

TRIKE RIDING TIPS

More and more riders are transitioning from motorcycles to Trikes as you will notice with our chapter. Some of this comes from riders that due to many reason that range from medical reasons, getting older and not as comfortable on a motorcycle, wish to travel long distances comfortably, or have a spouse that does not feel comfortable on the back of your motorcycle.

The Trike has a greater safety factor than motorcycles in many circumstances but you must remember that this is a dangerous activity and the better prepared and trained we are the safer it can be. We should always ride within our skill level and strive to improve our skills constantly.

The following are tips to help you get used to riding a Trike, as with any motorcycle you should always be learning and honing your skills, the more you learn and the more comfortable you become the safer and enjoyable your riding will be.

Size

It is important to remember that your Trike is wider than a motorcycle and this will come in to play when pulling up to gas pumps, parking, riding close to the centerline or the edge of the road, and most importantly when making evasive maneuvers swerving to avoid a stopped car in your lane. Keep in mind that with the increased width swerving between lanes of traffic is a last chance option so one of the best defenses is to allow more following distance and allowing adequate stopping distance between you and the vehicle in front of you.

The width of the Trike will be most evident when pulling up to gas pumps. This is one of the situations where you will need to pay more attention to the rear tires and fenders when pulling in to close or leaving the pump.

Remember to also allow more room as you are passing car, trucks, pedestrians, and bicyclist. Texas law does not require that we give bicyclist three feet of clearance when passing but Austin, Beaumont, Denton, Edinburg, El Paso, Fort Worth, Helotes, New Braunfels, and San Antonio all have city ordinances requiring that motorist give bicyclist three feet when passing and there may be more that have been added.

A good way to understand how much wider a Trike is than a motorcycle is to sit on it and stretch your arms out. This is approximately how wide the rear of the Trike is.

Controls

Controls on a Trike are the same as a touring motorcycle, but the main difference is in the steering. As with any motorcycle you should become familiar with the location of all the controls so that you can activate them without having to look at them.

Care should be used when using the radio, try to make changes to volume or channel when stopped or on a long straightaway. This will reduce distractions that increase the possibility of losing control while riding.

Get used to riding with the cruise control, this will allow you to rest your throttle hand and maintain a constant speed when riding with a group. Practice using the cruise control on open road rides, use the thumb switch to accelerate and decelerate. The cruise control can be deactivated by several means which include:

- A. Roll the throttle forward.
- B. Touch the front or rear brake.
- C. Turn the cruise control switch off.

Braking

The rear brakes of a Trike have twice the stopping power than a motorcycle because they have two rear automotive tires that allow for quicker and straighter stopping. Even with the increased stopping power you should still use both the front and rear brakes.

Care should be taken when riding in the rain or thru standing water. Trikes use two small brake pads on each side in the rear and the braking power can be adversely affected when soaked in water. Riders should lightly apply the brakes multiple times to generate heat which will help dry the brake pads and rotors. Always check your brakes before coming up to a light or stop sign so you will not be caught off guard. Remember that you will have more braking power using both the front and rear brakes.

Using the rear brake for most of your routine braking will afford you the most control and with the addition of lightly applying the front brake will transfer weight forward putting more pressure on the front tire and increase stability. Apply the front brake too hard and lock the front brake and you will lose the capability to steer, fortunately most 2009 and newer model Trikes come with ABS or anti-lock brake systems to will keep the brakes from locking.

Care should be taken when stopping quickly on a downgrade due to the weight distribution of the trike. If you apply too much front brake on a downgrade and lock the front brake you will lose your ability to steer so apply more pressure to the rear brake and release the front brake to regain control and reapply it lightly.

Even with the better braking, care must be used when turning on gravel as you can still lose traction with your front tire and cause the Trike to skate or slide with disastrous consequences. Always slow down and use your rear brake for smooth controlled braking.

