

Side-stands

What could possibly be said about these?

By: James R. Davis

Like an airplane, it is my opinion that motorcycles should have a 'walk around' performed before every ride. During these quick checks you will see the obvious: low tire pressure, damaged tires, dripping oil, open luggage, and the like. (You might also get in the habit of checking your oil level.)

Depending on how frequently you ride, I suggest that a 'touch everything' (literally) check should also be done regularly where such things as loose windscreens, loose spark plug wires, loose antennas, loose mirrors, etc. are discovered before they become problems.

But one part of our machines tends to get overlooked by most during our casual checks - our side stands.

First, let's look at what can go wrong with them.

- The most obvious is a weak or broken lock spring. With either you can end up dragging the stand as you ride, or it will fail to 'lock' the stand into place when you lower it leaving your bike on its left side when you dismount.
- Newer bikes have an interlock switch that kills the ignition if you put the bike into gear while the stand is down. That switch can fail. If you rely on it and don't bother to check that the stand is up before you drive away, that first left turn can easily send you bouncing over to the right and result in total loss of control.
- Older bikes have a rubber 'finger' extension at the tip of the stand that will wear over time. The purpose of that little 'finger' is to grab the pavement before the metal part of the stand itself does and ATTEMPT to pull the stand out of its locked position before it hits. There is a wear marker on these rubber extensions and when yours gets worn to that point it should be replaced because it no longer reaches the ground before the metal part of the side stand.
- If when parked on a level surface your bike is not leaning heavily on the side stand you should adjust the side stand, if possible, so that it does. If it is not possible for you to adjust the side stand sufficiently, any welder can easily do so in a matter of minutes.

Assuming that your side stand is fully functional, there are things you should not do in order to keep them from turning dangerous.

- You should never take a bike down from its center stand while the side stand is down. 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.
- You should never simply kick the stand down at your destination and climb off your bike without visually checking that it is extended all the way and 'locked' into place.
- You should never have your shocks so low, or luggage so heavy, or stop on an incline to the right so great that you have to lean the bike to the right in order to get the side stand all the

way down. If you have to do so, the bike will not be leaning heavily on that side stand when you leave it and you cannot, as a result, trust that your bike will remain standing when you return to it.

- You should never allow a passenger to mount or dismount your bike while the side stand is down (or you are off the bike, or you do not have both feet on the ground, or you are not in neutral). Compressing/decompressing shocks can result in the side stand pushing the bike over onto its right side.
- You should never rely on the side 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 that side stand is usually all that is required to keep your stand from punching a hole under it and sending your bike onto its left side.
- You should never leave your bike unattended in neutral gear with the side stand down if you are parked facing down (OR up) a hill. Putting the bike in gear (especially reverse) will 'lock' the rear wheel and your bike will still be standing when you return to it. Being 'in-gear' is the closest thing on your scooter to having a parking brake!

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And remember: Drive on the right except to pass...