

Picking Up a Dropped Bike

Though the worst part of dropping your bike may be the embarrassment, remember that even the best riders may occasionally put their motorcycle on the ground. What's more embarrassing than dropping it, however, is not being able to pick it back up!

However embarrassed you may feel, avoid the temptation to rush to pick up the bike. Hurrying will only make it harder and perhaps increase the chances of hurting yourself in the process. There's no shame in dropping a motorcycle, so take your time in picking it up – and make sure you do it right.

Ideally, you should have the technique demonstrated by a qualified professional and take time to practice in the presence of that professional, who can provide feedback on your technique.

There are two basic techniques, one for smaller motorcycles, one for larger, as described below in an excerpt from a Rider's Edge New Rider Course supplement (by Rodd Johnson). For both techniques (the second one is generally recommended, for any size bike), the very first step should be to take a few minutes to compose yourself. Take the time to assess both yourself and the motorcycle before proceeding. Ask yourself a few questions:

Are you hurt? Are you calm and relaxed? Are you capable of picking up your motorcycle under normal circumstances (let alone after a potentially traumatic event)? If there is someone nearby who can help you, ask! Again, there's no shame in getting assistance. In fact, it's a very good idea.

Now the motorcycle. Make sure the engine is turned off using the cut-off or ignition switch. Turn off the fuel supply valve (if your motorcycle has one). Check for spilled fuel and use extreme caution if you find any (a small spark or other ignition source could start a serious fire). If the motorcycle is on its right side, extend the sidestand down and shift the bike into gear.

Finally, use one or the other of the following techniques to lift your motorcycle (the second is generally preferred for a Harley-Davidson motorcycle):

Technique I:

Facing the motorcycle (for medium and smaller motorcycles)

1. Find the balance point of the two tires and the engine or engine guard.
2. Turn the handlebar to the full-lock position, with the front of the tire pointed skyward.
3. Straddle the handlebar. With both hands on the handgrip and your back straight, lift carefully, keeping the handgrip close to your body. Use your leg muscles.
4. Lower or set the motorcycle on its sidestand, and park the motorcycle safely.

Technique II:

Back to the motorcycle (preferred method for any size)

1. Turn your handlebar to the full-lock position. The illustration at the top right shows the front wheel pointing downward (with the motorcycle on its left side, handlebar locked to the left). What works best for you will depend on the type of bike, the design of its handlebar, and which way offers a more comfortable hand position for picking up the bike.

2. Find the balance point of the two tires and the engine or engine guard.
3. Squat down with your lower back/butt against the motorcycle seat. Keep your back straight.
4. With one hand, grasp the handgrip (overhand or underhand), keeping your wrist straight.
5. With your other hand, grasp the motorcycle framework, avoiding the hot exhaust system.
6. Lift using your legs, while pressing against the seat, and use small steps to straighten the motorcycle.
7. Lower or set the motorcycle on its sidestand, and park the motorcycle safely.

Once you get the motorcycle upright, take a few minutes to inspect it for damage. Often, damage is only cosmetic, but make sure that a bent fender, for instance, is not going to rub against the tire when you ride away. Keep in mind that a bent lever (clutch or front brake) may be cracked and could break after you pull on it a few times. Even if such an item remains functional, it should be replaced as soon as possible.