Steering

When learning to ride a Trike after riding a motorcycle the biggest thing to remember is that you need to steer in the direction you want to go and that counter steering and leaning does not work with a Trike.

Trikes due to their weight distribution and torque are susceptible to skating or sliding the front tire when accelerating hard from a stop in a turn. This can be very dangerous and is most likely the number one cause of a crash on a trike, the second would be not negotiating a curve. This problem is intensified when the roadway has any one or a combination of conditions that are common in our area. They include roadways that have a light dust such as that found near

quarries, wet roads, or turning from a lower level road to a higher level road. If tire skating or sliding occurs use your rear brakes and throttle to regain control.

Another factor that will cause this to happen is front tire wear. The front tire on a trike will wear far faster than one on a motorcycle because the trike front tire is directly turned which causes more friction, where a motorcycle is turned by leaning the motorcycle.

Steering a Trike will require more effort than a motorcycle but will be more stable in turns. Starting out, enter curves at a lower than normal speed to get the feel of how the Trike handles and then gradually increase your speed as you feel comfortable. Remember that your Trike is far more stable in curves than a motorcycle but still can tip over if you hit a curb or if you run off the road.

Trikes use direct steering; you must point the front wheel in the direction you want to go. Always look in and ahead of the direction of travel. This is good advice with both Trikes and motorcycles. A good thing to help with this is to point your nose in the direction of travel instead of just looking with your eyes, this sends a clear message to your brain and helps coordinate your hands and eyes.

There are two different methods of steering a Trike, The Push Only and Push/Pull. You should experiment with both methods and find out which you feel more comfortable with. I personally use a combination depending on the situation.

The Push Only method, to many riders this method uses less effort. With this method to turn right you will push on the left handle and to turn left you will push on the right handle. This method works well in many circumstances but lacks in some. When turning left you will have less control on your speed, which is ok unless you need to speed up. Another instance is when you are at a higher speed on a curve and feel the need to brace yourself. One distinct advantage is that on long rides or in gentle curves you expend less effort steering.

With the Push/Pull method to turn right you will pull on the right handle and push on the left. To turn left you will pull on the left handle and push on the right. This method uses more energy but will allow greater control when you use the throttle in turns. You will also find in a hard turn, that pulling on a hand grip and pushing on the other is easier than just pushing a single hand grip.

And so as you see that by learning both methods you can use whichever suits the situation. So practice each till you become proficient and you will have a more enjoyable ride.

On curves use the POINT, LOCK, And ROLL technique. POINT the Trike in the direction of the curve, LOCK your outside elbow into the turn, and ROLL on the throttle. Once you are used to this method you will be able to ride through curves with more confidence and as quickly as you can on a motorcycle. One distinct advantage of a Trike is the stability in turns, you will find that you can change your line in a curve far easier and safer than on a motorcycle but you should never ride at a level above your skill and comfort level.

Riding through winding roads and twisty roads you will get the sensation that you will need to counter lean, to reduce this sensation you will need to have a firm grip on the hand grips, clamp your thighs in tight against the fuel tank and this will allow you to brace yourself through the turn.

Suspension

Your Trike will have air shocks in the rear that are adjustable by removing the right side cover and adding or reducing the air pressure using the air fitting. You can dramatically change the ride of your Trike by changing the pressure. Experiment with different pressures to find the ride that is most comfortable. Never use compressed air to adjust this pressure, a small hand pump is all that is needed and will not blow the seals out of your air shocks.

The addition of a lift kit will help improve several things; it will help keep you from dragging your exhaust pipes on uneven roads and driveways, and will transfer a little more weight to the front tire. It is not recommended to lift your Trike more than 1 5/8" to keep from adversely affecting the steering and weight distribution during braking. Whenever making changes to the suspension of your Trike use additional care and reduce your speed when riding it after these changes till you are comfortable with any differences in handling or ride.

