RSA

CYCLE SAFETY

Some tips on safer cycling

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre
Road Safety Authority

Be safe

For further information on safe cycling, please look at the Rules of the Road website at

www.rulesoftheroad.ie

Getting started

Cycling is enjoyable and healthy.

This booklet will give you some tips on how to make it safer as well.

A bicycle is not a toy!

When you take your bicycle onto the road, you will be travelling with many other vehicles which are bigger and faster – and much more dangerous.

Is the bicycle the right size for you?

Riding a bicycle which is too big or too small is very dangerous. When on the saddle, both your feet should touch the ground.

Is the bicycle working properly?

- If you are buying a new bicycle, ask the salesperson to tell you all about it. Find out how to look after your bike and keep it working properly.
- If you are buying a used bicycle, get an expert to check it carefully before you buy.
- Whether new or used, check your bicycle regularly. If something is not working properly do not use your bicycle until it is fixed.

Get to know your bike

1. **Bell**

   Be sure your bell works! Your hands should be able to easily reach it.

2. **Brakes**

   Replace brake blocks and cables when they become worn.

3. **Chain**

   Keep the chain at the correct tension, clean and well oiled.

4. **Gears**

   Check that they are working correctly and adjust as required.

5. **Handlebars**

   Make sure your handlebars and grips are properly adjusted and tight.

6. **Lamps**

   Your front headlight (6a) must be a white or yellow light. Your rear tail light (6b) must be red and other road users should be able to see your front light from 150 metres and your red tail light from 180 metres. You can use flashing lights on your bike.

7. **Mudguards**

   Keep your mudguards securely fastened.

8. **Pedals**

   Lubricate (oil) your bearings and spindle of the pedal and remember to replace worn treads.

9. **Reflectors**

   Your bicycle must be fitted with a red reflector to the rear. Where reflectors are fitted in pedals they must be amber in colour. Remember you should keep reflectors on pedals clean.

10. **Saddle**

    Keep your saddle properly adjusted and tight.

11. **Spokes**

    Keep your spokes tight and replace broken ones straight away.

12. **Tyres**

    Inflate your tyres to the correct pressure which is shown on the side of the tyre.

    Use a proper cycle pump and replace worn tyres.

13. **Wheels**

    Your wheels should rotate smoothly, and you should lubricate bearings, and keep axle nuts tight.

"It's the law to have a bell on your bike at all times and to have working lights."

Be safe

Always wear a helmet when you ride your bicycle

Wearing a cycle helmet reduces the risk of head, neck and facial injuries by 33%.[1]

Ask the experts at your bicycle shop about the best helmet for you.

- A helmet should have a “CE” mark and should be EN 1078 compliant to show it meets European Safety Standards.
- Pick a helmet that fits your head well before adjusting it. Then use the adjustable straps and or sizing pads to make sure it is a snug fit for you.
- Pick a helmet that fits you or your child now, not a helmet to “grow into”.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions on when to replace your helmet.

A helmet is not a fashion statement. It is an essential, life-saving piece of cycling equipment. If your helmet gets a bang in a crash, replace it even if you cannot see the damage.

Be seen

When cycling you should always wear fluorescent and reflective clothing to make sure other road users can see you. This includes high visibility vests, armbands, and Sam Browne reflective belts.

These safety accessories should all meet European Safety Standards. Adult high visibility vests should be EN ISO 20471:2013 compliant. Children’s high visibility vests should be EN1150/1999 compliant. Children’s and adult armbands and Sam Browne adjustable belts should be EN13356 compliant.

The brighter, the better.

1. Rune Elvik, Alena Høye, Truls Vaa and Michael Sørensen (2009). The Handbook of Road Safety Measures, second edition

Sharing the road safely

Top tips

Always be aware that cyclists are vulnerable road users.

The RSA recommends that children younger than 12 should not ride bicycles in any type of traffic.

- Know how to control your bike before cycling in traffic.
- Never weave in and out of traffic. Stay in your lane and signal your turns.
- Always cycle on the left hand side with the flow of traffic.
- Never hold on to a moving vehicle.
- Never wear earphones, listen to music or use a mobile phone when you are cycling.
- Always obey the Rules of the Road. Other road users will respect you more if you respect the rules.
- Think ahead. Think about what drivers may do. Catch their eye.
- Ride well clear of the kerb. It will help drivers to see you and will prevent your pedal hitting the kerb. You also have more room to move if you come across obstacles or if vehicles pass too close to you.
- Show drivers what you plan to do. Always look and signal before you start, stop or turn.
- Ride a straight line past parked cars rather than be constantly weaving in and out.
- Ride positively and decisively. It helps motorists to understand what you plan to do.
- Keep well back from motor vehicles in case they brake.
- Never cycle on a footpath unless it has a cycle track. Use cycle tracks and/or lanes where provided.
- Never cycle side by side with more than one cyclist.

