

Safety Tips • Safety Tips

Make Sure Your Bike is Safe

1. The pedals, seat and handlebars let you control your bike. Make sure they are firmly attached.
2. Make sure tires are in good condition and are properly inflated.
3. Inspect the braking system to ensure it will function adequately when needed.

Obey Traffic Laws

Traffic law violations cause the majority of bicycle/motor vehicle collisions. By following traffic laws, cyclists are predictable to other drivers.

1. Ride in the directions of traffic.
2. Obey traffic signs and signals
3. Yield when entering a roadway.
4. Signal before turning or changing lanes.
5. Pass on the left.
6. Use proper lighting at night.



Wear a Helmet

Head injuries cause the majority of bicycle motor-vehicle collision deaths. Helmets can help reduce the frequency and severity of head injuries. **Helmets can only do their job, however, if properly fitted and adjusted.**

Always wear the helmet level on your head. The side buckles should be situated just below your earlobes. The chin strap should be adjusted to fit snugly when the chin buckle is closed. Try to push your helmet off to the front and then the sides. If you can, the helmet will not do its job in a crash and needs to be readjusted.

Bicycle helmets are designed to withstand one crash only. Structural damage is not always visible, so never use a crashed or secondhand helmet. Store your helmet away from sunlight, as ultraviolet light can damage it.

Resources

Bicycle Alliance of Washington

www.bicyclealliance.org
(206) 224-9252

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute

www.bhsi.org

Bicycle Information Center

www.bicyclinginfo.org

League of American Bicyclists

www.bikeleague.org
Washington DC (202) 822-1333

Cascade Bicycle Club

www.cascade.org
(206) 523-1952

Washington Traffic Safety Commission Bicycle Safety Program

www.wtsc.wa.gov
(360) 586-3484

Special Thanks to Larry Leveen



Bicycle Traffic Laws

Commonly Asked Questions

What traffic laws apply to cyclists?

When riding on a roadway, a cyclist has all the rights and responsibilities of a vehicle driver (RCW 46.61.755). Cyclists who violate traffic laws may be ticketed (RCW 46.61.750).

Where is cycling prohibited?

1. On designated sections of our state's limited access highway system. Call 360-705-7277 to obtain a map.
2. Local governments may adopt ordinances banning cycling on specific roads or on the sidewalks within business districts—check with your local jurisdictions (RCW 46.61.160).

Do children have to follow traffic laws?

Yes. Parents or guardians may not knowingly permit bicycle traffic violations by their ward (RCW 46.61.700).

May cyclists ride side-by-side?

Yes, but not more than two abreast (RCW 46.61.770).

What equipment is required on bicycles used at night?

A white front light (not a reflector) visible for 500 feet and a red rear reflector are required. A red rear light may be used in addition to the required reflector (RCW 46.61.780).

Are cyclists required to wear helmets?

Currently, there is no state law requiring helmet use. Some cities and counties, however, do have helmet laws. Contact local jurisdictions for more information.

What lane position would cyclist use?

1. When traveling slower than traffic, cyclists should ride as far right as is safe, except when
 - a) preparing to turn
 - b) when passing another vehicle,
 - c) when on a multi-lane one-way road (RCW 46.61.770).

2. Cyclists may occupy the middle of the lane when:

- a) traveling at the speed of traffic,
- b) when the lane is too narrow to permit a car to share the lane,
- c) when road conditions (poor surface, drain grates, parked cars, etc.) prevent riding to the far right.

3. At intersections cyclists would utilize the rightmost lane or portion of lane designated for their destination. However, if no turn lane is available, cyclists should occupy the left side of the lane to turn left, just right of the center of the lane to travel straight and the right side to turn right.

4. Cycling on road shoulders is legal (RCW 46.61.770).

Are cyclists required to use a bike lane or path adjacent to a roadway?

No. Cyclists may choose to ride on the path, bike lane, shoulder or travel lane as suits their safety needs (RCW 46.61.770).



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Make Yourself Easily Seen

Motorists are used to looking for car-sized objects. To enhance your visibility, wear **light-colored or fluorescent clothing** and accessories, apply **reflective tape to your helmet** and moving parts of your bike and always use **proper lighting** at night (see reverse side).

