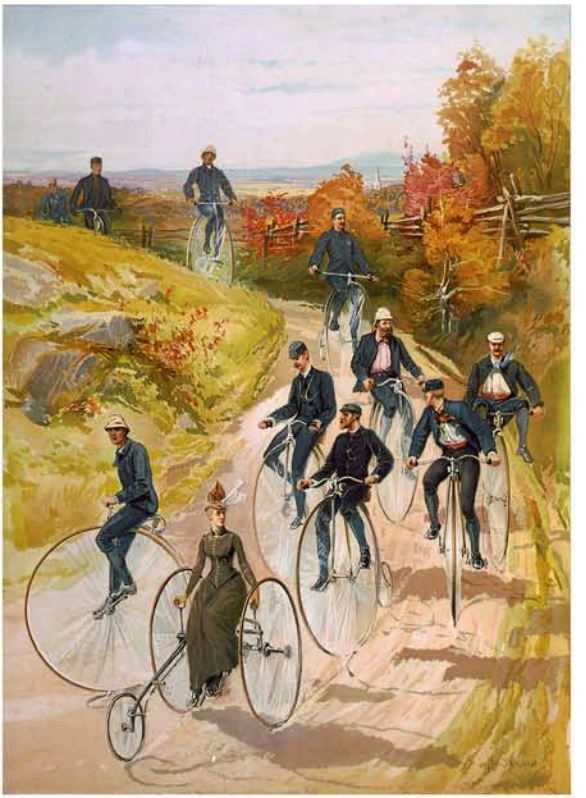
BICYCLE COMMUTE GUIDE



Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation
Charlottesville, VA

ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY CHOICE IN TRANSPORTATION

Programs for safer, better, and increased bicycling in Charlottesville include Bike Week, Safe Routes to School, the Bike Action Team, the Regional Mobility Map, and the Bike Mentors.

www. transportationchoice.org
295.6554

RIDESHARE

If you bike to work and have an emergency, Rideshare has you covered. Commuter who use an alternative to driving alone at least twice a week can register for a free Guaranteed Ride home.

www.rideshareinfo.org
295.6165

COMMUNITY BIKES

Make a recycled bike or fix your broken one in exchange for a few hours of work around the shop. Lots of tools and great volunteers, open Friday and Saturday from 2 to 5 pm. Located behind the Hampton Inn on W. Main St.

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/communitybikes

For more detailed information on bicycling, get a copy of
The League Guide to Safe and Enjoyable Cycling
www.bikeleague.org

BIKE REPAIR BOOKS

- **Anybody's Bike Book**, Tom Cuthberston, 1998
- **Simple Bicycle Repair**, Rob Van der Plas, 2004

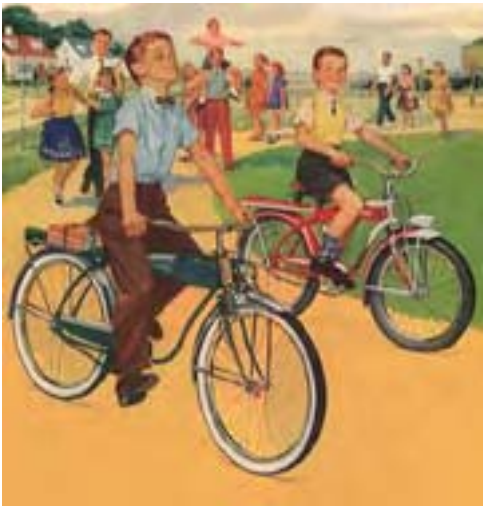
This guide is an adaptation of the original, created by the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (http://www.knoxtrans.org/plans/bikeprog/comguide.pdf).

August 2008

Introduction

Bicycling is a clean, efficient, healthy and fun way to travel. Since half of all daily trips in the U.S. are five miles or less, bicycling is a practical way to commute or do errands. Bike commuting to school or work is easy but may require some adjustments in your routine. A little planning ahead with the help of this guide will make your transition easier.

Try bicycle commuting a few times and see if it fits your needs. Your commute can become an enjoyable and invigorating part of your day. Once you establish a routine, bicycle commuting becomes as easy as — well, riding a bike!



Benefits of Bicycling

Improve Health and Fitness. Bicycling improves personal fitness, enhances energy levels, reduces stress and stimulates the immune system. Bicycle commuting is a great way to build regular exercise into a busy, but often sedentary, work routine. Bicycling is a moderate, low-impact exercise that can be continued throughout life.

