

Rules of the Road

Travel on public roadways is controlled by signs, signals, pavement markings, and driving laws. No matter what vehicle you drive or what road you drive on, you *must* obey these “rules of the road.”

You must learn how to drive properly on:

- Streets, roads, alleys, and avenues
- Traffic rotaries (circles)
- Highways, expressways, and freeways

You must also learn how to drive safely at:

- Special crossings
- Intersections
- Traffic hazards



Rules for Pedestrians



See *Appendix E* for color images of these signs.

Pedestrians must remember the following rules:

- State law requires you to use a crosswalk when one is available. If an intersection has a traffic signal, press the button and wait for the **WALK** signal. Intersections with no push buttons automatically give **WALK** signals. Be patient!
- Do not cross if the signal says **DON'T WALK**.
- Before you cross a roadway, stop at the curb, look left, look right, and look left again for traffic. Do this even on a one-way street. Be alert while crossing. Be especially alert at intersections that allow motor vehicles to turn right on red.
- If you must enter the street from between parked cars, stop and look before crossing.
- You must use a sidewalk when one is available. When no sidewalk is available, you should walk on the shoulder **facing** traffic.
- Never walk along or across expressways, interstate highways, or turnpikes.
- Wear clothing with bright colors or reflective strips, especially at night.

Laws for Bicyclists and Motorists in the Presence of Bicyclists (as amended by Chapter 525 of the Acts of 2008)

Bicyclists have the right to use all public ways in this state except limited access or express state highways where signs specifically prohibiting bicycles have been posted. When riding on public ways, bicyclists must obey the same basic traffic laws and regulations that apply to motor vehicle operators. The rules for bicycles (including amendments) are listed here.

As a bicyclist: (from Chap. 85, Section 11B)

- You can use the **full lane** anywhere, anytime, and on any street (except limited access or express state highways where signs specifically prohibiting bicycles have been posted), even if there is a bike lane.
- You must bike in the same direction as traffic unless otherwise indicated by signs or markings.
- You must stop at red lights and stop signs.
- You can keep to the right when passing a motor vehicle moving in the travel lane and you can move to the front of an intersection at stop lights.
- You must signal your intent by either hand to stop or turn. However, the signal does not have to be continuous or be made at all if both hands are needed for the bicycle's safe operation.

- You can ride on sidewalks outside of business districts for safety unless banned locally.
- If on the sidewalk, you must yield to pedestrians and give an audible signal before overtaking or passing (no sirens or whistles).
- No more than two bicycles can be operated side-by-side. On a roadway with more than one lane in the direction of travel, bicyclists riding side-by-side must stay in one lane and not unnecessarily restrict a passing vehicle's ability to overtake you.
- You must maintain a safe distance from other bicyclists, especially when approaching intersections.
- You must slow down when approaching crosswalks, especially during heavy traffic.
- You must ride on or astride a permanent seat affixed to the bicycle. A passenger must also ride on a permanent seat attached to the bicycle or to a trailer towed by the bicycle.
- You cannot transport a person who is between one and four years old or who weighs 40 lbs. or less except in a "baby seat" attached to the bicycle. The person must be in a harness, be seated in an upright position, and their hands and feet must be protected from hitting the wheel spokes. A person can ride on or astride a seat on a tandem bicycle if the person can reach the pedals and handlebars. You cannot transport a child under the age of one year on a bicycle.
- A bicycle helmet approved by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission must be worn by a bicycle operator or passenger under 16 years old. It must be secured to the person's head when the bicycle is operated on a public way or bicycle path, unless the passenger is secured in an enclosed trailer which protects his/her head.
- You must give an audible warning (other than a siren or whistle) when necessary to ensure safe operation.
- You can park your bicycle on a way or a sidewalk, but only if it does not obstruct vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
- You cannot let the bicycle be pulled by another vehicle and can only tow a bicycle trailer.
- You cannot carry any objects that would interfere with the safe operation of the bicycle and must keep one hand on the handlebars at all times.
- You must have a proper working brake system to stop from 15 MPH within 30 feet.
- From a half hour after sunset to a half hour before sunrise, you must have a white lamp in front visible from up to 500 feet and a rear facing red light or reflector visible up to 600 feet.
- From a half hour after sunset to a half hour before sunrise, you must have a reflector on each pedal or your ankles, or reflective material on yourself or on the bicycle. The reflectors must be visible up to 600 feet from all sides.
- Your handlebars cannot be set at a height above your shoulders while gripping them and you cannot extend the fork from its original manufacturer's design.
- You must report any crash involving personal injury and any crash involving property damage in excess of \$100 to the police in the municipality where it occurred.

