

# ***Bicycle Rules of the Road***

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**LEVEL:** K-1-2-3-4-5-6

**SUBJECT AREA(S):** Health, Language Arts, Art

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will understand that a bicycle is a vehicle subject to the same traffic laws as an automobile, and will understand bicycle rules of the road. The lesson will cover how to respond to certain traffic signs, signals, and situations, and how to react to certain road conditions.

For Your Information

None of the lessons about crossing streets fully address traffic signals because of their complexity.

**TIME:** Two or three 45-minute sessions

## **MATERIALS**

Chalkboard and overhead projector  
Figure 15-1: Hand Signals  
Figure 15-2: Bicycle Rules of the Road  
Figure 15-3: Answer Key to Figure 15-2  
Figure 15-4: Yielding the Right-of-Way  
Figure 15-5: Answer Key to Figure 15-4  
Figure 15-6: Turning Left on a Bicycle  
Figure 15-7: Road Signs  
Figure 15-8: Answer Key to Figure 15-7  
Figure 15-9: Hazardous Road Conditions  
Figure 15-10: Answer Key to Figure 15-9  
Figure 15-11: Techniques for Escaping Hazardous Road Conditions

## **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

1. Road Rules: Have students imagine they are police. When would they give out traffic tickets?

On the board or an overhead, write "Bicycles are vehicles and are subject to all traffic laws, except where such laws don't apply." Discuss what this means.

### For Your Information

- Bicyclists have the legal right to be on roadways and most sidewalks, but they are usually riding at risk. Few roads designate a place just for bikes, so bicyclists must protect themselves by riding defensively.
- Smart bicyclists will ride defensively to protect their bikes and their bodies. There are no guarantees that come with following the rules of the road.
- Because bicyclists share the road with motor vehicles, they must obey some special bicycle rules of the road (Figure 15-2).
- Bicyclists can be given traffic tickets.

Have students work in pairs or small groups to brainstorm as many bicycle rules of the road as they can, as well as a list of situations in which bicyclists might be ticketed. After approximately 10 minutes, place the “Bicycle Rules of the Road” transparency on the overhead projector. Have students compare their lists with the one on the overhead and place a check by each rule they wrote down that is also on the overhead. Discuss all the rules with the class, including any incorrect ones the students may have listed.

Have each pair or small group discuss and report back to the class on one of the 11 bicycle rules of the road.

2. Hand Signals: Demonstrate correct hand signals for left and right turns. Have students practice making those signals as you call them out (see illustration).

### For Your Information

- There are two correct methods for making the right-hand turn signal, either right arm straight out pointing right, or left arm bent at the elbow, hand pointing up.
- While these instructions make sense in terms of what will be taught later, to a bicyclist this signal may be counter-intuitive. Pointing to where you are going is effective communication in most instances.

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3. Yielding: To demonstrate the concept of yielding, have two student volunteers come to the front of the room. Have them start at opposite ends of the room, facing one another, slowly walking directly toward each other. Just before they are about to collide, have them stop. What would have happened if they had not stopped?

### For Your Information

Yielding the right-of-way and knowing who has the right-of-way are essential concepts to master for maneuvering smartly (safely) in traffic – as a bicyclist, a pedestrian, and a motor-vehicle driver. While this concept is especially important at uncontrolled intersections, always yielding is the best way to avoid crashes and save lives.

The Iowa Right-of-Way Rule states, “At an intersection where there is no stop sign or traffic signal, drivers must yield to vehicles coming from the right.” Although this applies to both motor vehicles and bicycles, always yielding is still the best way to avoid crashes and save lives.

For youth cyclists, many car-bike crashes occur in signalized crosswalks. The scenario is typically this: A sidewalk cyclist has a WALK signal; a motor-vehicle driver who is turning fails to see the cyclist. Contributing factors include the speed of the cyclist and that the turning driver may be scanning only for slower-moving pedestrians.

Give each student Figure 15-4: Yielding the Right-of-Way. Discuss it, using the examples provided in the answer key.

#### For Your Information

It can't be said enough at this age: If students want to be fully responsible for themselves and their bicycles, they will always (1) ride defensively, (2) ride on the right and in single file, (3) walk their bicycles across crosswalks and busy intersections, and (4) yield the right-of-way to other vehicles, regardless of whether or not they legally have the right-of-way.

4. Turning Left: Discuss Figure 15-6: Turning Left on a Bicycle with students. Then clear a lane in the classroom by moving the desks to either side of the room. Play “Follow the Leader,” with you as leader, calling out the steps for turning left (Answer Key) as you act them out. Then have students take turns as the leader, calling out when to turn. Repeat the procedure until all students understand it.
5. Traffic Signs: Using Figure 15-7: Road Signs, have students reproduce replicas of the signs and create a collage or mobile. One restriction on their work must be that signs have to be shaped and colored just like they are on the street.

