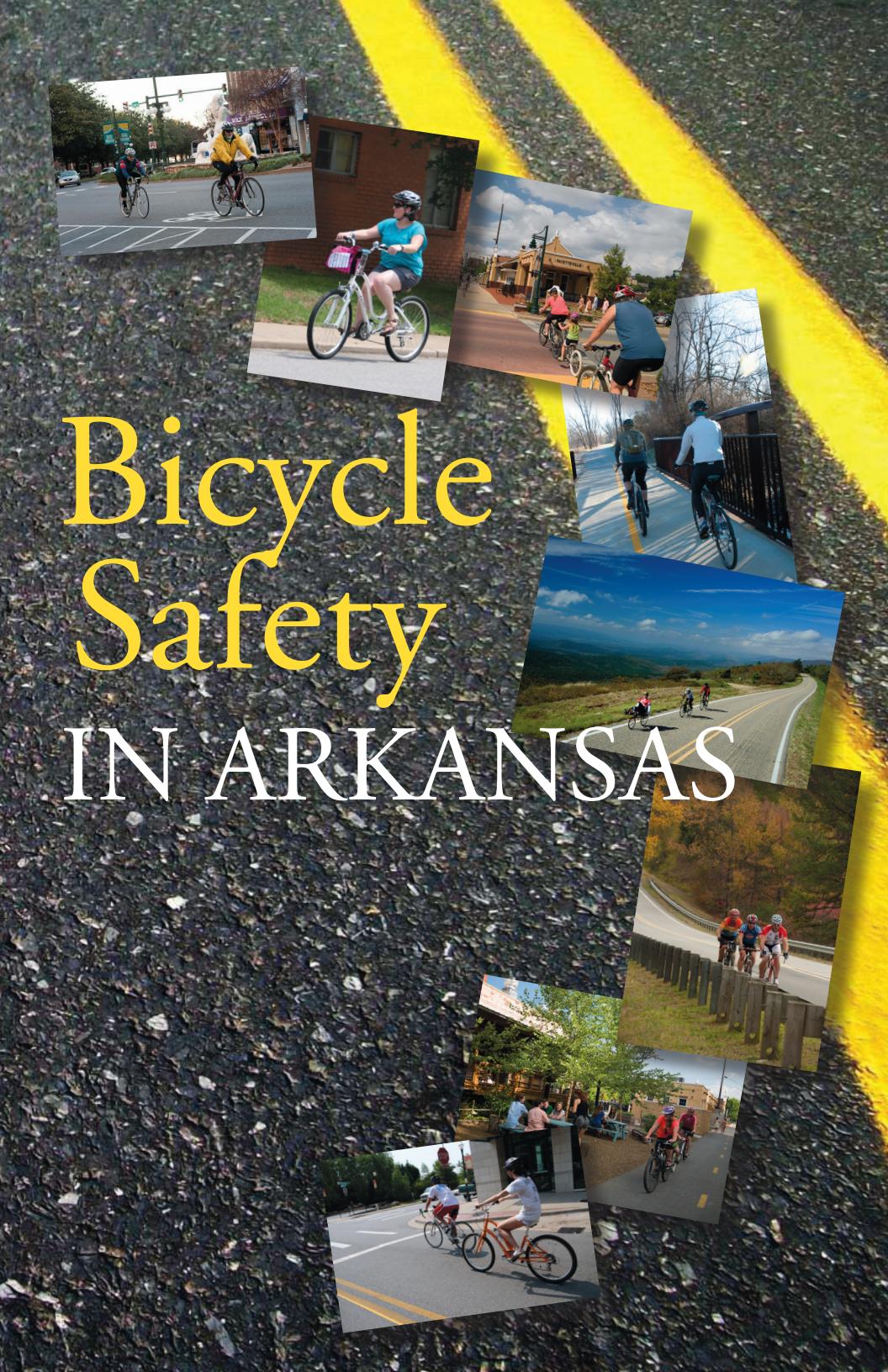
Bicycle
Safety
IN ARKANSAS

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This booklet was prepared to help adult bicyclists and parents of younger bicyclists understand how to ride safely and legally on the streets, roads and highways of Arkansas. This manual condenses and paraphrases language in Arkansas Statutes and also provides safety advice not included in the law. This booklet is not a proper legal authority to cite and should not be relied upon in a court of law. Traffic regulations in cities, towns and counties may go beyond state laws, as long as they do not conflict with state law.

Arkansas law does not define a bicycle as a vehicle but, A.C.A. § 27-49-111 contains language from the Uniform Vehicle Code which reads, "Every person riding a bicycle or an animal, or driving any animal drawing a vehicle upon a highway, shall have all the rights and all of the duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle, except those provisions of this act which by their nature can have no applicability" so as to include cyclists as legitimate and rightful users of the public streets and highways.