T-CLOCS

Pre ride safety inspections are just as important on a Trike as on a motorcycle. A pre ride inspection can make the difference between an enjoyable afternoon and a long hot wait on the side of the road waiting for rescue. Below is a short version of the T-CLOCS inspection and a full version can be found on the download tab of the Alamo HOG website.

T Tires

Check for low tires, bubbles on sidewalls, extreme wear and splits.

C Controls

Look for loose levers, frayed cables, loose shifters or brake pedals.

L Lights

Look for inoperative lights, loose fixtures, and broken lenses.

O Oil/Fluids

Check all fluid levels and look for obvious leaks, oil, fuel, brake, and leaking shocks.

C Chassis

Look for obvious damage to frame, fenders, seat, and tour pack. Check the air pressure of the rear shocks. Look for loose bolts, nuts, and fasteners.

S Stand

A Trike does not use a side stand so you will not need to check this.

Group Riding

When riding in a group there are several things you can do to make it safer and more enjoyable for everyone. When riding in a staggered formation do not ride in the center of the lane, this will allow the Lead Road Captain to see the Sweep Road Captain.

The only times you should not do this is when there is loose gravel on the road. Most of the loose gravel will be in the center and not in the tire tracks of cars. This position will contain most of the gravel that is kicked up under the Trike and reduce the amount of flying rocks others behind you are exposed to. Also by reducing your speed and increasing the following

distance in these areas will reduce kicking up rocks. Adding mud flaps and fender bras to the rear fenders of your Trike will also help reduce kicking up rocks and paint chipping.

Traveling

Traveling is made easier on a Trike with the additional storage. Remember that the larger the pack or bag that you strap to the tour box the more wind resistance you will have and will affect your fuel mileage. Always take extra care when securing load to your Trike to ensure that they do not fall off in transit.

Although trikes have more carrying capacity never overload your trike. Refer to the owner's manual for carrying capacities.

Riding with a Passenger

Riding with a passenger on a Trike is far more worry free for both the rider and passenger. A Trike will allow the passenger to move around and not affect the stability of the Trike making it more comfortable and safer to ride long distances. Although trikes are more stable it is always recommended that both rider and passenger wear proper riding gear including a helmet.

Always allow your passenger to mount the Trike first, this will allow the rider to step across without hitting the fender or tank with your heel. When dismounting the rider will dismount first, this is the opposite from a motorcycle thanks to the three wheel stability.

One thing to remember is that the addition of a passenger can change the balance of the Trike. This in most cases is for the better, with the additional weight of the passenger on back the rear when braking the rear tires will grip better and allow for quicker braking. The down side is that this will transfer weight off the front tire. This may cause the front tire to skate or slide on a slick road surface while accelerating hard on a turn or cause the front wheel to come off the ground especially when turning from a side road onto a main road that is slightly higher, a good example of when these conditions occur is at the corner of 3009 and 46. At this corner you will be accelerating to get on to 46 and up to cruising speed quickly to merge with traffic. Keep this in mind anytime it has not rained in a while and roads especially near quarries where dust may cause the road to be slick.

Parking

Never put your feet down, there is no need with three wheels it will not tip over. If you put your feet down you run the risk of getting your foot trap by the running boards and causing serious ankle injuries.

Trikes do not use a kickstand and relies on being left in gear and the hand brake. The hand brake and the emergency brake use the same brake calipers. Be sure to set the parking brake to keep it from rolling off while parked at the movie theater! Be sure that you release the parking brake before riding off as this will cause damage to the rear brake system of the Trike.