People who exercise routinely live longer, better lives, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Obesity among adults has increased by nearly 60% since 1991. "The continuing epidemic of obesity is a critical public health problem," says Dr. Jeffrey Koplan, CDC's former director. CDC suggests several measures to control the epidemic, including providing more sidewalks, bike facilities and other alternatives to automobiles. The American Medical Association offers similar solutions: "Automobile trips that can be safely replaced by walking or bicycling offer the first target for increased physical activity in communities." (AMA Journal, October 1999)

Save Money. Did you know you work an entire day each week just to pay for your car? It costs $5,000 to $10,000 annually to own, operate and maintain an automobile. Households spend about 20% of their budget on transportation.

And how much is your time worth to you? The average driver spends an hour a day behind the wheel. If you were bicycling, you would be getting exercise at the same time you were getting to work and saving money!

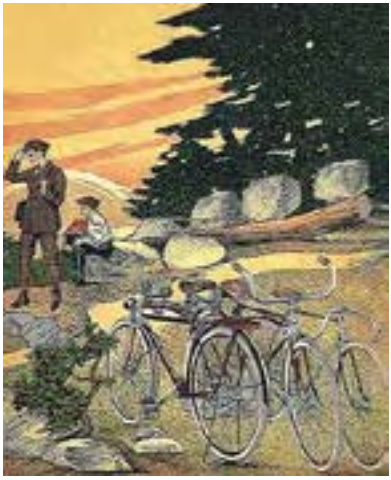
Avoid Congestion. Ever find yourself sitting in traffic, wishing you were somewhere else? On a bicycle, you can travel on secondary roads and paths, often arriving in less time than if you'd driven through rush-hour traffic! And you can usually park your bicycle quickly and close to your destination.

Freshen the Air. Automobiles are one of the largest sources of air pollution. More than 40% of trips by car are less than 2 miles in length. These short trips are up to 3 times more polluting than long trips. Those trips are also perfect biking distance! An average 4-mile bike commute keeps about 15 pounds of pollutants out of the air, so you can feel good about doing your part for the environment.

Save More Money. If the real taxpayer subsidy of autos were reflected in fuel taxes, a gallon of gasoline might cost as much as $15. That's because our other taxes cover the costs of road building, maintenance, parking spaces, police services and losses from crashes, pollution and congestion. If more commuters bicycled, these costs would go down; all taxpayers (businesses and private citizens) would save money.

Getting Started

Now that you've decided to give bicycle commuting a try, here is a quick reference of the key elements to get you on the road.



How Far & How Long?

Base your decision on how far to bike on your experience, confidence and abilities.

Distance

Typically, 3-5 miles is an ideal distance for bicycle commuting. Some seasoned riders go much farther.

Time

Riding 10 miles per hour won't break a major sweat (except in summer), and you can cover 3 miles in less than 20 minutes. You might be able to average 12-15 miles per hour, and if conditions (and your fitness!) are right, average speeds over 15 miles per hours are possible.

What should I wear while biking?

Afraid of spandex? Here's some help:

- Your clothing should be comfortable and should not get caught in your bike. For short commutes, regular clothing is adequate—just be sure to strap your right pant cuff to keep it from getting caught in the bike chain, or get a bike with a chain guard.
- For longer trips, many prefer to wear clothing specifically designed for bicycling such as shorts, tights and jerseys. Experiment with what works for you and invest in quality pieces over time.
- You will need special clothing for riding in cold weather or rain.
- The most important part of your bicycling attire is a properly fitting helmet. Helmets can prevent head injuries, so wear one every time you ride. Your local bike shop will be glad to help you find one that's right for you.

- Shield your eyes from bright sunlight, road debris, wind and insects by wearing sunglasses.
- Gloves can make your riding more comfortable and protect your hands.

Ideal Bikes for Commuting

Just about any bike in good condition will be suitable for bicycle commuting, depending on your personal needs.

- Mountain bikes have fatter tires and endure rough streets, but they are heavier and don't make for the fastest commute.
- Road bikes are the fastest, but the dropped handlebars may be uncomfortable for novices, and high-pressure tires are unsuitable for some city streets and greenways.
- Hybrids are similar to mountain bikes but have tires and gears suited for city streets.
- Cruiser or city bikes are often simple, one-speed bikes that work great for short trips. There are multi-speed cruisers available so you can deal with our region's topography!

Does Your Bike Fit?

You have to be comfortable on your bike. Getting the right fit depends on many things including your height, weight and riding style. You should contact your neighborhood bicycle store to help you find the right fit. As a general rule for road bicycles, you should have 1-2 inches of clearance between the top tube and your crotch as you stand astride the bike. For mountain or hybrid bikes, there should be 3-4 inches.

