

BICYCLE SAFETY

From the Safety Merit Badge Book, Boy Scouts of America

A Bicycle can be dangerous if you don't use it properly. Inexperienced riders — riders who are just starting out — might not know how to ride a bicycle safely. Before you ride a bike in traffic, get plenty of practice in a place where you'll be safe while you're learning. Don't ride an unsafe bicycle. Poor brakes, bikes without lights at night, a frame that doesn't fit, and old tires can cause accidents. It's up to you to ride a safe bike.

Bicycle Safety Code

1. Always wear a properly sized and fitted helmet. Look for approval by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.
2. Obey all traffic regulations, signs, and lights. Yield to motor vehicles even if you think you have the right of way.
3. Ride with the flow of traffic, as far to the right as is safe. Ride in a straight line; always ride single file. Avoid curbs, storm drains, soft or loose gravel on shoulders, and other hazards.
4. Have a white light on the front of your bike and a red light or reflector on the back. Side reflectors are also helpful.
5. Have a working signaling device, such as a horn or bell.
6. Look out for parked cars pulling into traffic. Watch for pedestrians stepping out from between parked cars.
7. Never hitch onto other vehicles. Never race in traffic. Do not attempt stunts—trick riding is only for professionals using special equipment.
8. Do not carry passengers. Do not carry objects that interfere with vision or control. Items should only be carried in baskets, saddlebags, or on a rear carrier rack.
9. Make sure brakes are functioning smoothly. Your bike should be in perfect operating condition. Keep it clean and well maintained—especially the brakes and drive chain.
10. Slow down and look to the left and right at all intersections.
11. Before turning, look left, right, back, and ahead. Stop and look in all directions when entering a street from a driveway, parking area, sidewalk, or alley.
12. Dismount and walk your bike through or across busy intersections.
13. Always use universal hand signals for turning or stopping.
14. Do not weave in and out of traffic or swerve from side to side.
15. Keep both hands on the handlebars except when signaling or shifting gears.
16. Do not ride when you are tired or ill.

More Bicycle Safety Guidelines

- **Physical fitness.** Biking is strenuous. Do not attempt long treks or hill climbing without training and preparation. If you have a health problem, check with your physician first.
- **Clothing.** On cool days, cyclists should dress in layers so they can adjust clothing to avoid chilling or overheating. When skies are clear, cover up for protection from the sun.
- **Buddying up.** During a bicycle expedition or trek, biking with a buddy is best. Be sure to tell someone your route, schedule, and destination before you depart.
- **Being smart.** Do not ride after dark. Do not wear headphones.
- **Riding the right bike.** Ride a bike that fits your size. Be able to put both feet on the ground while sitting on the seat. The handgrips should be no higher than your shoulders or lower than the seat.
- **Accessories.** In addition to a horn or bell and reflectors, a bike or helmet-mounted mirror is recommended for those who must ride in traffic. For long trips, a bike-mounted container for drinking water is recommended.
- **Racing right.** Street racing is very dangerous. Race only with supervision on marked courses that have been set up to exclude other vehicle or pedestrian traffic, eliminate fall hazards, minimize collision risks, and define clearly the “start” and “finish” points.
- **Planning.** If you plan to go on a bicycle trek, plan both the route and timing of the trip to avoid heavy traffic and hazardous conditions. Biking is unsafe on wet pavement and on windy days. Schedule at least hourly rest stops, and plan to be on the bike no more than about six hours per day.
- **Discipline.** All cyclists should know, understand, and follow the rules and procedures for safe biking.