

young cyclist's guide



Biking is good for your health
and the environment too. Have fun
and ride safely!

what this guide is about...

Biking is a fun activity that gives you the freedom to go places. It's a form of transportation that's good for your body, and good for the planet. Cyclists also have to share the road with cars, pedestrians and other cyclists.

This guide has information on bicycle equipment, riding tips, and the rules of the road to keep you safe while cycling.





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1. protect your head

ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET!

The #1 safety rule when you ride a bicycle: wear a helmet every time you ride. A helmet gives you a real chance of walking away from a fall or a collision with a car, pedestrians or other bikes. Your helmet should be the correct size for you, be properly adjusted, and worn on its own (no hats underneath).

The “2-4-1 Helmet Salute” is an easy way to make sure your helmet fits right so it can protect you:

- the edge of the helmet should be two fingers above the eyebrows to protect the forehead;
- straps should meet in a V shape just below the ears;
- one finger should fit between the chin and the chin strap;
- it should not shift around more than an inch in any direction.

TIP:

If you had a crash, or dropped your helmet hard enough to crack the foam, replace it.



Two fingers above your eyebrows to the bottom of your helmet.

2



Four fingers to make a “V” shape around the bottom of your ears.

4



One finger under the strap beneath your chin.

1

HELMETS PROTECT YOUR HEAD AND YOUR BRAIN. HERE'S HOW...

A helmet works by absorbing the force of the impact and spreading it out over the whole helmet. The impact on your head and your brain is reduced.

Your skull is hard, but it is not very thick (about the thickness of three pennies stacked up). You can crack your skull just by hitting your head on the ground after falling off your bike. Your brain is floating in a sack of fluid inside your skull.

When you hit your head, your brain crashes around in the fluid against the sides of your skull, like a boat crashing against a dock in a storm.

Your brain can be bruised and swell up. It can bleed. The hundreds of connections between different parts of the brain can be ripped apart. Most brain injuries are permanent.

Wearing a helmet reduces the force of an impact to your skull and how much your brain will crash around inside your skull if you hit your head.



TIP:

Wear a helmet every time you ride... it's the law!

2. ride a bike that fits

Frame size

Both feet should be flat on the ground when straddling the top tube of the bike. There should be space between the crotch and the top tube.

Seat height

When sitting on the bike seat, you should be able to touch the ground with both feet. Touching with your toes is OK.

Frame length

A cyclist should reach the handlebars with a gentle lean. Avoid stretching the back and shoulders.

Growing into a bike

When buying a bicycle, ask the sales staff to show you how high the seat and handlebars can be raised to see how the bike can adapt as you grow.

Brake levers

If your bike has handbrakes, make sure the levers are adjusted for your size so you can reach them and pull them strongly.



TIP:

*Ride a bike that fits...
ride a bike that is legal.
A bike that is too big can't
be controlled properly and
can be dangerous.*



MAKE YOUR BIKE LEGAL!

Equipment required by law:

1. Helmet: Cyclists under 18 must wear a helmet. Helmets are strongly recommended for cyclists over 18.
2. Lights and reflectors: A white light mounted on front of your bike, a red reflector on the back at night.
3. Bell or horn.
4. Reflective tape: White reflective tape on the front forks, red reflective tape on the rearstays.

Recommended equipment:

5. Rack or basket.
6. Water bottle in holder.
7. Shoes that cover your toes.
8. Red light on the back of the bike for night riding.
9. Bright coloured clothing to be more visible.
10. Bike lock.

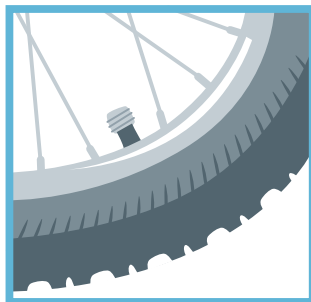
3. before you go: check your bike

TIP:

Check your bike before you ride. Ask for help from an adult.

