



PARKING LOT PRACTICE

A Parking Lot Practice project in May 1996 produced, among other things, a guide for those GWRRA people who might want to put on a PLP in their own chapter, but don't quite know how to go about it. This guide was intended as an outline, and was part of an all day workshop. I have included it here in the hope that it might be of help to someone. If after reading through it you need more detailed information, please feel free to e-mail Dave McElderry and I will be glad to answer any questions if I can.
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Disclaimer:

Every rider has his/her own level of expertise. Each individual shall be the sole determiner of his/her ability to perform any of the exercises contained within. The creators of this site and contributors of the exercises accept no liability for any personal injury or property damage which may occur while attempting these exercises. Instructions, hints, and other comments are the opinions of the author only, and should be followed only at the reader's discretion. Additionally, parking lot exercises are never intended to be a substitute for proper instruction from a qualified instructor. Take an MSF course often, and use the parking lot exercises to polish up on those skills you learned from the pros!

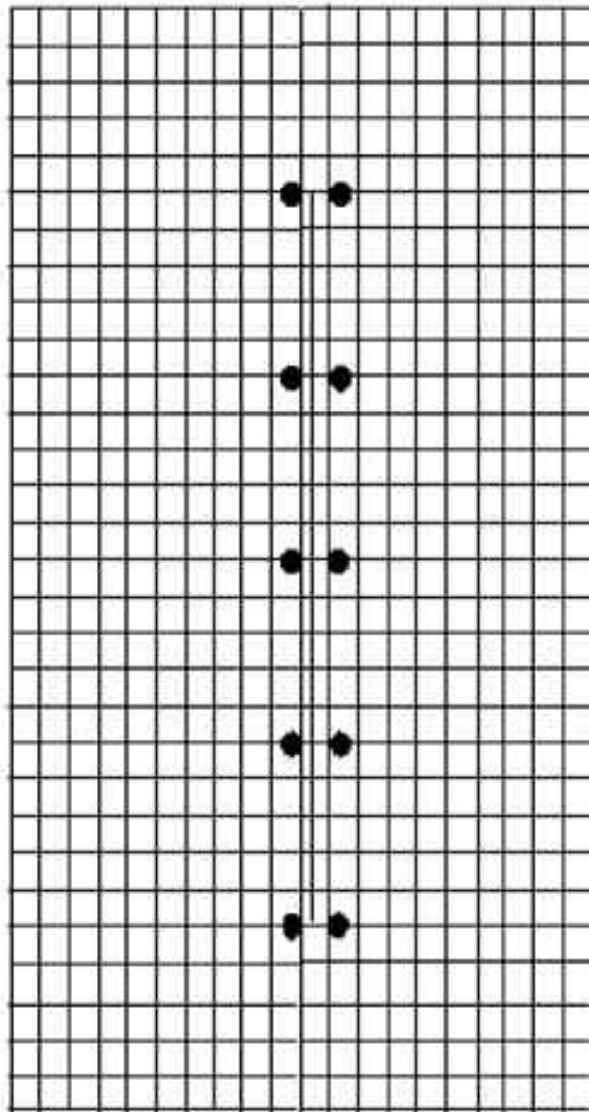
The Slow Ride

Cones are placed 2 feet apart (inside measure) and at intervals of 10 feet. Total distance is 40 feet.

Procedure: Rider keeps bike line of travel between the two lines of cones, riding the 40 foot distance as slowly as possible without touching a foot to the ground.

Objective: To take a minimum of 10 seconds to travel 40 feet. The longer the time, the better the slow ride.

Hints: Keep eyes and head up, looking at a fixed point straight ahead. Try using different combinations of throttle, brake, and clutch to adjust speed. Don't make any sudden movements or speed changes.



Each grid = 2 feet

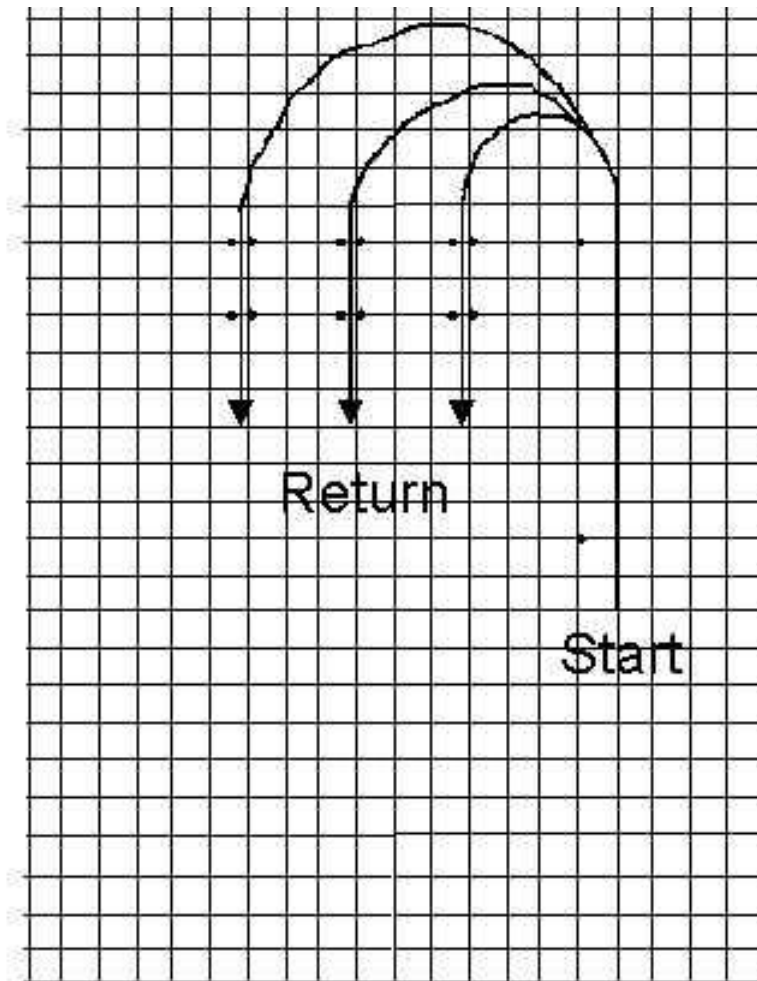
Cornering Decisions

Cones are placed to create one entrance gate and three exit gates. The distances may be varied to make this exercise as simple or as challenging as desired. The layout may be reversed for right-handed cornering decision practice.

