

BICYCLE SAFETY: A PARENT'S GUIDE

Thank you for partnering with the Newport Beach Police Department to help make your child a safer bicyclist.

BE A "ROLL MODEL"

LEARN. As a parent, it is important that you review this bicycle safety information so that you can guide your child(ren) to be safe on the road. Learn about helmet fit, bicycle fit, safety checks, rules of the road, and other important topics for bicycle safety. There are many misconceptions about bicycle safety and children's bicycling; use this document to make sure that you are aware of the best information possible.

SHARE. Discuss bicycle safety with your child(ren). Talk about safe and unsafe behavior, explain safety checks, and assess their ability to grasp these concepts.

LEAD. It's not enough to talk to your child(ren), especially if your own bicycling behavior does not reinforce the safety message.

- Always wear your helmet when you are on your bicycle. Ensure that it fits and that you wear it correctly.
- Follow the rules of the road, whether you are driving, bicycling, or walking.
- Be courteous and respectful to others drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
- Avoid honking at bicyclists. Honking does not show courtesy and can be dangerous, startling a bicyclist and causing a crash or injury.



DECIDING WHO RIDES WITH YOUR CHILD

As general guidelines:



- Children under age 10 should not ride bicycles alone, or without the close supervision of a parent or older companion. Generally, children at this age lack the experience and capacity to negotiate traffic without guidance and supervision.
- Children 10 or older should prove that they have the skills to ride their bicycle safely and follow the rules of the road before they are allowed to ride alone. Children must also be comfortable and confident riding in traffic before venturing out without the close supervision of a parent or an older companion.

Children are always safer when they are supervised while bicycling. Anyone riding with your child(ren) should understand bicycle safety and be able to make safe decisions for both themselves and for your child(ren).

Every bicyclist should ride with one person per seat. It is not safe to have someone ride on the handlebars or on wheel pegs.

DECIDING WHERE YOUR CHILD CAN RIDE

Riding in traffic is challenging, regardless of age.

- For younger children especially, consider limiting routes to areas away from traffic, like parks or trails.
- If you choose to allow your child to ride with traffic, consider restricting them to neighborhood streets or roads with low speed limits, slow-moving traffic, and/or dedicated bicycle lanes. For more information, see www.nhtsa.gov/DOT/NHTSA/NTI/SRTS/7505-10-ChooseSafeRoutes.pdf.



Although it may seem safer to ride on the sidewalk, **bicycles belong in the street.**

- Sidewalks are for pedestrians, not bicyclists.
- Drivers do not expect faster-moving traffic on sidewalks. Drivers can pull into or out of a driveway without looking for a bicyclist on the sidewalk.
- Drivers do not expect bicyclists to cross intersections in the crosswalk. Drivers can turn at an intersection without seeing a bicyclist preparing to cross in a crosswalk.
- Sidewalks with many driveways are not a safe riding path for any bicyclists, regardless of age.

DISTRACTIONS CAN BE DEADLY



Whether you are driving, bicycling, or walking, distractions can lead to accidents, injuries, and even death.

- **Focus on the task at hand.** Keep your hands on the wheel or handlebars. Whether you are driving, bicycling, or walking, your mind, eyes, and ears should be focused on your surroundings.
- **Handle one thing at a time.** Pull over if you need to address a situation in your car or in your bicycling group, need to use an electronic device, or need to handle anything else that would distract you from driving or riding safely.
- **Just turn it off.** Power down your cell phone, turn off alerts, or take other steps to ensure that you are not tempted to direct your attention to an electronic device. In California, it is illegal to wear earbuds or headphones on both of your ears while driving a motor vehicle or a bicycle.
- **X the text.** Never text, surf the web, or check your email while driving, bicycling, or walking; it's dangerous. Stop and leave the roadway to use distracting devices.
- **Secure your pets.** Unsecured pets in cars can distract drivers; unsecured pets near roadways can distract passing traffic. Secure pets in your car before you begin driving. Keep pets on a 6-foot leash for walks and in a secure area at home (like a fenced yard or inside your residence).



SHARING THE ROAD: SAME ROADS, SAME RULES, SAME RIGHTS



Bicycles

Bicycles are considered vehicles on the road. Obey all traffic laws, traffic signs and signals.

Ride in the same direction as traffic, and signal all turns. Stay as far to the right as safely possible. When approaching an intersection, position yourself so that you are visible. Stay out of drivers' blind spots (area around a car a driver cannot see others through either the side or rear-view mirrors).