Seat Height: A seat that's too low will strain your knees and Achilles tendons, while a seat that's too high will make it hard for you to pedal and put your foot onto the ground. Here are some ways to get the right seat height for most riding:

- Sit on your bike and push one pedal all the way down. Put the ball of your foot on the pedal. If your seat's high enough, your knee should be just slightly bent.
- Don't raise your seat so high that less than two inches of your seat post extends into the frame.

Handlebars: After you've set your seat height, set your handlebars so you feel comfortable. Some things to guide you:

- Start by raising or lowering your handlebars so they block your view of the front axle when you're sitting on your bike with your hands on the handlebars. In this position, your elbows should be slightly bent (not locked).

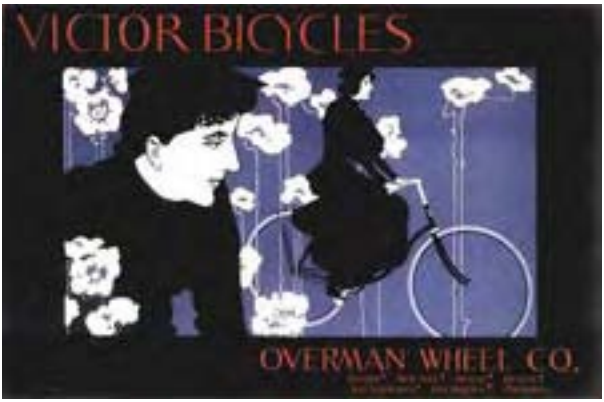
- Lower-back pain often means the handlebars are too far away, while upper-arm or shoulder fatigue often means the handlebars are too close to you. Try raising or lowering the handlebars, or moving your seat forward or backward. You can also change to a shorter or longer handlebar stem.

Seat Tilt: In genreal, it's best to keep your seat level. Try different angles until you feel comfortable.

Saddle Soreness: If you haven't bicycled in a while, you may be sore at first. Chafing or soreness should go away with time. If it doesn't, the first thing to check is the seat adjustment. If adjustment doesn't help, try alternatives: a gel-filled saddle or saddle pad; a wider or differently shaped saddle; one with springs; or one made specifically for women or men. Special padded bicycling shorts can also help.

Inspecting Your Bike

Regardless of what kind of bike you're riding, take a few minutes to do a quick safety check to give you more riding confidence.



Brakes

While standing next to your bike, push your bike forward while squeezing each brake lever individually to be sure they are capable of locking up the wheel. Inspect pads for wear; replace if there is less than ¼" of pad left. Check brake lever travel; there should be at least 1" between bar and lever when applied.

Wheels

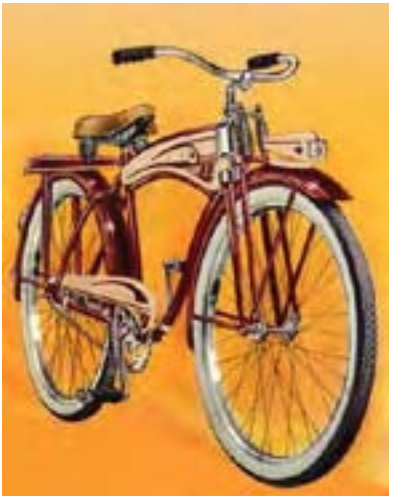
Wheel nuts and quick release levers need to be tight, and the wheel should not wobble. Check for loose or broken spokes. Lift each end of your bike, spin the wheel to ensure your brakes do not rub the tire.

Air

Check your tires for the manufacturer's recommended air pressure at least once a week. Use a pressure gauge to ensure proper pressure, and a hand pump to avoid over-inflation. Check for damage to tire tread and sidewall; replace if damaged.

Handlebars

Make sure your handlebars can't move side-to-side when you are holding the front tire still.



Pedals and Cranks

Your pedals should be securely attached to the crank arms. Check for loose bearings by trying to wobble a crank arm side-to-side.

Gears

Gear cables should slide easily and should not be frayed or rusty.

Chain

Be sure to lubricate your chain regularly, especially if you have been riding on wet streets or in the rain. Check your chain for wear. If your chain skips on your cassette, you might need an adjustment or a new chain.

Reflectors and Lights

Ensure that all reflectors are clean and properly aligned.

Before a Long Ride

Take a quick ride to check if derailleurs and brakes are working properly; inspect the bike for loose or broken parts, and tighten, replace or fix them; pay extra attention to your bike during the first few miles of the ride.

Be Sure

Take your bike to a shop once a year for routine maintenance.

Basic Equipment

A few simple pieces of equipment can help make your commute a whole lot easier —and safer. Here's what we recommend:

Carrying Rack or Basket is essential for carrying items such as clothes, briefcases, books, etc. Panniers (saddlebags for bicycles), bungee cords, folding wire baskets and plastic milk crates can all help you increase your carrying capacity.

