

WEST COAST STYLE

MOUNTAIN BIKING INSTRUCTION

THE BASICS – PART 1



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West Coast Basics

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THE BASICS – PART 1

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THE BASICS

Used to maintain balance and stability when riding.

Part 1:

1. **Neutral Position** - used to maintain fore-aft balance. Riders shift hips and shoulders forward or back to keep equal weight on the wheels as the bike changes pitch with the terrain.
2. **Bike/Body Separation** - used to maximize lateral balance. Riders lean their bike to one side and counterbalance with moves of the hips and shoulders to the other side.
3. **Pressure Control** - used to increase or reduce the traction between the tires and the terrain. Riders use up/down movements of the body to place more or less pressure on the tires.

DON'T HAVE THE VIDEO?

VISIT

www.westcoaststyle.net
and download
"THE BASICS - part 1"

Ten BASICS

1. Neutral Position
2. Bike/Body Separation
3. Pressure Control
4. Braking
5. Pedal Position
6. Eye Movement
7. Speed
8. Gearing and Cadence
9. Timing and Coordination
10. Steering

USE THE BASICS - FEEL THE RIDE

IMPROVED BIKE HANDLING - BETTER BALANCE - FEWER INJURIES
MORE FUN - LESS FEAR - INCREASED CONFIDENCE

NEUTRAL POSITION

TERMINOLOGY

Neutral Position is a body position that places equal weight on the front and rear wheels. In this position riders have traction and control with each wheel. To maintain neutral position the body moves as the pitch of the bike changes – shoulders shift forward on climbs and hips move back on descents.

With a correct neutral position you have fore-aft balance on the bike. When the bike changes pitch your body moves to keep this balance. Maintaining neutral position is very dynamic. The most useful stance is standing with pedals level and equally weighted. In the standing position you can react quickly to changes in the pitch of the terrain. More so than when seated on the saddle. Maintain your neutral position by moving your shoulders forward on climbs and shifting the hips back on descents.

Try the following exercises.

Neutral Position - for coasting on flat terrain.

- Find a flat area for practice, at least as big as a volleyball court.
- Stand on the pedals and coast with arms and legs extended and with a slight bend of the knees and elbows.
- Place the same amount of weight on each foot. Your pedals should be level.
- Distribute your weight between hands and feet so that you have equal weight on each wheel. You will feel weight on your hands.

SAFETY TIPS

**Rest a finger on each
brake lever.**

**Use your eyes to scan
ahead.**



**COASTING ON
FLAT TERRAIN**

Note: Your body position is not the same on every bike as equal weighting of the wheels takes into account the bikes geometry and weight characteristics.

NEUTRAL POSITION

Neutral Position - for a standing climb.

Repeat a climb several times experimenting with your body position. Your goal is to find the position where you have equal weight on each wheel. In general, the steeper the climb, the further forward your shoulders. When your shoulders are too far back there is too little weight on the front wheel. Steering may be difficult and the front wheel may lift or wander.



STANDING CLIMB

Neutral Position - for a seated climb.

The seated Neutral Position is less dynamic but has the advantage of being relaxed and relatively efficient. It is used for smooth, non-technical climbs with a pitch anywhere from flat to steeply ascending. Move your weight onto the front wheel by pulling your shoulders forward and low over the handlebars. On really steep climbs move your weight even further forward by shifting your sit bones towards the nose of the saddle.



SEATED CLIMB

Look at the two figures above. Both show the rider maintaining neutral position but there are key differences in body positions. In the standing climb the shoulders are forward and high above the handlebars. In the seated climb the shoulders are low and close to the handlebars.

Note: Refer to the Climbing lesson for in-depth instruction on the Standing and Seated Climb. In that lesson we also work with the Crouched Climb - a very useful technique used to climb rough and technical terrain.

Neutral Position - for descending.

Find a smooth descent for practice and feather the brakes to control speed. Your hips move back when descending - further back for steeper descents. The arms extend as the hips move back. Feel your weight shift onto the rear wheel. Also feel an equal amount of weight remaining on the front wheel. This weight is needed to control the front wheel. If you move the hips too far back, the front wheel will feel light and may wander off your riding line.



