

Phuzzy's Guide to Wheelies

By: [PhuzzyGnu](#)

Wheelies are an integral part of the motorcycling experience. Within the next few paragraphs you will find information on wheelies gleaned from more than 5 minutes of wheelie experience by that world-famous stunter, PhuzzyGnu.

Part One: Overcoming Mental Barriers

Perhaps one of the difficult aspects of wheelies to master is the fear of what scientists call "Busting Your Ass (BYA)." This is a very real and likely phenomenon associated with wheelies, other stunts, and motorcycles in general. Here are a few hints: 1. Start out small. You are not, and will probably never be, Gary Rothwell. So don't go big until you think you're ready. 2. Never confuse your intentions with your capabilities. See #1 above. 3. Wear safety gear. Helmet, gloves, boots, jacket, and back protector are my usual gear when riding, and as a matter of fact you should probably wear full leathers. If you do not wear these items and you mess up a wheelie, you will be scarred and misshapen and unattractive to the opposite sex. Wearing safety gear also makes you feel more confident.

Part Two: Equipment

To do a wheelie, you will first need a motorcycle. Any kind of motorcycle will do. I personally have a friend that wheelies his Gold Wing. For our purposes I will assume you ride a bike with some sporty capability, though the process is the same for all bikes. Dirt bikes are good to learn wheelies on, because they crash cheaply. Friends' bikes are similar in this regard.

Here are questions to ask your bike: 1. Are you in basically good shape? 2. Do you have a smoothly operating throttle? 3. Do you have a clutch in working condition? 4. Do you have a rear brake in case I need to save my ass?

If the answer to any of these questions is "no," you might have to find a new motorcycle. If your motorcycle does not answer, don't worry, motorcycles don't usually answer anyway.

Part Three: Where should I practice my wheelies?

Practice wheelies somewhere you can be an idiot on a motorcycle without many people minding. Also look for good pavement and, most importantly, a total absence of police (see section 4 below.) Alternatively, in front of girls' schools and in front of hospitals are good places to practice wheelieing.

Part Four: The Man Hates Wheelies

Cops HATE wheelies. It brings out some primal reaction in them. They will throw the book at you. It may be called "failure to control vehicle" or "not in complete control of vehicle" or "improper start from a standing position" or "exhibition of acceleration." DO NOT DO WHEELIES IN FRONT OF COPS. Mothers also dislike wheelies. On the other hand, young children (young boys especially) love wheelies.

Most women do to, though they usually won't admit it. It is best to do wheelies for women at every opportunity. (If you are a woman, by all means do wheelies. It goes without saying than guys love wheelies and a woman doing a wheelie could probably manipulate most men into doing most anything.)

Part Five: To Clutch or Not to Clutch?

If your bike has big power and/or light weight, you don't even need the clutch- you can get the front wheel up with just the throttle. GSXR-750s, Bandit 1200s, Blackbirds (my bike), TL1000s, VTR1000s, R1s, ZX-9s and other bikes with Lots-o-Torque or Not-Much-Weight can bring the front wheel up with just a big, or even not-so-big twist of throttle. Simply riding forward, rapidly closing and opening the throttle can get the front wheel WAY up on some of these bikes. Some bikes just require you to open the throttle. Other bikes require the use of the clutch, which is that lever on the left clip-on (or handlebar if you ride on of "those" bikes.) I'll assume if you have a bike with big power you don't need my help anyway.

Part Six: Will this hurt my bike?

Wheelies done right are harmful to neither bike nor clutch. Use low revs and torque to wheelie, not massive revs and horsepower. Slower speed wheelies are also easier to control. Wheelies done wrong can damage chains, head bearings, forks seals, and, in worse-case scenarios, bodywork and even you.

Part Seven: What if it all goes wrong?

If it all goes wrong, hopefully you have the back brake covered, you mash it, and the front end slams down, smashing your grollies into the tank (if you are a guy) or smashing those mystical parts into the tank (if you are a girl.) If it goes REALLY wrong, and you either didn't have the brake covered or you miss it completely (it happens), the bike will bodyslam itself into lots of expensive pieces, from about 5 feet up. It might also land on you. Try to fall off to the side. If you are not wearing gear, you will be in a world of pain, even at 20 miles per hour. Even wearing gear, you can still get hurt bad, okay?

Part Eight: The Wheelie

Having read this far, you're ready to try wheelies. Briefly, the following are the steps to the Wheelie. 1.Cover the back brake. It will stop you from flipping over backwards if you go too far. 2.Accelerate at about 1/4 throttle through 20-30 mph. 3. Squeeze the clutch. 4.Roll on more throttle. 5.Let out the clutch.