The **ABC Quick Check** is an easy way to remember what parts of your bike you need to check in a basic safety inspection, and keep your bike in good shape. Practice ABC Quick Check so that you can do it in about 45 seconds before you leave on your ride.

A is for Air: Check your tires to see if they have enough air and if there are any holes in the tires.



A is for Air

B is for Brakes and Bars: Check your brakes to see if they work properly. Standing beside your bike, pull the front brake only and push forward on the handlebars. The front wheel should lock up and the back wheel should leave the ground. Then pull the back brake only and walk forward, the back wheel should lock and skid along the ground.



B is for Brakes

The brake levers should be at least two fingers width from the handlebars when pulled. The brake pads should touch only the rim of the wheel and not the tire.

Check to see if the handlebars are loose, either from side to side or up and down. Hold the front wheel between your knees and try to twist the handlebars side to side and up and down.

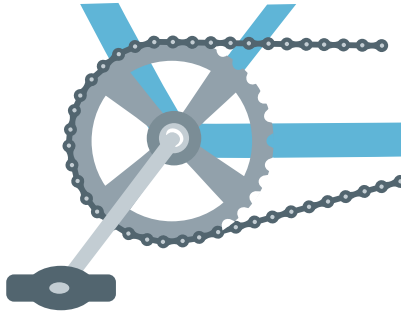
C is for Chain and Crank Check the gears to see if the chain is on and lubricated, there is no damage, and that the pedals spin freely backwards.

"Quick" is for Quick Release If your bike has quick release wheels, grab and shake the wheels to make sure it's not loose. The quick release handles should be firmly closed and pointing toward the rear of the bike.

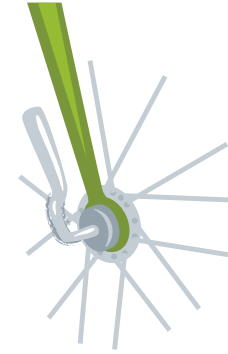
"Check" is for a Final Check Over: Lift the bike several inches off the ground and drop it. Listen for loose parts. Tighten as necessary. Try your brakes before you ride off.



B is for Bars



C is for Chain and Crank



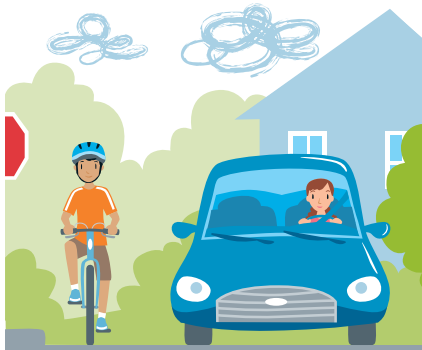
Q is for Quick Release

4. learn the rules of the road

TIP:

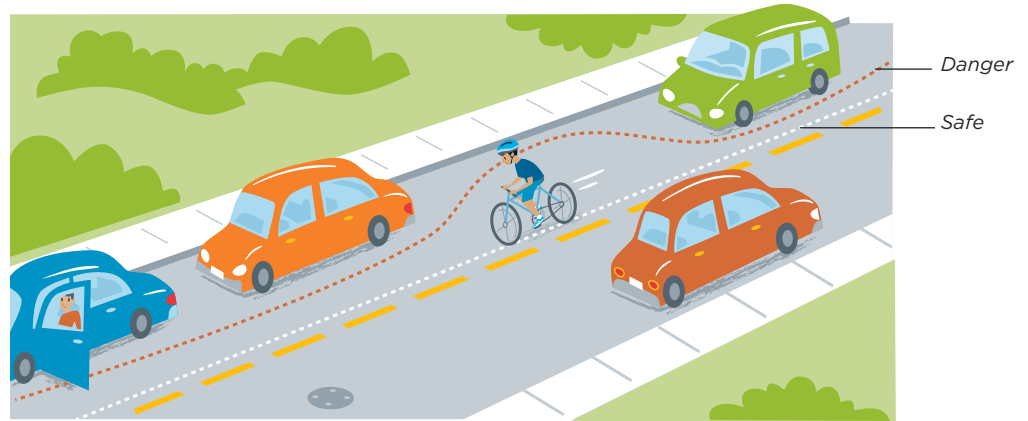
Bikes are fun to ride but a bicycle is not a toy - it's your first vehicle!