Scan ahead for obstacles in the roadway and learn to avoid them without swerving into traffic. Watch out for opening car doors; ride an arm's length away from parked cars on the street.

Be visible. Wear brightly colored or reflective clothing. If you choose to bike at night, use a white front light and red rear light or reflector, as required by law in all states.

Wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet every ride.

Learn more about how to ride on the road safely; visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) at www.nhtsa.gov/Bicycles.



Motor Vehicles

Watch for bicyclists in traffic; they have a right under the law to ride on the roadway unless posted otherwise.

Be cautious and patient around bicyclists. While bicyclists should ride as far right in the lane as safely possible, they may have to move further into the lane to avoid debris, car doors, to make turns, to be more visible, or because of narrow traffic lanes.

Avoid honking your horn, unless it's critical. Horns startle bicyclists and can cause them to swerve into traffic or crash.

Look for bicyclists along the roadway, especially at intersections. Slow down and allow **at least three feet** between you and the bicyclist when passing.

Look for bicyclists before opening your car door, backing out of a parking space, before making a turn or when coming out of driveway or alley.

Learn more about sharing the road with bicyclists; visit the League of American Bicyclists at www.bikeleague.org/action/sharetheroad.php, <http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/bicycle-safety/> or do a search for "share the road" + your local bicycle coalition.

HIGH-RISK BICYCLING SITUATIONS FOR CHILDREN

Statistically, there are certain types of bicycle-involved collisions where children are represented at a disproportionately-high rate. By being aware of these high-risk situations, you can help your child(ren) understand and avoid potential injuries. All statistics below are for children ages 14 and under, unless otherwise noted.



Entering the Roadway

- Entering the street from a residential driveway: Of all bicyclists involved in these collisions, **85%** are children. (**55%** are under the age of 10.)
- Entering the street from a sidewalk: **76%** of the bicyclists are children.
- Entering the street from mid-block (not from a driveway or sidewalk): **71%** of the bicyclists are children.

At Intersections

- Intersections with stop signs: Of all bicyclists involved in these collisions, **68%** are children.
- Other intersection collisions: **57%** of the bicyclists are children.

Other High-Risk Situations

- Turning right in front of a vehicle that had been travelling on the bicyclist's left: Of all bicyclists involved in these collisions, **63%** are children.
- Turning left in front of traffic travelling in the same direction as the bicyclist: **64%** of the bicyclists are children.
- Swerving into the path of a vehicle that is passing the bicyclist: **65%** of the bicyclists are children.



QUICK TIPS FOR BIKE SAFETY

ABC QUICK CHECK: HOW TO MAINTAIN A SAFE BICYCLE

A is for Air - Check the air pressure in both tires and add air, if needed. Each tire should feel firm.

B is for Brakes - Check to make sure that the brakes will stop the bicycle.

- For coaster brakes, spin the back wheel and apply the brake.
- For hand brakes, squeeze the levers to make sure that they do not touch the handlebars. Then lift one tire of the ground, spin it, and squeeze the lever to apply the brake.

C is for Cranks, Chain and Cassette

- Crank arms should be secure. If you try to wiggle them side to side, they should not move.
- Spin the pedals and cranks to verify that the chain drives the rear wheel. The chain should not have and rust or built-up debris.
- If the bike has gears, check to make sure that the gear levers and derailleurs work to shift the chain between gears.

Q is for Quick Release - Some bicycles have quick releases on the wheels and seat post. Quick releases should be tight, closed properly, and facing in the correct direction.

Check is for the Overall Check - Make sure that the seat and handlebars are tight and at the proper height. Have your child ride the bike in a safe environment, away from traffic. Check that everything is working well and that your child is comfortable on the bicycle.



2-2-2 HELMET RULE: MAKE SURE THE HELMET FITS

The helmet should sit level on the head, **2 finger widths** above the eyebrow. If you look up with your eyes, you will see the edge of the helmet.

The straps should be snug and form the shape of a "v" below the earlobe. When you make a "v" with **2 fingers**, they should be able to touch both straps, in front of and behind your ear.

The chinstrap should be snug. No more than **2 fingers** should fit between your chin and the strap.

2-2-2-2 SAFETY CHECK: SIMPLE REMINDERS FOR SAFE CYCLING

Your child(ren) should follow these simple rules every time they ride a bicycle:

- **2 wheels** on the ground
- **2 feet** on the pedals
- **2 hands** on the handlebars
- **2 fingers** on the brake levers