Ride Predictably

When riding in traffic, **avoid weaving in and out of the “parking lane”**. Instead, maintain your line of travel, remaining as far right as is safe.

Give Yourself Adequate Room

Leave about **three feet between yourself and parked cars** so that an opened door will not obstruct your path.

Road Hazards

Continually scan for hazards that could cause you to lose control.

1. **In wet conditions, give yourself extra room to stop.** Rainy conditions are usually low-light conditions too, so take steps to make yourself more visible.
2. **When crossing slippery surfaces** (pavement markings, utility covers, etc.) **avoid braking or turning.**
3. **Cross train tracks at a right angle and stand up** to absorb shock from the uneven surface.

Cycling on Sidewalks, Trails or Paths

1. **Ride at a appropriate speed** for trail/path conditions.
2. **Yield to pedestrians.**
3. **Yield to traffic** before entering/crossing a roadway.

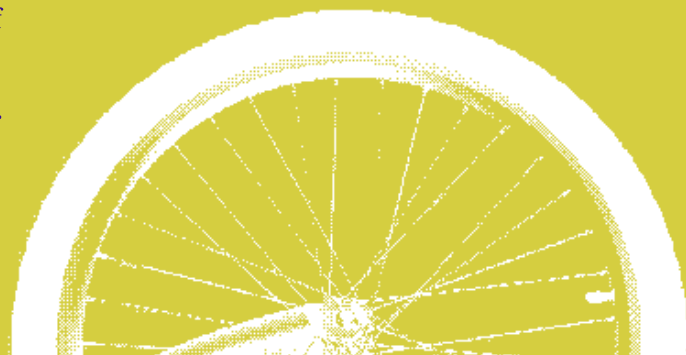
Note: some communities prohibit sidewalk riding in certain areas. Contact your city officials for information.

Be Responsible for Yourself

When riding in a group, each rider should look out for themselves and not simply follow the rider in front of them. Make sure all riders in the group are aware of how to ride safely and legally.

Safety Tips for Kids

Children are responsible for following all traffic laws (see inside). Familiarize yourself with the laws and tips in this brochure and then teach your children. Start with the most important rules (see “Obey Traffic Laws” above). As they become more skilled and confident, teach them finer points (the other tips in this section).



Bicycle Traffic Laws for the State of Washington

RCW 46.04.071 Definition of “Bicycle”

“Bicycle” means every device propelled solely by human power upon which a person or persons may ride, having two tandem wheels either of which is sixteen inches or more in diameter, or three wheels, any of which is more than twenty inches in diameter.

RCW 46.04.200 Definition of “Hours of Darkness”

“Hours of Darkness” means the hours from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise, and any other time when persons or objects may not be clearly discernible at a distance of five hundred feet.

RCW 46.04.197 Definition of “Highway”

“Highway” means the entire width between the boundary lines of every way publicly maintained when any part thereof is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel.

RCW 46.04.500 Definition of “Roadway”

“Roadway” means that portion of a highway improved, designed or ordinarily used for vehicular travel, exclusive of the sidewalk or shoulder even though such sidewalk or shoulder is used by persons riding bicycles. In the event a highway includes two or more separated roadways, the term “roadway” shall refer to any such roadway separately but shall not refer to all such roadways collectively.

RCW 46.04.670 Definition of “Vehicle”

“Vehicle” includes every device capable of being moved upon a public highway and in, upon, or by which any persons or property is or may be transported or drawn upon a public highway, excepting devices moved by human or animal power or used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks, except that mopeds shall be considered vehicles or motor vehicles for the purposes of chapter 46.12 RCW, but not for the purpose of chapter 46.70 RCW.

RCW 46.61.160 Restrictions on use of limited-access highway — Use by bicyclists

The Department of Transportation may by order, and local authorities may by ordinance or resolution, with respect to any limited access highway under their respective jurisdictions, prohibit the use of any such highway by funeral processions, or parades, pedestrians, bicycles or other non-motorized traffic, or by any person operating a motor-driven cycle. Bicyclists may use the right shoulder of limited access highways except where prohibited. The department of transportation may by order, and local authorities may by ordinance or resolution, with respect to any limited-access highway under their respective jurisdictions prohibit the use of the shoulders of any such highways where such use is deemed to be unsafe.