The specific statutes pertaining to bicycles are found in the Arkansas Code of 1987, Annotated, ("A.C.A.") Title 27, chapters 49 through 111.

Cyclists can use any public road, street, or highway in Arkansas, with the exception of the freeways and other controlled-access highways. Bicycles can also be ridden on the sidewalks in Arkansas, except in specific cities which have enacted local ordinances that prohibit riding on the sidewalks in the business districts (Little Rock, North Little Rock, Hot Springs, and Maumelle prohibit, directly or indirectly cyclists from riding on the sidewalks).

This manual was prepared and published by the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, Arkansas State Police and the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, with special thanks to the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Comments and suggestions are welcome.

Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department

Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinator
501-569-2020

Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism
501-682-7777

Arkansas State Police
501-618-8797

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Congratulations!

Bicycling is an inexpensive and efficient form of transportation for short trips. By riding a bicycle, you are helping everyone by reducing traffic congestion, wear and tear on our roads and the need for more roads and parking. You are keeping the air cleaner and neighborhoods quieter, while saving petroleum and you are improving your own health and well-being through regular exercise.

You have a right to ride your bicycle on Arkansas roads, streets and highways. Some basic safety principles will help you enjoy a safe ride.

The Four Basic Principles

Most bicycling injuries do not involve a crash with a motor vehicle. Bicyclists are more likely to fall or hit fixed objects such as a mailbox or a parked car. To avoid crashes, follow these Principles:

PRINCIPLE #1: Maintain control of your bicycle. Never ride while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants (DUI) laws apply when you're riding a bicycle.

PRINCIPLE #2: Ride on the right, with traffic, in a predictable manner. Most crashes with motor vehicles happen at road intersections and driveways, where bicyclists and motorists cross paths.

PRINCIPLE #3: Be visible and ride alertly. When motorists and bicyclists collide, the fault is about evenly split between them. Even if you ride responsibly, some motorists may not see you.

PRINCIPLE #4: Protect yourself: wear a helmet to reduce the risk of head injury in the event of a crash.

PRINCIPLE #1:
Maintain Control of Your Bicycle

There are many things you can do to control your bicycle, even in an emergency.

First, make sure your bike is the right size and adjusted to fit you properly. The right size bicycle is easier to control and more comfortable, causing less fatigue. Your local bike shop can help you choose the right size bicycle for you.

Make sure your bike is in good working order. You should inspect it regularly. Here are some important parts to check:

- Brakes must be powerful enough to let you easily bring your bicycle to a stop. You should be able to easily reach the brake levers.
- Tires should be in good condition and inflated to their recommended pressure.
- Luggage racks and saddle bags let you carry a load while keeping your hands on the handlebars for steering and braking.
- Lights are required by law when riding after dark. You or your bicycle must have a white light visible at least 500 feet to the front, and a red light or reflector visible at least 500 feet to the rear. These are the minimum requirements. More powerful lights will make you more visible to others, and help you see road hazards. A rear light is more visible than a reflector. Front white reflectors are not visible to motorists entering from a side street and do not meet legal lighting requirements.
- Fenders keep you dry and clean. They also prevent your bicycle from getting dirty in wet weather.
- Mountain bikes and hybrids are easier to handle than many older bikes. They are well-suited for city riding thanks to their upright sitting position, modern gear shifters and brakes, rugged construction and maneuverability.
- To improve your riding skills, practice in an area away from cars. Learn to ride while looking ahead, to the sides and over your shoulder (this is needed to check for traffic before turning). Avoid distractions involving the use of headphones, texting or talking on a cell phone while riding.

PRINCIPLE #2:
Ride with Traffic

When riding your bike on a road, you have the same rights and duties as other road users. With a few exceptions, the rules of the road for drivers also apply to you. Consult the Arkansas Driver's Manual to become familiar with these rules.

The most important rule to remember is ride on the right, in the same direction as the traffic next to you. It's the law. This way you will be seen by others. When drivers enter a road, change or cross lanes, they know where to look for possible conflicts. If you are riding with traffic, you are more visible and drivers will more likely yield to you.

When riding in a bike lane, you are still required to ride in the same direction as the traffic next to you. Riding with traffic also shows you are responsible and will help you gain the respect of other road users.