This means that as a cyclist you must follow the same rules and laws as drivers do.



When riding your bike remember the following road safety rules:

- Wear a helmet every time you ride.
- Wear bright clothing so drivers can see you better.
- You need enough space to avoid hazards. Ride one metre from the curb or from parked cars.
- Ride in a straight line on the right hand side of the road, in the same direction as traffic. Do not weave in between parked cars.
- Ride beside parked cars as if all the car doors were open. As long as you are riding in a straight line, motorists coming from behind will see you and give you enough space.



- Use hand signals early when turning or stopping - this lets drivers know what you are going to do next.

Always stop:

- At stop signs and red lights.
- At the edge of the road. Look all ways to see if the road is clear before entering a road.
- For stopped school buses when their red lights are flashing.
- For pedestrians at crosswalks.
- Two metres behind bus and streetcar doors and wait until the passengers have boarded or reached the curb.

Off-road rules of the trail:

- Wear a helmet.
- Ride on open trails only.
- Plan ahead. Be prepared for breakdowns. Take enough food and water.
- Always yield to hikers and horse riders.
- Never spook animals.



TIP:

Always use signals to let drivers know what you are going to do next.

Always look over your shoulder before you turn or move out on the road. Make sure the road is clear ahead and behind you. Stop and wait if there is too much traffic.

KNOW YOUR ROAD SIGNS

Traffic signs are an important way to help us use the roads safely. Signs help us decide who gets to go first and who must wait their turn. Cyclists must obey traffic laws like drivers of other vehicles. Here are a few of the most important signs:

- 1. One way:** Ride in the same direction as the sign.
- 2. Pedestrian crossover:** Stop to let pedestrians cross the street.
- 3. Yield:** Let other traffic go first.
- 4. Road narrows:** Check ahead and behind for traffic. Make sure you do not get squeezed.
- 5. No bicycles allowed:** Stay away from roads with these signs. They are not meant for cyclists.
- 6. Stop sign:** Stop, put your foot down and look all ways for traffic. Go when it is your turn and it is safe to do so.
- 7. Railway crossing:** Obey railway signals. Cross at right angles. Stop and walk your bike over the tracks.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



5. dangers: what to watch for

Riding alone:

Always check with your parents first before you go.

Sidewalks:

If riding on the sidewalk be careful around people walking. Go slow. Share the sidewalk. Let pedestrians go first and let them know you are coming. Check driveways for cars turning in, or backing out.

Driveways / Trails / Alleys intersecting with roads:

Stop and look all ways before moving forward. Check first at the sidewalk, and then at the edge of the road. If there are parked cars, move out so that you can see clearly down the street.

TIP:

Watch for cars pulling out of intersections and driveways. Make eye contact with drivers.



Crossing the Street:

Get off your bike to cross at a crosswalk or busy street. Check all ways, and cross.

Turning:

Practice looking back over your shoulder without weaving your bike. Shoulder check regularly, and especially before you make a turn.

Riding in groups:

Always ride in single file.

Right turning vehicles:

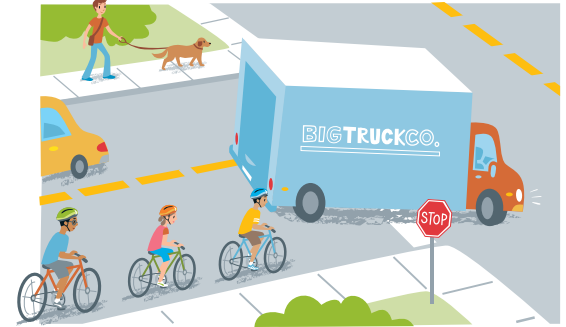
Stay behind a car as you get close to an intersection — don't try to pass. You can get caught between the curb and the car (or worse, a truck), and get squeezed.