DESCENDING

NEUTRAL POSITION



SEATED CLIMB



CROUCHED CLIMB



DESCENDING



STEEPER DESCENDING

NEUTRAL POSITION

Neutral Position - for whoop-de-dooos.

When riding Whoops the bike changes pitch, moving up and down with the profile of the terrain. The key to riding whoops is for you to maintain neutral position by using rapid body movements that allow you to maintain your fore-aft balance. Riding whoops are an excellent way to feel the dynamic nature of neutral position.

As your front wheel moves up the whoop pull your handlebars towards your shoulders. Use this movement to keep your body in neutral position and to keep your shoulders over the front end. As the bike goes down the backside of the whoop you respond by pushing the handlebars down and away from your body. The hips go back as you push the bars away. Use these “pull, push” movements to ride smoothly and quickly through the whoops. Add some intensity to your movements and make the “pull, push” quick and aggressive. When successful the bike increases speed even though you are not pedaling. When you involve the feet in a similar pull, push action you can increase your speed further. This is known as “pumping”. It is a key technique for BMX, and mountain bike racing. “Pump tracks” are excellent for training.

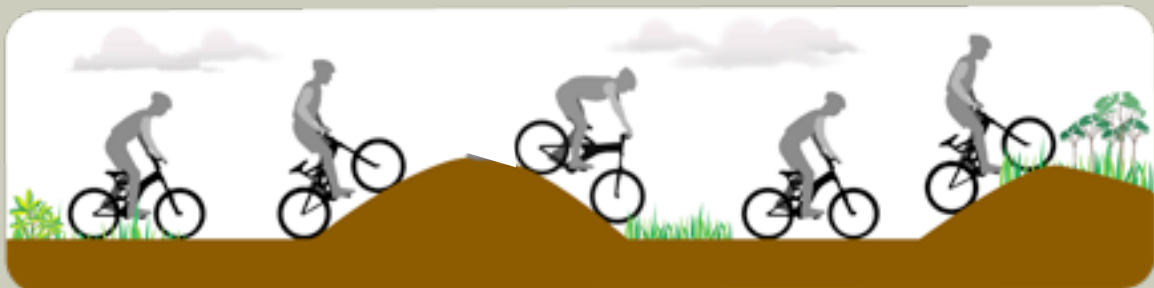
TIPS FOR RIDING WHOOPS

Lower your seat

Use a standing neutral position

Choose a gear that provides a comfortable resistance for pedalling prior to the whoops. Try middle chainring, a couple of cogs from the top.

DO NOT pedal when on the whoops



NEUTRAL POSITION and READY STATE

The standing **Neutral Position** is efficient and relaxed. Use it when coasting on easy terrain and for rest breaks during practice of skills.



NEUTRAL POSITION

When the legs are tired from being out of the saddle don't sit down -stand up in **Neutral Position**.



Ready State is a position where mind and body are fully prepared for riding. Get into your Ready State when riding singletrack and during your set up for practice of a skill.

Ready State is correct use of all ten Basics plus:

- eyes committed to the riding line
- fingers, one or two, resting on the brake levers
- a bit more bend in the knees and elbows with a slightly lower torso
- core muscles engaged
- controlled breathing



READY STATE

Use the **Ready State** for the anticipation needed to ride technical trails and be fully prepared for what lies ahead.

BIKE/BODY SEPARATION

TERMINOLOGY

Bike/body Separation are movements used to maintain lateral stability. A rider leans the bike to one side and counterbalances this lean by moving their body in the opposite direction, away from lean of the bike.

Bike/body separation helps you keep your side-to-side balance while riding. You can use bike/body separation when standing or when seated. The standing position is more dynamic because you can counterbalance the bike lean with your hips as well as your shoulders. Most West Coast Style lessons assume that you are standing.

Below are three situations where you make use of bike/body separation. Only the first is covered in this lesson.