Basic Repair Kit should include a spare tube or patch kit, tire levers, air pump and allen wrenches (or a multi-tool). Latex gloves can keep your hands clean while making small repairs.

Fenders will help keep you clean and dry. Even if it's not raining you can get dirty from mud and moisture on the road.

Lights are a must if you are going to be riding at dawn, dusk or after dark. You are required by law to use a white light in front and a red rear reflector. Red strobe lights are also effective as a supplement to your rear reflector. (See page 24 for more information.)

Lock will help prevent your bike from being stolen. In general, the more expensive your bike, the more you'll want to spend on a lock.

Water Bottle

On rides of any length you'll need to replace lost fluids. Mount a water bottle cage (or two) on your bike frame and put a bottle in before you ride.

Repairs

You can minimize your risk of flats by buying puncture-proof tires and tubes, or using tire liners. Also monitor brake wear to make sure the pads aren't rubbing against the sidewalls of your tires. But sooner or later, you'll get a flat. The easiest way to deal with a flat is to carry an extra tube with you. Practice removing your wheel, taking the tire off and changing the tube at home, where you're warm, dry and relaxed. To fix a flat with glue and a patch takes a little longer than replacing the tube. For other repairs and maintenance, read a how-to book, take a basic repair class (sometimes offered at bike shops), or ask an experienced cyclist for tips.

Helmets

Besides your bike, a helmet that fits is your most important piece of bicycle commuting equipment. It's a fact: About 1,000 American bicyclists die in crashes each year, and around 75% of those fatalities are from head injuries. Hundreds more suffer permanent brain damage. Using a helmet can reduce the chance and severity of injury and may even save your life.

Rating: Look on the inside of the helmet. You should see a sticker from one of the following organizations meaning the helmet is designed to meet stringent crash safety standards:

- The Snell Foundation
- ASTM, F1447 certification

Fit: You must have a good fit. Most brands of adult helmets come in two or three sizes, and you make them fit by adjusting the chin strap and putting foam pads around the inside. If the helmet fails these, adjust the straps, put in bigger pads or try another size or brand. Don't wear your helmet tilted back. It won't protect your skull in a frontal impact. Check for fit with these tips:

- The helmet sits level on your head, not tilted back.
- You can't easily shift the helmet to the front, back, or sides of your head.
- With the strap tight, you can't possibly get the helmet off.

When to replace: Helmets are designed to withstand one crash only. Structural damage is not always visible, so always replace a helmet that has been in a crash. Helmets should be replaced every five years because the foam core loses its ability to protect your head.

Ventilation: A helmet's ventilation depends on front-to-back airflow. Good airflow comes from long, wide air vents, and air passages between the vents.

Park and Lock It!

Never leave your bike unlocked even if you're leaving it for only half a minute. A thief can grab your bike in seconds. Lock your bike to something that's not easy for a thief to take. You may also wish to lock up (or take with you) any easily removable components like your wheels and seat. Lock to a bicycle rack, a parking meter or metal fence post. Don't lock to another bike, a door handle or small tree. Depending on building security and the value of your bike, you may even want to lock it if you park it inside.

U Locks: Make sure you buy a strong steel-alloy lock. If the manufacturer offers a warranty or insurance, register the lock and write down the lock's serial number and when you bought it. For added protection, get one or more U-lock cuffs; they can keep thieves from using a lever to pry open your lock. One drawback to U locks: you can't lock up to thick objects such as street lights; for these, carry a thick cable.

Padlocks & Chains: The thicker, the better; chain links and lock clasps should be at least 3/8 of an inch thick. Look for locks and chains that are case-hardened, a process that makes them harder to cut.

Cables: Some cables are actually harder to cut than chains, because they don't snap and thieves can't pry them open. Use a cable at least 3/8 of an inch thick with a lock as thick, or thicker.

Visibility: Park in open areas where many people pass by and your bicycle can be seen easily. Thieves usually don't like an audience.

Parking Meters are okay if you are using a U-lock. Never lock to a meter with only a chain or cable. A thief will slide your bike over the top.

Trees are nature's bike rack. The bigger the tree, the better. They even provide protection from the elements! Just be gentle with the bark.

Indoors: A good way to avoid theft and protect your bike from the elements. Check with your employer and see what arrangements you can make. Is there an empty office, extra cranny in the hallway or a storage room where a bike or two could be stashed?

Dress for Success

Most commuters place a high emphasis on starting their workday clean, fresh and dressed appropriately for their jobs. For bicycle commuters, this may involve some advance planning, but most agree that the mental clarity and relaxation that comes from starting the work day on a bicycle is worth the extra effort. You can handle the appropriate dress issue in three ways:

1. Ride in your work clothes. Depending on the weather and the length of your commute, you may be able to simply wear your work clothes on your bike. You don't have to arrive at work all sweaty; just ride at a relaxed pace and let the cool morning air refresh you.