Bicycle trailers

Bicycle trailers are generally low to the ground. Due to their low profile, HGV and car drivers may not be aware of them immediately behind the bike. To improve visibility of a bicycle trailer, a flag pole should be attached to the rear of the trailer with the flag being approximately the same height with the rider's shoulders/helmet.

Towing a trailer will have an adverse effect on the handling of a bicycle. The way you corner may have to be adapted and stopping times may increase as a result of the increased weight of the trailer. In busy urban areas you will have to take account of the extra width, especially in cycle tracks where you might take up the full width of the lane.

- Bicycle trailers should meet the European Safety Standard EN 15918:2011 intended for carrying up to two child passengers with the maximum weight permitted being 60 kg.
- Ensure your child is wearing a suitable cycle helmet.
- Ensure clothing like scarfs and shoe laces cannot get caught in the wheels.

Note: For overall safety and if travelling in poor lighting conditions then the trailer should display two red lights (one each side of the trailer)

It is recommended that these trailers are only used in protected areas e.g. greenways, cycle lanes etc. This will help protect the child as much as possible who, in these trailers, are much closer to the ground than the towing cyclist.

Bicycle carrier for children

Carrying children on bicycles exposes them to the dangers of the road.

- If you intend to use a child seat for carrying a child on your bicycle, make sure that it is fit for purpose and securely fitted by a competent person.
- Check that the seat's restraining straps are in good condition.
- Be aware of the risk of your child's feet getting caught in the wheel spokes. The seat should have secure foot straps.
- Ensure clothing like scarfs and shoe laces cannot get caught in the wheels.
- Due to toppling risk, children should never be left in any form of bike carrier unsupported by an adult.

Traffic lights and road signs

- On approach to a green light, you may proceed if its safe to do so.
- Anticipate that it may change to amber.
- You must stop at an amber light unless it is not safe to do so.
- Never try to race through an intersection when the traffic light shows amber.
- Come to a full stop when the light is red.
- Do not move off until the light has turned green and it is safe to do so.
- A stop sign means STOP for all vehicles – including bicycles.
- Stay safe! Learn and obey all the Rules of the Road.

Be particularly careful when a road sign warns of an oncoming hazard – like a dangerous bend or a pedestrian crossing.

Signalling

- Always look back before you signal.
- Always signal a turn or a change of lane clearly and in good time.
- Never pull out, turn, or change lanes without signalling.

Turning left

- Stay in the left lane when you are turning left.
- Signal your turn in good time.
- Never cycle between another left turning vehicle and the kerb. Stay well behind it and let it go. Then turn and don't swing out into the road.
- Never pass a vehicle on the inside when it may turn left. Keep well clear of buses and trucks near junctions.

“Like all road users, cyclists must obey the Rules of the Road.”

Turning right

- Turning right can be very dangerous. Many collisions happen when cyclists are turning right.
- Plan your turn well in advance.
- Look back. Signal. Then look back again before you move to the right side of the right-turning lane, if safe to do so.
- As you approach a junction, look all around and stop if required. Look right and left and then look right again. Ensure it is safe to proceed, otherwise stop.
- When it is safe to go, you should look back again, signal again and then move off.
- Stay well into the left as you enter the lane if you don’t feel confident.

Watch out for cars, trucks and buses

Cars, trucks and other vehicles can be dangerous to cyclists even when they are parked.

- Always signal and pull out well in advance when you are passing a parked vehicle.
- Leave plenty of space when you are passing – if someone opens a door, it can knock you off your bicycle.
- Cycle in single-file when you are overtaking parked vehicles.
- Remember all vehicles have blind spots and the driver may not be able to see you.

Blind spots

The area immediately in front, behind to the left and to the right of large vehicles such as buses and trucks is often hidden from the drivers view. If you cannot see the driver, the driver cannot see you.

Tram tracks

Cyclists need to take special care because tram tracks can be slippery, especially during wet or icy weather. In particular, cyclists should avoid braking while on tram rails. They should always cross tram rails at a right angle or as close to it as possible. They should take care to avoid getting their bicycle wheels caught in the groove of the tram rails.

Facilities for Cyclists

Cycle tracks

A cycle track is a part of a road or footway, which is provided primarily for the use of pedal cyclists. Cyclists are advised to use these tracks wherever they are provided however, by law a cyclist must use any cycle track provided as part of a pedestrian street or area or as part of a contra-flow cycle track.