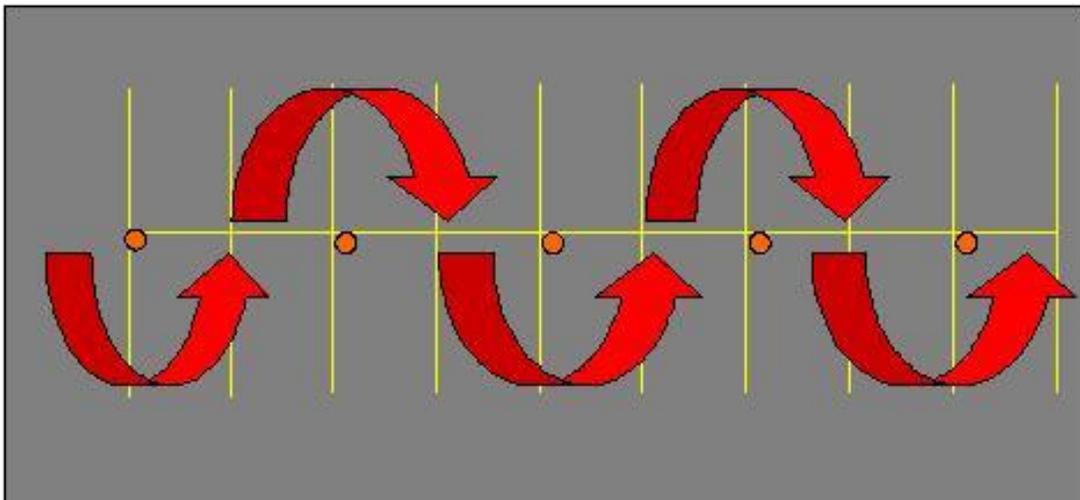
When parking while riding in a group, Trikes should allow motorcycles to have first choice of paved or non-gravel parking spaces because they do not have the risk of falling over when parking.

Parking Lot Practice

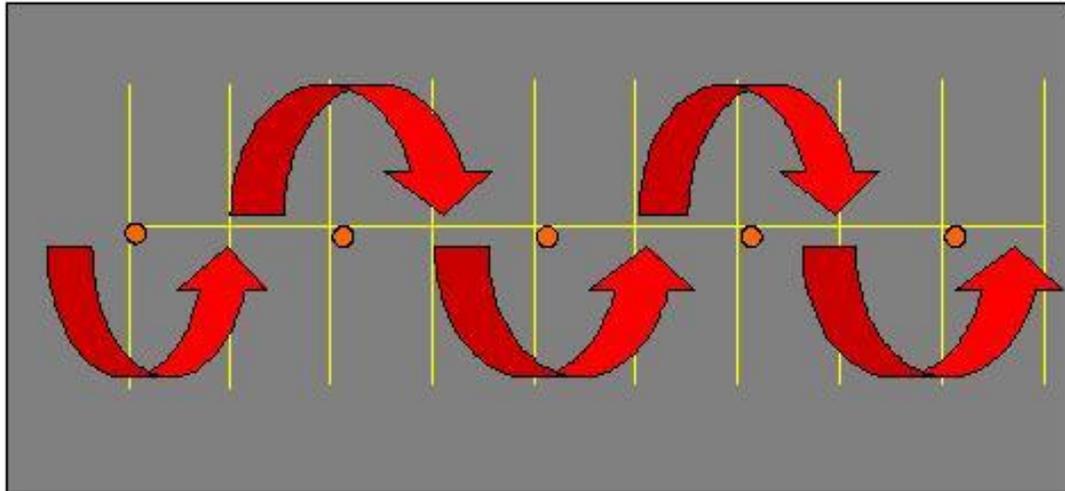
Practicing in a parking lot is a good place to hone your basic riding skills in a controlled environment. The following practice exercises will help you develop skills and get accustomed to your Trike. If possible have someone help observe you as you practice, they can help identify if you are clearing the route markers, point out where you need to improve, and help change the course for the next exercise. Use a large parking lot like Hero's stadium or Blossom Athletic Center when you will have plenty of space to practice maneuvers. When practicing always start at a slow speed then slowly increase your speed when you feel more comfortable. You can use cones to set up but I use tennis balls cut in half to help mark a temporary route or pattern, these are cheap and reusable.