### **ASSESSMENT**

Have students devise stories or unfinished stories based on Figure 15-2: Bicycle Rules of the Road.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Please refer to the Iowa Safe Routes to School Encouragement and Education Program Web site for additional resources ([www.iowasaferoutes.org](http://www.iowasaferoutes.org)).

# Hand Signals



Figure 15-1

## **Bicycle Rules of the Road**

1. Ride in proper roadway position
2. Be predictable
3. Read all traffic signs and directions
4. Obey all traffic signs and signals
5. Scan (pay attention)
6. Expect the unexpected
7. Be seen!
8. Be heard!
9. Plan the smartest (safest) route
10. Keep stunts and tricks off streets and roads
11. Carry only what your bike can handle

*Figure 15-2*

## Answer Key to Figure 15-2: Bicycle Rules of the Road

- 1. Ride in proper roadway position.** Always ride on the right side with the flow of traffic, three to four feet from the edge of the road or parked cars. You have a legal right to the lane, so take as much as you need for safety. Groups of cyclists ride single file with a bicycle's length in between. Bicyclists always ride with traffic, but pedestrians walk against traffic. Bike paths are for non-motorized use.
- 2. Be predictable.** Ride in a straight line, change direction without swerving, use hand signals when turning.
- 3. Read all traffic signs and directions.** When lanes are marked for certain movements (right turn, straight through, or left turn), use the lane appropriate for where you want to go.
- 4. Obey all traffic signs and signals.** To be smart (safe) in traffic you have to act like traffic. Bicyclists must follow the same rules motorists do, and can receive traffic citations for breaking the law.
- 5. Scan (pay attention).** Scanning means constantly looking ahead and around for traffic and potential hazards. Use your eyes and ears to alert you to road conditions and situations in time to take action.
- 6. Expect the unexpected.** Expect motor-vehicle drivers to pull out from side streets, alleys, and driveways, to turn left or right in front of you, and to open their doors in your path. If you expect the unexpected, you are better able to react appropriately. Even when a cyclist is going straight and has the right-of-way, they may be riding in a motorist's blind spot, or a motorist simply may not notice a cyclist. Pay attention to a motor vehicle's turn signals and be prepared to perform a quick stop or a quick turn to avoid a collision at intersecting streets. Use extreme caution; stop, scan, or walk your way through all intersections.
- 7. Be seen!** Wear bright colors and put reflectors and retro-reflective tape on yourself, your shoes, and all sides of your bicycle. If you must ride at night, ride with a light that shines 500 feet ahead of you, and with a rear reflector. It is illegal in Iowa to do otherwise.
- 8. Be heard!** If another road user is putting you in danger, shout "Hey!" It's the quickest, most effective way to get a motorist to hear you.
- 9. Plan the smartest (safest) route.** Wherever you are going, there is always a smartest (safest) way to get there. Think ahead and select a route without hazards. A dangerous road could have one or more of the following characteristics: narrow width; little or no shoulder or no sidewalk; high speed limits; poor road conditions (e.g., potholes, loose gravel); many curves or areas where motorists will not see cyclists until right upon them; railroad crossings; ongoing repair or construction. Sometimes bike routes and paths can provide smart (safe) routes.

10. **Keep stunts and tricks off streets and roads.** Just as race cars and stunt cars belong on race tracks, not on regular streets and highways, bicycle tricks should be practiced only on playgrounds and other confined areas.
11. **Carry only what your bike can handle.** Unless your bike is specially built for two, take on no passengers, and don't try to carry packages that won't fit in a bike pack or basket.

*Figure 15-3*

## **Yielding the Right-of-Way**

Q: What does it mean “to yield the right-of-way”?

Q: When must you yield the right-of-way to the other driver?

Q: How do you yield the right of way?

*Figure 15-4*

## **Answer Key to Figure 15-4: Yielding the Right-of-Way**

**Q: What does it mean “to yield the right-of-way”?**

**A:** When two vehicles want to be in the same place at the same time, there will be a collision unless one yields. Yielding the right-of-way simply means waiting to let the other vehicle go first and entering the intersection only after scanning to see that there is a clear and safe gap in traffic. The key is knowing and understanding the rules of who has right-of-way.

