

# TIPS FOR YOUTH

# BIKE SAFETY

Biking is fun, healthy, and a great way to get around and be independent. But your bike is a vehicle, not a toy!

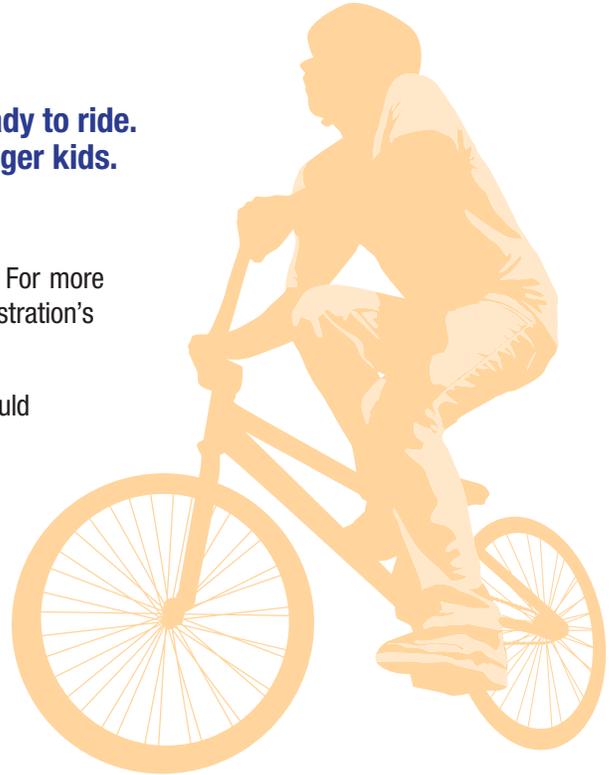
Some bike crashes can cause serious injuries and most are related to the behavior of you (the bicyclist) or the motorist. There are a number of things you can do to prevent a crash, and protect your brain if a crash occurs.

## Safe Riding Tips

Before riding, make sure you and your bike are ready to ride. You can be a “Roll Model” for your peers and younger kids.

### Remember to:

- **Wear a Bike Helmet.** Protect your brain, save your life. For more information see the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s *Fitting Your Bike Helmet*.
- **Adjust Your Bike to Fit.** Stand over your bike. There should be 1 to 2 inches between the rider and the top tube (bar) if using a road bike and 3 to 4 inches if using a mountain bicycle. The seat should be level front to back, and the height should be adjusted to allow a slight bend at the knee when the leg is fully extended. The handlebar height should be at the same level with the seat.
- **Check Your Equipment.** Before riding, inflate tires properly and check that the brakes work.
- **See and Be Seen.** Whether daytime, dawn, dusk, foul weather, or at night, make yourself visible. Wear neon, fluorescent or other bright colors when riding, to make yourselves the most visible to others. Also wear something that reflects light, such as reflective tape or markings, or flashing lights. Remember, just because you can see a driver doesn’t mean the driver can see you.
- **Control Your Bike.** Ride with two hands on the handlebars unless signaling a turn. Place books and other items in a bike carrier or backpack.
- **Watch for and Avoid Road Hazards.** Look for hazards that may make you crash, such as potholes, broken glass, gravel, puddles, leaves, and dogs.
- **Use Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication.** This includes eye contact with drivers, turn signals, pointing to road hazards for bicyclists behind you, and stating “passing on your left,” or “on your left.”
- **Avoid Riding at Night.** It’s harder for other road users to see bicyclists at dusk, dawn or nighttime. Use reflectors on the front and rear of the bike. White lights and red rear reflectors or lights are required by law in all States.



## Rules for Biking on the Road

In all States, bikes on the roadway are considered vehicles, and bicyclists are the drivers of those vehicles, with the same rights and responsibilities as other motorists to follow the rules of the road, including:

- **Go With the Traffic Flow.** Ride on the right side in the same direction as other vehicles. Go with the flow – not against it.
- **Obey All Traffic Laws.** As the driver of your vehicle on the road, obey all traffic signs, signals, and lane markings.
- **Yield to Traffic.** Almost always, drivers on a smaller road must yield (wait) for traffic on a major or larger road. If there is no stop sign or traffic signal and you are coming from a smaller roadway (out of a driveway, from a sidewalk, a bike path, etc.), slow down, look for traffic, and go only when it's clear. Also yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk.
- **Be Predictable.** Ride in a straight line, not in and out of cars. Signal your moves to others.
- **Stay Alert at All Times.** Use your eyes AND ears. Look for potholes, cracks, wet leaves, storm grates, railroad tracks, or anything that could make you lose control of your bike. Listen for traffic and avoid dangerous situations; don't use personal electronic devices when you ride.
- **Look Before Turning.** When turning left or right, always look behind you for a break in traffic, and then signal before making the turn. Watch for left- or right-turning traffic.
- **Watch for Parked Cars.** Ride far enough out from the curb to avoid the unexpected from parked cars (like doors opening, or cars pulling out).

## Where to Ride Safely

- **Use bike lanes or bike paths, if available.**
  - While bicycles are allowed on many roads, riders may feel safer being separated from traffic. A lane or path is a safer choice than riding on a sidewalk.
  - Riding on sidewalks puts you in a place where cars do not look for or expect to see moving traffic.
  - Sidewalk riding puts you at risk for crashes at driveways and intersections.
- **If you don't know the rules of the road, or your parents feel like you aren't ready to ride on the street, avoid riding your bike near traffic altogether.**
- **For anyone riding on a sidewalk:**
  - Check the law in your State or jurisdiction to make sure sidewalk riding is allowed.
  - Watch for vehicles coming out of or turning into driveways.
  - Stop at corners of sidewalks and streets to look for cars and to make sure the drivers see you before crossing.
  - Enter a street at a corner and not between parked cars. Alert pedestrians that you are nearby, saying, "Passing on your left," or use a bell or horn.



U.S. Department of Transportation  
National Highway Traffic Safety  
Administration



DOT HS 811 556  
January 2013

For more information  
on bicycle safety, visit  
the NHTSA Web site at:  
[www.nhtsa.gov/Bicycles](http://www.nhtsa.gov/Bicycles).