

Bike Safety

From
Pritzker Olsen
Attorneys

Basics



Before You Ride



Wear a helmet that fits properly.

For more information, see [“Easy Steps to Properly Fit a Bicycle Helmet.”](#)

Make sure the bicycle is in good working order. Check all parts, especially tire pressure and brakes.

Adjust the bicycle to fit you.

Stand over the bicycle. There should be 1 to 2 inches between you and the top bar if using a road bike and 3 to 4 inches if a mountain bike. The seat should be level front to back and should allow a slight bend at the knee when the leg is fully extended. The handlebars should be level with the seat.



Wear bright colors. Especially at night, wear reflective gear and colors such as bright yellow or lime green; red is less visible in fading light.

Wear rear and front lights on your bike, especially at night.



Ten Road Safety Tips

- 1** Don't drink and ride.
- 2** Ride with at least one hand on the handlebars.
- 3** Ride single file on a busy or narrow street.
- 4** Always look over your shoulder to make sure the lane is clear before turning or changing lanes.
- 5** Ride far enough away from parked cars to avoid being hit if the car door opens or if the car suddenly pulls out into traffic.
- 6** Do not ride on roads where bicycles are prohibited or restricted. Plan your route before you ride.
- 7** Don't wear headphones when you ride.
- 8** Watch for potholes, broken glass, gravel, puddles, leaves, and dogs. If you're riding with friends and are in the lead, alert the riders behind you of such hazards.
- 9** If you have to ride at night, wear something that reflects light and have reflectors and lights on the front and rear of your bicycle, as well as reflectors on your tires. These are required by law in many states.
- 10** Be cautious when riding through intersections and don't travel alongside motorized vehicles because they may turn in front of you without warning.

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Bicyclists and Traffic Laws

Bicycles are “vehicles” as defined under state law. This means that bicyclists have all of the rights and responsibilities of other drivers on the road.

- Obey all traffic signals and signs. Stop at stop signs and red lights.
- Obey the laws regarding right-of-way. Motorists and bicyclists must yield the right-of-way to each other.
- Signal your turns and stops.
- Make left and right turns in the same way that drivers do, using the same turn lanes.
- Ride on the right side of the road.
- Do not bike drunk or distracted.
- Ride on the road instead of the sidewalk.
- Ride in the same direction as traffic. This will make you more visible to drivers entering roads or changing lanes because they will know where to look for possible conflicts.
- Ride in a predictable manner. Ride in a straight line, not in and out of cars.
- Use a headlight and rear reflectors on your bicycle when it's dark. Some states require a white or yellow reflector on each pedal. To increase visibility, add a rear flashing light.
- Some states require bicyclists to wear a helmet.



Motorists and Cyclists

- Be careful when passing a bicyclist. Slow down and pass only when it is safe.
- If possible, allow clearance of at least three feet when passing a bicyclist.
- Be careful when approaching a bicyclist.
- Look for bicycles before turning.
- Look before merging toward the curb or into the bike lane.
- Do not overtake a bicyclist just before making a turn. Merge first, then turn.
- Be respectful of the right-of-way of bicyclists because they are entitled to share the road with other drivers.

- Look for bicyclists before opening doors next to moving traffic.
- Do not drink and drive.
- Be alert and avoid distraction.
- Do not talk on a cell phone, text, shave, put on makeup, read, eat, or reach for something that is more than an arm's length away while driving.



