

Bike Safety Checklist

By John F. Smith

- Preparation**
 - If your bike is new, take it on a few short trips around the neighborhood before venturing into traffic or going on an extended ride** Getting used to your bike takes time.
 - If your bike is of a certain age, check the tires for bald spots.**
 - Clean your bike** Grime caught into the chain or between the brakes and tires will could cause for poor performance.
 - Before setting off, put your helmet on and tighten the safety straps** A helmet that isn't properly strapped on is worthless.
 - If you are planning a biking vacation with a backpack, take the bag along on your rides** Driving with a load takes getting used to.
 - Before setting off, check the air in the tires and the tightness of the brakes.**
- Gear / Equipment**
 - Bike** Choose the right one for your activity - mountain bikes have different tires and structural strengths than bikes for city riding.
 - Shoes** These should have a closed toe, flat sole and no heel.
 - Apparel** Choose clothing that is bright and tight fitting, to make you visible in traffic and to prevent loose ends getting tangled.
- Things to Pack**
 - ID** Whether you take a leisurely ride or plan a trip over several miles, it is recommended that you have identification and contact information on you.
 - Communication** Take your phone with you. A cell phone doesn't take up much room but might come in handy should you need help.
 - Sunscreen** In summer the speed of which a bike moves may keep you cool, but you are still exposed to harmful sun rays and you need to protect your skin.
 - Warm clothing** In winter you may want to wear protective clothing as you catch more wind riding than walking. Warm gloves are imperative to protect your hands.
- Fix-it Kit.**
 - Spanner, spoke wrench and chain whip** These can fix most mechanical problems.
 - Pedal** Spares can save a ride in case of trouble.
 - Sandpaper, glue, and patch** If you get a puncture in your tire, you can fix it yourself.
 - Air pump** Invaluable if you get a flat tire or a slow leak.
- Safety Tips**

- Kid safety** Always accompany a child on a bike, never let a young child ride on his or her own.
- Street safety** Respect traffic laws and teach the laws to your children. Traffic laws are there to keep you safe. Always stop at a red light and a stop street.
- Ride in a single line** If you are in group, resist driving next to each other. Not only is the outside driver more likely to be hit by a car, if your bikes make contact with each other you may get tangled up and fall.
- Baggage** If you're planning on transporting groceries with your bike, get a basket. Never hang packets from the handlebars.
- Night Riding**
 - Bright clothing** Be as visible as possible. Avoid any type of dark colors for night riding. White and yellow is best as they are most visible for other drivers.
 - Reflectors** Make use of reflective arm and leg bands. You can also make use of reflective stickers that can be attached to your back, arms and legs. For total visibility, wear a reflective vest.
 - Reflective tape** Even though your bike is already fitted with reflectors, you can add more for extra visibility.
 - Pay attention** Be aware of your surroundings. If possible stick to a bike lane and be careful.
 - Sobriety** Don't drink and drive. This rule is not just for car drivers, it applies to bike riders too.