and posture.

### **Balance**

- Stay centered while riding.

### **Connecting with the motorcycle**

- Feel everything while it happens.

### **Controls**

- Apply all controls progressively as you feel and realize the reaction to the application.