

Six points # 4 - Eyes

The eyes are your windows. We all know that. In motocross, where you look is just as important as “feel” and technique on a bike, and I actually consider it to be a very important element to achieving good technique. Most riders I work with initially come to me with the habit of looking at the ground, so let’s talk about where your eyes should be looking while riding.

If you are consistently riding and looking at the ground, then you don’t have a good view of what is coming up ahead. Your brain won’t have time to actively process what is coming up, so in turn, you start to ride tight with the arms and upper body. This my friends, will lead to arm pump or mistakes and you won’t have that much needed “flow” to your riding. There will be a lot of “stop and go”.

If you can't see “up,” then it is only natural to be tentative with the gas. When riding in any condition, you always want to be ahead of yourself; not looking at the front wheel. You have already been there so why focus on where you have been? Focus on what is coming up, only then will you be able to relax and flow with the bike and track.

Now let’s touch on where you want to be looking when faced with different obstacles on the track, starting with corners.

When you are approaching a corner, once you’ve braked and are starting to lean the bike over, this is when you need to make a conscious effort to look to the *middle* of the corner. This will create a roll into the corner or constant momentum and in turn, your exit will be faster and more controlled while using less energy. When there is a stop or a pause from the rider looking down into the corner, the mind says “go!” to get them out of it and then there is a “blast” of the gas and clutch. This “blast” will lead to the bike wheeling, the back end of the bike coming around and/or the bike coming out sideways. This then forces the rider to have to correct the motion by pulling in the clutch or chopping the gas to correct the mistake, in turn leading to slow exit speed and using excess energy as the rider must pull himself up to stabilize himself and the bike. Keep in mind that the exit of a corner is about one of the most important parts of riding or racing, as this is generally where you will see the lap time difference between “great riders” and your run of the mill rider.

In rough sections or whoops, always look at least to 2-3 whoops *ahead* of your bike so you can relax the upper body and arms. Reason being is so your arms will have movement in them similar to your front forks. The bike is coming to and away from you while you are hitting the bumps or whoops. Looking too closely to the front wheel will cause you to ride with tight arms and a tight grip, not allowing the bike to do what it needs to do.

Next, let’s address ruts when going down straights, up hills, down hills and jumps. You always want to look to the end of the obstacle or rut, not at the front wheel. It's like walking on a balance beam; the more you look up, the easier it will be and the more relaxed you and your arms will be. Makes sense, right?

Lastly, let's look at riding off-road. When riding off-road, you always need to be looking ahead because there are so many obstacles! From trees, to rocks, ruts and dust, as well as to the speed you are going through all these. There is so much going on when off roading. Most riders are hitting the gas then braking repetitively, because they are looking down so much. If riders would just look up a bit, they would find there would be more of a "roll" through these obstacles with consistent speed. There not any real technique that I can suggest, other than looking up and ahead at all times.

For example, here's scenario to think about: If I were to tell you that I wanted you to sprint a 100 yard dash, but then I added rocks, tires, etc. to the equation and then I told you to look down at your feet the entire time, you probably wouldn't be too fast! You need to look ahead to see what's coming up next. Now, take in to consideration that in Motocross, all those obstacles, trees, rocks, etc. come up 10 times faster than they would if you were running! I see the "looking down" syndrome so much with my students that I have coached. Try to alway be ahead of yourself when riding and that will naturally pick up your speed with out trying to go fast with the gas. It will also help with your fitness and reaction time because you aren't fighting the bike or getting "ridden" by the bike from hanging on so tight.