Procedure: Rider accelerates in second gear until reaching the first cone. A verbal and/or visual signal is given by a range aide to indicate which exit gate the rider is to use. The rider then adjusts speed and gear appropriately by the time he/she reaches the second cone and makes the needed arc to smoothly exit through the chosen gate. As an alternative, the rider may choose his/her own gate.

Objective: Once an entry speed is chosen, that speed is maintained throughout the arc. Preferably, the rider will gradually throttle out of the arc. The intent is to choose an entry speed that will allow you to maintain a constant throttle or even accelerate slightly as the curve is negotiated. Touching the brakes while in the curve is a sign of having misjudged the entry speed.

Hints: It is better to start with too slow of an entry speed and then accelerate slightly than to go in too fast. Turn the head (not just the eyes!) and look through the curve to the exit gate to aid in a smooth arc. Keep head and eyes up.



Each grid = 10 feet

Cornering

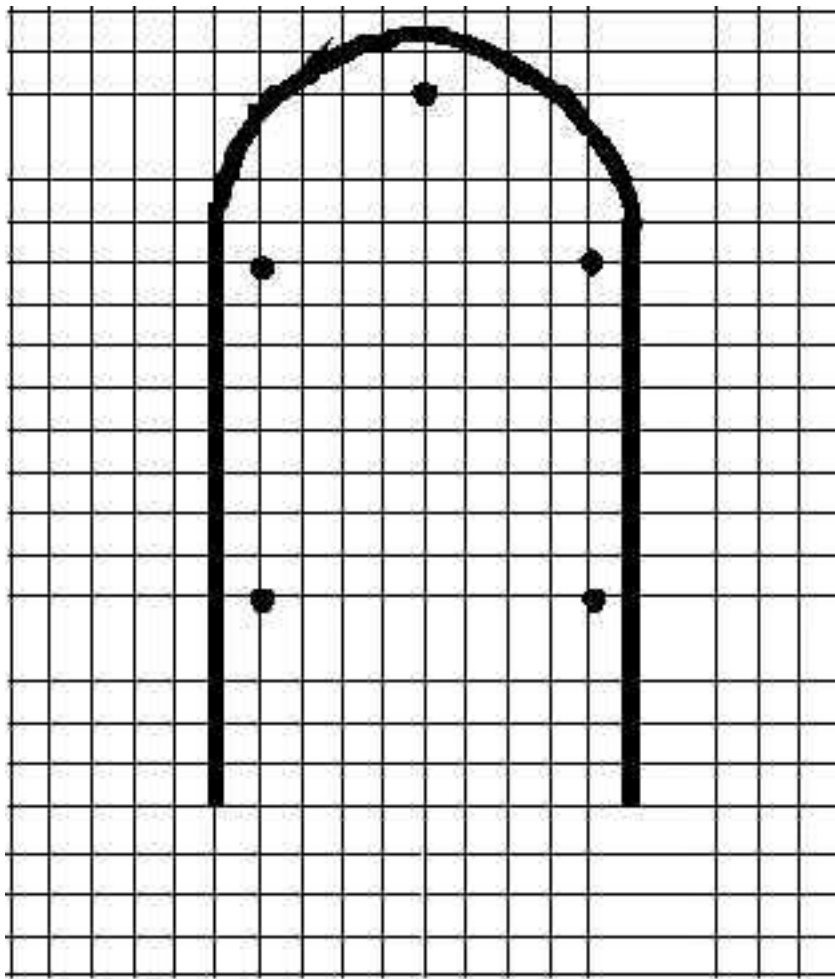
Cones are placed in an arc to form a U-shaped exercise. The distances may be varied to make this exercise as simple or as challenging as desired.

Procedure: Rider begins at open end of "U", staying close to the cone arc - within 6 feet if possible. After practicing one direction several times, the opposite direction is also practiced.

Objective: An entry speed is chosen, and that speed is maintained throughout the arc. Preferably, the rider will gradually throttle out of the corner. No brakes should be used once the entry speed is chosen, and the throttle should remain constant or slightly increased.

Hints: It is better to start with too slow of an entry speed and then accelerate slightly than to go in too fast. Turn the head (not just the eyes!) and look through the curve to the exit point to aid in a sharp, smooth turn. Keep head and eyes up.

Note: If you see "double wide" grids in the diagram, they are a result of some kind of quirk in the way the browser interacts with the diagram produced by my drawing program. Ignore them. After much time spent, it became easier to explain it than to fix it.