1. When riding straight ahead on a trail that is technical enough to challenge lateral balance.
2. In all types of turns: high-speed cornering, slow tight turns, trackstand and rock dodge are examples.
3. When riding very narrow lines on the trail such as narrow singletrack or ruts and when riding logs and other skinny obstacles.

Staying on Track



High-speed Cornering

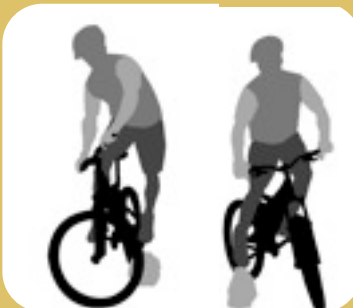


Trackstand



MORE ON BIKE/BODY SEPARATION IN THESE LESSONS

Rock Dodge



Tight Turns and Switchbacks



BIKE/BODY SEPARATION

Practice the exercise below. When the movements feel natural take them to the trail and use them to maintain lateral balance when riding technical singletrack.



- In an open flat area, coast at moderate speed and in your Ready State - pedals level, fingers resting on the brake levers, eyes scanning ahead.
- Lean the bike to the side by extending one arm and using it to push down on the handlebar. When you push down and extend the right arm the bike will lean to the right.
- At the same time the other arm pulls up, bending at the elbow. The front wheel should not turn during this move.
- Keep the knees apart, cowboy style, so the bike can move from side to side with ease.
- Use your body to counterbalance the bike lean. You can see that the head, shoulders and hips are separated from the bike. This is bike/body separation.
- Try leaning the bike to the other side. Pull the arm that was extended upward and extend the arm that was bent. This forces the bike to lean in the other direction.
- Exaggerate the lean of the bike and the separation of the body until you feel the saddle push against your inner thigh. This much bike lean should give you excellent lateral stability.

Look again at the above figures. When the rider leans the bike from side-to-side the body counterbalances. In this type of bike/body separation the hips and shoulders stay square, facing forward in the direction the bike is traveling. A common error for riders is to shift the shoulders to one side while the hips remain over the saddle. If you have difficulty try the static exercise on the page 10. It may help you get the hips and shoulders moving together.

BIKE/BODY SEPARATION

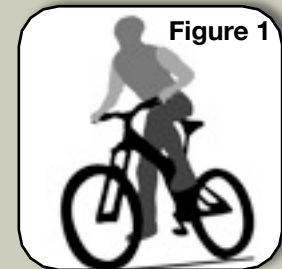


BIKE/BODY SEPARATION

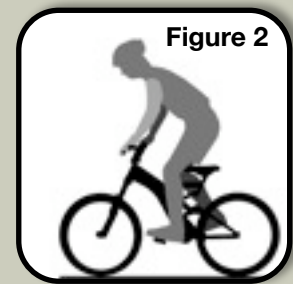
Static Exercise. Two people are needed - a rider and an assistant

Straddle your bike with one foot on the ground. (Figure 1)

Your **assistant** straddles the front wheel of your bike, facing you and holding the wheel between their thighs. This person should also take hold of the handlebars with their hands close to the stem. The role of your assistant is to steady your bike as you practice the movements below.



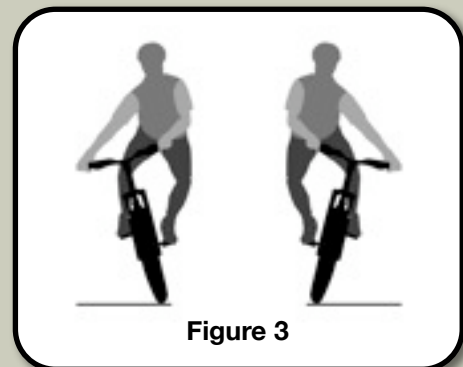
Get onto your bike with both feet on the pedals. Backpedal if necessary until your pedals are level. (Figure 2) You should be in a standing neutral position. Lock both brakes so the bike can't roll forward or back.



