

# *Illinois*



# *Bicycle*

## *RULES OF THE ROAD*



ALEXI GIANNOULIAS  
Secretary of State

Biking is a fun way to exercise and get around. To remain safe on Illinois roads, bicyclists must obey the same traffic safety laws that govern drivers of vehicles.

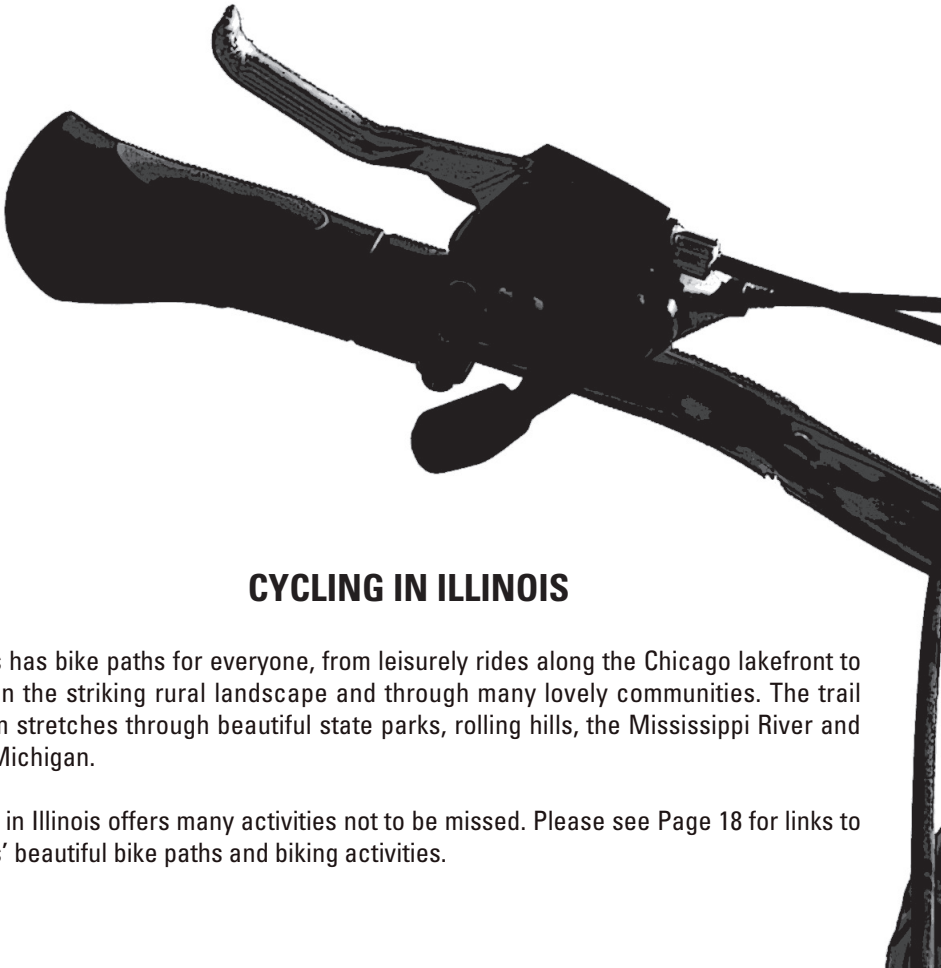
If involved in a vehicle collision, no amount of bicycle safety equipment can adequately protect a rider from the dangerous force of a car or truck. The best way to avoid injury is to prepare for the dangers streets pose.

This manual explains the rules of the road, teaches safe bicycling on Illinois' roads and streets, and provides tips about bicycling. Understanding the information provided in this manual and practicing bicycling skills will enable you to ride with confidence, and provide a lifetime of safe bicycling.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexi Giannoulias". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Alexi Giannoulias  
Secretary of State



## CYCLING IN ILLINOIS

Illinois has bike paths for everyone, from leisurely rides along the Chicago lakefront to trails in the striking rural landscape and through many lovely communities. The trail system stretches through beautiful state parks, rolling hills, the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan.

Biking in Illinois offers many activities not to be missed. Please see Page 18 for links to Illinois' beautiful bike paths and biking activities.