The Department of Transportation or the local authority adopting any such prohibitory regulation shall erect and maintain official traffic control devices on the limited-access roadway on which such regulations are applicable, and when so erected no persons may disobey the restrictions states on such devices.

RCW 46.61.502 Driving while under influence of intoxicating liquor or drug — What constitutes

A person is guilty of driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or any drug if he drives a vehicle within this state while: (1) He has 0.08 percent or more by weight of alcohol in his blood as shown by chemical analysis of his breath, blood or other bodily substance made under RCW 46.61.506 as now or hereafter amended; or (2) He is under the influence of or affected by intoxicating liquor or any drug; or (3) He is under the combined influence of or affected by intoxicating liquor and any drug.

The fact that any person charged with a violation of this section is or has been entitled to use such drug under the laws of this state shall not constitute a defense against any charge of violating this section.

RCW 46.61.700 Parent or guardian shall not authorize or permit violation by a child or ward

The parent of any child or the guardian of any ward shall not authorize or knowingly permit any such child or ward to violate any of the provisions of this chapter.

RCW 46.61.750 Effect of regulations — Penalty

1. It is a traffic infraction for any person to do any act forbidden or fail to perform any act required in RCW 46.61.750 through 46.61.780.
2. These regulations applicable to bicycles apply whenever a bicycle is operated upon a highway or upon a bicycle path, subject to those exceptions stated herein.

RCW 46.61.755 Traffic laws apply to persons riding bicycles

Every person riding a bicycle upon a roadway shall be granted all of the rights and shall be subject to all of the duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle by this chapter, except as to special regulations in RCW 46.61.750 through 46.61.780 and except as to those provisions of this chapter which by their nature can have no application.

RCW 46.61.758 Hand Signals

All hand signals required of persons operating bicycles shall be given in the following manner:

1. Left turn. Left hand an arm extended horizontally beyond the side of the bicycle;
2. Right turn. Left hand and arm extended upward beyond the side of the bicycle, or right hand and arm extended horizontally to the right side of the bicycle;
3. Stop or decrease speed. Left hand and arm extended downward beyond the side of the bicycle. The hand signals required by this section shall be given before initiation of a turn. [ed. note: hand signals should only be used when it is safe to remove a hand from the bicycle handlebars.]

RCW 46.61.760 Riding on bicycles

1. A person propelling a bicycle shall not ride other than upon or astride a permanent and regular seat attached thereto.
2. No bicycle shall be used to carry more persons at one time than the number of which it is designed and equipped.

RCW 46.61.765 Clinging to vehicles

No person riding upon any bicycle, coaster, roller skates, sled or toy vehicle shall attach the same or himself to any vehicle upon a roadway.

RCW 46.61.770 Riding on roadways and bicycle paths

1. Every person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at a rate of speed less than the normal flow of traffic at the particular time and place shall ride as near as near to the right side of the right through lane as is safe except as may be appropriate while preparing to make or while making turning movements, or while overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle preceding in the same direction. A person operating a bicycle upon a roadway or highway other than a limited-access highway, which roadway or highway carried traffic in one direction only and has two or more marked traffic lanes, may ride as near to the left side of the left through lane as is safe. A person operating a bicycle upon a roadway may use the shoulder of the roadway or any specially designated bicycle lane if such exists.

2. Persons riding bicycles upon a roadway shall not ride more than two abreast except on paths or part of the roadway set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.

RCW 46.61.775 Carrying articles

No person operating a bicycle shall carry any package, bundle or article which prevents the driver from keeping at least one hand upon the handlebars.

RCW 46.61.780 Lamps and other equipment on bicycles

1. Every bicycle when used during the hours of darkness as defined in RCW 46.37.020 shall be equipped with a lamp on the front which shall emit a white light visible from a distance of at least five hundred feet to the front and with a red reflector on the rear of a type approved by the state commission on equipment which shall be visible from all distances from one hundred feet to six hundred feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful lower beams of head lamps on a motor vehicle. A lamp emitting a red light visible from a distance of five hundred feet to the rear may be used in addition to the red reflector.

2. Every bicycle shall be equipped with a brake which will enable the operator to make the braked wheel skid on dry, level, clean pavement.