Each grid = 5 feet

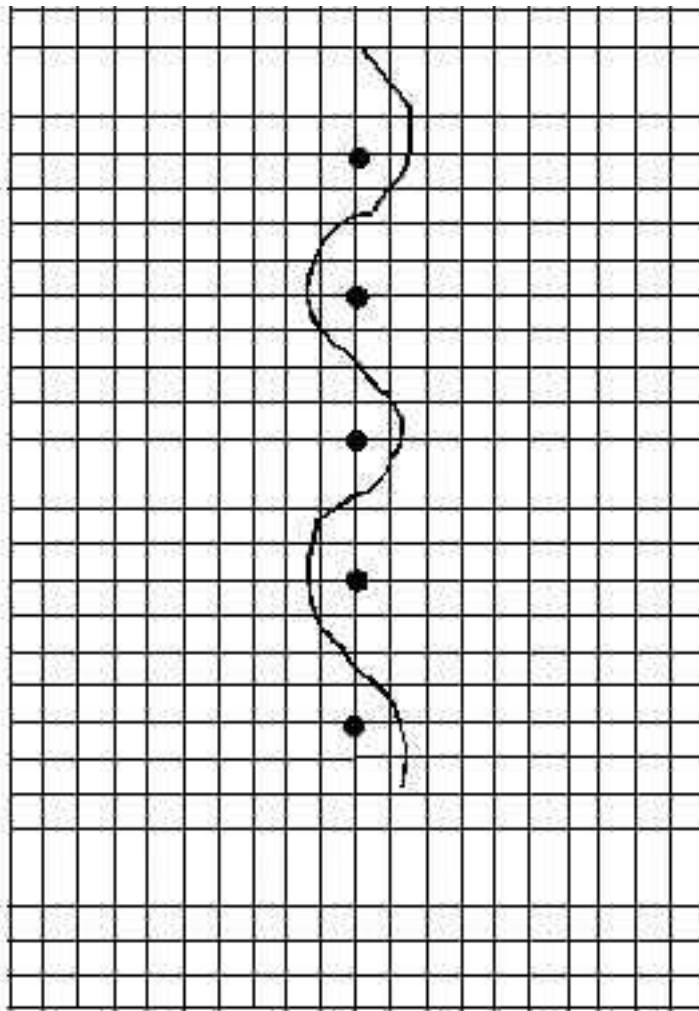
Straight Weave

Five cones are placed in a straight line, 20 feet apart. The distances may be varied to make this exercise more or less difficult. A variation is to place the cones closer together toward the end of the weave. This is called a decreasing straight weave.

Procedure: Always begin on the outside of the first cone. That is, the side nearest the outside of the range. Use proper entry speed and countersteering to maintain a smooth line through the cones.

Objective: The rider should develop a smooth rhythm as the bike leans first one way and then the other. A touch of the rear brake is acceptable, but constant brake while throttling is not. Feathering the clutch is acceptable.

Hints: Some people find weaves easier in either first or second gear. Experiment to see what works best for you. A countersteer push on the handlebar, in the direction that you want the bike to lean, works well - especially in tight weaves where a quick lean is desired. A nice rhythm can be obtained from pushing left, right, left, right. Keep the head and eyes up. Don't look at the pavement. As you approach a cone, turn your head and look to the next cone in your path. Keep looking well ahead, not down at your present position.



Each grid = 5 feet

Offset Weave

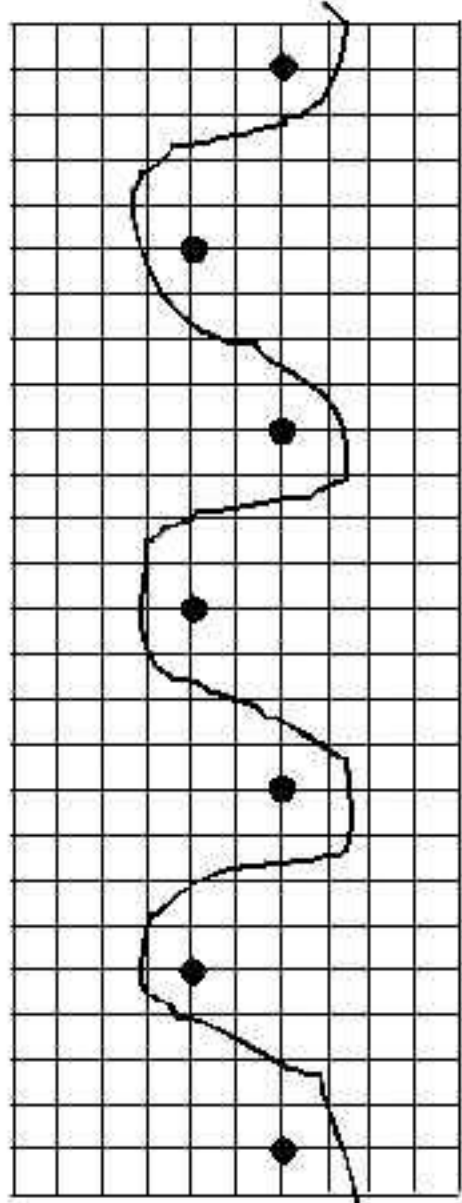
Seven cones are placed 20 feet apart and with every other cone being laterally offset by 10 feet. The distances may be varied to make this exercise more or less difficult. A variation is to place the cones closer together, or use a wider offset, toward the end of the weave. This is called a decreasing offset weave. As shown, this weave would normally be described as a medium offset weave. Distances for a wide offset weave would be approximately 15 feet of offset and cones 30 feet apart.

Procedure: Always begin on the outside of the first cone. That is, the side nearest the outside of the range. Use proper entry speed and countersteering to maintain a smooth line through the cones.

Objective: The rider should develop a smooth rhythm as the bike leans first one way and then the other. A touch of the brake is acceptable, but constant brake while throttling is not. Feathering the clutch is acceptable.

Hints: Some people find weaves easier in either first or second gear. Experiment to see what works best for you. A countersteer push on the handlebar, in the direction that you want the bike to lean, works well - especially in tight weaves where a quick lean is desired. A nice rhythm can be obtained from pushing left, right, left, right. Keep the head and eyes up. Don't look at the pavement. As you approach a cone, turn your head and look to the next cone in your path. Keep looking well ahead, not down at your present position.