2. Wear cycling clothes and carry your work clothes. For longer commutes or more extreme temperatures, it can be more practical to change once you get to work. Rolling work clothes, rather than folding them, will help prevent wrinkles.

3. Store a week's worth of clothing at the office. What about driving or riding the bus in one day a week and bringing a few changes of clothing along with you? Talk to your employer if you need hooks, closet or drawer space for storing clothing.

TIPS FOR RIDING IN CYCLING CLOTHES

The layered look. Wear, or carry, layers of clothing, including a lightweight, windproof outer layer. By adding or subtracting layers, you can keep your body temperature constant, and adjust to changes in the weather.

Be cool. If you dress so that you are warm before you even start riding, you will get too hot during your ride.

Be comfy. Specialized clothing, such as padded cycling shorts and gloves, can increase your comfort level on longer rides, but are not absolutely necessary.

Get noticed. Wear bright clothing to be more visible to motorists.

TIPS FOR RIDING IN WORK CLOTHES

Pants. Use an ankle strap or tuck your pants into your sock on the right side so they don't get greasy or caught in the chain.

Skirts. Make sure the skirt is full enough to pedal but not so much that it will catch in the chain. Or wear a short skirt with bicycle shorts underneath.

Shoes. You need flat, comfortable shoes for bicycling. Consider carrying dress shoes with you, or storing them at work.

Cleaning up at Work

Many bicycle commuters find that a quick sponge bath is all they need to feel refreshed, especially if they ride to work early in the morning.

Here are a few tips for freshening up:

- Allow yourself a few minutes of cool-down time before changing.
- Keep a fresh towel, washcloth and other toiletries for quick clean-ups at the office.
- Use talcum powder to help absorb moisture and odors.
- If you really need a shower, consider joining a health club nearby or see if a neighboring business has an available shower.

Getting There

You've checked your bike, customized it for your needs, packed your clothes for work and are decked out in some new threads—you're ready to roll. If you don't know what route to take, map out your commute and see what options are available. Look for roads with wide shoulders, wide curb lanes or bike lanes so there is enough room for cars and bicycles to share the road easily. Roads with center turn lanes can also help motorists get around you.

Explore. A leisurely ride through a new neighborhood on weekends or in the evening will reveal alternate roads that may be perfect for your commute. You may find a route you like better or one that will allow you to do some errands during your ride.

Advice. Charlottesville has a Bicycle Mentor Program that can help you with route planning and other topics to get you started. Call ACCT or visit their website for information or to sign up.

Practice. The more comfortable you are riding in traffic, the more routes you will have available to you. Practice your safety skills and riding habits when you are not in a hurry so you will be ready to use them when needed.

Traffic Basics

Although bicyclists legally have the same rights and responsibilities as motorists on the roads, bicyclists are much less visible and need to ride defensively. Most veteran bicyclists recommend assuming that drivers do not see you at all while you are riding.

Obey all traffic laws, signs and signals just as you would if you were driving a car. Obeying the law is your first defense against crashes, and is the best way to gain respect from other road users.

Be predictable. Signal your turns; stop as required by law; use the correct lane; communicate with other road users so they'll know what you're doing and where you're going.

Be Visible. Wear bright colors in the daytime; use reflective materials and lights at night. Don't hide from traffic.

Ride in the direction of traffic only. Motorists in intersections and driveways do not expect you to be coming the wrong way on the road. In addition, you have less time to maneuver in traffic, and your chances of having a head-on crash are much greater. Wrong-way riding is also illegal, even in bike lanes.

Distance. Don't ride between lines of cars. Ride at least three feet from parked cars to avoid being hit by an opening door.

Scan the road ahead. At intersections, watch for turning cars and pedestrians. Between intersections, watch for cars pulling out of driveways, alleys and parking spaces. Yield the right of way to pedestrians in crosswalks.

Cross railroad tracks, storm grates or pavement cracks as close to a right angle as possible. Your wheel can get caught and dump you on your head. Check behind you, then swing out slightly into the lane if you need to cross at a better angle.

Bicycling on sidewalks is not recommended except for children. Motorists are not looking for or expecting bicyclists on a sidewalk, which creates dangerous situations every time you cross a driveway or intersection. Many people assume riding on sidewalks is safer than on the road, but studies show that to be false. (Riding on sidewalks is permitted, however, pedestrians have the right of way. Bicyclists must give audible warnings and pass pedestrians with care. Ride slowly on sidewalks and watch carefully as you approach driveways or intersections.)