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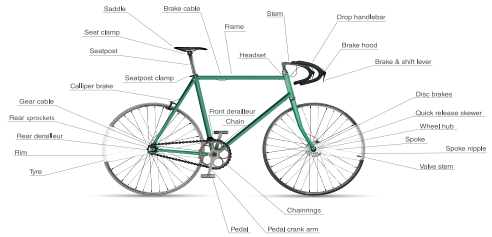
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# BICYCLE SAFETY EQUIPMENT

To ride your bike safely and efficiently, it is important to have all equipment operating smoothly and properly.

## Make sure your bicycle has the following safety equipment:

- ✓ Front light visible for at least 500 feet (night riders).
- ✓ Clear front reflector.
- ✓ Red rear reflector visible from 100 to 600 feet.
- ✓ Horn or bell that can be heard up to 100 feet.
- ✓ Reliable, properly adjusted brakes.
- ✓ Wheel-mounted side reflectors.
- ✓ Reflector pedals.
- ✓ Gears that are adjusted and operate smoothly.
- ✓ Properly adjusted seat.
- ✓ Handlebars and all accessories securely attached.



The structure of the bike

## Bicycle Helmets

Bicycle helmets are an essential element of bicycle safety and must be properly fitted and adjusted. While riding, always wear an approved safety helmet to protect your head and brain from serious injury in case of a crash. Wearing a helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85%.

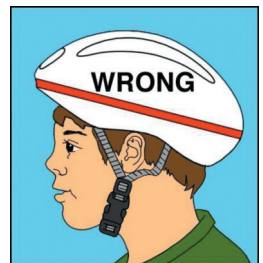
To make sure your helmet fits properly, use the “Eyes-Ears-Mouth” test.

**Eyes:** Position the helmet on your head and look up. You should see the front rim of the helmet.

**Ears:** Make sure the side straps come to a “V” just below each ear.

**Mouth:** Open your mouth wide. You should feel the helmet push down on your head.

If your helmet does not pass the test, adjust the straps or add bigger pads to get the right fit.



## Night Riding Equipment

Illinois law requires a front light and a rear reflector when riding at night.

### Equipment for night riding:

- ✓ Reflective tape on helmet.
- ✓ Reflective safety vest.
- ✓ Clip-on strobe light.
- ✓ Rear light and reflectors.
- ✓ Reflective tape.
- ✓ Headlight.
- ✓ Reflective sidewall tires.

### TIP :

**Ride with extra caution at night.  
It is harder to see drivers and predict  
their moves.**

## Carrying Equipment

Carrying any package, bundle or article that prevents the use of both hands in the control and operation of a bicycle is not only dangerous but illegal. Use **baskets, panniers, saddlebags or a plastic crate to carry items**. Any load should be carefully attached.

Trailers can also be used to haul large, heavy or awkward loads. There are trailers specifically designed to transport children (see Bicycling with Children Pages 15-16) and others for hauling cargo.

## SAFE BIKE/"ABC" QUICK CHECK

Making sure your bike is in good condition before each ride is an important part of riding safely. Before riding, conduct an "ABC" Check.

**A is for Air.** Check the air pressure, spin the wheels and make sure the tires are not worn out.

**B is for Brakes.** Check to determine if the coaster brakes will stop the bike by spinning the back wheel and applying the brake. If the bike has hand brakes, check to see that the levers do not hit the handlebars when squeezed. Lift one tire up at a time and spin it; squeeze the brakes to see if the tire stops.

**C is for Chains and Cranks.** Pull on the cranks to determine they are not loose. Check the chain to make sure it is not rusted or full of gunk.