Have your **assistant** stabilize the bike while you lean it slightly to one side. Your assistant observes and corrects your form as you counterbalance this bike lean with a slight shift of your hips and shoulders away from the side of the bike lean. Check that your hips and shoulders stay square, facing forward in the same direction as the bike. (Figure 3)

Your **assistant** looks for the following:

- Hips, torso and shoulders in line and away from the bike.
- Pedals level and equally weighted.
- Cowboy style bend in the knees.
- Shoulders directly over the handlebars. Note: Riders tend to shift their weight back during this exercise – this takes weight off the front wheel and reduces control of the front wheel.



When you use your body correctly to counterbalance the bike lean you will feel stable and the bike will not want to fall over.

Now lean the bike the other way. Your assistant observes to see that your body is counterbalancing this lean correctly.

Repeat the above bike/body separation movements several times.

PRESSURE CONTROL

TERMINOLOGY

Pressure Control is using up and down movements of the hips and shoulders to place more or less pressure on one or both of the tires.

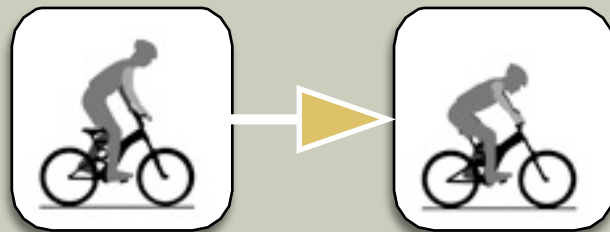
Pressure control is very useful when braking, cornering and riding rough sections of trail. In this lesson you practice pressure control with movements that increase or decrease the pressure on **both tires at the same time**. Applying pressure control to the front and rear wheel independently is more advanced and is addressed in later lessons.

Coast on easy terrain and practice the movements below. Then take it to the trail.

Increase the pressure on both tires by quickly lowering your body. Your hips and shoulders drop down and your knees and elbows bend. Use this when:

Braking: the sudden increase in pressure on the wheels increases traction and braking power. Drop your weight when you begin braking.

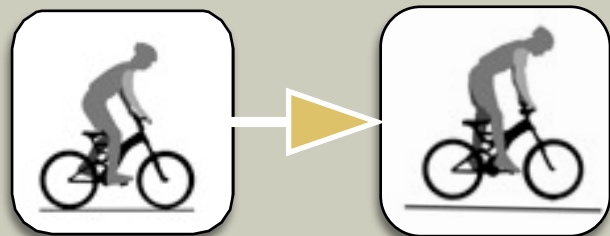
Cornering: the sudden increase in pressure on the wheels increases traction and control through the corner. Drop your weight as you enter a corner.



Decrease the pressure on both tires by quickly moving your body upwards.

Your legs and arms extend and your hips and shoulders move up. Use this when:

- Riding a short section of the trail that is rooty, rocky, or rough. The sudden decrease in pressure on the wheels reduces traction, lightens the wheels and lets the bike roll more smoothly over the rough terrain. Extend the arms and legs when you want to smooth out the ride.



CAUTION - expect the bike to pick up speed when the wheels are unweighted over rough terrain.

TRACKING PROGRESS



Neutral Position - correct form on flat terrain: coasting with pedals level, wheels equally weighted, slight bend in elbows, legs fairly extended, hips high, relaxed. Also scanning with eyes and an index finger resting on each brake lever.



Neutral Position - able to maintain on a non-technical climb with seated climb technique



Neutral Position - able to maintain on a non-technical climb with standing climb technique.



Neutral Position - able to maintain on a technical climb with crouched climb technique.



