

Rider Education Report

Practice Makes Perfect is a New York Times Best Seller about a small-town sweetheart and an emotionally unavailable bad boy that try to find some common ground. The setting for this novel is Rome, Kentucky, which is near Owensboro. This book gets a 96% approval rating from Google users. I think some of our members may know of this location and perhaps have even passed through during a ride. If you have yet to discover Rome, perhaps this book will help.

“Practice makes perfect” is also a traditional saying, but it is not grammatically correct or true. It is correct, however, to say “Practice makes one perfect” because it is grammatically correct. But if the “one” is human then this statement is also not true. What I know to be true is that improvement of a skill does not happen without practice. The Oxford Languages offers the definition of practice as a verb, meaning “perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one's proficiency.”

Motorcycling is a skill that we can and should practice often. Some riders offer the excuse that training classes and opportunities are hard to find and expensive to experience. I do not believe either reason is true. The former GWRRA published a pamphlet *Parking Lot Practice* that was free to any member and listed six different on-bike riding skills with instructions, course diagrams, common failures, and advice on how to correct them. In preparation for this article, I did a quick internet search, and the pamphlet is still out there, free of charge. (I am happy to email it to you if you want a copy.) Finding a place to set up the different exercises is likely the biggest challenge one will face. Church, school, and abandoned mall parking lots are good places to start. Any parking lot that is relatively flat, clear of light poles, concrete curbs, and other obstructions will work. If the parking lots are marked so the spaces are perpendicular to the travel lanes, this is ideal. Small objects can be used to mark the different points for stopping, turning, and boundaries of the exercise course. These objects can be anything handy. When I practice, I use old tennis balls that I have cut in half. These make good markers because they are visible (bright yellow-green), forgiving if run over (rubber shells with fuzzy outer covering), and less slippery than things like paper or cardboard markers, or even the vinyl mini-cones designed especially for motorcycle training. Be sure to bring water with you to stay properly hydrated.

Practicing riding skills can be a workout if your training session lasts very long. And you may not notice an immediate improvement during your time at the parking lot, but the next time you ride to work, or go back to the lot for another session, you may find the skills come a little easier. Remember, Rome was not built in a day, but little by little over an extended period of time. So it goes with riding skills. Practice may not make you perfect, but it will help you get better, and it may help you get back in touch with your mechanical friend, without having to actually travel to Rome.

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