TIP:

Plan ahead. Avoid danger by knowing where it could be.



Dismount, check all ways, and cross.



Stay behind a vehicle as you get close to an intersection— don't try to pass.

Never ride against traffic:

Drivers aren't looking for bicyclists riding on the left side of the road.

Surface hazards:

Ride far enough out from the curb to maintain a straight line, steering clear of puddles, sharp objects like bits of glass, debris and holes in the pavement. If you get a flat tire, slow down gently to a stop and walk your bike to avoid ruining the tires and rims.

Stop signs and red lights:

Going through a stop sign or red light can be a killer. Make stopping a habit. Practice stopping and starting again. Always stop with your pedal in a good pushing position, so it is easy to start. You will soon get good at it, and you will feel strong as you speed up from your start.



Can you spot the dangers?

6. important bicycle riding skills

TIP:

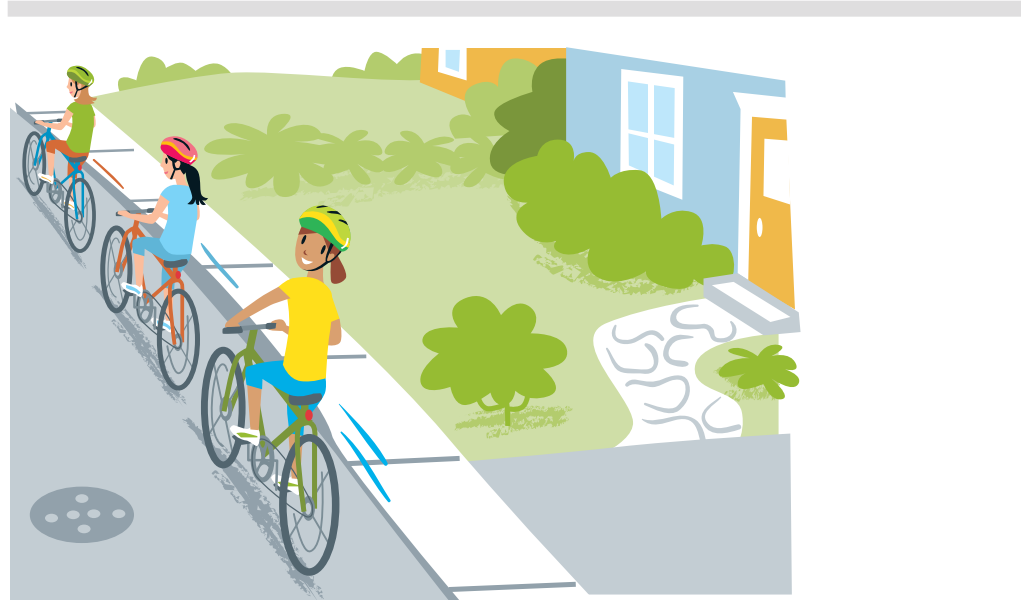
Practice safe cycling skills in places where there are few cars.

Riding in a straight line

This shows other people you are in control of your bike, and helps them know what you are going to do next. Try this on any pavement away from traffic that has a straight painted line. Ride on the line until you can do it without wobbling.

Shoulder checks

Scan the road behind you. Learn to look back over your shoulder without losing your balance or veering into traffic. Ride in a straight line and try looking back over your shoulder for a second. Stay relaxed and keep pedaling and you won't steer off the line after you practice for awhile. Practice looking over both shoulders.



Shoulder check regularly, and especially before you make a turn.

Signalling

Making a surprise turn in front of a car is as smart as diving into a shark tank! Signal all turns (but not until you know it's OK to turn by checking over your shoulder first).

Practice using the same painted line method as before. Learn to ride in a straight line with one hand by dropping one arm to your side (you will need that arm to signal).

TIP:

Practice your signals, always starting with a shoulder check.