**Q: When must you yield the right-of-way to the other driver?**

**A:**

- When a yield sign faces you
- When you stop at a stop sign or a red traffic signal
- When merging into a new line of traffic
- When entering a roadway
- At intersections without stop signs, yield signs, or traffic signals (yield to the driver on the right no matter who reaches the intersection first)
- At railroad crossings
- When you're not sure who has the right-of-way
- When in doubt about what another vehicle driver is going to do

**Q: How do you yield the right-of-way?**

**A:**

- Stop and wait at the edge of traffic
- Scan both ways for other vehicles
- Decide who has the right-of-way in each traffic situation
- Wait for a safe gap in traffic
- Merge into the roadway and take your proper roadway position

*Figure 15-5*

# Turning Left on a Bicycle

**Q: How do you make a left turn on a bicycle?**

**A:**

- Prepare to turn early by checking over your left shoulder for safe gaps in traffic, while maintaining control of your steering.
- After judging that there is a safe gap, give a left-hand turn signal.
- Move sideways into the lane or lanes looking back each time you cross or enter a lane.
- Position yourself to where you are ready to turn – near the left side of the lane, near the center of the roadway.
- Yield the right-of-way to any traffic coming from the opposite direction.
- Turn with both hands on the handlebars (drop your hand signal while turning).
- Take your proper position at the right of the road.
- Never force your way into a line of traffic to turn.
- Remember that you always have the option to walk across. Or ride straight to the far-side crosswalk, then walk your bike across.

*Figure 15-6*



Figure 15-7



ONE-WAY TRAFFIC



TWO-WAY TRAFFIC



RAILROAD CROSSING



WRONG WAY



ROAD NARROWS



MERGING TRAFFIC



STOP



INTERSECTION



YIELD



TRAFFIC SIGNAL AHEAD  
*Figure 15-8*



DO NOT ENTER



STREET ENTERING ON RIGHT

# Hazardous Road Conditions

- Narrow streets, no bike lanes
- Obstructions to visibility (curves, grades, corners)
- Poor lighting conditions (darkness, bright sunlight, glare of headlights)
- Bad weather (rain, sleet, fog, snow)
- Railroad or MAX tracks
- Loose surfaces (gravel, leaves, dust, sand, snow)
- Slick surfaces (water; mud; wet metal, paint, or wood; oil; ice)
- Raised surfaces or objects (metal plates, lane markers, reflectors, raised driveways)
- Holes (potholes, entrances, drains, grates)
- Sharp objects (glass, sharp rocks, pins, staples, wire, sharp pieces of metal)

*Figure 15-9*

## Answer Key to Figure 15-9: Hazardous Road Conditions

- **Narrow streets, no bike lanes**  
Ride as far to the right as possible. Walk your bike through busy intersections.
- **Obstructions to visibility** (curves, grades, corners)  
Ride slowly. Keep scanning. Ride or walk your bike on the sidewalk if you can.
- **Poor lighting conditions** (darkness, bright sunlight, glare of headlights)  
Avoid riding at night whenever possible, but if you must, be certain you have the required front light and rear reflectors. Also wear light-colored clothing: a reflective vest is a wise investment.
- **Bad weather** (rain, sleet, fog, snow)  
Just as motorists do, slow down for these conditions and make sure you're visible with appropriate clothing and equipment. Allow extra time for brakes to work and realize that motorists cannot see well in bad weather conditions.
- **Railroad or MAX tracks**  
Railroad tracks should always be crossed at a 90-degree angle. Any other angle may cause your bike tire to get caught in the rail. Be sure traffic is clear before crossing.
- **Loose surfaces** (gravel, leaves, dust, sand, snow)
- **Slick surfaces** (water; mud; wet metal, paint, or wood; oil; ice)  
Slow down. If these conditions are unavoidable, be sure your turns are made before or after you cross them so you and your bike won't go down on them.
- **Raised surfaces or objects** (metal plates, lane markers, reflectors, raised driveways) Keep an eye on the road in front of you as well as on the traffic around you. Always scan.
- **Holes** (potholes, entrances, drains, grates)  
Scan the ground ahead in order to turn away from these problems. Be careful riding through puddles; sometimes there are potholes underneath. If time or traffic doesn't allow turning, a quick jump by squatting down and then pulling up on the handlebars can get you over one of these obstacles.
- **Sharp objects** (glass, sharp rocks, pins, staples, wire, sharp pieces of metal)  
If you are forced to ride over sharp objects, stop your bike and clean the tire to avoid a puncture in your tire tube.

Figure 15-10

# Techniques for Escaping Hazardous Road Conditions

- Never dart around a hazard without looking first.
- Always slow and maintain a straight line when forced to ride through road hazards like potholes or glass.
- Make a quick and controlled stop; with caliper (hand) brakes, be sure to grab both front and back brake levers at the same time and shift your weight to the rear.
- Make a “sidewalk escape.” When biking on narrow roads, or on streets that seem dangerous to you, carefully and slowly ride onto the sidewalk if available.  
Remember, pedestrians have the right-of-way on sidewalks; be courteous.
- Make a quick turn to avoid an unaware motorist about to run into you, especially at intersections.
- Yell if nothing else is likely to work, or you don’t have time to do anything else.

*Figure 15-11*