



## BACK IT IN BABY

BY MATT PURSLEY

One of the most spectacular attractions to supermoto is the art of backing it in. It takes some time to master this feat but when executed, it is poetry in motion. The advantage of backing in a supermoto bike is to set the bike up for the turn and scrub off speed. But above all, it's the rush of sliding on asphalt that is the ultimate thrill.

Backing it in is not always the fastest way through a turn, but when it is necessary it helps to know how to do it smoothly without wasting time or losing control. One common misconception is that a rider must use the rear brake to initiate the slide. The slide actually starts with a combination of front brake, engine braking and the initial lean into the

turn. The rear brake is a secondary tool to control speed and the rear wheel. At no time is the rear wheel supposed to lock up or skid due to the rear brake. If the rear locks up, a rider can easily lose control and valuable seconds. Study a pro-level rider and understand that no matter how sideways or flat they get, the rear wheel is always spinning.

There are a few theories when a rider should put their foot out during a slide. Some have to do with rider comfort while others are all about technique. Riders with dirt track backgrounds feel it helps them set up for the

turn but I have found that learning to slide with your feet on the pegs offers more control and it is easier to correct mistakes. At a certain point in the turn you will want to put your foot down, but not until you are just about to hit the apex.

I have demonstrated how I back it in, but each rider will slightly alter their style based on their background. As a rider becomes more accomplished, the bike naturally starts to float into the turns—don't try to speed up the process by leaning on the rear brake and skidding the bike into the turn as it could spell disaster. 💎



1: Find a track or area to ride that offers a nice fourth-gear straight with a 160-180 degree turn with ample runoff. As you can see here, I have hit my braking point and have started to initiate the ritual of events. Braking, downshifting and dragging the rear brake slightly. Notice I have also started to lean the bike into the turn direction to help initiate the slide. Body english takes on a major role in learning to back it in. During the slide, a rider can alternate their body weight to control the slide and the angle of the bike to the tarmac.



2: Depending on how tight the turn is that you are approaching, you may need to go from fourth or high gear all the way down to second and possibly first. All shifts should be made in one action. The key to supermoto is total clutch control. While motocross racers slip the clutch exiting corners, supermoto and roadracers slip the clutch going into corners to keep the rear wheel from skidding and hopping. The idea is to bang down your gears and control the rear wheel action with the clutch. If you let it out too fast or all the way, the rear wheel chatters. If you slip the clutch in excess, the rear wheel won't bite the tarmac enough to cause the rear to slide. In this shot I am in first gear while modulating the clutch engagement to control my slide.

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3: In the third frame I am deep into my slide but technique still plays a huge part. At this point I have shifted my weight slightly to the inside of the bike and into the turn to maintain control and to start setting up for the oncoming turn. Clutch and brake modulation is still key. As the rear wheel speed starts to slow down and spin down to the engine speed, the clutch still has to be modulated to avoid rear wheel hop until the ratio is one to one. Braking is very important at this point and it ultimately determines whether you are going to hit the apex of the turn or not. If you brake too early you will be forced to stand the bike up before the turn, or if you go in too hot, the bike will float past the apex of the turn and open the door for a pass.



4: The entire idea of the slide is to set the bike up for the turn. As you start to end the slide, the bike should be pointing directly toward the apex of the turn. Notice the rear is hardly backed out at this point. The main reason is the rear wheel speed is catching up to the ground speed. At this time you are looking to firmly plant the rubber on the ground for corner traction. However, you should still be hard on the front brake, trail braking into the apex in order to keep the front suspension loaded for maximum traction. This is also the time I kick out my inside leg. There is a right way and a wrong way to do this. Motocrossers stick their leg straight out with their toes pointing up in the air. The only contact they make with the ground is their heel. Simply take your foot off the peg and put it on the ground with your toes pointing in the direction you want to go, just like a dirt tracker.



5: The final act is changing direction. As you can see, I have shifted my body weight back to the center of the bike. As said before, I trail brake into the turn to keep the front suspension loaded for maximum traction. There is no reason you should ever release the front brake going into a corner unless the front tire breaks traction and starts to skid. If you release the brake too early, the front end wants to stand up and the bike will run deeper into the turn. Remember that if you're coasting anywhere on the racetrack, you're doing something wrong—it's either brakes or gas all the time. Rome wasn't built in a day so don't think you're going to master backing it in overnight—it takes time and patience. Mastering braking, downshifting, clutch control and body position all in one fell swoop is the ticket. If you wish to take clutch control out of the mix, the secret to supermoto is to install a STM slipper clutch.