

READY POSITION

The Ready Position is a balanced standing position used to prepare for challenges, impacts and as a set-up and follow-through for many skills. This position has a dynamic range of motion during terrain changes and skills performed. The key is to remain balanced and *ready* for what is next.

When observed, the Ready Position mimics a crouched athletic stance that is used for many sports and physical activities.



The goal is to maintain balance, maximize strength, and minimize response time through weighing of the feet and bending the elbows and knees.

Site Selection: Smooth, flat terrain. Use cones to provide a basic runway and turn-around point.

Teaching Points:

- » Crouched athletic stance.
- » Deep bend in knees and elbows. Elbow out.
- » Weight in the feet. "Heavy feet, light hands!"

Demonstrations:

- » Static: Side view standing next to bike. Body language should match the explanation.
- » Fluid: Side view. Speed is slow jogging pace.
- » Approach in a Neutral Position. Transition smoothly into the

Ready Position when closest to the viewers. Then, return to Neutral Position as you ride away.

- » Mention that the Ready Position is a dynamic position. A high or low ready position may be required based on changes in terrain or skill about to be performed.

3 Key Essentials

These essentials are common to all skills. Therefore, make mention of them before beginning the first skill or provide a reminder before resuming instruction. They can then be stressed during observation and correction of rider skills practice.

- » Head up, eyes scanning ahead
- » Finger on each brake lever at all times
- » Level pedals, evenly weighted

NEUTRAL POSITION

The Neutral Position is a tall and relaxed standing position on the bike used when cruising relatively easy terrain such as grass fields, wide paths, gravel roads, etc. The position can also provide a moment of rest between challenges that a rider may be navigating.

When observed, the rider should appear tall and relaxed with a slight bend in the elbows and knees while standing. The rider's weight should be centered over the bike with level pedals.

The goal is to maintain a relaxed position while standing and coasting, keeping equal weight on the front and rear wheels through weighing the feet.¹

Site Selection: Smooth, flat terrain. Use cones to provide a basic runway and turn-around point.

Teaching Points:

- » Tall, relaxed stance.
- » Slight bend in knees and elbows.
- » Weight in the feet. "Heavy feet, light hands!"²

Demonstrations:

- » Static: Side view standing next to bike. Body language should match the explanation.
- » Fluid: Side view. Speed is slow jogging pace.
- » Coast in a neutral position and emphasize the relaxed stance with a very slight bounce in knees and loose elbows.



BRAKING

Braking is used to reduce speed, maintain speed while descending or bring the bicycle to a controlled stop. Braking is used in varying amounts and combinations to control the bicycle without skidding.



The goals are to utilize both brakes in a safe, controlled manner for reducing speed while riding and to come to a complete stop from a range of speeds using proper technique.

Consideration should be made for those with varying technologies of brakes (ie. disc vs. rim) and discrepancies in setup. Proper brake lever alignment is critical to braking and the success of many other skills. Adjust the position, angle, and reach of each brake lever to best suit the type of brake and rider. One-finger braking is preferred. Two is acceptable for smaller riders or lesser brakes.

Site Selection: Smooth, flat terrain. Use cones to provide a basic runway and turn-around point.

Teaching points:

- » Ready Position.



- » Apply appropriate pressure to brake levers (Toothpaste analogy).
- » Forward foot, heel down.
- » Bracing leg.

BIKE/BODY SEPARATION - Side to Side

Side to side bike/body separation is critical to riding a specific path while maintaining horizontal balance and stability. Examples are riding narrow trails or singletrack, cornering, or dodging obstacles encroaching on the handlebars, such as trees and other riders.

The goal is to lean the bike from one side to the other while maintaining a balanced ready position, showing appropriate use of all other fundamental elements.

Site Selection: Smooth, flat terrain. Use cones to provide a basic runway and turn-around point.

Teaching points:

- » Low Ready Position with wide knees.
- » Hinge at the elbows.
- » Lean bike without steering.
- » Keep torso still.

Demonstrations:

- » Static: Front view standing next to bike.
- » Fluid: Front view. Speed is slow jogging pace.
- » Coast straight towards your participants while leaning the bike from side to side. You may need to do this multiple times to allow everyone in a large group to see a front view.



BIKE/BODY SEPARATION - Forward & Back

Forward and back bike/body separation are used to maintain vertical balance and stability while riding on any type or measure of incline or decline - typically climbing or descending. Forward bike/body separation is used for inclines. The back position is used for declines.



The goal is to move between a forward and a back position while showing appropriate use of all other fundamental elements.



Site Selection: Smooth, flat terrain. Use cones to provide a basic runway and turn-around point.

Teaching points:

- ✦ Low Ready Position.
- ✦ Move the body forward and back.
- ✦ Torso moves on a level plane.