There are different types of cycle tracks.

- **On road:** (cycle lanes) are tracks provided at the same level as the main carriageway. A solid white line means that other vehicles cannot drive or park in them during their hours of operation.
  A broken white line means that other vehicles can drive, load and or unload and park in them for 30 minutes during their hours of operation.

- **Off road (two types):**
  - **Segregated tracks** are tracks separated from the road and the foothpath by a kerb or a verge.
  - **At footpath level tracks** are tracks that are at the same level as the foothpath and they are sometimes only separated by a white line. The line indicates the side pedestrians can walk on and the side for cyclists. Cyclists should still watch out for pedestrians, give them plenty of room and be prepared for them to change direction suddenly.
- **Two-way:** Some off-road cycle tracks accommodate cyclists travelling in both directions. Unless the design or signage indicates otherwise, cyclists should stay as near as possible to the left-hand side of the track. Cyclists should be careful where two-way tracks cross side roads.
- **Contra-flow:** These tracks are found in some one-way streets and cyclists must use them where they are provided. This allows cyclists to travel safely against the main traffic flow. Don't use these tracks to travel in the same direction as traffic as this may interfere with cyclists travelling in the opposite direction.

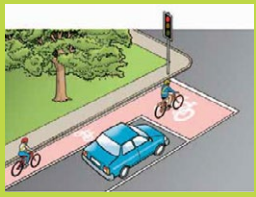
Cycleways

Only pedal cyclists or pedal cyclists and pedestrians should use a cycleway. Where pedestrians are allowed to use certain cycleways, you should take care and give them plenty of space when passing.

Bus lanes

In general, as a cyclist, you can use the same lanes as buses, even where there is a parallel cycle track. You are not allowed to enter contra-flow bus lanes unless the signs say you can. When using bus lanes, you should be careful of buses and taxi stopping along the route.

Advanced Stop Lines



Advanced Stop Lines require general traffic to stop at the first stop line (the advanced line) but permits you to stop in front of traffic between the advanced stop line and the main stop line. The waiting area, identified by a bicycle symbol and usually with a different surface colour, allows cyclists turning right to get into position while the lights are red. You should be careful when doing this as the lights might change.

Parking your bicycle

- If your local area provides space to park bicycles, use them.
- Never park your bicycle where it could cause problems especially for people with disabilities or on busy footpaths.
- Use a strong bicycle lock.

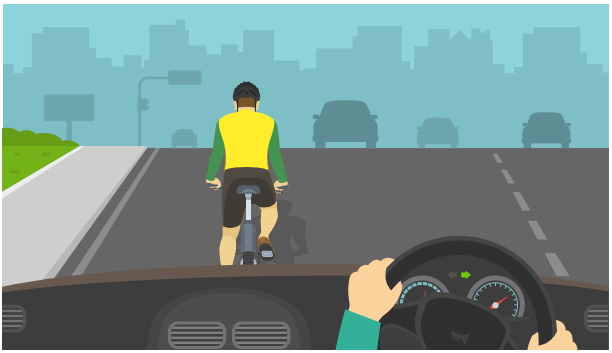
Road positioning for cyclists

Correct road positioning will allow a cyclist to move safely and competently on the road network.

Drivers should be aware that cyclists may need to change direction from the normal secondary position on the road (left side of the road) to a more primary riding position (center of the road) in order to

- Get the best view of the road and junctions ahead.
- Increase visibility for approaching traffic, especially where a driver's view may be blocked.
- Turn left or right, enter a roundabout, change lanes and on approach to bends.

Before changing position on the road, cyclists should 'look, signal in good time and look again' to ensure that it is safe to proceed. Where a cyclist is not confident in taking up the 'primary' position it may be safer to get off the bike and walk or cross the roadway where it is safer.



Cycle to work scheme

The Cycle to Work Scheme allows employees who are paying tax in Ireland to buy a bicycle and associated equipment tax free. Using the Bike to Work scheme, your employer can help you obtain a new bike and safety equipment worth up to €1,000. You can give a part of your salary to pay for the bike each month. By doing this you can save almost half (47%) of the retail price of the bike and equipment. Your employer also makes savings to encourage them to get involved in the scheme. For further information, please visit www.revenue.ie.

Further information can be found in the Rules of the Road www.rulesoftheroad.ie, the National Transport Authority's Cycle Manual www.cyclemanual.ie, and the National Standard for Cycle Training information and resources www.cycleright.ie

Working To Save Lives

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