# BICYCLE RULES OF THE ROAD

**A bicyclist in Illinois has all the rights and responsibilities applicable to the driver of any other vehicles. Bicyclists must obey the rules of the road and be responsible for their actions, for their safety and the safety of others.**

## Where and How to Ride

**Ride on the Right** — Ride as close as practicable and safe to the right-hand curb or edge of roadway.

**When You Can Move Left** — A bicyclist may move left under the following conditions:

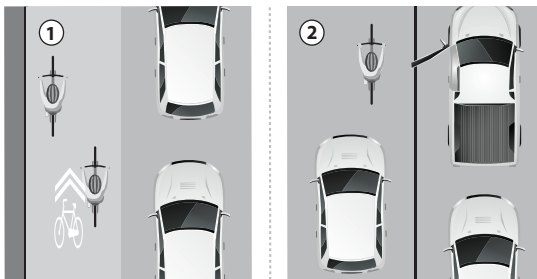
1. When overtaking or passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction.
2. When preparing for a left turn.
3. When necessary to avoid fixed or moving objects, parked or moving vehicles, motorized pedal cycles, animals, surface hazards, or a lane that is too narrow (less than 14 feet) for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane.
4. When approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.
5. When riding on a one-way highway with two or more marked traffic lanes.

**Ride in the Same Direction as Other Traffic** — When riding, you must ride in the same direction as other traffic. Riding in the opposite direction of traffic is both dangerous and illegal.

**Riding Side by Side** — Riding two abreast is permitted as long as the normal and reasonable movement of traffic is not impeded. Riding more than two abreast is prohibited except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.

**Ride One to a Bike** — Ride one to a bike unless it is specifically designed to carry additional passengers or cargo. A bike is harder to balance with another person on it. Also, a passenger may block the view of the surroundings.

**Avoid the “door zone”** — The “door zone” extends 4 feet along the left side of a lane of parked cars, where a person opening a door while exiting a car can hit and seriously injure a person biking. As shown below, (1) Ride at least 4 feet away from parked cars on the street. (2) Take the full lane if there is no room to safely pass open car doors and to avoid exiting passengers.



**Riding on Sidewalks (where permitted)** — When riding on sidewalks, you must:

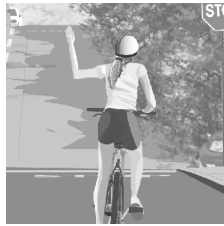
- ✓ Obey all pedestrian signs and signals.
- ✓ Yield the right of way to pedestrians on sidewalks or crosswalks. Slow down and go around pedestrians when possible.
- ✓ Slow down and provide audible signal (such as a bell or horn) to alert your presence before passing a pedestrian from behind.

## Using Hand Signals

Use hand signals to communicate your intent to motorists. There are four important hand signals you must know and use every time you prepare to turn or stop. When turning, you must signal about one-third of a block before you turn.



Left-turn Signal



Right-turn Signal  
(using left arm)



Right-turn Signal  
(using right arm)



Stop Signal

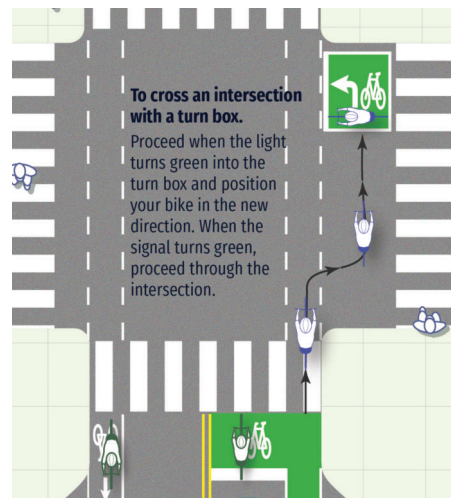
## Turning

Before turning, look over your shoulder for any traffic. Proceed only when it is safe. By law, bicyclists must stop for pedestrians at crosswalks and intersections as is done by motorist.

**Right Turns** — Right turns must be made from the right lane. If a vehicle is turning right ahead of you, it is important to wait. Do not assume motorists can see you. Avoid squeezing by on the right at intersections.

**Left Turns** — When making a left turn, you have two choices:

1. Complete the turn as a vehicle would. When a left-turn lane exists, you should stay in the right side of that lane. After entering the intersection, look in all directions and complete the turn when it is safe.
2. Stay as close as necessary to the right curb or edge of the roadway when entering the intersection. Proceed straight across the roadway to the opposite corner and wait at this location. After obeying any traffic control device, you may directly cross the street again to complete the turn in the new direction. Some municipalities have bicycle turn boxes (see image) at certain intersections to facilitate this movement.