How Far to the Right You Should Ride

Riding on the right doesn't mean hugging the curb or edge of the road. This may not be the best place to ride. For example, if you hit the curb, you could lose your balance and fall into traffic. Other times when you shouldn't ride too far to the right include:

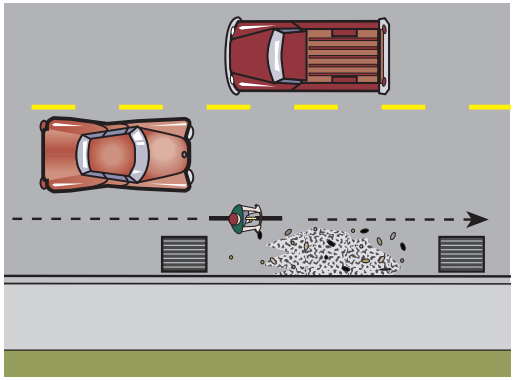
- when avoiding parked cars or surface hazards,
- when a lane is too narrow for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel safely side by side,
- when making a left turn,

- to avoid conflicts with right-turning cars,
- on a one-way street, you may ride on the left as long as you are riding with traffic.

The above exceptions also apply to riding in a bike lane.

Road Surface Hazards

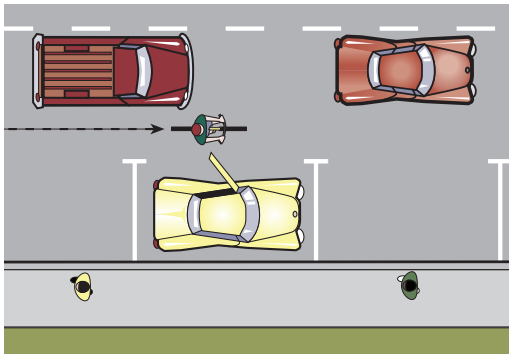
Keep an eye on the road ahead. Avoid running over potholes, gravel, broken glass, drainage grates, puddles you can't see through and all other unsafe road conditions. When avoiding these obstacles first look over your shoulder to avoid swerving suddenly into traffic. If necessary, signal before moving over. To make riding safer for you and other bicyclists, report unsafe road conditions to local authorities as soon as possible.



Avoid road hazards.

Parked Cars

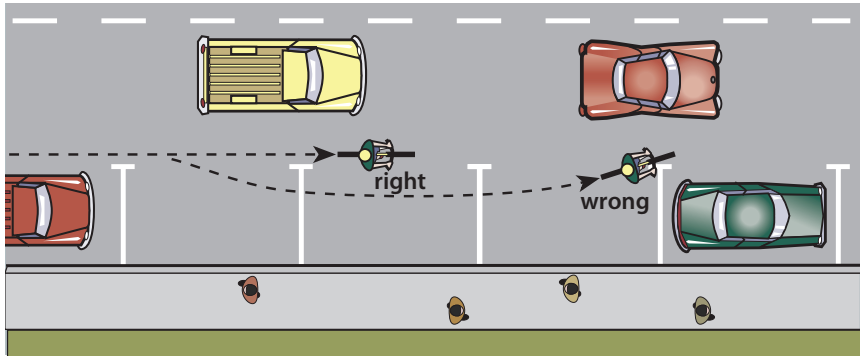
Ride far enough away from parked cars so you don't risk being hit by an opening car door.



Avoid open car doors.

Ride in a Straight Line

This will make you more visible to motorists. Don't weave in and out of parked cars—you may disappear from motorists' sight and get squeezed when you need to merge back into traffic.



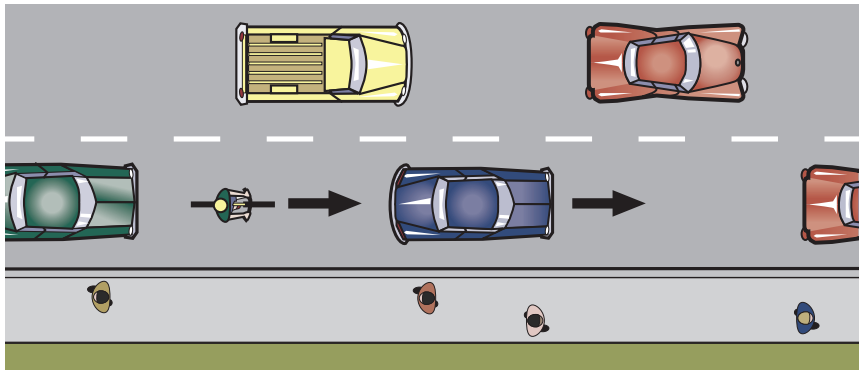
Don't weave in and out of parked cars.

Riding Side by Side

You and a companion may ride side by side on the road, but only if you don't impede other traffic. Ride single file if traffic doesn't have enough room to pass you safely.

