

Bicycle Laws, Safety and Other Tips

A bicycle is a vehicle under the Ontario Highway Traffic Act (HTA). This means that, as a bicyclist, you have the same rights and responsibilities to obey all traffic laws as other road users. Cyclists charged for disobeying traffic laws will be subject to a minimum set fine and a Victim Surcharge fine of \$20.00 for most offences (please note set fines below are subject to change).

There is a \$20 fine for not complying with the following:

- Lights – a bike must have a white front light and a red rear light or reflector if you ride between ½ hour before sunset and ½ hour after sunrise and white reflective tape on the front forks and red reflective tape on rear forks.

There is a \$60 fine not complying with the following:

- Helmet – Every cyclist under the age of eighteen must wear an approved bicycle helmet. Parents or guardians shall not knowingly permit cyclists under sixteen to ride without a helmet.

There is an \$85 fine for not complying with any of the following:

- Bell – a bike must have a bell or horn in good working order.
- Stop for red lights and stop signs and comply with all other signs. One-ways streets ride in the designated direction on one-way streets.
- Signalling a turn – before turning, look behind you and signal your turn. Cyclists can use their right arm to signal a right turn.
- Crosswalks – yield or stop for pedestrians at crosswalks. No riding in crosswalks – walk your bike when crossing at a crosswalk.
- Brakes – a bike must have at least one brake system on the rear wheel. When you put on the brakes, you should be able to skid on dry, level pavement.

For a complete list of fines please visit:

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/pubs/cycling-guide/section5.0.shtml>

Helmets

Bicycle helmets must be worn by all cyclists who are under the age of 18. Look for the CSA or CPSC certification in the helmet before you buy or wear it.

To provide maximum protection, the helmet should fit level and square on the head, and the front should cover the forehead. It should sit snugly on and not slip when the head is moved around, even before the chin strap is fastened. The straps should be adjusted to meet just below the ear, and fastened comfortably. See the images

Rules of the Road

Cyclists must identify themselves when stopped by police for a contravention of the *Highway Traffic Act* or municipal by-law regulating traffic. You just need to provide your correct name and address.

Cyclists are required to ride as close as practicable to the right curb of the roadway, except when:

- travelling at the normal speed of traffic.
- avoiding hazardous conditions.
- the roadway is too narrow for a bicycle and a motor vehicle to travel safely side-by-side.
- riding alongside another cyclist in a manner that does not impede the normal movement of traffic.
- preparing to make a left turn, passing another vehicle, or using a one-way street (in which case riding alongside the left curb is permitted).

Other safety tips:

- Obey all traffic signs and signals
- Give pedestrians the right-of-way
- Ride defensively
- Ride so that drivers can see you and predict your movements
- Dress to be visible
- Ride at least one metre from parked cars
- Keep your bicycle in good working condition

Rules of the Pathway

Bicycles are permitted on mixed-use pathways.

Cyclists should follow the "Share the Path" guidelines:

- Keep to the right of the yellow centre line (where one exists)
- Pass other users only when it is safe to do so
- Use your bell or voice to warn others when you are passing e.g., "Passing on your left!"
- Ride at a speed that is suitable for a mixed-use pathway (recommended speed of no more than 20 km/hr)
- Be cautious at night, especially along pathways that are not lit. Ride more slowly, especially around dark curves, and stay visible by dressing brightly and using bicycle lights.

Sharing the Road

A bicycle is a vehicle and must be treated the same as buses, large trucks, motorcycles and cars. This means that cyclists need to operate their bicycles like other vehicles on the road. Motorists must also respect a cyclist's right to ride on the street. Here are some tips to make everyone's road experience safer and more enjoyable.

Cyclists

Sharing with Motorists

- Follow the rules of the road at all times.
- Be bright at night! Use a headlight, taillight, reflectors and light-coloured or retro-reflective clothing so motorists can see you.
- Motorists may not anticipate a cyclist, so ride defensively.
- Never compromise your safety for the convenience of a motorist.
- Where possible, ride in a straight line and avoid dodging between parked cars, into bus bays or around obstacles.
- Know where you are going and look ahead to position yourself in the correct lane. Avoid being in a "right turn only" lane if you plan to proceed straight through an intersection.