Offset Weave Finish



Start

Each grid = 5 feet

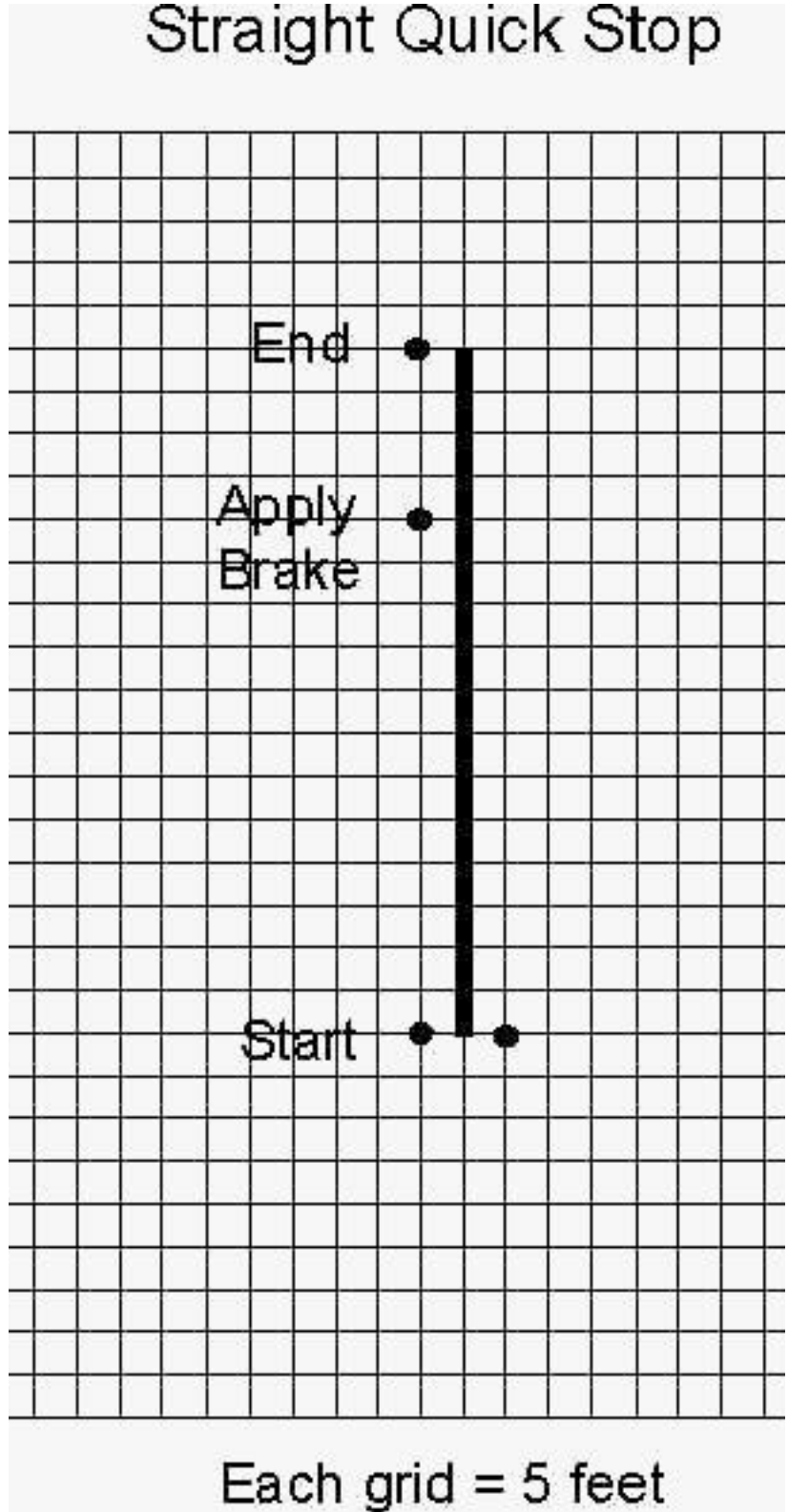
Straight Quick Stop

The rider accelerates in first or second gear and maintains a constant speed between 12 and 18 mph. When the bike reaches the "apply brake" cone, the rider smoothly applies both front and rear brakes, bringing the bike to a controlled stop. The "end" cone marks a zone, not an absolute stopping point. It is okay to bring the bike to a stop beyond the "end" cone.

Procedure: Note the difference between a "panic" stop and a "quick" stop. The quick stop never pushes the bike beyond safe braking limits. Never try this exercise faster than 18 mph. Never lock either front or rear wheel while braking. This is NOT an attempt to stop the bike in the shortest possible distance! If the rider upshifts while accelerating, it will be necessary to downshift during braking. Most people will want to practice this in first gear before attempting a downshift while braking maneuver.

Objective: Try this exercise at slower speeds and use less braking at first. The objective is to get a feel for the braking action of the bike in a controlled environment.

Hints: Only properly trained instructors, such as those used by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, are qualified to teach proper braking techniques. If you have any doubts about your ability to safely bring a motorcycle to a quick and safe stop, DO NOT PRACTICE THIS EXERCISE! Sign up for an MSF RiderCourse for proper instruction.



Circles/Figure 8s

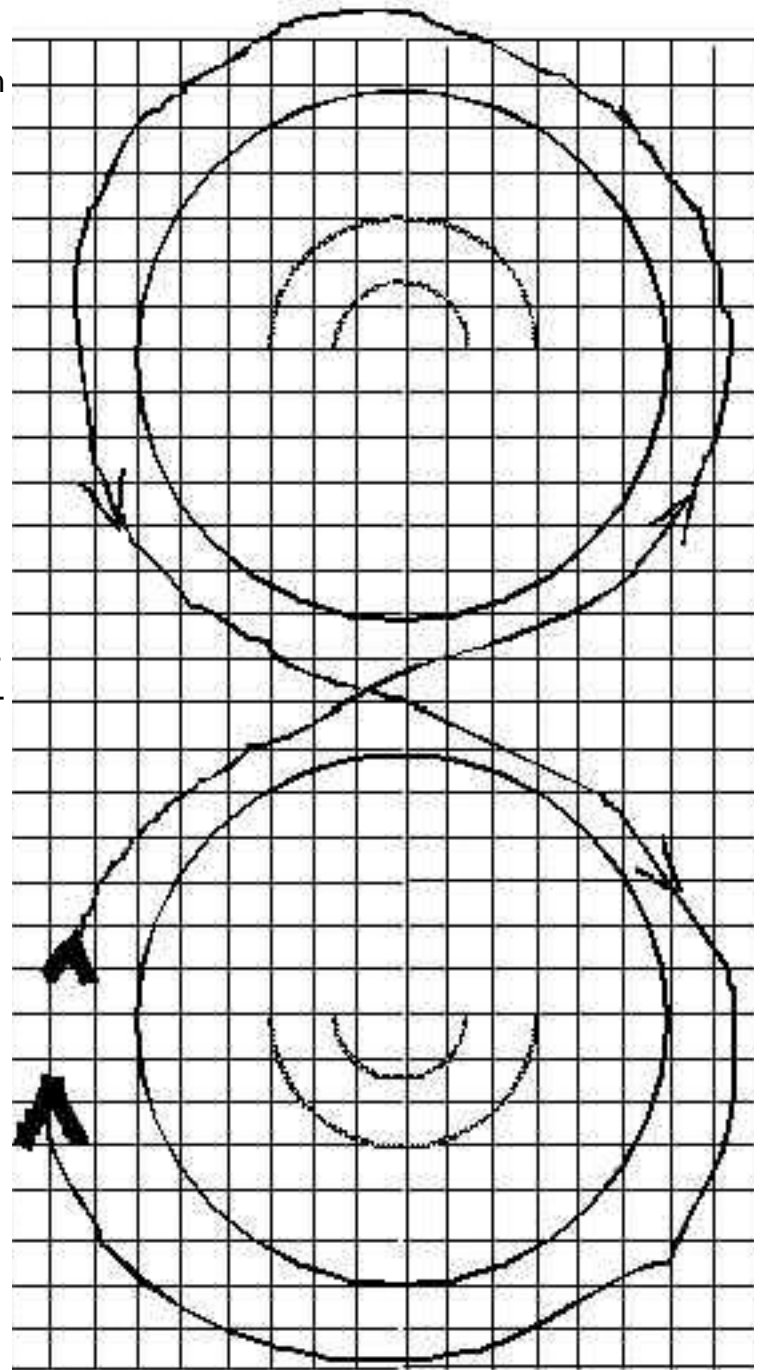
It is easiest to draw the circles using a piece of children's sidewalk chalk tied to a long string. Find the center of the circle and swing a circumference around it. The medium and small circles are not drawn out entirely, but are represented by half circles. This configuration allows riders to choose a large circle or figure 8 by staying on the outside of the large circles as shown in the diagram. A medium circle or figure 8 can be chosen by moving to the inside of the large circle - between it and the larger of the two half circles. A small circle or figure 8 can be chosen by moving between the two half circles.

