

Tips for Bicycle Driving

Bicycles are vehicles under the Traffic Law in many states (otherwise cyclists have the rights and duties of drivers of vehicles). The safest and best way to use one is by following standard rules of the road.

A common fallacy about cycling is the extent and source of danger. People believe there is great danger in getting run down by cars passing from behind. Cars are fast and noisy and we cannot see them coming, so the fear is natural. But it is mistaken. Hit from behind accidents represent less than one-half of one percent of urban, daylight cycling crashes. (In rural areas, the ratio is slightly higher. Unlighted cyclists and drunk drivers make these accidents much more common at night.)

Many think that the sidewalk is a safe place to ride. However, crash studies show that riding on sidewalks has about two to ten times the risk as proper cycling on the road. Because motorists do not look for fast traffic on the sidewalk, sidewalk cyclists are in danger at every road crossing and even at every driveway. Also, mixing pedestrians and cyclists is dangerous to both.

Some are taught to ride on the wrong side of the road so they can “see traffic coming”. This is illegal and dangerous. The accident rate for wrong-way cyclists is about 3½ times as high as for cycling properly. Pedestrians walk facing traffic so they can sidestep off the road if necessary. But you cannot sidestep on a bike.

Cyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles.



On narrow-lane road, ride near middle of right lane or in right tire track.



Make a left turn just as you would in a car: Merge to left turn lane, yield to any traffic, wait for opposing traffic to clear and then turn.

A popular misconception holds that a person on a bike is some kind of pedestrian. But a cyclist can easily go 4 or 5 times as fast as a person walking. And even faster downhill. A bike cannot stop in a stride; it has brakes like other vehicles. It cannot turn in place or step sideways. A bike is really a vehicle. Drive it like one.

You have as much right to use the road as anyone else. Horsepower does not give a superior right. If the traffic lane is not wide enough for cars to pass safely, then ride far enough *left* so drivers can see they must use the next lane to pass. This is legal – the law says to ride as near to the curb as *practicable*, not as near as possible.

We recommend the booklet Bicycling Street Smarts, by John Allen. This is used as a bicycle driver’s manual in PA, OH, FL, AZ and ID. You can read it on the web at

www.bikexpert.com/streetsmarts/usa/index.htm

Recommend cycling information on the web:

- www.crankmail.com/
- www.geocities.com/fredoswald/
- www.humantransport.org/bicycledriving/
- www.bicyclinglife.com/
- www.bikexpert.com/

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