

RULES OF THE ROAD - - -

For Bicyclists



WEAR A BIKE HELMET

- **All children and teens younger than 18 are required to wear a helmet in the City of Columbus** while riding bicycles, scooters, in-line skates, roller skates and skateboards. The helmet must fit the child's head and be buckled under the chin. A child not wearing a helmet may be given a ticket by the police.
- Wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of brain injury by up to 88%.

WHERE TO RIDE ON THE ROAD

- Ride with the flow of traffic (on the right side of the road). Bicyclists have the same rights— and responsibilities — as motorists.
- Children under ten years of age should ride on the sidewalk.
- Adults should not ride on sidewalks. Riding on sidewalks is illegal in the City of Columbus. However, there are some locations where sidewalks are officially part of multi-use trails and they can be shared by bicyclists and pedestrians (people walking).
- Where there are no bike lanes: ride close to the right edge of the road, but without getting too close to the curb or very edge of the paved road. Do not ride on gravel, broken pavement, sand or trash.
- Where there are parked cars: ride at least four feet into the roadway from where the cars are parked. Riding closer than four feet increases the risk of being hit by an opening car door.
- Don't weave in and out between parked cars. It's much safer to ride in a straight line where everyone can see you.
- Use caution on narrow roads. If the road is too narrow for a car to safely pass a bicycle, you can "take the lane" (ride in the middle of the lane) until the road gets wider and it is safe for cars to pass you. This is legal per Ohio Revised Code.
- Ride in bike lanes when possible, but closer to the left side of the bike lane when passing parked cars.
- If something is blocking the bike lane, pass it safely on the left. Don't hesitate to leave the bike lane when needed for your safety.

RIDING THROUGH INTERSECTIONS

- When making a right turn, stay in the right lane, signal your turn, look around for traffic before turning.
- When making a left turn, proceed as a car would, but with more caution. Signal left with your hand, check for traffic behind you, and when it's safe to do so, move over to the left to make the turn. If there's a left turn lane, use it. When making your turn, yield to oncoming traffic and obey all traffic signals, just as you would when driving a car.
- If you don't feel comfortable making the "car-style" left turn, you can walk your bike across the crosswalks in the intersection like a pedestrian.
- *Before you change your lane position, you must always look back for traffic.* Your sense of balance is in your head, so you need some practice to turn your head without swerving. Signaling is important. Always signal your turns and lane changes.
- When going straight through an intersection, avoid riding in a right-turn-only lane. If you need to merge from a right-turn-only lane into a straight-ahead lane, look back, signal, and do so when it is safe. If there's a lane marked for both right turns and through traffic, ride in the middle of the lane.
- When traffic is stopped at an intersection, line up with the cars. Do not squeeze past the line of cars, unless there is a bike lane.

RIDING IN GROUPS

- Keep 3 feet of clearance when you're passing another bicyclist — more at high downhill speeds.
- When you're about to pass another bicyclist, check behind you before you change your lane position. Call out, "On your left" or "passing on your left" to the bicyclist you're passing, and pass on the left.
- Never pass another bicyclist on the right — if you do, you force the other bicyclist farther toward the middle of the road without warning.

RULES OF THE ROAD FOR BICYCLISTS

Riding in groups, cont.

- Riding two abreast (side-by-side) is legal in most places, but is not safe everywhere. Side-by-side bicyclists should use an entire lane.
- If riding side-by-side on a narrow road or with heavier traffic, pull into a single line well before cars reach you. Call out, "Car back" to let the group know it's time to single up.
- A rear-view mirror helps you to check on the cars behind you. With a mirror, you can ride side by side more often and still pull back into a single line to let the cars pass you.
- Never ride side-by-side on a hilly or winding road. Don't make yourself into a last-moment surprise to a motorist coming around a curve or over a hilltop.
- When preparing a lane change or turn, you must look out for yourself. It may be safe for the bicyclist ahead of you to change lane position, but not safe for you. Do not rely on others to tell you it's safe; always look yourself.

USE CAUTION AROUND PEDESTRIANS

- Adults should not ride on sidewalks, except in areas where the sidewalk is part of a designated multi-use trail.
- On multi-use trails, yield to pedestrians. When passing, ring a bell or call out, "Passing on your left." Use caution around pedestrians and do not ride aggressively.
- When riding on the street, yield to pedestrians at all crosswalks and stop signs, just as motorists are required to do.

RIDING IN THE DARK

- Bike lights should always be used in the dark so other people can see you. Reflectors alone are not enough. A bicycle is always required by law to have a white headlight and red taillight at night.
- Small battery lights are most useful for riding under streetlights. High-powered battery lights are best for night riding under demanding conditions, like dark roads or off-road. When riding at night, carry spare bulbs and batteries for your lights.
- It's a good idea to add additional reflectors beyond those sold with a new bicycle. Reflective ankle bands, pedal and wheel reflectors, reflective clothing, and reflective tape will make you more visible at night.
- Be sure to aim your lights and reflectors straight to the front and back. If they are tilted up or down, they may not be as visible.

RIDING IN THE RAIN

- Always use extra caution when riding in rain or on wet roads. If it is wet, it takes longer to stop and you are more likely to slip when making a turn.
- Don't wear long raincoats or ponchos as they can tangle in wheel spokes or bike frame. A hood is dangerous because it can block your view when you turn your head. Rubberized rain suits aren't dangerous, but they get as wet inside as out because they don't let perspiration evaporate.
- A bicyclist's rain cape is a fine solution, along with fenders on your bike. The rain cape is like a poncho but tailored to fit you in your riding position on the bicycle. It's small and light to carry, and relatively inexpensive to buy.
- Aluminum rims or a hub brake improve wet-weather braking. One of these is advisable if you ride much in wet weather. Check with your bike shop about the best choice.
- If you ride in the winter, use even more caution. Winter weather conditions are dangerous for bicyclists, especially when there are patches of ice on the roads.
- Pay special attention to metal surfaces such as manhole covers or steel-grid bridge decks, painted traffic markings, wet leaves and oil slicks. They're all especially slippery.
- Avoid riding through puddles if you can't see the bottom — a puddle can hide a pothole.

Content adapted from Ohio Bicycling Street Smarts, published by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

MORE INFORMATION

- For more information about safe biking:
<http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/TransSysDev/MultiModalPlanning/bicycle/Pages/default.aspx>.
- Bike helmet information from the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital:
<http://injuryresearch.net/resources/1/FactSheets/ColumbusYouthBicycleHelmet2pageFS.pdf>
- Digest of Ohio Bicycle Laws:
<http://www.ohiobike.org/bicycle-law-digest.html>