Procedure: Choose a direction of traffic flow, and begin with large circles or figure 8s. Figure 8s are generally preferred, since they provide an opportunity to first lean left and then right as the rider moves from circle to circle. If doing circles, limit the time spent on each one to a few rounds, due to the possibility of dizziness. The safe number of bikes on this exercise is normally limited to five. Riders should spread out evenly, and right-of-way at the center crossover is always given to the bike on the right. Close range control by the range captain is important for safety's sake. After a few minutes of doing large figure 8s, the range captain will direct the bikes, one at a time, into the medium circles. Then a few minutes later he can direct them in the same manner into the small circles. All riders should be briefed on this procedure before entering the range, so that everyone knows what to expect.

Objective: To practice smooth throttle control in a variety of different radius circles. Speed should remain constant throughout, except to give right-of-way when necessary.

Hints: Use peripheral vision to watch for other bikes. When negotiating a curve, turn the head (not just the eyes) and look to the exit of the curve. Leave plenty of space between bikes, and maintain a constant speed whenever possible.

Circles/Figure 8s



Each grid = 5 feet

Stopping On A Curve

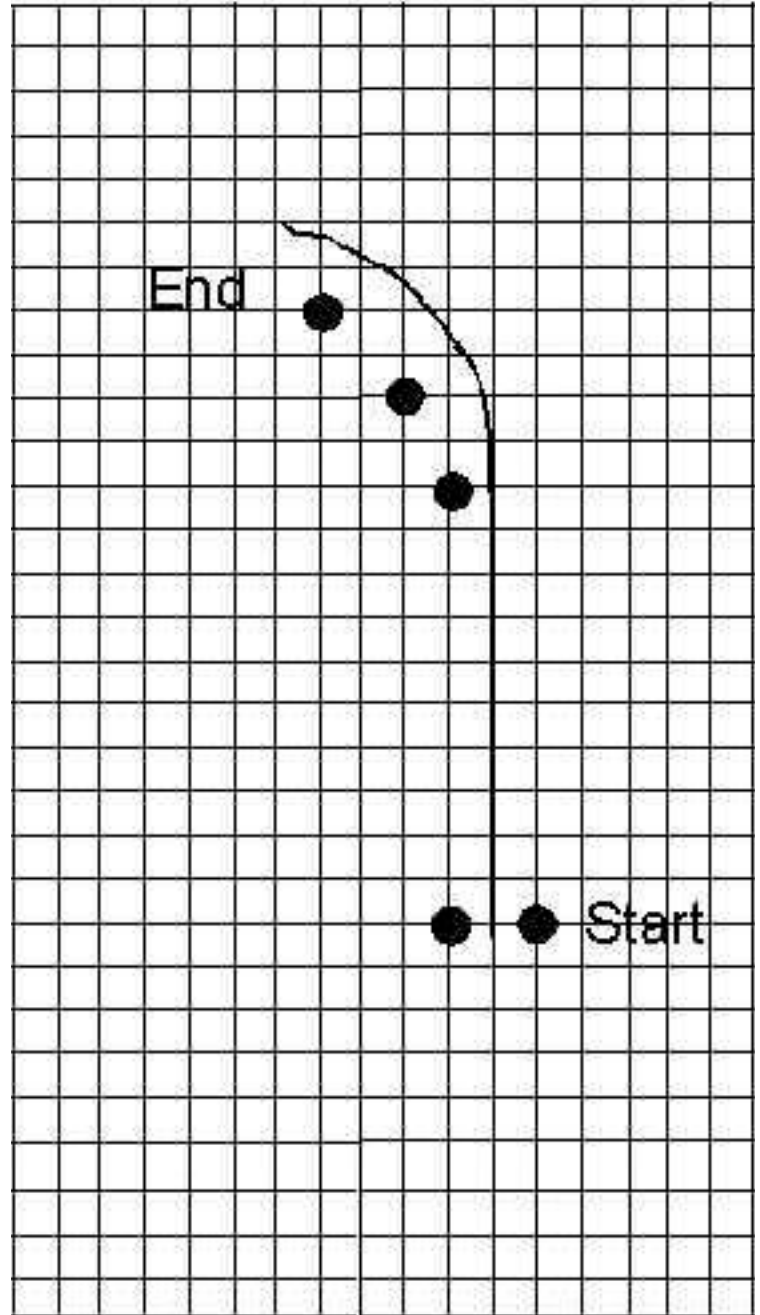
The rider accelerates to a constant speed of between 10 and 15 mph. As the bike enters the curve, both brakes are smoothly applied and the bike is brought straight and upright, as it comes to a gentle stop.

