

Please Share the Road

All of us on the road have a duty to be safe vehicle operators. Many cyclists are experienced road users; others are not. Inexperienced cyclists may make mistakes. Regardless, there are many actions you can take to reduce the chance of a conflict with any cyclist. Here are some things you need to remember as a motorist*:

- Bicycles are vehicles. Cyclists have the legal right to ride on the road and have all the rights of a vehicle operator in all 50 states.
- Because bicycles are vehicles, you should treat bikes as you would other vehicles. Because they're narrow, they can often share the curb lane with smaller motor vehicles. However, if the cyclist determines that the lane is not wide enough to safely share, he or she has the right to "take the lane," i.e., to ride far enough out into the lane to make it clear to motorists that they shouldn't try to squeeze past the cyclist.
- If you need to pass a cyclist, you should allow at least 3 feet of clearance between vehicles (yours and the bicycle). Leaving less space than this can be very dangerous to the cyclist. If you approach a cyclist who has taken the lane, you will need to move over into the next lane, at least partially, to safely pass the cyclist. You may have to follow at a safe distance, waiting for a safe opportunity to pass. Please be patient. Once you think you've passed, check your mirror to be sure. Some cyclists can ride 25-30 mph.
- Please do not honk at cyclists. This is rude, unnecessary, and can be very startling. You could cause an accident.
- Be aware that when crossing railroad tracks, cyclists need to cross the tracks perpendicularly. If the tracks cross the road at an angle, a cyclist may need to veer a bit further out into the road than he or she was previously riding so as to approach the tracks at the correct angle and not get a bicycle wheel caught in the tracks. Cyclists certainly watch for traffic when doing this, but it's something you can be aware of and anticipate. Also, inexperienced cyclists may not know about the dangers of track crossing. They may not know to cross at the correct angle, and they could fall; this is a good reason to give any cyclist approaching railroad tracks plenty of clearance.
- Please allow cyclists enough room to maneuver around road hazards such as debris, potholes, and drain grates. Debris and potholes that are of no consequence to a car can easily cause a flat tire for a bicycle. A drain grate can cause a serious accident.
- Experienced cyclists will not ride closer than 5 feet from parked cars. Many cyclists have been very seriously injured or killed when riding too close to a parked car when the car door opened. Please keep this in mind and give cyclists plenty of room near parked cars.

Remember that roads are for all vehicles, motorized or not. Every cyclist is one fewer car on the road, and everyone hates traffic jams! Please do your part to make sure everyone is safe!

*This handout is for drivers of cars. Driving a large truck or bus? Please see http://www.riinsrants.info/bikes/truck/shareroad_bus.pdf

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