In addition to the laws listed above, bicyclists should also do the following:

- Ride in a straight line so drivers and pedestrians know where to expect you.

- Ride at appropriate speeds on shared paths and streets. If riding on a sidewalk where it is legal, you must ride at a walking speed and yield to pedestrians.
- Put your phone away when biking. Do not text and bike.
- Yield to pedestrians. Be alert and prepared to stop for them.
- Slow down as you approach crosswalks.
- Ride outside of the "door zone" (at least three feet from parked cars) and watch for opening car doors.
- Give other bicyclists room. Pass other bicyclists on the left, not the right. Don't cut in front of other bicyclists who are stopped at an intersection.
- At intersections, assume drivers cannot see you. Slow down and try to make eye contact with the driver. Anticipate when drivers may turn. Don't try to race by a driver at an intersection. Maintain a safe speed.
- Give buses, trucks, and other large vehicles room and avoid riding next to them or passing them. They make wide turns, take time to come to a full stop, and have large blind spots. Be especially careful in the rear blind spot and don't assume the driver can see you. Never pass a moving tractor trailer on the right.
- Don't pass buses on the right. You might hit someone exiting the bus or get squeezed into the curb. If passing a bus on the left, pay attention and expect it to re-enter the lane.
- Do not wear headphones or earbuds in both ears while biking.

As a motorist in the presence of bicycles:

- **Do Not Cut-Off After Passing:** When passing a bicycle traveling in the same direction that is on your right, you must not return to the right until you have safely passed the overtaken bicycle. (Chap. 89, Sec. 2)
- **Do Not Make an Abrupt Turn After Passing:** When passing a bicycle near an intersection or driveway where you want to turn right, you cannot turn unless you are at a safe distance from the bicyclist and you can make the turn at a reasonable and proper speed. (Chap. 90, Sec 14)
- **Do Not Squeeze Bicycles in a Narrow Lane:** If a lane is too narrow to pass a bicycle at a safe distance, be **PATIENT** until you can safely use an adjacent lane or **WAIT** until it is safe to pass in the lane you share. (Chap. 89, Sec. 2) You should stay at least three feet away when passing.
- **Do Not Fail to Yield When Turning Left:** When turning left at an intersection or into an alley, private road, or driveway, you must yield the right of way to a vehicle approaching from the opposite direction, including a bicycle, if it is in the intersection or close enough to be an immediate hazard. (Chap. 90, Sec 14)
- **Watch for Bicycles on Your Right:** Bicycles can legally ride to the right of motor vehicle traffic. The law says it is not a defense for a motorist causing a crash with a bicycle that the bicycle was to the right of other traffic. (Chap. 85, Sec 11B)
- **Do Not Open a Door Without First Looking:** Drivers and passengers can be fined up to \$100 for opening a vehicle door into an oncoming bicycle. (Chap. 90, Sec 14) Before opening your door, you should always check behind you to make sure that no bicyclists are approaching.

- **Be aware that bicyclists can ride two bicycles side-by-side.** However, on a road with more than one lane in the direction of travel, they must stay in one lane. (Chap. 85, Sec. 11B)
- **Be aware that bicyclists Do Not Always Have to Signal Turns!** Bicyclists must signal their intent by either hand to stop or turn. However, the signal does not have to be continuous or be made at all if both hands are needed for the bicycle's safe operation. (Chap. 85, Sec. 11B)



See *Appendix E* for color images of these signs.

