

DIY Rider Education, by Mark Caldwell

With the success of Lowe's and Home Depot, it seems that the DIY (Do It Yourself) trend is here to stay for a while. So rather than fight the wave, let me help you to ride it. Did you know that there are a lot of resources in the area of Rider Education that you can take advantage of by yourself? And many of them are **FREE**. Let's take a look.

I have hounded you in the past to read good books about safe riding skills such as those by David Hough. I was very happy to see how many of you purchased one or more of his books when he came to talk to our chapter. I hope you actually took some time to read them during the winter in preparation for this great riding season we are entering. If you haven't, it's not too late. Just pull the books out of wherever you stored them, dust them off and go to it. If you find that you're just not getting around to it, perhaps planning a regular reading time would help, such as reading one chapter each Sunday after dinner, or something like that. What a great way to start your week!

For those who did not get his books yet, and/or are on a tighter budget, do not worry. David's books are available in the public library system, which I believe is still free in this country. We also have two of his books, *Proficient Motorcycling* (the first one) and *Street Strategies* available in our Chapter Library, which is also free to members. In fact, every month in the newsletter we publish what items are available to be borrowed from the Chapter Library.

If you'd rather do things the electronic way, there are several resources on the national GWRRA web site (<http://www.gwrra.org/>). On the right side of the home page, there is a Site Links drop down list. Choose Rider Ed from that list and it takes you to the national Rider Education page. From there you can read the National Rider Education newsletters, download T-CLOCK and trailer inspection checklists, and even read the Rider Education Program Handbook. Also on that site are links to other safety resources such as the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF), Red Cross, MEDIC FIRST AID, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and others.

Also on the GWRRA web site there is the Message Board with Motorcycle Tech Info and Rider Ed discussion forums (topics). If you're new to using discussion forums, I suggest you start by browsing some of the discussions (a.k.a. threads) already on the site before posting your own questions. There is a Test Topic where you can practice posting messages in order to get used to the way the system works. It's not difficult, but it can be intimidating if you're new to forums. **But please** remember my warnings about False Authority Syndrome from a few newsletters ago. Just because it's on the Internet, and somebody writes with a forceful tone or sounds like they should know what they're talking about, does not mean that it really is accurate. I'm perfectly happy to talk about anything you read and let's discuss the pros and cons. Safety is rarely pure black and white, but instead is full of trade-offs. So let's talk about them.

Always remember: your safety is your own responsibility. Take some time to learn something new, or to sharpen those skills you already have. I'd like to see each and every one of you enjoying the ride, and then coming home safe.