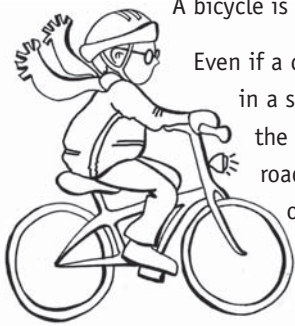


Bicycle Safety for Children

i N F O
update

Information for parents, guardians, childcare providers

A child's first vehicle



A bicycle is not a toy. It's a child's first vehicle.

Even if a child can balance a bicycle and ride in a straight line, it may be too soon for the child to handle a bike on a busy road. Generally, children under nine or 10 years lack the perception and decision-making skills to be safe cyclists and it is advised not to ride on busy roads without an accompanying adult. You can prepare children to be safer cyclists by helping them practise safe-riding skills and teaching them about safety equipment and the rules of the road. The following information can help.

A bicycle must be the right size

A bicycle that fits properly is easier to control, comfortable to ride and does not hurt the knees.

- The seat should be at hip height when the child stands beside the bike.
- A child should be able to straddle the bike with both feet flat on the ground.
- Young beginner cyclists should be able to put both feet on the ground while sitting on the seat.
- While a child is seated on the saddle with both feet on the pedals (ball of foot should be on pedal), the legs should be almost straight at the bottom of the pedal stroke, with a slight bend of the knee.
- In a normal riding position the child's weight should be evenly balanced allowing the child to rest their hands lightly on the handlebars.

- The handlebar stem and seat post must be inserted at least five centimetres into the frame. Both usually have a mark that indicates the maximum extension point. Longer seat posts and stems are available if you need them.
- Drop by your local bicycle store and have them check the proper bicycle fit for your child.

Bicycle safety equipment

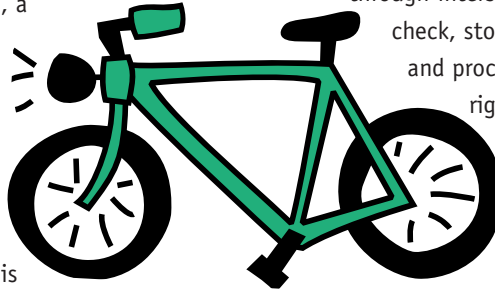
In 2005, approximately 1,300 people reported injuries to ICBC in cycling-related crashes in B.C.

- A bicycle helmet is a cyclist's best protection from head injuries in case of a fall. Bicycle helmets are mandatory in B.C. Helmets should have CSA, ASTM or SNELL safety standards approval clearly designated on them.
- Hockey or other types of sports helmets are not legal for cycling since they are designed and tested for other types of impacts.
- A visible cyclist is a safer cyclist. An especially important point for young children as they are so much smaller. Light or reflective clothing makes a cyclist easier to see.
- To prevent a fall, if a child's bike has no chain guard, pant legs should be tucked into socks or a pant leg clip and shoelaces should be fastened and tucked away to prevent getting caught in the chain, crank set or brakes.
- A child's bike should have a horn or bell and a reflector. For riding at dusk, dawn, at night and in poor weather conditions (e.g. fog, rain), a rear red light and a white front light are required.

Learning to ride

Supervised practice is the best way to learn. The safest place to learn to balance and steer a bike is away from the road (e.g. a vacant parking lot).

- Before learning to go on the road, a child should be able to: ride in a straight line, ride at different speeds, turn, stop, look back and shoulder check while riding, signal while riding and be able to make emergency stops.
- Teaching children cycling signals is important. It's essential to also teach children how to shoulder check for traffic before they signal a turn. Many children mistakenly think that the signal is like a magic wand; drivers will see the signal and automatically stay out of the way.
- **To shoulder check:**
 1. Keep both hands on the handlebars and scan backward over the left shoulder for traffic.
 2. If the way is clear, signal and proceed with the turn, and keep shoulder checking for approaching traffic or change in traffic patterns.
 3. If traffic will obstruct the turn, wait until the way is clear, then check again and if clear, proceed following points 1. and 2. above.



- Remember it is illegal to cycle in crosswalks and in most jurisdictions it is illegal to cycle on sidewalks.
- Option B: after looking in all directions proceed through intersection on the right. Shoulder check, stop and make a 90-degree left turn and proceed as if you were coming from the right.
- Always yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk.
- Yield to oncoming traffic and watch for right-turning vehicles.

