

Dirt Bike Control Setup

Paying some close attention to your control setup can help tailor a bikes ergonomics specifically to your own size and riding preferences. All this adds up to a bike that's easier to ride and that means hopefully faster.

Handlebars - Your handlebars should be the first thing you consider for your control setup, as a starting point adjust your bars so that the grips are either horizontal or pointing down just a little. This will vary according to what discipline you're racing, if you're riding motocross or supercross then you'll probably run your bars further forward than if you're competing in an enduro or cross country event.

See if you can borrow a couple of different sets of bars to find out what manufacturer and particular bend suits you. You can also cut a small section off the length of the bars if they feel too wide (don't do this to the pair of bars you borrow off your mate!).

Bar widths should be between 790mm (31.1in.) and 820mm (32.2in.) for a full size bike.

Bar grips should be glued on. I personally don't glue mine, I spray the inside of the grip with contact cleaner and slide it onto the bar end, once the contact cleaner has evaporated I then tie wire the grip in the middle and at each end.

Lever setup - Lever positioning is an important part of your control setup. The clutch lever and brake lever should be angled down slightly so that when you're in the attack position on the bike, your forearms should be in a straight line with the levers.

When you're forward in the attack position you have greater control over the handlebars and also your body will weight the front wheel giving better traction for cornering and braking.

Position your levers so that when they're pulled in the ball on the end is in past the end of your bars. This way in the event of a crash the lever will push into the handlebars instead of snapping off. Also tighten your perch bolts just enough that they hold firm but have them loose enough so that in a crash they'll spin on the bars and not break.

If you find that your clutch pull feels too heavy you can fit a longer lever which increases your leverage or fit a different perch and lever setup which gives a lighter pull. Works Connection make aftermarket perch and lever combinations or a Honda CR item is supposed to be quite good too, spending a few bucks on your control setup will pay big dividends when you get on your bike.

There should be about 3-5mm of freeplay in your clutch lever. Adjust this and also the take up point (friction point) to suit yourself. After a bike has done some work you may find that the levers will wear and start to flop around in the perch. You can fix this by fitting a thin shim washer to the pivot point between the lever and perch.

Always keep your cables and perches well lubricated. You can use one of those nifty little cable lubricators that clamp to the end of the outer sheath of the cable, you then poke the plastic nozzle tube of your lubricant spray to the lubricator and force the lube in that way. If you don't have one of those then you can just jam the nozzle tube in to the end of the outer sheath. Keep your perch pivot point lubricated with a good waterproof grease.

Check your throttle cable for play. They can stretch over time and you may not be getting full throttle when you twist it on.

Your gear lever and rear brake lever should be about level with the footpegs. Faster riders may run their brake lever slightly higher because they're up on the pegs a lot and also so they can drag the rear brake slightly over rough terrain to improve stability. I used to run my rear brake lever a little lower when I was riding KTM's because everyone I had (5 in all!) had a super touchy rear brake.

Spend a bit of time with the control setup of your dirt bike. It'll make it easier to ride and will be easier on your body too!