Procedure: This exercise should be done in first gear and practiced slowly at first. More speed and shifting can be added with practice. Speed should never go above 18 mph. This is not a quick stop exercise.

Objective: The purpose of this exercise is to practice the skill of braking while leaned over in a curve, and at the same time bringing the bike completely upright before stopping.

Hints: A motorcycle that is leaned over when it stops will fall down! Be sure to bring the bike completely upright before it comes to a stop. Brake gently. This is not a braking exercise so much as it is a stopping exercise. Stopping distance is not as important as maintaining control all the way to a stop. Keep head and eyes up until completely stopped.

Stopping On A Curve



Each grid = 5 feet

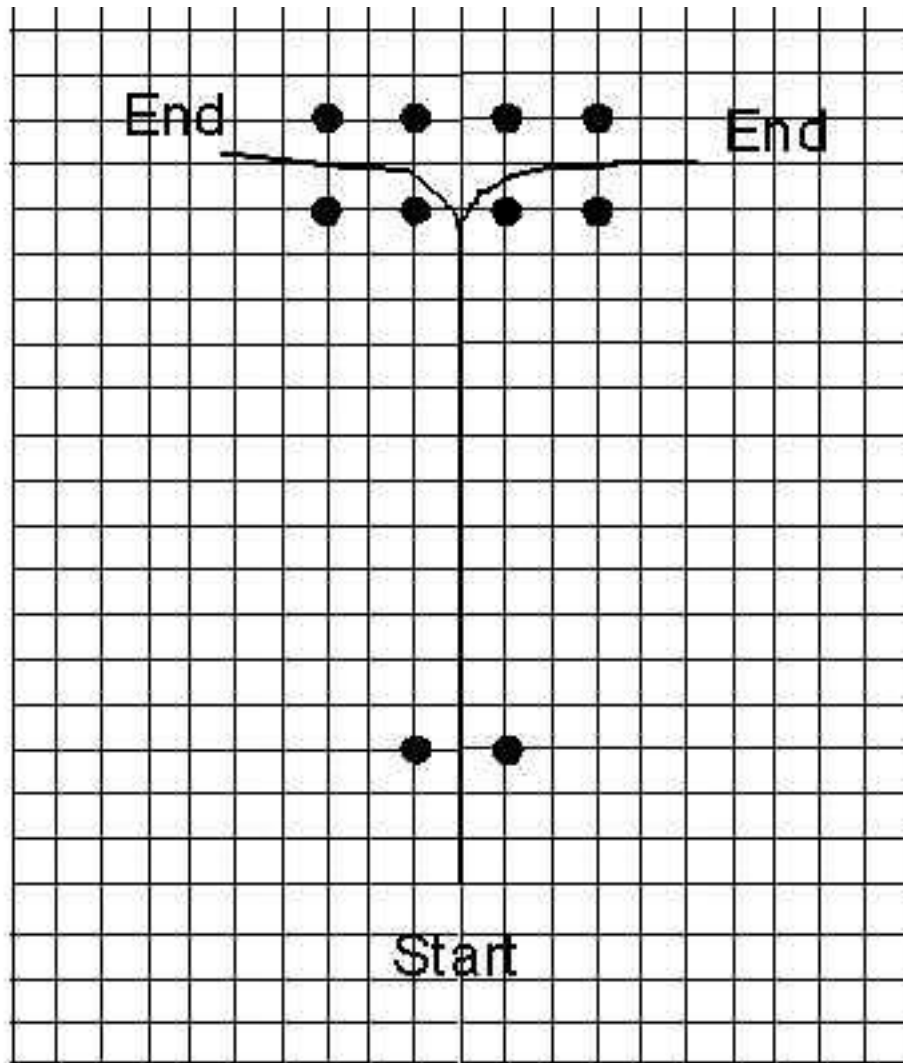
Sharp Turns

The rider approaches a gate where a 90 degree turn, either left or right, is needed. The rider chooses the proper speed by braking before entering the turn, and then gently rolls on the throttle as the bike completes the turn and exits.

Procedure: The rider decides whether to turn left or right. The decision and adjustments for appropriate entry speed is made, and the rider executes the turn.

Objective: To practice smooth and controlled tight turns. No braking should take place in the turn itself, and the throttle should remain constant, or should be gently rolled on.

Hints: Keep head and eyes up. Don't look at the pavement. A quick glance is all that should be necessary to determine position as you enter the turn. Use a little countersteer to make the bike "fall" into the turn and then pull out of the corner with moderate throttle. The rider may find it helpful to pull in the clutch when entering the corner, using both clutch and throttle when powering out. This may help assure that the engine does not bog down and die while leaned over in the corner. DO NOT use the front brake in slow speed exercises such as this one.