When You Should Take a Lane

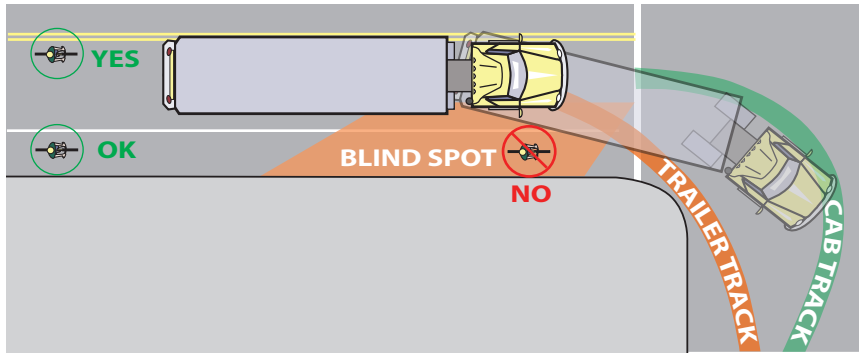
If there is no shoulder or bike lane, and the travel lane is narrow, ride closer to the center of the lane. This will prevent motorists from passing you when there isn't room. You should also take the lane when you're traveling at the same speed as traffic. This will keep you out of motorists' blind spots and reduce conflicts with right-turning traffic.



Occupy more of the travel lane if it is narrow or if traffic is moving slowly.

Blind Spots and the Right Hook

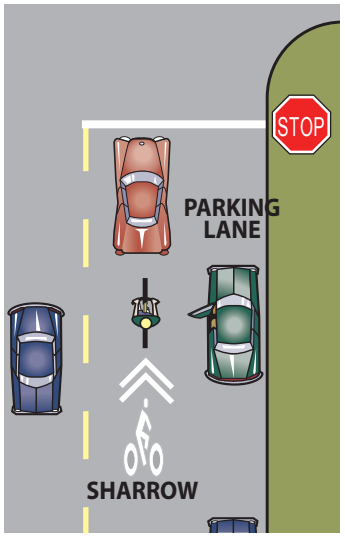
A right hook occurs when a right-turning motorist crosses the path of a bicyclist traveling straight ahead through an inter section. While it is legal to pass a line of stopped cars on streets with a bike lane, it is advisable to stop behind the first vehicle, particularly if it's a large truck with limited peripheral visibility. On streets without bike lanes, bicyclists should take the lane at intersections and proceed through the intersection as any other vehicle.



It is advisable to stop behind large trucks with limited peripheral visibility.

Sharrow

The symbol in the graphic to the right is a "sharrow." It's provided to show bicyclists where to ride on streets without bike lanes and to indicate to motorists where to expect bicyclists. It is placed along a line of travel that avoids opening car doors.



Sharrows indicate where to ride.

Obey Traffic Signs and Signals

Stop at STOP signs and red lights. It's the law to stop for a yellow light, too. This makes good sense—rushing through a yellow light may not leave you enough time to make it across the intersection before the light changes.

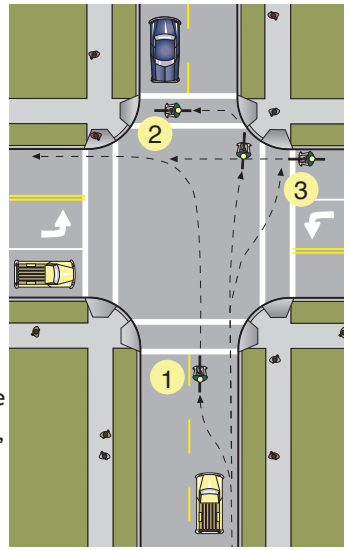
Useful tip: *Downshift before stopping at an intersection. This will help you cross the street more easily when you start again.*

Making a Left Turn

There are several ways to make a left turn on a bicycle:

As a Vehicle

As you approach the intersection, look over your left shoulder for traffic and, when clear, signal your turn, move over to the left side of the lane on a two-lane road (1), or into the left lane or the center turn lane when available. You should be positioned so cars going straight through can't pass you on the left. Yield to oncoming cars before turning. If you are riding in a bike lane, or on a road with several lanes, you need to look and signal each time you change lanes. **Never make a left turn from the right side of the road, even if you're in a bike lane.**



