

Bicycle Safety Suggestions

The policy of the Siskiyou Velo Club is that all members and guests are personally responsible for their own cycling safety on all rides and events, not the Ride Leaders. These Bicycle Safety Suggestions are provided to assist you with your responsibilities; if ever in doubt, use your own judgment for your safety.

Keep Your Bike in Good Working Order

It is your responsibility to maintain your bike in proper operating condition to enable you to control the speed and direction of the bicycle, start and stop quickly and accurately, etc.

Do the ABC Quick Check:

- **AIR** If your tires give a bit when you press with your thumb, they need some air.
- **BRAKES** When you squeeze your brakes hard, you should still be able to fit your thumb between the brake levers and the handlebars. Check that your brake pads or discs aren't worn out and replace as necessary.
- **CHAIN, CRANK, CASSETTE** Make sure your chain is running smoothly – lightly oiled and free of rust and gunk – by spinning it backwards a few revolutions.
- **QUICK RELEASE** If your bike has quick release wheels, make sure the release levers are securely closed.
- **CHECK** As you start to ride, listen for any rubbing, grinding or clicking noises that might indicate something isn't working correctly.

More Maintenance Tips

- **If something isn't working** correctly, fix what you can and take your bike to a local bike shop for additional adjustments.
- **Make sure your bike fits you correctly.** You'll be more comfortable and efficient. A local bike shop can help adjust your bike.
- **Use secure racks or packs** for carrying items or packages. Don't let anything get caught in the spokes of your wheel.

Bicycling Suggestions

Use your bicycle with a keen awareness of the cycling environment. Follow the tips below to help improve your safety and confidence as a bicyclist.

- **Wear a bicycle helmet.** See <https://helmets.org/buying.htm> for fitting suggestions. All riders on a Siskiyou Velo-sponsored bike ride are required to wear a helmet.
- **Obey all traffic signals, signs and lane markings.** Cyclists have the same responsibilities and privileges as motor vehicle drivers, per [OR 814.400 - 814.489](https://www.oregon.gov/OSD/Divisions/Transportation/Transportation%20Division/Pages/814.400-814.489.aspx).
- **Stop as Yield** – In Oregon, cyclists are allowed to slow to a safe speed, check for cross traffic and proceed without stopping at a stop sign or flashing red light. All the rules of

right of way still apply. Riders are still required to come to a stop and remain stopped at a steady red light.

- **Always keep both hands on the handlebars** and be ready to brake. You can remove one hand to make a hand signal, take a drink, or look behind you – so long as you can still control your bike.
- **Go slower and use caution** when the road is wet or icy, or when it is foggy or visibility is otherwise limited.
- **Be visible.** Use lights and reflectors – even when riding in the daytime and especially when riding at night. Brightly colored or reflective clothing helps increase visibility
- **Ride your bike “defensively.”** Remember that car drivers are often unaware of your presence. They are on the look-out for cars and pedestrians, but not necessarily cyclists.
- **Be alert.** Scan the route ahead for traffic, opening car doors, other people riding bikes, pedestrians, and obstacles on the road surface.
- **Ride predictably** so that others can see you and predict your movements. Do not weave in and out between parked cars. Use hand signals to indicate turns and when slowing or stopping.
- **Practice riding in a straight line.** It is an important skill when cycling alone as well as with others.
- **Ride on the right side of the road** with the flow of traffic. Car drivers are looking for other cars and trucks consistent with the “rules of the road,” not for bikes going in the wrong direction.
- **Ride far enough away from the curb** to stay clear of opening car doors, potholes, debris and sewer grates and to maintain a straight line. If the road is too narrow for vehicles to pass you safely, it may be better to ride in the right third or middle of the lane to prevent dangerous overtaking.
- **Use designated bicycle lanes** when available. Use shoulders when bike lanes are not available.
- **“Take the lane” if you are planning on turning left.** Signal that you will turn into a car lane from the shoulder or a bicycle lane. Do NOT stop next to a stopped car at an intersection, stop sign, etc. “Take the lane” and stop behind the car. If you stop next to a stopped car, the driver often doesn’t anticipate or see you. Watch for and stay out of a vehicle’s blind spot.
- **“Take the lane” can still apply when you are turning right,** Pull behind the stopped car and move up to the intersection once that car exits. If you stop on the passenger side of a car, the driver might not see you or could turn sharply and run into you.
- **Take extra care around trucks, buses and other large vehicles.** They have big blind spots and make wide turns.
- **Double check to make sure it is safe before crossing** the path of motorists and pedestrians. Motorists sometimes don’t watch for or see cyclists. For some vehicle drivers you are invisible.

- **Do not rely on other riders who may call out “clear” when crossing a road.** Assess whether it is safe for you to cross. It may have been clear when they crossed, but no longer safe for you to do so.
- **“Shout out” important information** for people around you. Examples are: “Biker back” or “car back” to let them know a car or cyclist is approaching from behind. “Rider up” or “walker up” if a cyclist or pedestrian is ahead of you. “Debris on road” [name the type of debris] is helpful. Shouting out any other unexpected road conditions, obstacles, etc. helps everyone avoid them.
- **Shout out your intention to slow, stop, etc.,** especially if you cannot remove your hand from the handlebar to make a hand signal.
- **Use a mirror** to view the lane to your left and behind you. Mirrors can be attached to a handlebar, eyeglasses or helmet.
- **If you are turning your head to see behind you,** your hands tend to go in the same direction – leading you to veer to that side. IF it is safe to do so, remove the hand from the handlebar on the side you are turning your head to help you maintain a straight line
- **Use hand signals** to indicate to other cyclists and motorists your intent to turn, slow down, stop, etc. Click here to view suggested hand signals. Use hand signals only when it is safe to remove a hand from the handlebar.
- **When passing** another cyclist or pedestrian, call out “Passing on left.” Avoid passing people on their right, if possible.
- **Avoid bicycling on sidewalks.** If you must, ride at “walking speed” or walk your bike. Pedestrians don’t expect other vehicles on the sidewalk. There are often obstructions that limit your visibility. Motorists don’t expect a cyclist to enter a road from a sidewalk.
- **Also see How Not to Get Hit by Cars** which is probably the single greatest fear when people ride bikes. Good information for both experienced and novice cyclists.

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References

League of American Bicyclists, “Smart Cycling Quick Guide.” Available from [LAB](#) (League of American Bicyclists) and as a Kindle version on [Amazon.com](#).

The League of American Bicyclists also offers excellent online learning modules as part of its “[Smart Cycling Program](#)”, including [videos](#), [bike maintenance](#), [ride better tips](#), [rules of the road](#), etc.

Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Bicycling Manual, 5th edition:
<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/programs/tdd%20documents/oregon-bicyclist-manual.pdf>

Oregon Department of Transportation, [Stop as Yield Brochure](#)

[BicycleSafe.com](#) “How Not to Get Hit by Cars”