Each grid = 3 feet

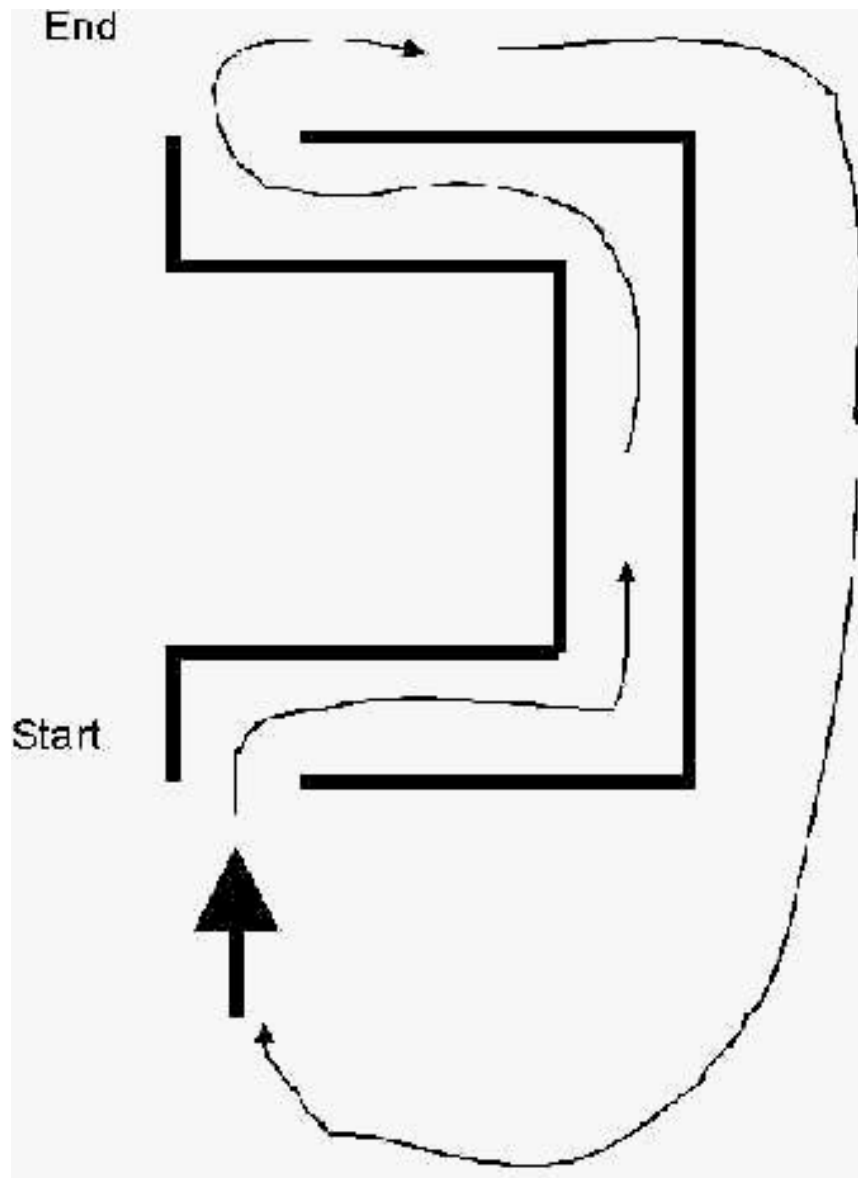
Right and Left Corners

The width of the entrance, exit, and the path of travel, is six feet. Other distances can be experimented with, but normally you won't use more than about 15 to 20 feet.

Once the riders become familiar with the "feel" of this exercise, most will begin to approach it differently than they did the first couple of times through. Instead of treating it as separate 90 degree turns, they will begin to see it as sort of a U-turn, and will start rounding the corners off. It will become a leaning exercise more than a tight turn exercise.

Try this one out on your chapter and watch the expressions on their faces as they begin to understand what this is really all about. I've had lots of people tell me how at first they thought it was nearly impossible, but a few minutes later they thought it was fun!

For a different feel, this exercise can be run in the reverse direction. Spread everyone out, and don't run too many bikes at the same time. Riders should wait until the bike ahead has exited before entering. A running start is preferred, so if everyone leaves plenty of room, and keep a slower pace, a continuous flow can be achieved.

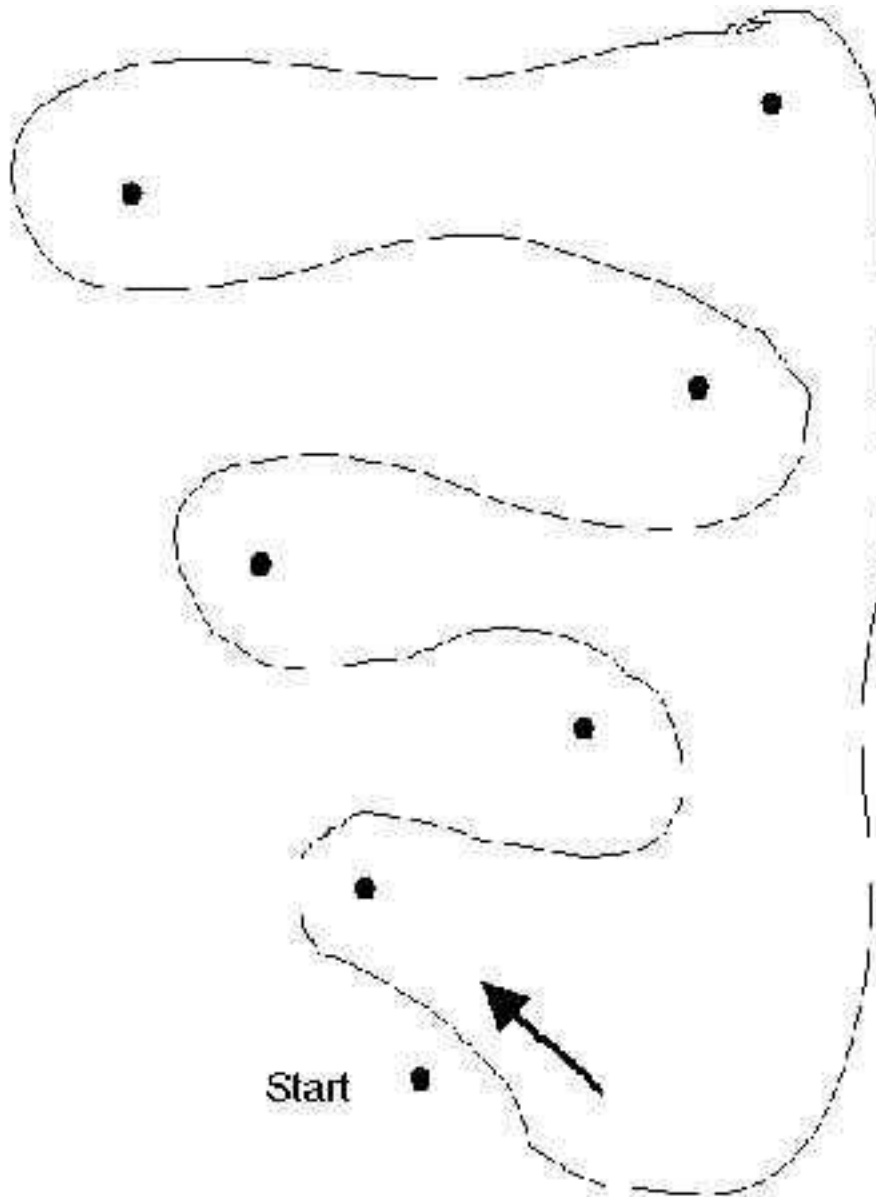


The V - Weave

A quick examination of the cone pattern in this exercise will reveal that the cones are set up in a V pattern. The resulting path of travel is an offset weave that increases as you go. If setup with the number of cones as shown, this exercise can take up most of a 100 x 200 foot range. Difficulty, of course, is determined by how far apart the cones are set up.