Steps 2-5 are almost simultaneous.

Step 1- The back brake will save your ass if you start to go over backwards. Until you are very proficient at wheelies, you should always cover the back brake just in case.

Step 2- You need to be accelerating gently to get the weight on the back wheel. Once you become proficient, you can do a wheelie from any speed, but we'll start like this, ok?

Step 3- Squeezing the clutch gets the engine spinning faster and making more power, of course. You don't have to squeeze it all the way in, just enough to get it slipping, thus spinning the motor up and getting more power.

Step 4- Giving a little more gas increases the engine spinning as noted in step 3 above.

Step 5- Letting out the clutch is the key to a smooth wheelie. Don't just pop out the clutch, or the front end might leap in the air and scare you away from wheelies for a year. Let the clutch out smoothly and quickly, as if you were pulling away from a light really fast. If you have ever been in a stoplight drag race and had the front end come up on you as you left the line, that's exactly how the clutch should come out.

In any case, unless you are really ballsy or just stupid, the front won't even come up the first time. You'll just kinda jerk forward a bit. No problem. Now, do it again, with a wee bit more throttle, engaging the clutch a wee bit faster, sneaking up on the wheelie. It probably won't come up this time either. Just keep on giving a wee bit more gas and a wee bit quicker (but still smooth) clutch engagement, and eventually the front will come up more and more. More throttle- more air.

Steering wheelies is just a matter of centering your weight. You lean to one side, you go to one side. Turn the front wheel one way, you'll go the other way, just like countersteering. Stick a knee out and you'll go that way. Simple. Just sit straight up and hold the bars straight at first, ok?

The front wheel has a gyro-effect, so if it stops spinning, turning the front can't steer you anymore and when you finish the wheelie it'll have to spin up to speed. If you are going fast enough, you'll get a chirp and a puff of smoke, but let's save that for later. If you set a wheelie down crossed up you can get a nasty tankslapper and get tossed, so try not to do that either, unless you like tankslappers.

Once you can consistently get the front end up higher and higher, then you can think about going just a bit further!

Part Nine: What now?

Okay, now you are getting the front wheel up regularly. Now you can find the balance point. Basically, it's this floaty, light point in a wheelie that is really damn high up there where you don't have to use as much throttle and you can basically keep it up indefinitely.

Part Ten: More Gears!

You aren't limited to 1st gear, of course. Once you are proficient at wheelies, you can use other gears. You can wheelie most sportbikes in 1 st and 2nd and maybe 3rd gear, and some big boys like the R1 or the ZX-9 or maybe a Blackbird might be wheeliable even in 4th. I haven't brought a bike up, ever, in 4th, but it is possible.

Alternatively, you can start out in 1st and go up through the gears as far as your balls (or ovaries), the road, and your skill will let you. The current wheelie record is well over 175 miles per hour, so get out there. To shift in a wheelie all you need to

do is twitch your right wrist to unload the gears, while having your left toe already pressuring the gear change. No clutch necessary. Some Hondas and other bikes, my Blackbird included, have a big throw from first to second. Give it a big, positive kick into second to avoid missing a shift, having the engine rev the tits off itself, and then having the front wheel slam down to the jeers of any witnesses and to your own shame and possibly mashed privates. If you do get it into second it will want to kick a little higher, so be ready to modulate the throttle. Of course, you haven't tried to shift into 2nd until you were really familiar with balancing these things, so it's no problem. Now you can go into 3rd and 4th and 5th and 6th, and you're the man (or woman) and you can make money at this.

Part 11: Variations.

Once you're quite the badass, here's some things to try.

Standing up. Easy, stand up on the pegs and wheelie away. Cool, eh?

Crossed up. You'll have to turn the bars and stick out the opposite knee to get a nice, crossed up, rad effect.

Waving/Flip off/other gestures. Take your hand off (your LEFT hand!) and do whatever you think would be cool. Extra points for flipping off cops, if that's your kinda thing.

Passengers. If you have a trusting friend, go for it. It is actually easier because of the weight distribution, but the stakes are higher for obvious reasons.

There are other variations, but if you are good enough to think of them and do them, you wouldn't be reading this, would you?

Part 12: It Ain't My Fault

Phuzzy accepts no responsibility whatsoever for anything that might happen to you if you decide to read this and go out and practice the techniques described herein. Wheelies are inherently dangerous because motorcycles have two wheels for a reason and if you take one of them off the ground, you open up a whole new realm of possible ways to maim yourself. Don't be stupid. Don't blame me if you end up having aftermarket titanium parts installed on your body if something goes wrong. Have fun.

Comments? Questions? Criticisms? Fan mail? Email phuzzygnu@aol.com

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