



Urban Cycling Tips

It's easy to feel very paranoid when you start cycling in Dallas, but the reality isn't bad at all when you follow these simple tips.

General Tips

- Practice riding your bike until it's second nature. There are too many other hazards to risk being distracted by starting, stopping, signaling, looking behind, and gear changing.
- Cycle 3-6 feet away from the curb and 4 feet away from parked vehicles.
- Assume you're invisible to everyone – always have an escape route.
- Your main visibility weapon is making eye contact with drivers.
- Anticipation is the most effective way to avoid the majority of accidents.
- Your hearing is far better than that of cocooned motorists; use your ears as an information source. Scan the road ahead with your eyes.
- You can buy a flexible orange reflector, which sticks out to the left on your bike to persuade motorists to give you more clearance. Also, the 'controlled wobble' can help, as motorists will be scared you're about to lose control of your bike.
- Use bike routes, back streets, and trails if you can... they should be safer.
- Look behind, and then signal clearly before changing road position or making maneuvers.
- Trust your feelings – if it seems unsafe, then get off and walk until you're past the danger.

Key Hazards to Watch Out For

- Never pass on the right side of large vehicles (between vehicle and curb), especially semis & tractor-trailer trucks. They may turn unexpectedly leaving you few escape routes. Add in parking meters, fire hydrants, and signposts - they can easily be lethal.
- Assume all the doors of parked cars and stationary taxis will open just as you pass.
- The gutter offers many surprises; including drain gratings that can trap your front wheel, broken glass, and other bulky objects (including pedestrians who've stepped off the pavement without looking).
- Rain attracts poorer motorist driving standards, makes manhole covers slippery, and affects your braking ability. Frequent gentle application of brakes helps performance.
- Approaching a side road on the right: You should move in the middle of the right hand lane – if you are turning right it will mean you do not need to swerve out, and if you are going straight on it will discourage right turning motorists from trying to overtake you.
- Traffic Lines: when cycling inside/outside/in-between lanes of traffic, go slowly and be very careful – a car door may open in your face, a vehicle may make a sudden turn, or a pedestrian may be crossing the road – where is your escape route if this happens?
- Danger! Danger! Large yellow buses (DART and school) may suddenly emit or attract small, fast moving humanoids.
- Shopping bags on handlebars or long flowing clothing will eventually catch a wheel, throwing you violently off your bike.
- Effective brakes are vital – do not cycle until they work properly.
- Watch out for commercial vans, sports cars, pedestrians, children, and dogs.
- If a pothole appears just in front, don't swerve out unless you're sure there's no vehicle behind. If you can do it safely, stand up on your pedals before you hit the hole.
- Night: Always use lights. A reflective vest is often very effective.
- Alcohol & Cycling do not mix. Your alertness drops, as does your ability to balance. Bar closing time is riskier for cycling even if you're sober, due to more drunk drivers.

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83% of road bicycle accidents do not involve a motor vehicle. Of these the most likely causes are:

- wet roads
- bag/clothing caught in wheel
- cycling from sidewalk onto road
- bike mechanical failure (brakes, chain falling off),
- collisions with pedestrians and animals.

Traffic Regulations

You must obey the same traffic laws as motorists. There are occasions when you may feel you need to infringe a traffic regulation in order to remain safe – you may have a moral right to do so, but the law will not recognize this unless the situation is exceptional. And flagrantly flouting the rules of the road brings cycling into disrepute. Furthermore, your actions may irritate a motorist so much that they take it out on the cyclist behind you.

Bicycles are Vehicles

Every person riding a bicycle shall be granted all rights and be subject to all duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle. (Sec. 551.101 Texas Transportation Code)

John Forester's Dream

Cyclists fare best when they act as, and are treated the same as, the drivers of other vehicles.

On-Line Dallas Bike Commuter Map

A map of the Dallas Bike Plan is available on-line. Go to www.dallascityhall.com and follow the Online Services button to the Interactive City Map. This is a scalable map that can also display aerial photographs of the city. At the bottom of the Map Legend (left hand side of page) is a link to access more features. Click this link to get an expanded map legend, and then select Bike Routes and Bike Trails. All city streets that are part of the 800 lane-mile Dallas Bike Plan will now be displayed.

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This information has been adapted, with supplementation, from the website of BikeFix London, UK (www.bikefix.co.uk).

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