

What happens when you swerve away?

About five or six years ago, I began to question countersteering. What was it? How did it work? Why did I favour this type of steering? And, most importantly, what has it ever done for me?

This all sounds a little bit like Monty Python, but there is a serious note I promise you.

If countersteering is as good as they say, what evidence is there to back the argument up? How can you tell whether a rider was or was not employing countersteering when there was a collision? This is the crux of where I want to go. Can the use of countersteering be demonstrated as a means of avoiding a collision? And if this technique is not employed, can that also be specifically identified?

Consider riding down a straight section of road, rural or urban it matters not. You are approaching a nearside junction and you have right of way. Quite reasonably (contrary to cars drivers) you expect any vehicles approaching from this junction to give way to your progress. Stupid assumption; the first car pulls out of the junction into your path. Easy, I hear you shout, lean right, press down on the right bar end and round the car we go, giving the finger as you pass within millimetres of the car's front bumper.

You obviously live in Utopia!

The brain, that inert object between our ears, says swerve right, and without thinking you do exactly that. Now what happens? Do you miss the car as in the ideal world above or do you veer left and collide with it?

If countersteering allows you to use the forces acting on the motorcycle to steer in the opposite direction to that which you want to go, does the opposite occur when you swerve away? i.e. when you turn the bars in the direction you want to go but the forces acting on the machine turn you into the danger?

Hopefully I now have your attention. Being switched on, I know you're ahead of me in asking if it can be determined from the marks on the road / tyres, whether the rider countersteered or actually swerved and went into the hazard? At this moment in time I don't know, but in time I hope to.

It's now time to say who I am and what I am doing writing this article. I am a retired police officer (please don't hold that against me) and a collision investigator. I am also a research student at Teesside University studying for a PhD. My research, believe it or not, is based on the gyroscopic effect on motorcycles in swerve to avoid collisions.

At the bottom of this article there is a web link to an in depth questionnaire, which I ask you to take the time to visit and complete. This questionnaire is obviously only part of the research but it will help me to have a better understanding of individual training and experience. Please take the time to complete the questionnaire and if you have experience of a swerve to avoid collision, I would like to hear from you. Needless to say, any information you give me is for statistical research only and won't be used for anything more sinister.. In anticipation, thank you all.

Rod Shephard.

The questionnaire is at <http://www.slightlydifferent.co.uk/swerve/>

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