

Bicycle Safety Tips

The Charlotte Department of Transportation wants to protect cyclists by providing them with the following safety tips:

- **Ride on the right side of the road, in the same direction as traffic.** This puts the cyclist where others expect to see them. Riding against or facing traffic is illegal and a common factor in many bicycle crashes. Riding facing traffic places cyclists where motorists are not trained to look for other road users.

Observe all traffic signs and signals. A bicycle is classified as a vehicle and is obligated to follow the same rules as other vehicles. By stopping at red lights and stop signs, the cyclist is behaving in a safer, more predictable manner. When coming to a stop, line up near the middle behind any cars already stopped in your lane. That places you behind or in front of motorists where they can see you - and not in their blind spot to the side where they may unintentionally hit you if they make a right turn. When the light turns green, proceed through the intersection; then move to the right to allow faster traffic to pass.



- **Use hand signals before making a turn or stopping.** Left arm out straight for a left turn, left arm out and bent up at the elbow for a right turn, and left arm out and bent down at the elbow for a stop. This lets others know your intent. Being predictable helps others know how to operate around you.
- **Use front and rear lights and reflectors if riding at night or in low light.** Crashes during periods of low visibility account for a disproportionate share of cyclists injuries and fatalities. Lights will help you see potential road hazards and make you more visible to other traffic.
- **Avoid the “door zone.”** When riding beside parked cars, position your bike far enough to the left in the lane to avoid a suddenly opened car door. Also, look through the rear windows of parked cars for signs that someone may be about to open the door or pull out of the parking space.
- **Maintain a straight line along the right side of your lane.** Weaving between parked cars and in and out of the lane may take you out of the view of following motorists. Cautiously assert your rightful place on the road. If you ride too close to the edge of pavement, some motorists may try to squeeze by and unintentionally force you off the road.
- **Look for hazards.** Be aware of hazards around you, such as drainage grates with openings that could trap your wheel, cracks in the pavement, uneven road surfaces, broken glass, low hanging

branches or other potential hazards. Try to cross railroad tracks at a perpendicular angle to avoid your wheels getting caught in the gaps next to the rails.

- **Be aware of the right and left hooks.** Many bicycle crashes occur at intersections or driveways when a motorist turns in front of a cyclist. The right hook occurs when a motorist passes a cyclist and then makes a sudden turn to the right, striking the cyclist. A left hook occurs when a cyclist is struck by a motorist making a left turn from the opposite direction. Keep your eyes and ears on other traffic for signs that someone may make a turn in front of you.
- **Wear a helmet. Do not wear earphones.** A bicycle helmet has been proven to provide head protection should a fall or crash occur. Do not wear earphones. Your hearing is needed to help warn you of potential dangers, such as an overtaking car that may turn in front of you.
- **Keep your bike maintained.** Make sure the brakes are in good working order. Tighten any loose bolts, nuts or screws. Replace worn parts. If your bike has quick release wheels, make sure the releases are tightly closed. Adjust your seat to the correct height and angle. If you are unsure how to maintain your bike, take it to a bike shop. A well-maintained bike reduces the risk of crash or injury caused by part breakage or inappropriate fit or adjustment.

You can also download these tips in our bicycle safety brochure in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).