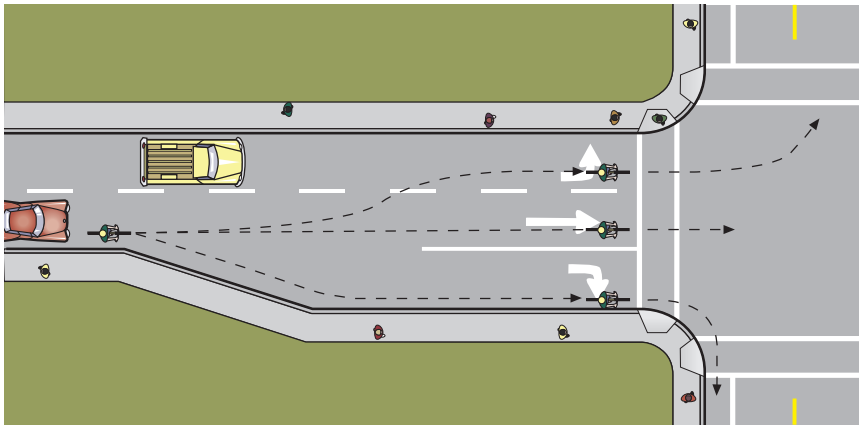
How to make a left turn

Proceed straight through the intersection on the right. Then stop and either cross as a pedestrian in the crosswalk (2), or make a 90-degree left turn and proceed as if you were coming from the right (3). If there is a signal, wait for the green or WALK signal before crossing. Yield to pedestrians in crosswalk.

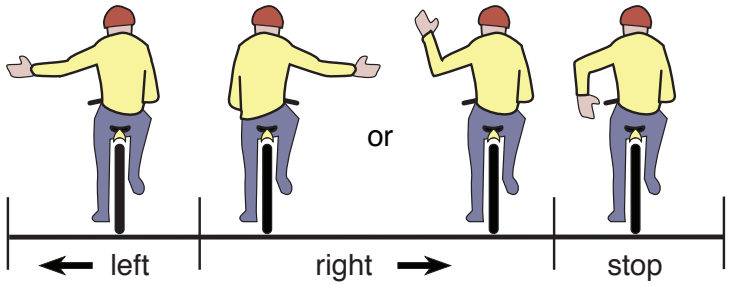
Turn Lanes

When you approach an intersection with several lanes, choose the one with the arrow pointing where you want to go. You may get cut off by turning cars if you're in the wrong lane. If there is a straight through bike lane, use it only if you're going straight ahead.

If you can't make it across traffic to the correct lane, use the crosswalk instead.



Choose the correct lane.



Bicyclist hand signals

Use Hand Signals When Turning

Signal before making a turn to warn traffic behind you. To signal a left turn, look behind you, and then hold your left arm out. To signal a right turn, either hold your right arm out, or hold your left arm up, with bent elbow. You don't have to keep your arm out through the turn—you may need both hands on the handlebars to keep control of your bicycle.

Passing Other Vehicles

You may pass on the right under certain conditions, but always do so prudently and if it's safe to do so. Some drivers may want to turn right at the next driveway or street. They may not see you if they aren't looking your way. Ride at a reasonable speed, and

scan carefully for right-turning cars. If a car ahead of you is signaling a right turn, do not pass on the right. Do not pass stopped cars at a crosswalk or intersection—they may be stopped to let a pedestrian cross or to let another car through.

PRINCIPLE #3:
Be Visible and Ride Alertly

Even if you obey all traffic laws, there's always a risk of being hit by a motorist who isn't obeying the laws, or who simply didn't see you. So ride cautiously, because cars waiting at stop signs, at driveways or parking spaces may suddenly pull out in front of you. Also look out for cars that have just passed you and may turn right, and cars across the street that may turn left in front of you.

Be prepared to stop suddenly or to take other evasive action.

You can also increase your visibility **by using lights and reflectors at night** and wearing light or bright colored clothes. Red isn't a good color for evening riding, because red looks black in the fading light. Yellow and lime green are very effective.

Mirrors can provide opportunities for increased awareness of your surroundings. However, use the mirror only as an aid—you must look over your shoulder to make sure adjacent lanes are clear before turning or changing lanes.

PRINCIPLE #4:
Protect Yourself

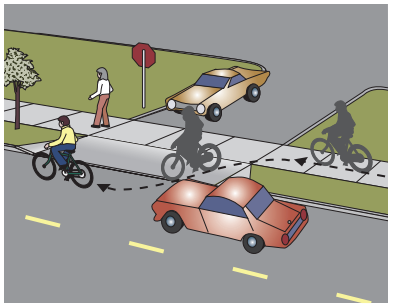
Even very careful riders can fall or get hit by a motorist. And even a simple fall can injure your head. The brain is very fragile and often does not heal like broken bones. The damage can be for a lifetime. Helmets provide proven protection.