Sharing with Pedestrians

- Stay off sidewalks.
- Yield to pedestrians at crossings.
- Stay out of crosswalks when waiting at intersections - stopping here forces pedestrians into traffic.
- Watch for pedestrians when pulling into or out of driveways, parking lots or anywhere you have to ride across a sidewalk.
- Keep an eye out for pedestrians when turning, especially on one-way streets. While vehicles may only travel in one direction, pedestrians cross both ways.
- Be especially careful where children might be walking - near schools, day cares and pathways.
- Watch for pedestrians on roads that don't have sidewalks. They should be walking on the shoulder facing on-coming traffic.

Sharing with Buses

- Avoid riding in the blind spots at the sides and rear of the bus where the operator cannot see you. If you can't see the operator's eyes in the bus's mirror, she or he can't see you.
- Stay well back and to the left side of the bus and remember that buses make frequent stops.
- Always pass a bus on the left side. Don't get trapped between the bus and the curb.

- Allow plenty of room when passing a bus, and never race.
- Avoid repeat passes ('leap-frogging').
- Stay out of bus bays when cycling.
- On Albert and Slater Streets ride in the far left lane to reduce conflict with turning vehicles. To make a right turn, signal and change lanes one at a time.

Sharing with Trucks

- When stopping behind a truck, remember that it may need space to roll back when it starts up again, especially on a hill.
- See and be seen: trucks have large blind spots on both sides, directly behind and in front. Stay away from these areas as much as possible. If you're cycling behind a truck and you can't see one of its side-view mirrors, the truck driver can't see you.
- Give turning trucks lots of room. Never pull up into the open space on a truck's side if the driver has signalled a turn because the driver may be setting up or completing a turn.
- The size of the truck will directly affect the size of the blind spots, length of time it takes to stop, and the amount of space needed for turns.

Fixing your bike

It's important to keep your bike in good running order in order to be safe and comfortable on the road.

You need to do the following regularly (every week during the cycling season):

- check your tire pressure and pump your tires to the recommended pressure (the number is embossed on the tire sidewall). Under-inflated tires make it more likely you'll get a flat, and slow down your ride.
- oil/wax/grease your chain (and preferably clean it if it's dirty). A dry chain will squeak and wear out faster, and is more likely to snap.
- check your front and rear brakes to ensure you can quickly and fully stop. This is essential to your safety. You should not be able to press your brakes right to the handlebars: if you can, that means the cable has stretched and needs to be tightened.
- check you can shift properly
- check that all your nuts and bolts are tight, and that your tires aren't worn or cut or have glass embedded in the tread

Protecting your bike from theft

There are only three ways to steal a bike

1. Ride away with the unlocked bike
2. Break the lock
3. Break what the bike is locked to

Always lock up your bike!

No matter where it is — in your backyard, on your front porch, or outside a store — it's smart to spend the extra time to lock up your bike properly. It only takes a few seconds for someone to steal it.

Lock your bike to something solid, like:

- blue bike racks found around the Region
- other well-built bikeracks (not old-style "wheel-benders")
- solid steel railings. Don't block pedestrians
- well-anchored, tall poles
- But . . .

not to:

- things made of wood, like porch railings, trees, or park benches
- wire fences that can be easily cut
- any pole a bike could be lifted over
- poles that are loose or removable. Check first
- racks that aren't bolted down
- wheelchair ramps. be courteous to people with disabilities -- even part of a bike can block a ramp

Lock your frame, not just your wheel

It's very important to lock your bike frame, not just a wheel, to a solid object. It only takes a thief a few minutes to loosen your axle nuts (only seconds for a quick release axle) and walk away with the rest of your bike. If you encounter an old style "wheel bender" rack, don't use it. Find somewhere else to lock your bike, then start campaigning to get rid of that damaging rack.

Guard your quick release items

Thieves don't always take the whole bike. Wheels, seats, and even handlebars are being stolen. To guard against parts theft, ensure that both wheels are securely locked along with the frame. If your lock won't fit around all three things, then take one wheel with you. Thieves can ride off on a stolen bike, but not if there's only one wheel. You can change a quick release axle to an axle with nuts, and replace quick release seat bolts with regular bolts. Fill your Allen-key holes on your handlebars and other places with caulking. It can be removed when necessary with a knife or a small screwdriver.