

Up and At 'Em: Basic Ledges

From the staff at the Trials Training Center

At the Trials Training Days event every spring, one of the most popular lessons involves techniques for basic ledges. In this article, we'll examine the most basic techniques used for rock ledges. For most rock ledges, the most sure-fire technique to get up & over is the basic roll-up in which the front wheel impacts first.

The key steps to conquering ledges are:

- Squatting into the bike to load the rear tire for traction while revving the bike and slipping the clutch
- Impact the front wheel about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the ledge
- Use the moment of impact to load the suspension and launch the bike up the ledge
- Jump with the legs to the top of the ledge bringing the bike into your body
- Extend the bike over the ledge as you clear the top

These points are illustrated & described step by step, as performed by TTC instructor Bruce LeRiche.

1. As you approach the ledge keep your weight balanced on the pegs and initiate the wheelie using your legs while keeping the bike revved up and slipping the clutch (photo 1). You should squat into the bike while keeping your upper body upright. A common mistake is to dip the upper body toward the handlebars; if you dip your head and shoulders you will unload the rear tire and the bike may spin just when you need to make traction! In photo 2 you can see that Bruce has the front wheel starting to come up and without using his arms to pull up.
2. The front wheel should impact the ledge at a distance generally between $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up, depending upon the size of the ledge and whether it is undercut (photo 3). The impact with the ledge compresses the suspension and you use this compression to help get the bike up the ledge. When the suspension is compressed and you have lots of traction, use the clutch to launch the bike up the ledge and simultaneously use lots of legs to jump your body up onto the ledge (photo 4). A bigger or more undercut ledge requires the front to hit lower to get more compression and therefore more rebound. More rebound can help the rear tire to jump higher in the next step.
3. As you and the bike move up the ledge, bring the bike into your body as shown on photo 5. You have jumped yourself to the top of the ledge and the bike is coming with you! Note in this photo that both wheels have left the ground. A key point here is to bring the handlebars into your waist so as to position yourself to shove the bike over the ledge in the next step.
4. As you and the bike reach the top of the ledge you start to move the bike forward as in photo 6 and fully extend to bring the bike onto the ledge as in photo 7. This move was set up by bringing the bars into your waist in the previous. A common mistake riders make is to have their weight too far back while going up the ledge with the result that they aren't in position to extend the bike forward at the top.

Remember to practice the technique on a ledge of a size that is within your skill level and practice with a friend so you can spot for each other. Next month we'll look at those tricky double ledges where a second ledge is close behind the first.