Lane Positioning

Virginia law requires bicyclists to ride as far to the right as is practicable, except when passing a vehicle, preparing for a left turn, and avoiding hazardous conditions in the roadway.

Stay far enough away from the curb to avoid hazards. You are safer riding in a lane of traffic than in the gutter. You

need room to maneuver if a pothole, bottle or other debris appears in your path. And you are more visible when you ride where drivers expect to see a vehicle. Also be sure to stay a few feet from parked cars to avoid getting hit if someone opens their car door.

Ride where cars on side streets and driveways can see you. If you ride too far to the right, you may be blocked from their view by a parked car. You are also more visible to cars behind you if you are in the line of traffic.

Do not weave in and out between parked cars. Drivers behind you may not see you, and you may be cut off if you cannot get out from behind a parked car due to heavy traffic.

Take the lane. When it is too narrow to safely share with cars, when approaching an intersection, or when traveling at the same speed as traffic, ride farther out into the lane so that you don't get squeezed into a dangerous situation.

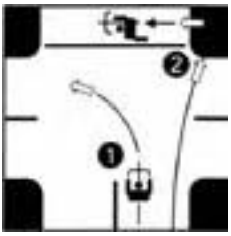
In extra-wide lanes: don't ride all the way to the right. Again, you will be more visible if you ride three to four feet to the right of traffic. Right-turning cars and motorists pulling out of side streets and driveways will also be more likely to see you.

Turns & Other Maneuvers

The key to safety is predictability. For the most part, you want to turn, pass and change lanes just as you would in your car.

To change lanes, look behind you for traffic and signal first. Traffic in the lane you want to move into has the right of way. Look back and wait for an opening before moving over. Start looking for an opportunity to get into the correct lane at least one block before the intersection.

Use the correct lane for your destination. Go straight in a through lane, not a right-turn-only lane. Other drivers expect all the vehicles in that lane to be turning right.



Left Turns: For bicyclists, there are two ways to make a left turn:
1) Like an auto: look back for traffic, signal and move into the left-turn lane, and turn left.
2) Like a pedestrian: ride straight to the far-side crosswalk, then walk your bike across, or queue up in the traffic lane.

Pass cars and buses on the left, with at least three feet of clearance. That is where other vehicles expect faster traffic to be. Passing on the right could get you squeezed against the curb if the car or bus pulls over, opens its doors or makes a right turn.

Signal your lane changes and turns so that drivers and other cyclists know what to expect.

Riding on Greenways

Greenways, or shared-use paths, are popular and can provide great alternatives to busy roads. The Rivanna River Greenbelt Trail in Riverview Park is the first section of our City's planned trail system. Some greenways are along creeks and others are adjacent to roadways.

Many people assume they are safer riding on greenways than sharing the road with motor vehicles. Bicyclists need to be aware that there are safety issues on greenways as well. Bicyclists will be sharing the greenway with other cyclists (going both directions), joggers, people walking their dogs, small children and skaters. Collisions between these different users can occur and can be serious. Bicyclists should stay to the right and pass on the left. Be respectful of others and give audible warnings before passing. Slow down to pass. Watch out for young children and pets, because they can be unpredictable.

Sidepaths are greenways that are adjacent to roadways. Bicyclists using these facilities have an added danger to deal with—traffic. Bicyclists need to be aware of possible motor vehicle traffic crossing the path at driveways and other intersections. Bicyclists also need to be careful when they reach the end of the greenway and merge back into traffic on the road. Most sidepaths are built only on one side of the road but bicyclists use them to travel in both directions. This results in potential danger at intersections where motorists aren't expecting bicyclists to be traveling against the flow of traffic and may cut you off or turn in front of you. Ride defensively and always be aware that motorists may not see you.

Defensive Riding

Knowing and following the rules of the road is not enough to keep you from being involved in a crash. Unfortunately, there are drivers who do not know, understand or follow the rules. Knowing what other drivers do wrong and watching for their mistakes can help you reduce your chances of being in a crash.

Motorist turns left in front of bicyclist going straight
Watch cars at intersections carefully. Make eye contact with drivers. Be visible. Be prepared to stop or make an emergency turn if necessary. Also be aware of oncoming cars that may turn left into a driveway or other access point.

Motorist turns right in front of bicyclist going straight
Be alert for drivers speeding up then slowing down as they pass you. Do not pass cars on the right near intersections; you will be in the driver's blind spot. Do not rely on other drivers' turn signals.

Motorist pulls out in front of cyclist
Motorists pulling out of parking spaces, cross streets and driveways may not always yield to cyclists. Proper lane position and careful scanning will help you avoid these situations. If you ride on sidewalks, be extra alert when crossing driveways and intersections. Most drivers do not expect bicyclists on sidewalks.

