

## Hints for When You Park Your Motorcycle

When parking along the road, choose a space as far away as possible from main lanes of traffic, sharp curves and intersections. Make sure that the surface is solid and clear of loose gravel or sand so that you won't lose your footing and the bike stand won't sink in. Avoid parking under a tree; the shade may be nice, but trees tend to drop sap that can damage your bike's finish. Try to park under a street lamp if your bike will be there after dark. Generally, try to park where the bike can be easily seen and near where people are working, such as shops and restaurants. This gives the impression that the owner is probably close by. Avoid parking behind trucks or other vehicles that may have limited visibility when backing-up. Stay away from rental trucks. Most roads are crowned and slope down to the gutter. Point the front end of your bike uphill, and roll backward into the parking spot. Put your rear wheel against the curb. If you can't lodge the rear wheel against a curb, leave the transmission in first gear. Position the bike at between 90 and 45 degrees to the flow of traffic, depending on the width of the road. Parking parallel to the flow of traffic makes the bike far less visible to other road users. If you can't park safely at 45 degrees, you probably shouldn't park there at all.

If you are parking in a lot, seek out an area that is well lighted. Be cautious about parking between two 4-wheelers, especially big ones. An approaching motorist may think the space is empty, and could hit your bike before he realizes that it is occupied. At motels, try to keep your bike close to your room. If you are unable to park near your room, leave your bike close to the entrance where there is some traffic rather than in a remote location where it can't be easily seen. If you are traveling with other riders, park in clusters to be more obvious. There is also less chance of your bike being tampered with when in a group.

When shutting off your engine, it is best to keep both hands on the grips. You can do this by either putting down the side stand with the transmission in gear (not all bikes), or by using the engine cutoff switch, rather than the ignition switch. If you make a habit of using the cutoff switch, you will build "muscle memory" as to where the switch is so that you can quickly and unerringly find it in the event of an emergency. Get into the habit of using your left hand to turn off the ignition switch so that you can keep your right hand on the front brake lever. Whenever you climb on or off the bike, always squeeze the front brake lever to prevent the machine from rolling.

Use the center stand only when parking on very hard surfaces such as concrete. If you are going to work on your bike put it on the center stand; you will have less chance of pushing it over, and generally it is easier to work on in the upright position. For most other situations, the side stand is preferable. The side stand provides three-point stability, like a tripod, while the center stand only gives two-point stability. And it's far easier to "fine tune" the position of a bike on the side stand than it is to take it off the center stand and start again. Never rely on either stand to support your bike by itself unless you are parked on a solid surface. While sand and grassy areas are obviously not solid, neither is asphalt when the temperature exceeds 90 degrees. Placing a "foot" under the side stand is usually all that is required to keep it from punching a hole in the surface and sending your bike onto its left side. Turn the handlebar to the left when using the side stand. A motorcycle is several times more resistant to movement when the front wheel is not pointing straight ahead.

If you find that you need to park in a spot that is not sloped, or has no curb, make sure your bike is in first gear. Then push the bike forward until all the play in the gears is gone before leaning it over on the side stand. If the parking area slopes side to side, try to park with the down slope to the left. This may cause the bike to lean over further than normal, so make sure that it is stable before dismounting. Never leave your bike unattended in neutral with the side stand down. Putting the transmission in gear will 'lock' the rear wheel and reduce the chance of the bike falling over.

Never take your motorcycle off the center stand while the side stand is extended. To do so risks potential damage to the frame and engine mounts (from shock) and can easily result in tossing your bike over onto its right side. Situations that increase the risk include your shocks being low, heavy luggage, a road slope to the right, or coming down slightly off center.

Always secure "loose" valuables when leaving your bike unattended. An unsecured helmet could fall to the ground and get damaged. It's a good idea to lock your helmets to the helmet holders if your bike is so equipped. But even this has its drawbacks. Riders have been known to return to their bikes only to find their helmets there, but their audio equipment missing. Helmets secured to helmet holders typically hang upside down and after a good rain, you may find them filled with water. It is always best to lock helmets in the saddlebags or travel trunk. Loose stuff is tempting to potential thieves, so lockup other valuables too. And while you're locking things, take a second to lock the steering.

If you have a bike cover, use it. It is advisable to cover your bike when parked overnight or for any extended period. A covered bike is difficult to identify and tends to minimize the risks of theft and curiosity seekers taking liberties. A cover can protect the bike's finish from windblown sand and other debris, as well as hail and harmful sunrays. Use an elastic cord or locking cable to cinch together the bottom edges of your cover under the bike to keep it from flying off (and to further deter someone who might even think about stealing the bike). Use a good quality cover that will not trap moisture under it. Keep your cover clean. Dirt inside the cover can easily scratch your paint. For day parking, partial covers are handy. They are very compact, easy to install, and they protect the seat, electronic controls, and windshield from sun and rain.