

Cycling Safety

WEAR A HELMET

You can't bike if you're living in a vegetative state!

Be Considerate!

If a driver allows you to pass in front of them, it's always good practice to acknowledge their generosity with a wave or nod (cyclists need all the good will we can muster).

Regarding Earphones

In some states it is illegal to have any sort of headphone covering your ears while operating a motor vehicle or bicycle. Florida law, for example, states, "No person shall operate a vehicle while wearing a headset, headphone, or other listening device" (Section 316.304). In other states the law permits wearing headphones as long as one ear remains uncovered, and in still others wearing both earpieces may be permitted. Finally, in many states there is no law on the books at all. The absence of a law does not necessarily mean wearing headphones is permitted, though; the best course would be to check with your local department of vehicles.

Even in states that have laws on the books, the legality of headphone use while riding is confusing. For example, while Florida bans the use of headphones, there is an exception for using a cell phone with a headset that "only provides sound through one ear and allows surrounding sounds to be heard with the other ear." Is this the equivalent of listening to music with one earpiece out (which, parenthetically, produces an awful sound)? In your question you referenced people getting ticketed in California, where the law states, "A person operating a motor vehicle or bicycle may not wear a headset covering, or earplugs in, both ears" (CA Vehicle Code Section 27400). This would suggest that listening to headphones is permitted if you have only one earpiece in, but again the law is not as clear as it could be.

If you are using a personal music device and are injured in an accident with a negligent driver, it is certain that the insurance company will attempt to pin some or all the blame on you, making recovery of your damages more difficult.

Source: Legally Speaking with Bob Mionske: Listen up!

By Robert Mionske, JD

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<http://www.bikeforums.net/archive/index.php/t-127896.html>

Teamwork

Give a helping hand, watch for problems (loose straps, loose equipment), and help each other to be safe and enjoy the ride.

Be Predictable

Group riding requires even more attention to predictability than riding alone. Other riders expect you to ride straight, at a constant speed, unless you indicate differently.

Communicate

Use hand and verbal signals to communicate with members of the group and with other traffic.

Hand Signals

Hand signals for turning and stopping are as follows: Left arm straight out to signal a left turn. Left arm out and down with your palm to the rear to signal slowing or stopping. And, for a right turn, put your right arm straight out (in areas where this is legal) or put your left arm out and bent up.

Verbal Warnings

Along with hand signals, verbally warn cyclists behind you of your changes in direction or speed. The lead rider should call out "left turn," "right turn," "slowing," "stopping," "standing" (especially important if you're drafting and you're dropping your speed), etc. Announce a turn well in advance of the intersection, so that members of the group have time to position themselves properly.

Announce Hazards

When riding in a tight group, most of the cyclists do not have a good view of the road surface ahead, so it is important to announce holes, gravel, grates, and other hazards. Indicate road hazards by pointing down to the left or right, and by shouting "hole," "bump," etc., where required for safety. Everyone in a group should be made aware of hazards. However, not everyone needs to announce them.

Change Positions Correctly

Generally, slow traffic stays right, so you should try to pass others on their left. Say "**ON YOUR LEFT**" to warn the cyclist ahead that you are passing. If you need to pass someone on the right, say "**ON YOUR RIGHT**" clearly since this is an unusual maneuver.

Watch For Traffic Coming From the Rear

Even when you are occupying the proper lane position, it often helps to know when a car is coming. Since those in front cannot see traffic approaching from the rear, it is the responsibility of the riders in back to inform the others by saying "car back." Around curves, on narrow roads, or when riding double, it is also helpful to warn of traffic approaching from the front with "car up."

Watch Out at Intersections

When approaching intersections requiring vehicles to yield or stop, the lead rider will say "slowing" or "stopping" to alert those behind to the change in speed. Each cyclist is responsible for verifying that the way is clear before entering the intersection.

Leave a Gap For Cars

When riding up hills or on narrow roads where you are impeding faster traffic, leave a gap for cars between every three or four bicycles. Motorists can then take advantage of shorter passing intervals and eventually move piecemeal around the entire group.

Move Off the Road When You Stop

Whether you are stopping because of mechanical problems or to regroup with your companions, move well off the road so you don't interfere with traffic. It is usually best for the lead rider to pull forward in the stopping area and for other riders to pull in behind the rider in front of them. When you start up again, each cyclist should look for, and yield to, traffic.

Ride One or Two Across

Ride single file or double file as appropriate to the roadway and traffic conditions and where allowed by law. Even where riding double is legal, courtesy dictates that you single up when cars are trying to pass you if the lane is wide enough for them to safely do so.

Wait at Turns

If the group becomes at all separated, even by a few dozen meters, someone should wait at the turn until the next rider arrives at the intersection, and so on until all riders have made the turn.

Two at the End

For safety and as a courtesy, if the group spreads out, the last two people should adjust their speed to ride as a pair. If either should need assistance, they will have a helping hand.

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From www.ibike.org with additions by Jeff Herman