Dealing with hostile motorists
If harassed by a motorist, try to keep your cool and remember that your safety is the priority. You will rarely convince an irate motorist to share the road, and you don't want to provoke a person unstable enough to harass you in the first place. Your best bet is to develop your riding skills, know your rights and ride legally. Vent to a biker friend or mentor if you need to. ACCT keeps an informal record of self-reported incidents - call or email them (295.6554, info@transportationchoice.org) and ask to fill out a 'Safe Streets' form. And of course, call the police (977-9041) if you need to.

Light Up!

Only 3% of bike rides happen at night, but over 50% of all cyclists killed get hit while riding at night without lights. At night, Tennessee law requires a white front light visible from 500 feet, and a red rear reflector visible from 50 to 300 feet. That's not much; you can see a car's headlights from 3,000 feet, and that's what most motorists look for. Under bright streetlights you need bike lights to be seen, not to see. And because your upper body is at eye level, it's important to wear bright clothing at night.

Headlight: Get the most powerful one you can afford. A handlebar-mounted light makes you visible to others, and shows you where you're going. If you are riding where there aren't street lights, you'll need a strong headlight. Lights with rechargeable battery packs are great and there are also hub lighting systems powered by you!

Rear Light: A red light effectively supplements your legally required reflector to help approaching traffic see you. Many cyclists use flashing red lights.

Rear Reflectors: Big is best; get one at least three inches wide, make sure it's pointed straight back and not up or down. Reflectors work only if they're clean, so remember to wipe them off!

Reflective Tape: Use on your bike frame or helmet. Use white or yellow in front, yellow or red in back.

Reflective Safety Vest: Good for cycling in dark clothes or if your rear light goes out.

Jacket: Bright color, reflective piping in back.

Riding in Rain

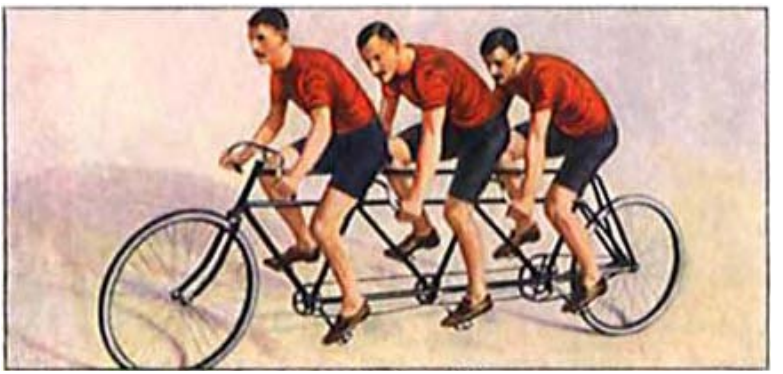
Wet Streets. Wet streets can be hazardous. Watch out for railroad tracks, sewer and manhole covers, painted pavement, and leaves—all are slippery when wet. Don't brake or turn suddenly on them.

Puddles. Don't ride through a puddle if you can't see the bottom. It could be a pothole that could make you crash or dent your wheel.

Start of Rain. Be careful when it starts raining. Oil and anti-freeze cause streets to be slick. Turn slower and with less lean.

Slow Down: Remember that motorists and cyclists can't see as well in rain or snow. And it takes longer to stop, so to be safe, go slower than normal.

Braking: When brake pads are wet they take up to ten times longer to work. Dry them by applying your brakes far ahead of where you want to slow down, causing your pads to wipe the rims. To dry them faster, pump the brakes by applying them, then letting go, over and over.



Dressing For Cold & Wet

People who bicycle in the cold and rain aren't nuts; they're just dressed right. Here are some tips:

Rain

Rain gear comes in two types —breathable and non-breathable. Non-breathable fabric can cause you to overheat and sweat, but breathable fabrics can also cause overheating during vigorous rides. Ventilation is a main key. Look for large pit-zips in the jacket to allow perspiration to evaporate. Rain pants should be long enough to cover the top of your shoes to help keep feet dry. The cuffs of the pants should cinch to prevent them getting caught in the chainrings.

Cold

For cold weather, remember to layer. If you are warm when you start cycling, you are overdressed. Cycling creates a lot of heat and you warm up after just a few minutes of riding. Use a thin, wicking layer against your skin, and then an insulating layer. If necessary, a rain or wind jacket can make up the third layer. Make sure the jacket has full front zippers and/or pit-zips for ventilation. Ear warmers and head coverings make cold weather cycling more enjoyable — but make sure to adjust your helmet if necessary. Gloves are essential and need to be wind proof. For cold and wet weather, avoid cotton clothing, which loses its ability to insulate when wet.

