

By James R. Davis

The secret to 'picking up' a big bike by yourself is that you PUSH it up rather than LIFT it up, if it is laying over at more than a 45 degree angle you will have to do some lifting! The smaller the angle of lean (relative to vertical), the easier it is to make that angle still smaller. In other words, it is the first inch or so of movement that is the hardest. So, the very first thing you should do is try to get the lean angle to be as small as possible. If you are on an incline, for example, twist the bike until its tires are facing downhill. The next thing you do is to turn the front wheel as far as possible TOWARDS the ground. If possible, turn it to its stop and lock it in place. You may have to jerk hard on the handlebar to get the wheel turned, but this is a very important step. Why? Because by turning the wheel towards the ground the frame of the motorcycle is lifted off the ground. This means you are reducing the lean angle before you even begin to try to pick up the machine. If the bike happens to be on its left side, you should check that the side stand is up, if possible. If it is on its right side, you MUST make sure the side stand is down (before you pick up the bike!). If possible, ensure that the bike is in a low gear or, in the case of some Gold Wings, in reverse, so that there is minimal chance of the bike rolling when you get it back on its wheels.

Next, you are going to plant your butt (not your hip) on the seat. So, face away from the motorcycle and lean against the seat such that the top half of your cheeks are above your contact with the seat and the bottom half are pressed solidly against the seat. Your feet should be spread no wider than your shoulder width and planted FIRMLY (you are wearing RUBBER SOLED boots, right?) on the ground away from the bike by about three feet. Your knees should be bent at about a 40 to 50 degree angle - anything more than that and you will probably not be able to straighten them. Indeed, though you want some bend, the less bend in your knees that you can manage, the easier this effort will be - what limits your choice is the length of your legs.

Now you need to grasp your motorcycle with your hands on both sides of your body. You need to hold onto firm structures, but because you should not be doing anything with your hands other than guiding and possibly a little lifting when you start, they can be parts of your fairing, a firmly mounted part of your backrest, a passenger handrail, under your seat, or handlebar. What you hold is not very important except that it is firmly attached (no give) and is conveniently located. Now simply walk backwards as you PUSH against the seat. (I remind you that if the bike has a lean angle of 45 degrees or more you must also LIFT - be careful!). As you approach vertical the vast majority of the bike's weight will be on the tires. Proceed slowly so as to prevent going too far and causing it to fall over on its other side. Once vertical, still facing away from the motorcycle, fish for the side stand with your left foot and bring it down. Then just let the bike lean over onto the stand.

If the bike had been on its right side when you started you already made sure that the side stand was down. So, in this case you simply ease the bike past vertical and let it come to rest on that side stand. Please note that if you are on an incline, my earlier instruction had you twist the bike such that the wheels face down slope. In this case you will need to be VERY careful about how fast you let the bike go past vertical or you may find yourself having to pick it up again from the other side! Indeed, it may be impossible for you to ease it past vertical without losing control of the bike again. (In this case I would try to change my body position so that it is facing the front of the bike (while it is vertical) and try to push the bike to a more level location - but REMEMBER that your side stand is down!).