

GENERAL BIKE SAFETY

BE READY FOR THE ROAD

Young children do not have the perceptual maturity or physical coordination to judge the speed and distance of other traffic or identify and adjust to many hazardous situations; therefore, they should not be allowed to ride on the street unsupervised. *Bicycling on the road without direct adult supervision is not recommended until about age 10.* Older children who can demonstrate good judgment and the necessary skills to ride with traffic, and who can safely follow the rules of the road can begin riding on the road without adult supervision. Also children should not be allowed to ride in low visibility conditions such as night, dawn, or dusk or during storms.

Before riding on the street, your child should be able to:

- Demonstrate he or she knows the rules of the road, can confidently handle his or her bike, and can skillfully ride with other traffic (including motorists, other bicyclists and pedestrians).
- Ride straight with one or both hands on the handlebars.
- Stop on demand while using brakes properly and without swerving, falling over, or colliding with anything or anyone.
- Swerve in a controlled manner to avoid a hazard after scanning ahead and behind.
- Scan ahead and behind while briefly looking over either shoulder and continuing to ride straight.

LEARN AND FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE ROAD

- ***Know and obey your local traffic laws.*** Obey traffic lights, signs, speed limits, and lane markings. Bicycles are considered vehicles; bicyclists must obey the same rules as motorists on the road. Read your state driver's handbook.
- ***Ride on the right side of the road (with traffic) in a straight predictable path.*** Cycle single file. Riding against traffic puts you where motorists don't expect you. The safe way is the RIGHT way.
- ***Use correct hand signals.*** Signal in advance of a turn. Always check behind you before changing lanes or moving to the left. Be able to continue to ride straight while looking behind you briefly or signaling with one hand.
- ***Ride cooperatively and predictably.*** Make eye contact or use hand signals to communicate with motorists. Use a bell, horn or your voice to let pedestrians know you are close. Negotiate with other road users to determine who will yield, but do not expect anyone to yield to you. Yield to pedestrians and all emergency vehicles. Learn to predict what motorists, other bicyclists or pedestrians will do next. Courtesy and predictability are key to safe cycling.

HANDLE BIKES SKILLFULLY

- ***Keep Control of your bicycle.*** Keep both hands on your handlebars, ready to brake, unless you're signaling a turn or shifting gears. Always control your speed by using your brakes. If your bicycle has hand brakes, apply the rear brakes slightly before the front brakes. Ride more slowly in wet or icy conditions and apply your brakes earlier – it takes more distance to stop. If you cannot stop quickly, adjust your brakes. If you are unsure, or lack the skill to handle an especially rough area, pull off to the right side of the road and walk your bicycle around the rough area. Also, walk your bicycle across busy intersections.
- ***Stay alert at all times.*** Always keep a lookout 15 to 20 feet ahead for obstacles in your path. Ride far enough out from the curb to avoid the unexpected from parked cars. Be aware of potential hazards like potholes, cracks, expansion joints, wet leaves, drainage grates, road litter, gravel, or anything that could make you fall. Cross all railroad tracks at a 90-degree angle and proceed slowly. Use special care on bridges.
- ***Check for traffic.*** Always be aware of the traffic around you. Before you enter any street or intersection, check for traffic. Always look left-right-left, and walk your bicycle into the street to begin your ride. If already in the street, always look behind you for a break in traffic, then signal, before going left or right. Watch for left or right turning traffic. Before going around any object scan ahead, and behind you for a gap in traffic. Plan your move, signal your intentions, and then do what you planned.

MAINTAIN A SAFE BIKE

- Make sure your bicycle is the proper size and properly maintained. Check to see that your bicycle is adjusted properly to fit you (see your Owner's Manual) and that all parts are secure and working well.
- Make sure that books, clothes, and other items are securely attached to a rack on the bicycle or carried in a backpack. Do not loop bags over the handlebars to try to carry things in one hand while riding.
- Never wear headphones; they hinder your ability to hear traffic.

BE VISIBLE

- Wear bright colored clothing that makes you more visible in daylight (neon and florescent colors are particularly good).
- Children should not bicycle in non-daylight or low visibility conditions. It is far more dangerous to bicycle at night than during the day. Most bicycles are equipped for daylight use and need to be adapted for nighttime use.

- Equip your bicycle with reflectors on the front, the rear, the wheels and the pedals and keep them clean. The rear reflector should be red and at least three inches across, pointed straight back to reflect the headlights of vehicles at least 600 feet away. These should be permanently installed on bicycles for daytime use also. If a carrier is added, make sure the rear reflector remains visible.
- Attach bicycle reflectors to the pedals and wheels. Wheel reflectors can include retro-reflective spokes, cranks, and wheel rims.
- Add the brightest lights you can find to the front and rear of your bicycle. In the front, use a bright, white headlight, preferably one that makes you visible to drivers 500 feet ways. In the back, use a red light.
- Wear retro-reflective (reflects light back to its source) clothing or material especially on your ankles, wrists, back and helmet. White and florescent clothing only help make you more visible in daylight.
- Only ride in areas familiar to you. Brightly lit streets are best.
- Always assume you are not seen by a driver.

CORRECT HELMET USE

- A good-fitting helmet should be snug, but not so tight that it is uncomfortable. Buy the smallest size that fits comfortably, and use the sizing pads to fine-tune the fit. Most helmets come with an assortment of pads that can be inserted in the front, back, sides and crown of the helmet with Velcro-like fasteners. Some pads attach with adhesive; others come already glued down.
- A properly fitting helmet should touch your head at the crown, sides, front, and back. The helmet should set squarely on top of the head in a level position and cover the top of the forehead extending down to about an inch above the eyebrows. It should not be able to slide back and forth on the head easily, nor should it rock from side to side. If it moves enough to create a gap between your head and the pads, use thicker pads. If it's still loose, get a smaller helmet.
- Helmets also have adjustable straps to help you keep the helmet level and secure. Adjust the straps according to the manufacturer's instructions. With the chinstrap buckled, the helmet shouldn't move when you shake you head or push from sides, front, or back. Be sure your child can buckle and unbuckle his or her helmet easily.