Start with these exercises to help you get comfortable with riding your Trike.

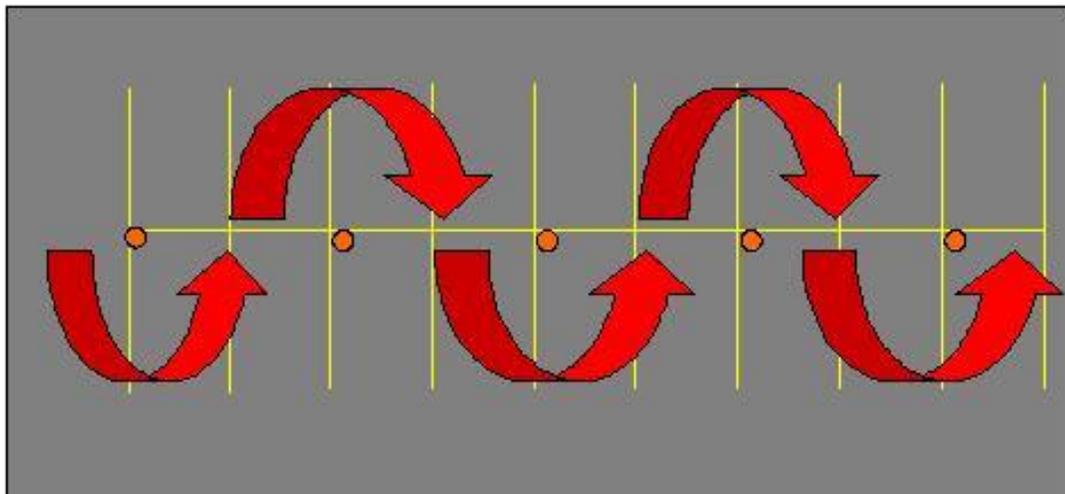
1. Practice turning by starting out in first gear and at a very slow steady speed about 15 mph. Take your left hand off the hand grip and place it on your thigh, start steering to the right in a figure eight and then to the left, this will help you get used to pulling and pushing with the right hand and controlling speed while doing so.



2. Next place both hands on the hand grips and repeat the same exercise. This time focus on your left hand using it to push and pull to control your direction and only using your right to control the speed. As you get comfortable with these two exercises reduce the distance between the tennis balls to help learn the turning capabilities of your Trike.