Demonstrations:

- ✦ Static: Side view standing next to bike.
- ✦ Fluid: Side view. Speed is slow jogging pace.
- ✦ Coast in a ready position. Slide forward until the hips are in front of the saddle and the chest is over the handlebars, then slide back on an even plane so the hips are behind the saddle.
- ✦ Briefly pause in between the front and back positions in a balanced ready position.



INTRODUCTION TO CORNERING

Cornering is used to maintain balance, momentum, and speed while making dramatic changes in direction. Often used when riding on flat or descending terrain. Cornering is a complex skill with numerous teaching points and progressions. For that reason, we offer an introduction at this first level of instruction.



While the rider may STEER the bike through tight turns at slow speed, cornering involves leaning the bike. When cornering, the rider must LEAN the bike in the intended direction. This causes the bike to arc in that direction. The rider remains in a low Ready Position with equally weighted pedals to provide stability and distribute body weight evenly over the front and rear wheels.

The goal is to maintain balance while making dramatic changes in riding direction.

Site Selection: Smooth, flat terrain or gentle downgrade. Use cones to create a slalom course and right-angle turn.

Teaching points:

- ✦ Low Ready Position.
- ✦ Lean the bike in the direction of turn while maintaining level pedals.
- ✦ Look in direction of turn.

Demonstrations:

- ✦ Static: Front view standing next to bike.
- ✦ Fluid: Front view. Speed is jogging pace.
- ✦ Coast straight towards your participants while leaning the bike from side to side. Allow the bike to create a gentle curving path back and forth while your torso remains still. Do the same while navigating a line of cones creating a slalom.

- ✦ Have participants near the end of a right-angle turn and face you. Coast through turn, demonstrating teaching points. Hold the bike in a leaning position as you travel through the arc of turn.

SHIFTING

Shifting is used to maintain an efficient and comfortable pedaling cadence while riding over varied terrain. When cadence is too low, more force is required to pedal which can cause early or excessive fatigue. It can also create unnecessary strain on the knee joint. When cadence is too high, the rider is unable to accelerate. As a coach, we want to provide guidance on how and when to shift the gears. Use terminology such as Easier/Harder gear because they correspond to sensations that the rider will feel when they shift.

The goal is to help the rider understand how shifting gears affects comfort and efficiency over varying terrain.

Site Selection: Start with the basic cone configuration on smooth, flat terrain. Progress to slightly sloping grass area offering varying resistance. Use cones to create a large rectangle directing riders both up and down the sloped terrain.

Teaching points:

- » Surge.
- » Soft pedal.
- » Shift.
- » Resume (continue pedaling).

Demonstrations:

- » Fluid: Side view. Speed is slow jogging pace.
- » Exaggerate the surge with appropriate body language.
- » Maintain quiet shifting as you shift one gear at a time.

SEATED CLIMB

Seated climbing is often the most efficient climbing method as the majority of the rider's body weight is supported by the bike seat. The upper body can remain relaxed with minimal movement. Pedaling power is provided by muscles in the lower body.

The goal is to climb easy to moderate inclines efficiently while in a seated position.

Site Selection: Smooth, gentle inclined terrain.

Teaching points:

- » Shift gears.
- » Shoulders forward.
- » Slide hips forward as terrain steepens.
- » Low Ready Position with elbows out for technical terrain.
- » Low Ready Position with elbows in for power on non-technical terrain.

Demonstrations:

- » Static: Revisit forward & back bike/body separation.
- » Fluid: Side view. Speed is slow jogging pace.
- » Ride up an easy incline while exaggerating a forward body position.



STANDING CLIMB

The standing climb is used to accelerate on climbs that are not technical or loose. Standing consumes more energy as the rider must now balance and support the weight of the entire body. The standing climb is also used as a break during long seated climbs, to stretch the muscles, or to burst over the crest of a hill.



The goal is to develop good timing and coordination, when rocking the bike from side to side, during a standing climb.

Site Selection: Short, steep climbs, road or smooth packed dirt.

Teaching points:

- » Stand up.
- » Power pedal.
- » Pull.

Demonstrations:

- » Fluid: Front view from top of climb.
- » Ride up a steep incline while exaggerating the bike rocking side to side.

CROUCHED CLIMB

The crouched climb is used to navigate short portions of technical climbs. The hips are hovering above the saddle and shoulders are above the handlebars. This position allows for quick forward and back bike/body separation to maintain balance and traction. Crouched climbing is the most strenuous method of climbing but very effective in technical terrain.

The goal is to develop good bike/body separation to maintain balance and traction while climbing technical terrain.

Site Selection: Rough, uneven terrain, of moderate to steep incline.

Teaching points:

- » Shoulders low.
- » Elbows out.
- » Hovering above saddle.

Demonstrations:

- » Fluid: Side view. Speed is slow jogging pace.