Practices to Avoid

Now that you know what to do, you should also know what to avoid. The following behaviors cause crashes and create an image of bicyclists as irresponsible and foolish:

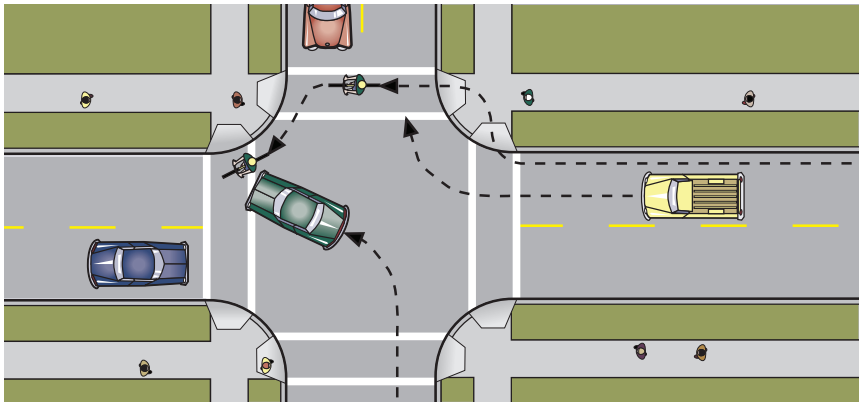
Don't Dart Out Suddenly Onto the Roadway

When entering the road from a driveway, always yield to traffic. It is dangerous to alternate between the sidewalk and road, by hopping the curb or using driveway cuts. If you ride on the sidewalk, motorists may not see you, and may not have time to react and give you space if you suddenly enter the road.

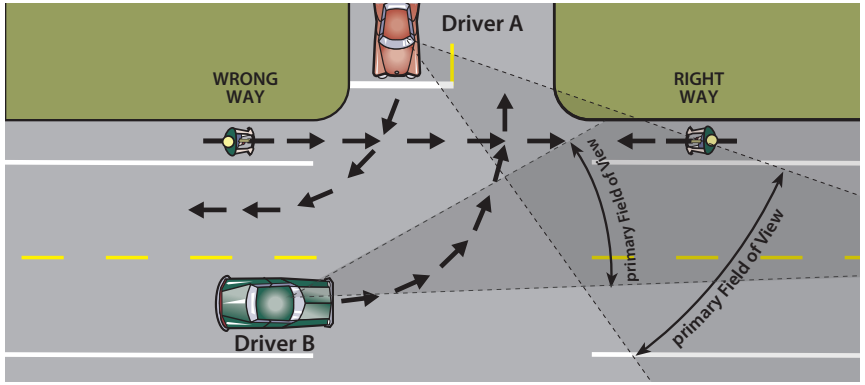


Darting out onto the road can put you in the path of a moving car.

At intersections, stay on the road. Don't ride in the crosswalk and suddenly reappear on the road again. A driver, thinking there is no one there, may lose sight of you, turn the corner and hit you.



Alternating between riding on the road and riding in a crosswalk is confusing to a driver.



**Hazards of wrong-way riding: Driver A is looking for traffic on the left; Driver B is looking for traffic ahead; in both cases, a wrong-way bicyclist is not in the driver's main field of vision.*

Never Ride Against Traffic

Wrong-way riding is against the law. It's one of the leading causes of crashes, accounting for 15% to 20% of all crashes with cars. Riding against traffic is often based on the fear of traffic hitting you from behind, and a sense that looking at on-coming traffic will prevent crashes. In reality, bicyclists are rarely hit from behind.

The biggest danger of riding the wrong way is at intersections and driveways: you may not be seen by drivers entering, crossing or leaving the roadway. They are expecting traffic coming from the other direction, not a wrong-way cyclist (*see figure above).

Another danger of wrong-way riding is the speed of cars coming at you:

- If you're riding the wrong way at 15 MPH, then a car going 35 MPH is coming towards you at 50 MPH, leaving little reaction time.
- If you are riding the right way at 15 MPH, and a car gaining on you is going 35 MPH, then the difference is only 20 MPH, giving the driver more time to react.
- You also risk a head-on collision with cyclists riding in the proper direction.

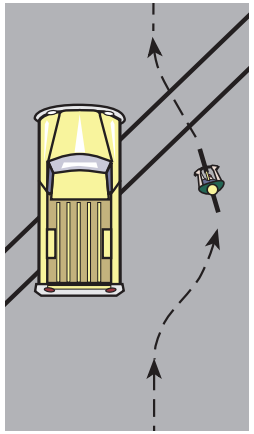
The problem is made worse when riding the wrong way on one-way streets: you can't see signs and traffic signals.