This exercise can be run in reverse for an interesting twist. People seem to like this exercise because it combines several elements of the standard increasing and decreasing weave, changing distances both in width and breadth. This requires thinking and looking ahead.

This idea is reproduced as accurately as memory allows from an article which appeared in Motorcycle Consumer News. I apologize for not having the issue or author's name.

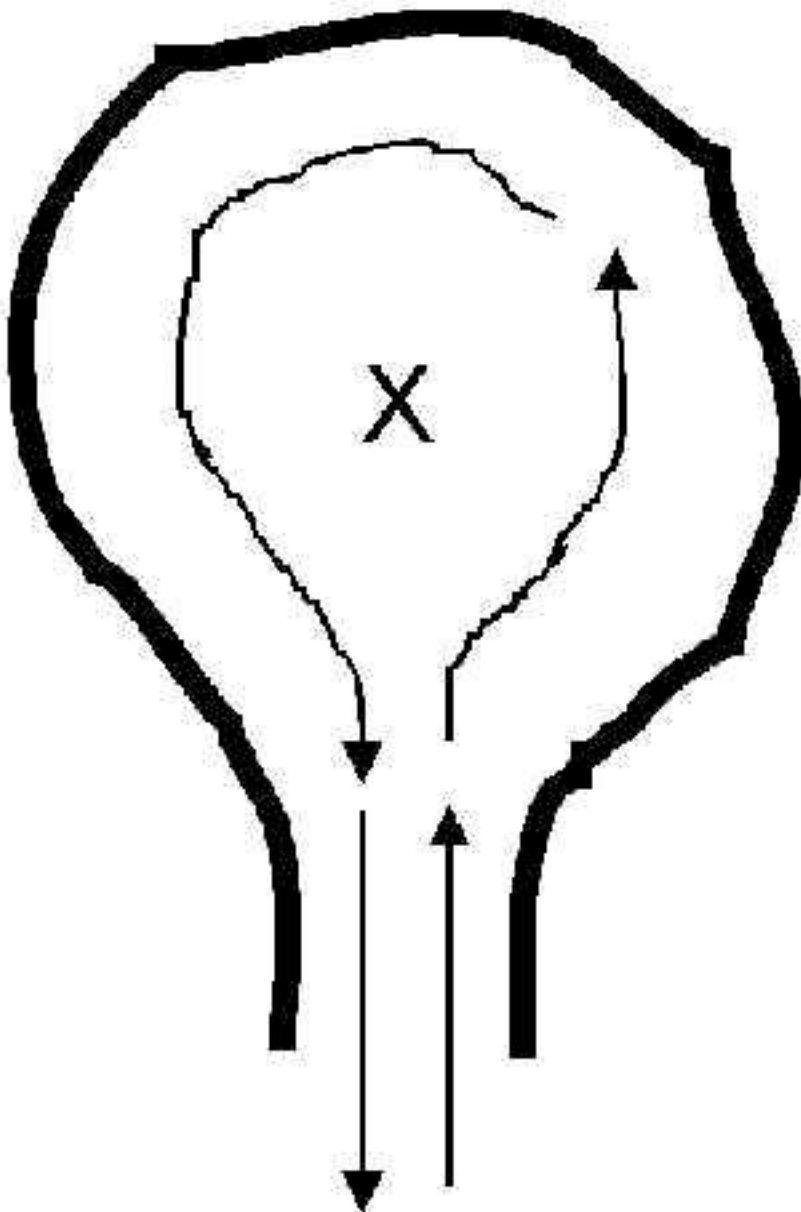


The Keyhole

A variation on the circles and figure 8s theme. Try it clockwise a few times and then try it counter-clockwise.

This exercise was contributed by Jim Peringer, Chapter Educator GWRRA FL1-H, Daytona Beach. Here's what Jim had to say about it:

"A keyhole is basically a circle with a long gate entrance to limit the approach angles."



The Double "S"

The "S" shapes are made of two half-circles, with one flipped over 180 degrees and connected end to end. The circles are the same diameter as the ones used to make the small circles shown in the "Circles and Figure 8s" exercise. They are easy to draw on pavement using a long piece of string with a piece of chalk on the end. Hold one end stationary as the pivot of the radius and swing the chalk around it in a circle.

To define the path of travel, place cones only at the start, finish, and at the outside of each curve. The dots on the diagram represent cones. Too many cones will intimidate and confuse.

The trick to this exercise is in the ability to quickly change the lean of the bike from left to right or vice versa. As taught in the MSF courses, you go where you look, and it is extremely important that the rider turn the head (not just the eyes) to the exit of the curve. For example, when entering the start gate, the rider immediately cranks the head left to look at the center point of the "S" shape - the end of the first arc. As the rider exits the left curve he/she then immediately cranks the head the opposite direction to look at the exit of the right curve. The same process is repeated at the other "S" curve at the opposite end of the range. Concurrent to the head turns, the rider will find it necessary to give countersteer pushes to make the bike lean quickly first one way and then the other. It is nearly impossible to just "steer" through this exercise. In my experience, after a few times through, riders will get a "rhythm" through these curves, and will find them to be an extremely challenging and fun exercise.

Be sure to remind everyone before they begin that they are only cones and chalk marks. It's very preferable that they go outside of a line or knock over a cone rather than drop the bike. Co-Riders should keep their legs tucked in close to the bike at all times. If the bike should go over, their legs will be best protected that way.