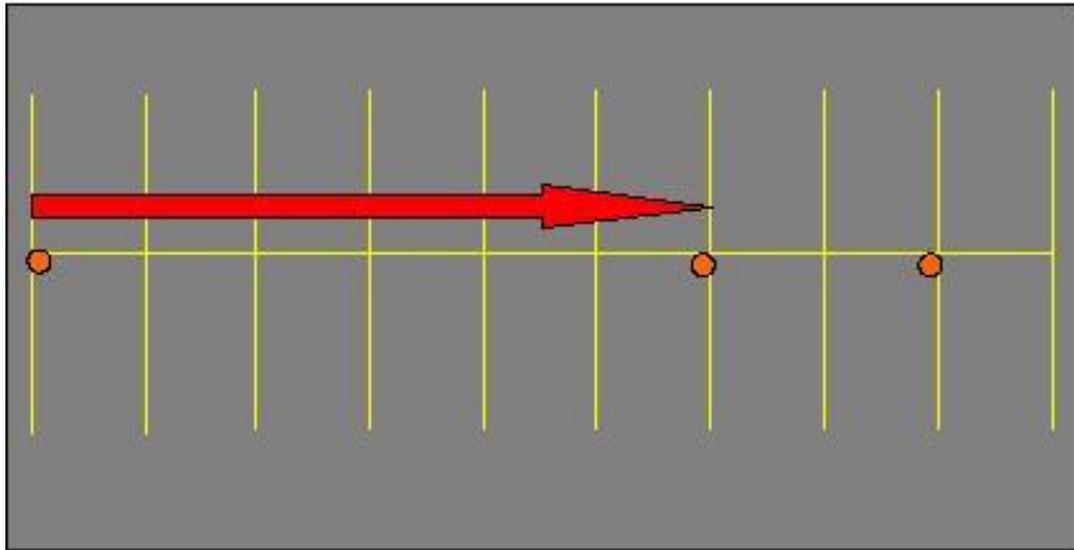


3. Next place both hands on the hand grips and repeat the same exercise. This time practice the PUSH ONLY method, turn to the right by using the left hand to push forward on the hand grip and turn to the right by pushing on the left hand grip. Then practice the PUSH/PULL method, turn to the left by pulling on the left grip and pushing with the right grip, next turn to the right by pull on the right grip and pushing with the left grip. Once again reduce the distance between the tennis balls as you get comfortable to learn how the Trike handles with each method. Take notice of your ability to use the throttle with each method.

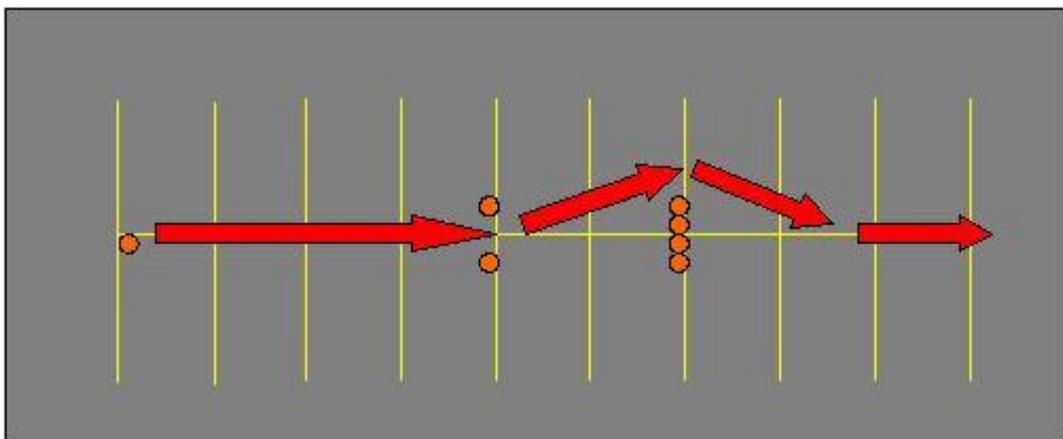


4. Practicing panic stops will help you learn how fast you can stop in an emergency. First practice in a straight line. Use the tennis balls to setup a course to simulate the width of a car and practice stopping without turning, then stopping with the front wheel pointed to the right, then practice stopping to the left. When practicing this remember to use

both the front and back brakes as this will allow you to stop faster, never try this exercise on a motorcycle using the front brake as you WILL drop your motorcycle. First start at a slower speed then try it at a faster speed. Practice this until you are comfortable with the stopping characteristics of the Trike.