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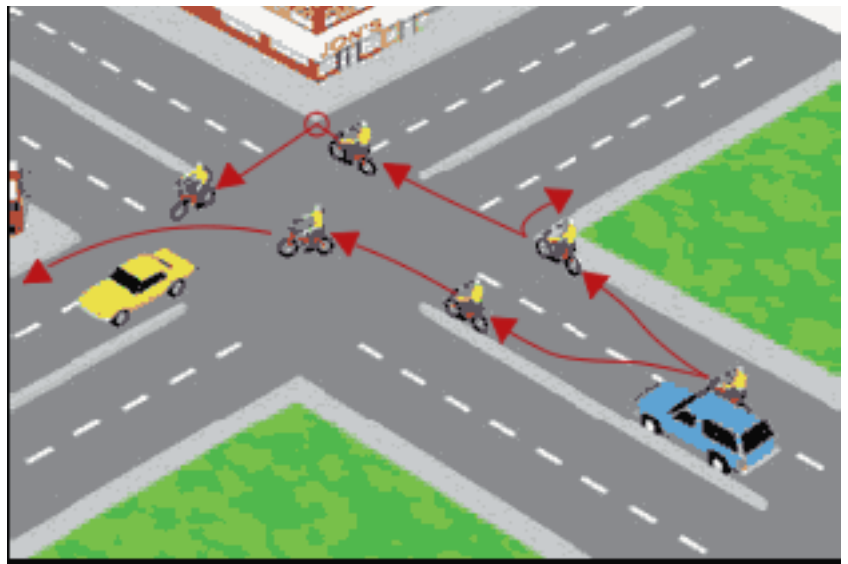
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How to Make a Left Turn

There are two proper methods for turning left on a bicycle:

Using Turn Lanes

As you approach the intersection, look over your left shoulder for traffic. If clear, signal your turn and move over to the left side of the lane, or into the left or center turn lane. You should be positioned so vehicles going straight can't pass you on the left. Yield to oncoming traffic before turning. If you are riding in a bicycle lane, or on a multi-lane road, you need to look and signal each time you change lanes. Never make a left turn from the right side of the road, even if you're in a bicycle lane.



WHEN TURNING LEFT, BIKERS CAN USE LEFT TURN LANES AS CARS DO, OR USE CROSSWALKS AS PEDESTRIANS DO.

Using Crosswalks

Approach the intersection staying on the right. Stop and either cross as a pedestrian in the crosswalk, or make a 90 degree left turn and proceed as if you were coming from the right. If there is a signal light, wait for the green or WALK signal before crossing. Yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Common Bicycling Myths

MYTH #1: "BICYCLISTS SHOULD RIDE FACING TRAFFIC."

This myth causes about 25 percent of car-bike crashes. At intersections, few drivers look for traffic coming the wrong way. Ride where motorists will expect you.

MYTH #2: "A CHILD NEEDS A BIKE TO GROW INTO."

Wrong. On a big bike, kids wobble and weave down the road. They won't be able to react quickly in an emergency. Your child should be able to stand over his or her bike with both feet flat on the ground.

MYTH #3: "MY CHILD NEEDS A 21-SPEED MOUNTAIN BIKE."

Probably not. Leave the fancy bike for later. Few young kids can work standard-sized handbrakes or confusing shifters while steering and pedaling. Ask 10-year-olds how they stop a high tech bike: "I drag my feet." "I don't stop." "I run it into something." For your child's first bike, choose a sturdy one-speed with a coaster brake.

MYTH #4: "A QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD IS A SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD."

Many bike crashes involving children happen on quiet two-lane residential streets with 25 mph speed limits—largely because that's where kids bicycle.



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Information on this page taken from:

http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/brochures/fast_facts/ffd137.htm

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/docs/SafeRoutes/EveryParentShouldKnow.pdf>

What to Do if Your Loved One is Injured or Killed in a Bicycle Accident

Don't Talk to Another Person's Insurance Company

Anything you say can be used to try limit the amount the insurance company pays your injured loved one. When the insurance company of the driver that hit you calls, tell them you are hiring an attorney and will have the attorney contact them.

Don't Sign Anything

Consult your attorney before signing anything, particularly any kind of release form. The goal of the insurance company of the at-fault driver is to limit the company's liability. The insurance company representative will try to get you to sign a settlement agreement right after the accident. This is never a good idea.

At the Scene of the Accident

It is your lawyer's job to gather and preserve evidence, but if you are at the scene of the accident, there are some things you should do, if possible:

- Call the police and make sure an accident report is made.
- Get the names and addresses of all witnesses
- Get the name and address of the driver, the driver's license number, the vehicle registration number, and the driver's insurance company address and phone number.

Document Injuries

Document yours or your loved one's injuries with photographs and/or video. Your lawyer should be part of this process because it is the lawyer's job to tell the story of the accident (what happened and how it has affected the injured person's life) in a persuasive way during settlement negotiations and, if a settlement can't be reached, at trial.



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