A Few More Things You Should Know

Railroad Tracks

Cross railroad and trolley tracks carefully. Watch for uneven pavement and grooves that could catch a wheel. Keep control of your bicycle. One way is to rise up from your saddle and bend your arms and legs so your body acts like a shock absorber.

If the tracks cross the road at a sharp angle, change your course so you cross them at closer to a right angle. But avoid swerving suddenly; this can cause you to fall or to veer into traffic.



Crossing railroad tracks

Traffic Signals

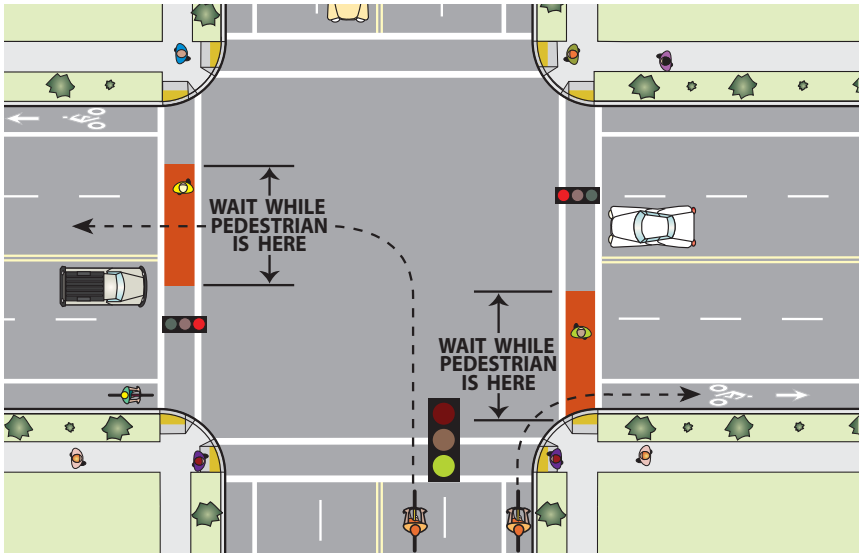
Many traffic signals are triggered by electrically charged wires buried under the pavement. When a vehicle goes over them, the metal disrupts the current, which sends a signal to a traffic light control box. A computer directs the signal to change at the appropriate time.

Crosswalks

You must stop for pedestrians at crosswalks. **A crosswalk exists at any public road intersection, whether marked or unmarked.** If a pedestrian is crossing in a crosswalk, as a vehicle you must stop and wait until the pedestrian has cleared your lane and the next lane before you may proceed. If you want to make a turn with a signal, and a pedestrian is crossing the intersection, you must stop and wait until the pedestrian has cleared your lane and six feet of the next lane before turning.

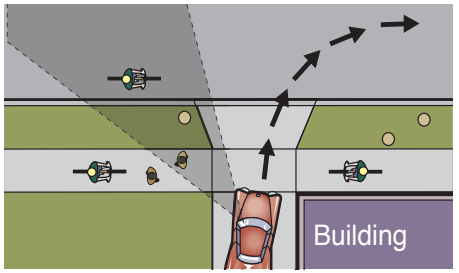
Riding on Sidewalks

In general, avoid riding a bicycle on sidewalks. Many crashes between bikes and cars occur on sidewalks, especially when bicyclists ride against the flow of car traffic. If you do ride on a sidewalk, try to ride in the same direction as traffic next to you, and adjust your riding habits for the safety of all sidewalk users by following these guidelines:



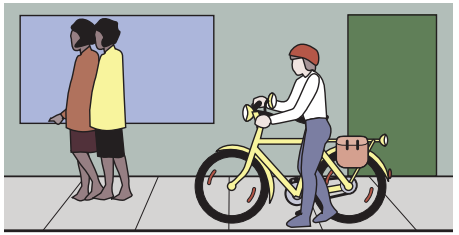
When turning at a signal, you must wait until a crossing pedestrian has cleared your lane and six feet of the next lane.

Slow down at driveways and street crossings if a car is coming. If you go too fast, drivers will not see you (they are looking for pedestrians nearby, not a fast moving cyclist further away). If you crash, you may be found at fault if you were going too fast.



Motorist crossing a sidewalk may not see you on a bicycle.

Yield to pedestrians on sidewalks. Sidewalks are for walkers, not bicyclists. Be courteous and ride cautiously. When passing a pedestrian, **slow down**, give an audible warning, and wait for the pedestrian to move over. A bicycle bell works best. If you must say something, make your intentions clear. For example, "Passing on your left."



Walk your bike on downtown sidewalks.