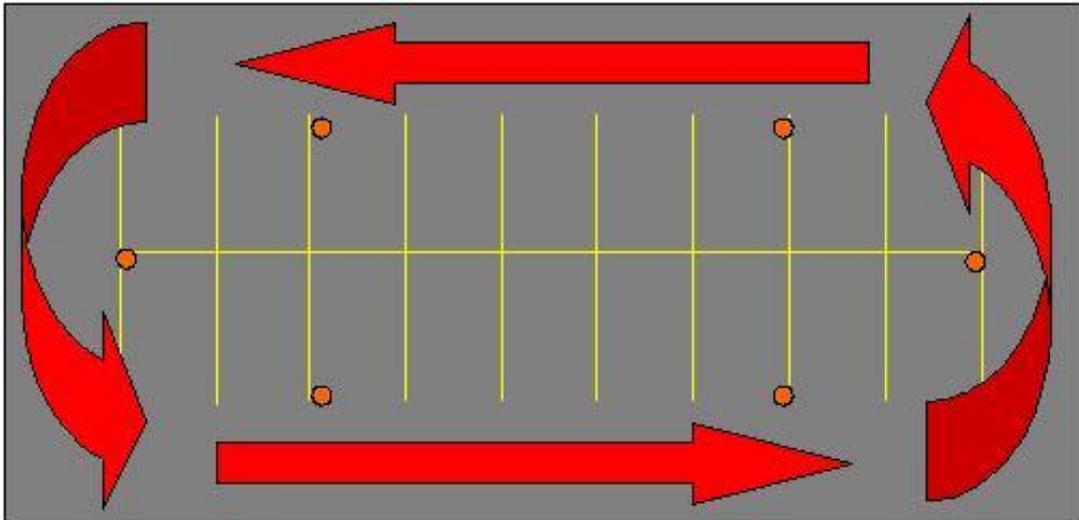
5. Now practice emergency swerving using the same course you used for the emergency braking practice. Try this at different speeds first with minimal braking then with more aggressive braking. This will help you learn obstacle avoidance with a Trike that is a lot wider than a motorcycle.



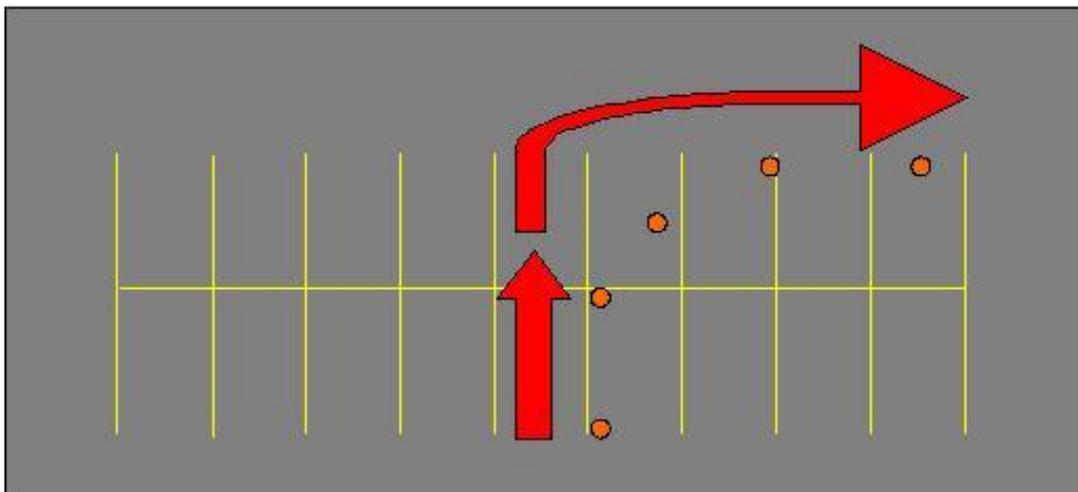
6. Next practice emergency stopping using same course with the tennis balls to setup a course to simulate the width of a car. Start out slow and practice stopping without turning, then stopping with the front wheel pointed to the right, then practice stopping

to the left. When practicing this remember to use both the front and rear brakes as this will allow you to stop faster, never try this exercise on a motorcycle using the front brake as you WILL drop your motorcycle. First start at a slower speed then try it at a faster speed. Practice this until you are comfortable with the stopping characteristics of the Trike.

