

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.