Walk your bike in downtown areas. Downtown areas have busy sidewalk traffic, people walking out of doorways, stopping to talk to each other or window shopping. Avoid riding here; walk your bike instead if you are not comfortable riding in the street. Many cities ban bikes from their downtown sidewalks.

Stop for School Bus Safety Lights

A bicyclist, just like the operator of any other vehicle, is required by law to stop and stay stopped for a school bus that is operating red bus safety lights. It is the law that traffic in all directions stop and remain stopped until the bus driver turns the flashing bus lights off.

Riding on Paths

Paths are wider than sidewalks, but you should still ride cautiously. Ride on the right and yield to pedestrians. Use caution when passing other path users. Pass on the left and announce your intentions or alert them with a bike bell. Extra caution should be taken when passing children and animals. Be especially careful when crossing a road. When crossing a driveway or street, slow down and be sure drivers see you. Ride more slowly and alertly at night, when it's harder to see the surface and edges of the path. Pedestrians, joggers, skaters and other cyclists may approach suddenly out of the dark in front of you.

Riding Through a Work Zone

As a cyclist, riding through a construction work zone can be intimidating. Pre-trip planning can help make the trip a bit less stressful and safer. It may be possible to identify a safer alternate route around the work zone. However, if you must ride through a work zone, do the following:

- Obey the rules of the road as you would in a motor vehicle.
- Obey construction signs and look for bicycle-specific warning and detour signs.
- Follow detour signing for bicycle routes, where applicable.
- Follow detour signing for motor vehicles if sharing the road.
- Stay out of the work area—do not ride behind the cones, barricades or barrier.
- Walk your bike across rough, uneven or gravel surfaces.
- Watch for steel plates in the roadway—they can be slippery!
- Obey directions given by flaggers—they may have specific instructions for bicyclists.
- Be alert, be visible, be patient.
- Report any unsafe incidents to a flagger, police officer or other official on site, if necessary.

What to Do in Case of a Crash

Check for injuries first. If someone is injured, call 911 for help right away. Administer first aid if you are trained. After the injured has been helped and removed from harm's way, begin gathering information.

If someone has been struck by a car. Ask the driver for name and address, vehicle registration number, driver's license number, and insurance policy company and number. Don't discuss fault immediately after the collision. Make sure to write down what you witnessed as soon as possible. Carry identification and medical insurance information, especially when you cycle alone.

Give your name and address. Ask witnesses, including passengers, their names and addresses. Do not depend on others to take witness names and phone numbers.

Document your injuries and property damage with photographs or video tape. Save all receipts and repair estimates. Contact your insurance company if you have coverage on your bicycle. You may also want to contact an attorney.

Traffic Signs

Arkansas traffic signs follow the national standards. You are responsible for observing all official highway signs and markings.

Regulatory signs are rectangular with black words or symbols on a white background. They may be posted alone, with other traffic signs, or with traffic signals.

Bicycle Resources

State Bicycle Advocacy Group

Bike/Walk Arkansas
http://www.bikewalkAR.org

Local Bicycle Advocacy Groups

Bicycle Advocacy of Central Arkansas
P.O. Box 55677, Little Rock, AR 72215
http://www.bicycleadvocacy.com
membership@bicycleadvocacy.com

Bike Bentonville
208 NW A St., Bentonville, AR 72712
http://www.bikebentonville.com
aley@bikebentonville.com

Bicycle Coalition of the Ozarks
P.O. Box 4173, Fayetteville, AR 72702
http://bconwa.com
bco@bconwa.com

Conway Advocates for Bicycling
P.O. Box 833, Conway, AR 72033
http://cycleconway.com
cabcycleconway@gmail.com

Hot Springs Bicycle Association
http://www.bikehotsprings.org/

Northeast Arkansas Bicycle Coalition
P.O. Box 892, Jonesboro, AR 72403
http://neabicyclecoalition.org
sallybway@suddenlink.net

Regional Trail Systems

Razorback Greenway Trail
http://www.razorbackgreenway.com/

Arkansas River Trail
http://arkansasrivertrail.org/

Other Bicycle Route and Trail Information

State Highway Bicycle Suitability Map
http://www.arkansashighways.com/maps/Bicycle_ADT.pdf

State Bicycle Tourism Brochure
http://tinyurl.com/ArkansasBicycle

Arkansas State Agencies

Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department
State Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator
(501) 569-2020
http://tinyurl.com/StateBicycleCoordinator

Arkansas State Police
(501) 618-8797
http://asp.arkansas.gov/

Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism
(800) NATURAL (628-8725)
http://www.arkansas.com/

Arkansas
THE NATURAL STATE
ARKANSAS
STATE POLICE
ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
AHTD