Bike/body Separation - correct body position: head, shoulders, torso, hips and knees with bike leaned to your left when coasting on flat terrain



Bike/body Separation - correct body position: head, shoulders, torso, hips and knees with bike leaned to your right when coasting on flat terrain



Bike/body Separation - able to use bike/body separation to maintain lateral balance when descending rough terrain



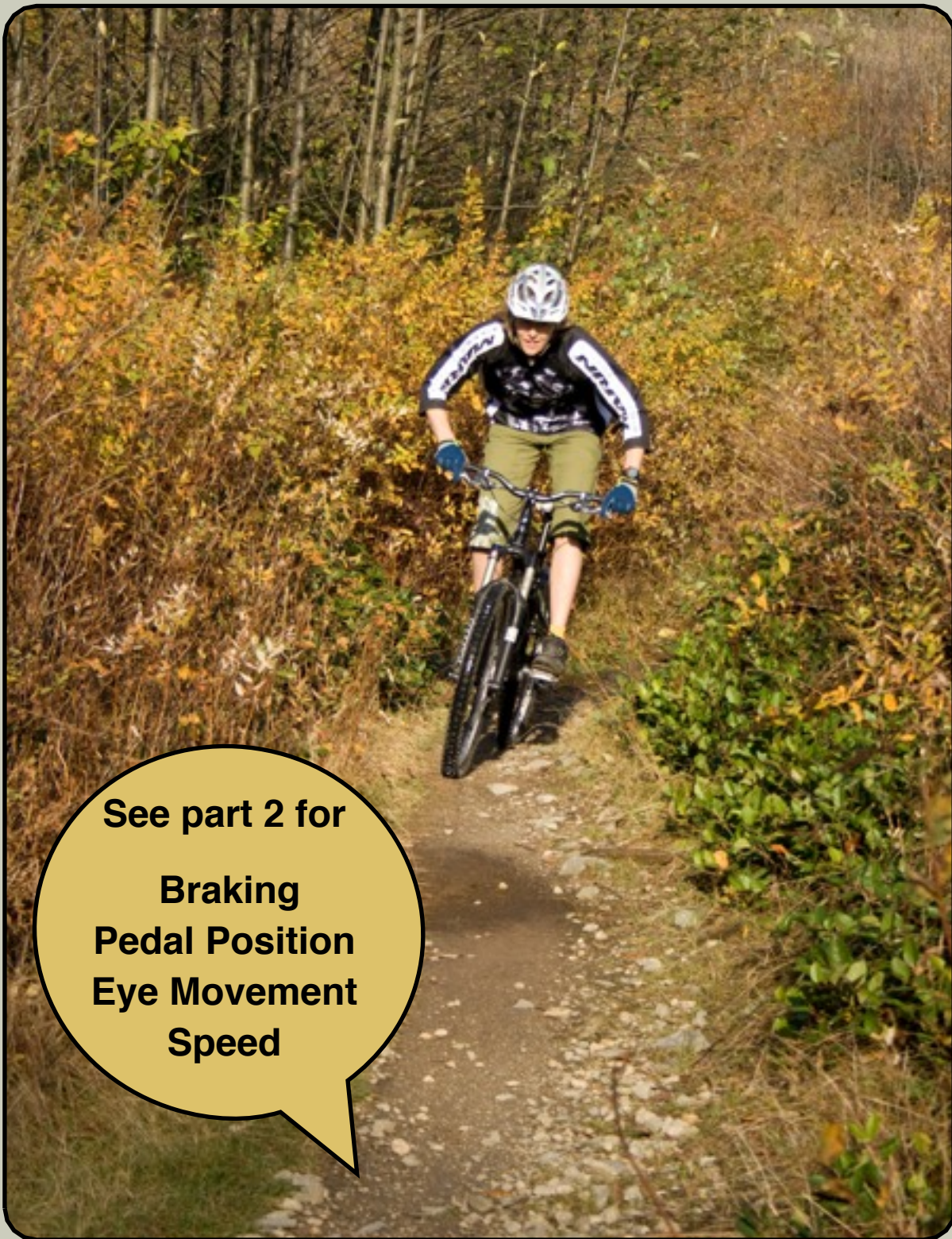
Pressure Control - able to increase the weight on both wheels when the brakes are applied



Pressure Control - able to decrease the weight on both wheels when riding a short section of rough terrain



Pressure Control - able to increase the weight on both wheels when entering a corner at moderate speed



See part 2 for
Braking
Pedal Position
Eye Movement
Speed