Advanced cyclists:

1. Look back over your left shoulder for approaching traffic.
2. Signal a left turn, and keep shoulder checking all through this manoeuvre. When clear, move over to the left side of the lane (on a two-lane road), or to the far right of the dedicated left-turning lane.
3. Be positioned so cars going straight through cannot pass you on your left.
4. In a two-lane road make sure left-turning cars will either remain ahead or behind you. This is so you will not be squeezed by other traffic.
5. In a dedicated left-turning lane make sure motorized traffic will remain on your left or ahead or behind you. This so you will not experience conflict and all traffic will resume the right road position once you have made your turn.
6. Yield to oncoming traffic before turning and watch for right-turning vehicles moving into your lane.
7. Obey all traffic signs or lights at the intersection.
8. Still signalling left, cycle into the intersection and turn left onto the right side of the intersecting road.

Note: *If riding in a bike lane, or on a road with several lanes, cyclists need to look and signal each time they change lanes. Cyclists must never make a left turn from the right side of the road. Never make a direct left turn from a bike lane. You need to position yourself properly before making a left turn.*

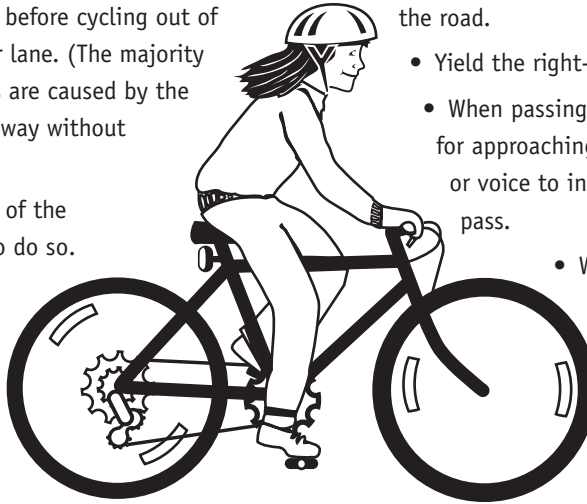
How to turn left at an intersection

Young beginner cyclists:

- Obey all traffic signs or signals while approaching and at the intersection.
- Look in all directions for traffic before proceeding through the intersection.
- Option A: Cycle straight across the intersection on the right-hand side of the road then shoulder check, stop and dismount. Make a 90-degree left turn and position yourself on the sidewalk.
- If there is a signal, wait for the light to turn green or for the traffic to clear, then walk your bike across the intersection.

Cycling safety tips

- Always wear a bicycle helmet — it's the law in B.C. Position it flat on the head, not slanting forward or back. Fasten the chinstrap to fit snugly.
- Stop and look all directions before cycling out of an intersection, driveway or lane. (The majority of children's cycling crashes are caused by the child riding out onto a roadway without looking.)
- Keep to the right-hand side of the road as much as it is safe to do so.
- Ride single file — it's the law in B.C.
- Keep a straight line. Do not weave in and out of parked cars, obstacles, etc.
- Never ride your bike on the left-hand side of the road while facing traffic. A bicycle is a vehicle; cyclists need to cycle on the right-hand side of the road.
- It is against the law to carry passengers on a bike with one seat.
- Never pull or tow anybody with your bike.
- Shoulder check before signalling to turn, change lanes, move in and out of traffic or stop.
- Keep both hands on the handlebars unless signalling.
- Obey all traffic signs and signals and rules of the road.
- Yield the right-of-way to pedestrians.
- When passing other cyclists, look behind for approaching traffic and use a bell, horn or voice to indicate you are about to pass.
- Walk your bike over rough spots (gravel, ruts, rocks, and potholes) and over cattle guards, crosswalks, and on sidewalks.
 - Railroad tracks are uncomfortable to cross. To safely cross, use caution and angle your bike over the tracks, rather than riding over them straight on.
- Never ride your bike through puddles. There may be hazards hidden beneath the water that you can't see.
- Remember your bicycle is not a toy. It is a vehicle.



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This publication reflects the laws in British Columbia as of January 2007. You should be aware that laws might change from time to time, so for a current statement of the law, you should refer to the applicable legislation. In the case of any conflict between this publication and the legislation, you should always follow the legislation.

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