LEFT



STOP



RIGHT - OPTION 1



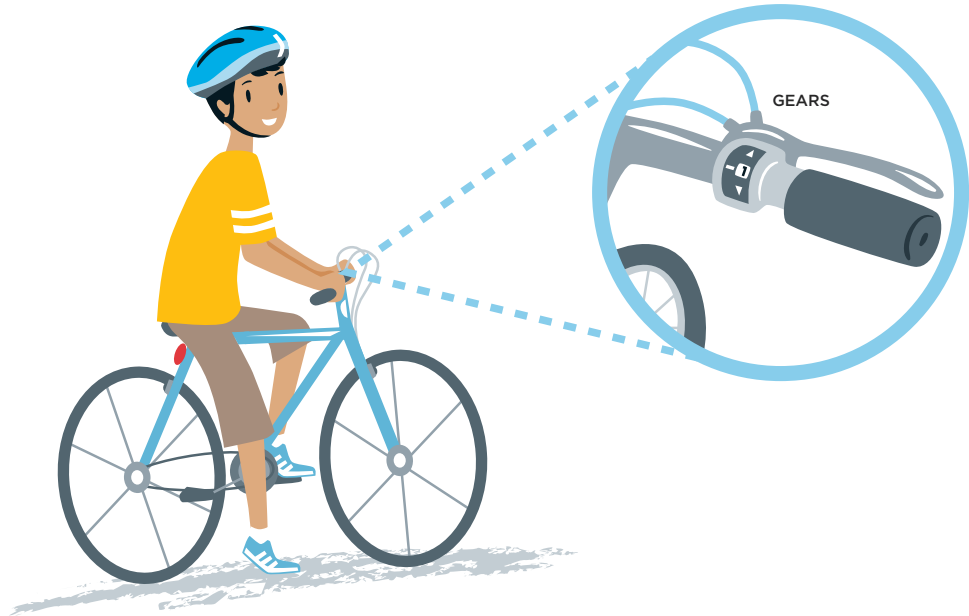
RIGHT - OPTION 2

Stopping and starting

Practice stopping and starting again, so that you get good at it, and it becomes easier. Change into an easy gear for a smooth fast start. Have your stronger foot ready on the pedal at the top to start.

Using gears

If your bike has gears, practice changing them, so that you can use them when you need them, like climbing a hill or starting fast from a stop. Pedaling should be easy so you don't get tired fast. If you have gears learn to use them... they make cycling fun.



7. information for parents

TIP:

Communities across Ontario have different rules about young children riding on sidewalks while they learn to ride. Contact your local municipality for information about cycling by-laws.

Cycling and the Law

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/pubs/cycling-guide/section5.0.shtml>

HELMETS

Ontario's Helmet Law

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/pubs/cycling-guide/section1.2.shtml>

Think First

thinkfirst.ca

Safe Kids Canada

safekidscanada.ca

Healthy Ontario

healthyontario.com

City of Toronto

<http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/safety/helmet>



SAFE CYCLING

Children under 10 years old should not ride their bicycles in traffic. To be safe on-road cyclists, good judgement and physical coordination is required. Children under 10 lack depth perception and the thinking skills required to negotiate traffic. Proper adult supervision is required.

Citizens for Safe Cycling

safecycling.ca

Kids CAN-BIKE courses

canbike.net

Ontario Cycling Association

ontariocycling.org

City of Toronto CAN-BIKE

<http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/canbike>

To be a confident cyclist, consider taking a CAN-BIKE cycling course for young cyclists and adults which will help boost your skills, safety and cycling pleasure. All instructors are fully accredited in CAN-BIKE, are knowledgeable about the Highway Traffic Act and have advanced cycling skills. Check with your local cycling organization or police service.

For more information about cycling safety, contact ServiceOntario: 1-800-268-4686 or (416) 235-4686 in GTA

*TTY Users:
1-866-471-8929 or
(905) 704-2426 in Niagara*

www.mto.gov.on.ca