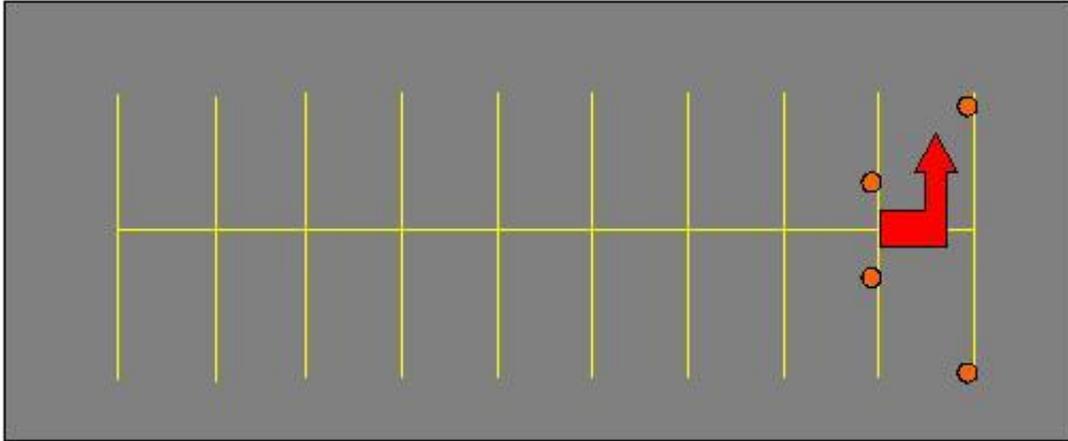
7. Next setup a larger course and practice basic turns. Start slow then gradually increase your speed as the build confidence. Practice in both directions until you feel comfortable.



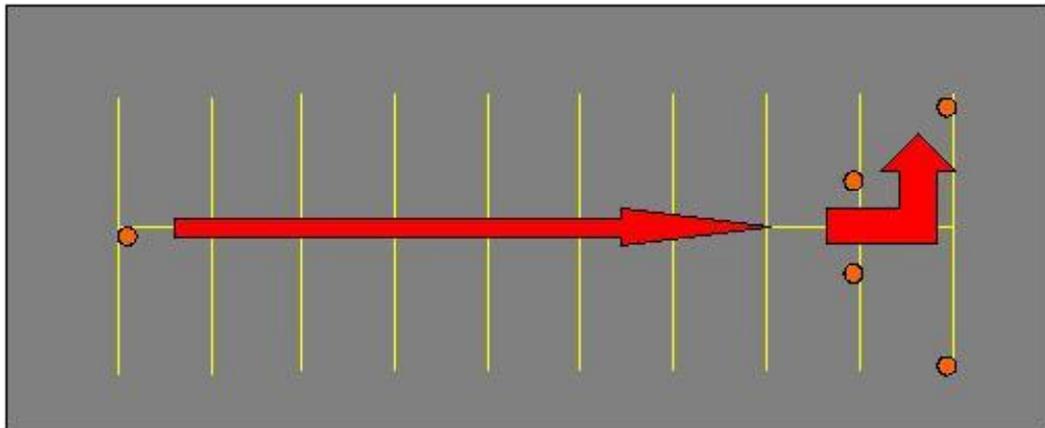
8. Now you should be ready to practice normal sweeping turns both to the right and left without stopping. Keep the speed slow at first then increase to about 15 mph.



9. Now practice making sharp turns from a stop. This is a basic skill that you will use every time you go on a ride. For many new riders this is one of the hardest maneuvers to become used to especially when transitioning from two wheels to three. Practice turning both to the right and left keeping in mind the width of the Trike to clear the curb and keeping from swinging too wide and turning into what could be oncoming traffic.



10. Once comfortable with sharp turns from a stop, practice making a sharp turns both to the right and left without stopping. Start at about 10 mph then increase your speed slowly to become accustom to the turning capabilities. This will help build confidence in turning.



11. Next practice backing up into a parking space. First back into the space from the right, keep in the center of the space and try to stop with the back of the Trike as close to the back of the space as possible. Then repeat this exercise from the left side.
12. Practice pulling into the space head on keeping close to the right line but not letting the rear fender cross the line. This exercise will help you practice pulling up to a fixed object such as a gas pump.