Bikes and Transit

Take Your Bike on the Bus

CTS buses have bicycle racks. The racks are mounted on the front of the vehicles, with space for two bikes, and are designed for easy loading and unloading. The rack is positioned for all bikers to load their bikes from the curbside of the street. Always communicate with drivers before loading and unloading your bike. For information on how to use the racks call CTS at 970-3649 or check their website at www.charlottesville.org/transit.

1. Simply grab the bar on the front of the bike rack and pull down to unfold it.

2. Lift bike onto the rack, fitting the tires where indicated with marks for front wheels. Use inside slot first.

3. Pull support arm out and up over the front tire to secure it in place. Use your bicycle lock now to secure your bike to the rack.

Commute Options

So, you live a long way from work. How about biking to a bus stop? You can take your bike with you on the bus. You could also bike one way and take the bus the other direction. This can help you avoid steep hills and extreme temperatures or sudden storms.

The Top Ten Excuses

10. I need my car for work.
Many errands could be handled equally well if not better on a bike. Your company might benefit from a more environmentally friendly image if you conducted your business by bike. Many traditional tasks adapt well to cycling, including police work, meter reading and postal delivery. Or see if there is a company car that you could use for those work trips.

9. Bicycling would take too long.
You'd be surprised! Because of traffic in urban areas, cycling generally takes less time than driving for distances of three miles or less, and about the same time for trips of three to five miles. But even if your commute is longer, 30 extra minutes of sleep won't be nearly as invigorating as an early morning ride. You'll arrive at work alert and refreshed.

Likewise, your evening ride home should leave you more relaxed since you won't face the aggravation of sitting in rush-hour traffic. You won't have to rush off to the gym because you've already done your workout. And don't forget your savings of time, money and the environment when you eliminate visits to the gas pump.

8. I'm out of shape.
If you leave yourself plenty of time and go at an easy pace, you'll find cycling no more difficult than walking. As you ride more, you'll ease your way into better shape, building fitness that is an integral part of your schedule. If you have health problems, consult your family doctor for suggestions on getting started.

7. I can't afford a special commuting bicycle.
You don't need a special bike. Most any bike can work if properly adjusted and maintained, and old bikes are less attractive to thieves. If you have a recreational bicycle you can outfit it with a lightweight rack and bag, or use a fanny pack to carry necessary commute items. With the fixed cost of operating an automobile at around $0.35/mile, the money you would save commuting by bicycle on an average 10-mile round trip would buy you a $400 bicycle in 6 months time.

6. I have to dress nice for work.

Some bicycle commuters simply ride in their business clothes, while most ride in casual or cycling clothes and change at the office. You can carry your change of clothes in a pack or in panniers on the bike, or even transport them back and forth on days when you don't ride.

5. There's no secure place for my bike.

There is probably a storage room or closet where your bike can be secured behind a locked door. Maybe you can even take it to your office. Parking could be available in nearby buildings or garages. Otherwise, fasten it to an immovable object with a U-lock, preferably in a visible location. There is a bicycle parking program — go to www.knoxtrans.org or call 215-3815.

4. I can't shower at work.

Depending on the weather, you may not need a shower if you ride at a leisurely pace. If you do, take a washcloth, soap, towel and deodorant and clean up at the restroom sink. Or look for a public facility or health club within walking distance of your workplace where you can shower. You may be able to get a cheap rate for shower privileges only.

3. It's rainy or cold.

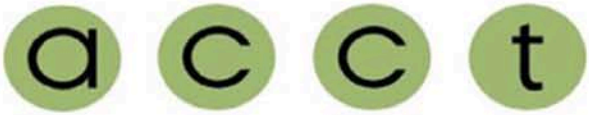
Start as a fair weather bicycle commuter—when the forecast is bad, don't bike. If you only ride when the weather report is favorable, it will still make a dramatic improvement. The more you bike, the more you'll look forward to your daily ride and miss it when you drive or take the bus. You'll probably decide to invest in rainwear and cold weather gear so you can commute every day!

2. I'd have to ride in the dark.

Wear light colored reflective clothing, use a good lighting system and choose a route that avoids major roads. There are a variety of bike lights that can help you see and be seen.

1. It's not safe to ride in traffic.

The fear of riding in traffic is often much greater than the actual danger. Minimize risk by riding properly — visibly and predictably. In stop-and-go traffic, a fit cyclist can generally keep up with the traffic flow, so it's acceptable to maintain your place in the roadway. Hugging the curb invites danger as cars try to squeeze past you. To help prevent injury, always wear a helmet. You can also reduce the risk of riding in traffic by using less-congested secondary roads. You will often have to travel farther and have more stops, but you may enjoy the ride more.



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