

Staying Safe While Biking & Scooting

Biking and scooting are great ways to get outside, be independent, and have fun. However, in 2016, 840 people lost their lives in bicycle-vehicle crashes in the U.S., and riders are seeking medical care for scooter-related injuries more than ever before. It is important to ride safely, so before heading out the door, here are a few safety tips to keep in mind:



Safety Tips

- **Protect your head. Wear a helmet that fits properly every time you ride.** A properly fitted helmet is the best way to prevent death and serious injuries in bicycle crashes.
- **Adjust the bike for your body.** Change the seat height—with a foot on the pedal, your fully extended leg should have a slight bend. Your local bike shop can help you find the right sized bike. Scooter handlebars should be around the height of your waist when standing on the deck.
- **Make sure the bike or scooter is in good condition.** Before riding, check that brakes are working, tires are properly inflated, and that you have a white light on the front and a red rear reflector on the back.
- **Be visible.** Increase your visibility by wearing retro-reflective or light/bright clothing; and don't ride where it's dark or poorly lit unless your bike has a front light and rear reflector.
- **Stay focused, sober, and alert.** Stay aware of the traffic around you, watch for obstacles in your path, and avoid gravel, potholes, cracks, and other hazards that could make you fall. Remember, alcohol and drugs will impair your ability to ride safely and stay alert, just like driving. In 2016, 22% of bicyclists killed in the U.S. had high blood alcohol concentrations.
- **Obey all traffic laws.** By law, you are considered the driver of a vehicle when you ride on the street and must follow traffic laws that apply to motor vehicles. Obey traffic signs, signals, and lane markings.
- **Don't ride your bike on the sidewalk, unless you're under 10.** Adults and children over age 10 are safer riding in the street, since most drivers do not expect a fast-moving rider on the sidewalk. Ride in the bike lane, if available. If riding in the travel lane, ride to the right. If the lane is narrow, it may be safer to "take" the lane by riding in the middle, rather than "share" the lane with a vehicle.
- **Go with the flow.** Always ride in the direction of traffic as close to the right side as practical except: when passing, preparing for a left turn, avoiding hazards and dangerous conditions, or if the lane is too narrow.
- **Keep your eyes and ears open.** Put away your phone while riding and never wear headphones that cover both ears or earplugs in both ears (except hearing aids).
- **Be predictable.** Help drivers know what you are about to do. Signal before changing lanes or before making a turn by raising and pointing your arms in the direction you intend to go. Ride straight and do not swerve in and out of traffic.
- **The same rules for helmet and rider safety apply to all modes of personal transportation** – including skateboards, roller skates, rollerblades, bicycles, and scooters.
- **Ride in single file.** This will help vehicles navigate safely around you and the people you are riding with.
- **Watch out for pedestrians.** Slow down and/or stop when you approach pedestrians. Dismount in crosswalks and walk your bike across the street. Give pedestrians priority.
- **Don't carry anyone else.** A bicycle with one seat is a bicycle for one person.
- **New at this? Take a bike riding class!** Ask your [local bike coalition](#) or nearest bike shop for resources.

Additional Safety Tips for Older Riders

- **Consider your needs.** All bikes are not created equal. You may be more comfortable riding a recumbent bicycle, tricycle, or step-through bike – or a bike with a wider padded seat or wider tires.
- **Find safe places to ride.** Choose bike trails or paths instead of riding in traffic.

Additional Safety Tips for Younger Riders

- **Don't carry anyone else.** A bicycle with one seat is a bicycle for one person. Scooters should always be ridden alone.
- **Supervision may be needed.** Young children should NOT ride at night or in the street unsupervised. Young children riding on the sidewalk should ride slowly and be prepared to stop quickly, especially at driveways and intersections
- **Take a bike riding class.** Ask your local bike coalition or bike shop for resources.

Report Safety Issues

If you see something, say something. Your local government is usually in charge of how streets, including bike lanes look and are maintained. If you see debris in the bike lane, blocked lanes, cracks in the asphalt or other safety issues, **call your local elected official's office.**

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