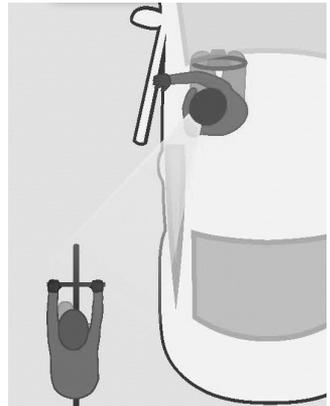
About 75% of bicycle-related deaths and disabling injuries could have been prevented if riders wore a proper bicycle helmet.

The Danger of Open Doors to Bicyclists

Open vehicle doors pose a very serious threat to bicyclists. When opening a vehicle door, drivers and passengers are suggested to do the following:

1. Check your rear-view mirror.
2. Check your side-view mirror.
3. Open the door with your far hand (the hand farther from the door).

This is called the "Dutch Reach" method because it originated in the Netherlands. It forces your body to turn, which will better allow you to see approaching bicyclists. It also prevents the vehicle door from being opened too fast. This not only protects bicyclists, but can also prevent your door from being damaged or torn off by an approaching motor vehicle.



The "Dutch Reach" method for opening vehicle doors.

Bicyclists should ride at least three feet from parked cars to avoid doors, both on streets with and without bike lanes. This will keep bicyclists outside of the "door zone" and protect them from getting hit by opening vehicle doors.

Bicycle Boxes

Bicycle boxes are pavement markings that are installed at intersections to allow bicyclists a safe way to turn when approaching a red light. Bicycle boxes are green and have an image of a bicyclist. At intersections, they are painted on the pavement before the crosswalk and they cover the entire travel lane.

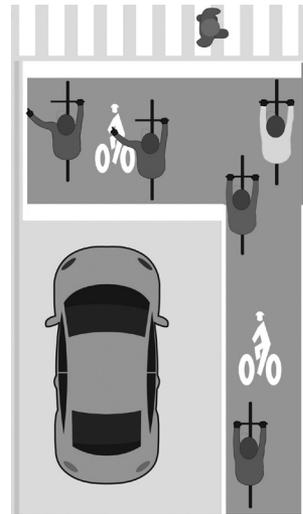
Drivers must stop behind the bicycle box (even when it's empty) and wait for a green light.

Bicyclists who are turning left should stop in the bicycle box, move to the left side of the box, signal the turn, and wait for the green light. Bicyclists traveling straight or turning right should stay to the right in the bicycle box, in a staggered formation, and wait for the green light.

Bicycle boxes can also be used by bicyclists to make a two-stage left turn. A two-stage left turn allows bicyclists to make a left turn in two separate steps, rather than crossing multiple lanes of traffic:

Step 1: Cross straight through the intersection on the green light and stop in the bicycle box for the road you are turning onto.

Step 2: Wait for the green light and go straight through the intersection.



Example of a bicycle box

Separated Bicycle Lanes

Separated bicycle lanes, also known as cycle tracks and protected bike lanes, physically separate bicycle traffic from vehicular traffic. Where bicycle lanes cross an intersection, they are indicated by green pavement throughout the intersection with an image of a bicyclist. Bicycle lanes are not intended for pedestrians, who must stay on the sidewalk.

At intersections, drivers must stop at the stop line to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to cross safely. When turning right, drivers must yield to pedestrians and bicyclists who are crossing.

Bicyclists must ride in the proper direction on bicycle lanes. At intersections, bicyclists must ride in the lane through the intersection, while watching for turning vehicles. Bicyclists must yield to crossing pedestrians.

Some of the text and images in the "Laws for Bicyclists and Motorists in the Presence of Bicyclists" section provided courtesy of the City of Cambridge. For more information, see the document "Street Code - Rules and Etiquette for Getting There Together", which can be found on the website www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/Transportation/rulesoftheroad.