

HOW TO... UMMMM... ERRRR... ...CRASH... (OR NOT)

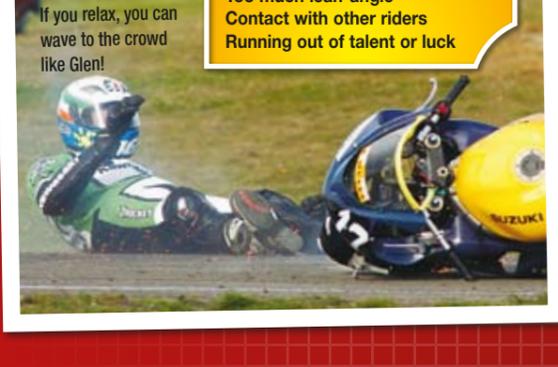
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TOP 10 REASONS FOR CRASHING

- Lack of concentration / rider error
- Cold tyres or cold track
- Panic braking/steering
- Slippery track surfaces
- Overly aggressive throttle on exit
- Poor suspension set up
- Worn Tyres
- Too much lean-angle
- Contact with other riders
- Running out of talent or luck



Glen showing us how it's done...



If you relax, you can wave to the crowd like Glen!

None of us like it and none of us go out on the track planning for it to happen – but the reality is if you're a road racer or even a track day enthusiast, there is a certain amount of inevitability that one day you're going to run out of talent or luck and suffer a crash. Glen Williams looks at how to prepare for the worst.

It's A Learning Curve

Most of us crash more when we are learning how to ride, or learning how to ride faster. It's nature's way of telling us whether we are any good or not. With experience comes the improved ability to understand what the motorcycle is feeding back to us and helps us become more consistent and crash less often.

Safety Gear

Wearing the right gear obviously plays a huge part in your ability to survive a crash unscathed. A good quality helmet, boots and gloves are important, plus a one-piece leather suit with armour fitted, and of course a back protector. Leather really does rule the roost when it comes to protection at the track - it doesn't

melt and burn you and it resists tearing apart and exposing your skin.

Things I don't like to see used on the track are two-piece leather suits, leather suits with lots of buckles, clips and zips (these parts can get damn hot as you slide along and can also dig into you). Riding suits, gloves etc made of fabric are another no-no in my mind.

Bike Damage Control

A number of measures can be taken to protect your machine. Crash bungs and solid-mount footpegs that extend from the side of the bike help keep the main bodywork of the machine off the ground as it's sliding along (but beware – in some circumstances they can 'dig in' and start the bike tumbling – which gets expensive real fast). Fibreglass fairings are relatively inexpensive and can be easily repaired, while aftermarket handlebars, and the removal of as much road gear as possible (indicators, lights, switch-blocks etc) will help keep damage costs to a minimum.

What Can Be Learnt?

To take a positive perspective - most crashes can teach you something. Crashing is usually a result of you finding either your own or your bike's limits. By going near to these limits on a regular basis you will occasionally



Paul preparing his GPZ for the worst

exceed them and sometimes this will result in a crash. It comes with the territory so to speak. By sitting down and analysing why you fell off, you will often come up with a game plan of how to avoid it next time around under similar circumstances. Sometimes this might be a simple change to your bike's suspension setup, or it could be a riding technique change, or a different line through a corner.

The other positive about crashing is that you learn to 'feel' how the bike reacts just moments before you actually fall off. This feedback becomes crucial to you gaining experience of how the bike feels when near to its limit and helps teach you to stay just within these limits.

Crashing can hurt you and some racetracks have specific corners that require increased concentration (coming over the hill at Pukekohe springs to mind). In these types of corners you need to be very attentive to your job of riding the bike well and avoid errors while minimising risks. These types of corners with close

sliding on the track and will be able to 'steer' yourself to some degree and keep your head up and safe. For instance you may be sliding along and about to go over a track edge kerb – if your sliding feet first then it's a good idea to slightly lift your feet and stop them catching the kerb abruptly (avoiding broken ankles, toes etc).

In the past I have regularly had time to transfer load from one butt cheek to the other whilst sliding along the road to avoid road rash and burning through the leathers.

During highside crashes you will often have time to draw your arms into your chest and pull your legs together (whilst in the air), this helps to avoid you landing on extended limbs end first (that can tickle a bit that).

Hold Or Let Go?

If you're in a WSB or MotoGP race and being paid to ride - by all means when you crash hang onto the bars, pull the clutch in and keep her running. If however you are at

barriers demand respect – they are not the places to be trialing new maneuvers or techniques.

Saving It

Some riders have better reactions skills than others and can 'catch' a front-end slide before it goes too far or recover from a near high-side. More often than not though the blunt truth is that a saved crash very often comes down to good fortune rather than skill. A properly set up bike with good suspension action and balance will also tend to recover from a slide all by itself compared to a poorly set up bike.

Body Position

Due to a sudden pump of adrenalin going into your system when you're crashing, it is common for things to all happen veeerrrry sloooowley! You can use this to your advantage.

In many instances you will be very aware of your body position whilst

a track day or a club race then my suggestion is that you let yourself get as far away from a bouncing 200kg piece of metal (your bike) as soon as you are able. If that means giving it a kick or a shove whilst it's sliding along the track beside you – then do it.

Relax

It's hard to do, but if you're in the type of crash where you a sliding flat along the road then being as relaxed as possible tends to stop you jarring yourself when you hit bumps and soft traps. Being relaxed and remaining aware of your surroundings can also give you time to protect or prepare yourself if you are about to come into contact with a solid object. This has saved my butt on more than one occasion.....

Wait Until You've Stopped

If you do end up on the deck and sliding along the ground – a word of advice, don't try to stand up until you've stopped sliding! Placing hands or feet

into position too early in an attempt to stand up whilst still moving may (A) hurt and (B) throw you into a tumble which will result in more of option (A). Try to relax as you are sliding along (hopefully on your butt or back), come to a stop and unless you feel you are in a dangerous position on the track – stay still for a few seconds and check out your vitals (no not your dangly bits) before jumping up and rushing for the bike, as sometimes adrenalin will delay any real pain hitting you for a few moments.

The Luck Of It

The faster you go – the bigger the mess. This is certainly true on the track as well, however I have seen low speed crashes almost totally wreck a machine and hurt the rider, whilst I've also experienced some high speed 'get offs' where there has been almost no damage at all. Clearly it simply comes down to 'the luck of the bounce' on any given day.

FINAL WORD.....may you all have Good Luck!

BRM



One way to check the crowd numbers..!