## Yielding the Right of Way

Since bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as drivers of vehicles and pedestrians, the rules that govern the right of way for motorists and pedestrians apply to bicyclists also. When bicycling, you must follow rules that govern the right of way.

**Two-way Intersections** — When coming to a stop sign at a two-way stop intersection, you must yield the right of way to pedestrians and vehicles on the cross street before proceeding.

**Four-way Intersections** — When arriving at four-way stop intersection, the vehicle or bicyclist who arrives first at the intersection should be the first to go. Take turns and go one by one through the intersection after coming to a complete stop. Proceed only when it is safe to do so.

**Unmarked Intersections** — When arriving at an unmarked intersection or crossing where there are no traffic signs or signals, the driver or bicyclist on the left must yield to those on the right. When proceeding out of an alley or driveway, you must stop and yield the right of way to pedestrians and vehicles before crossing the sidewalk or entering the street.

**Emergency Vehicles** — Emergency vehicles with their lights flashing and sirens sounding always have the right of way. The law requires that drivers or bicyclists pull over to the side of the road and stop, if necessary, until the emergency vehicle passes.

**Disabled Persons** — Persons who are blind, hearing impaired or physically disabled can be identified by their white canes, support or guide dogs. Always yield the right of way to them.

**Police** — If a police officer directs otherwise, the right of way laws do not apply; riders and pedestrians must obey the officer's directions.



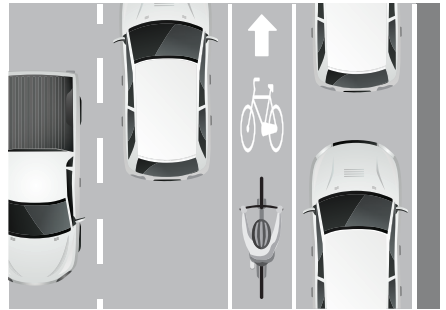


# BICYCLE LANES

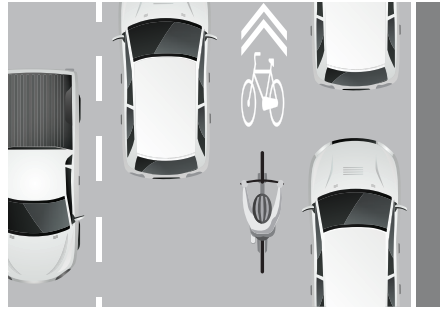
When a bicycle lane is properly marked on city streets, a bicyclist should stay within this space when practical. As bicyclists are riding in their designated lanes, they should be aware of parked vehicles and the possibility a motorist could unexpectedly open the door.

## Types of Bicycle Lanes:

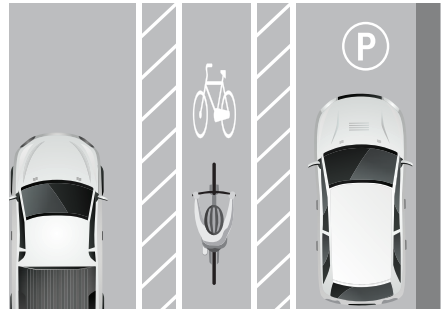
**Bike Lanes** are striped, on-street lanes with a bicycle symbol and an arrow. Avoid riding in the “door zone” where a door can open into the bike lane.



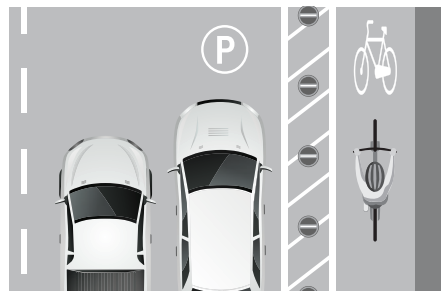
**Marked Shared Lanes** are not striped but show the bicycle symbol and a chevron. They are typically installed when there is not enough width for a full bike lane.



**Buffer-Protected Bike Lanes** are similar to conventional bike lanes, with extra space to keep cyclists further from parked vehicles and opening doors.



**Barrier-Protected Bike Lanes** use physical barriers between cyclists and moving cars to help people of all ages feel more comfortable on the street. The lane is usually located next to the curb. Cars park between the bike lane and car travel lane.



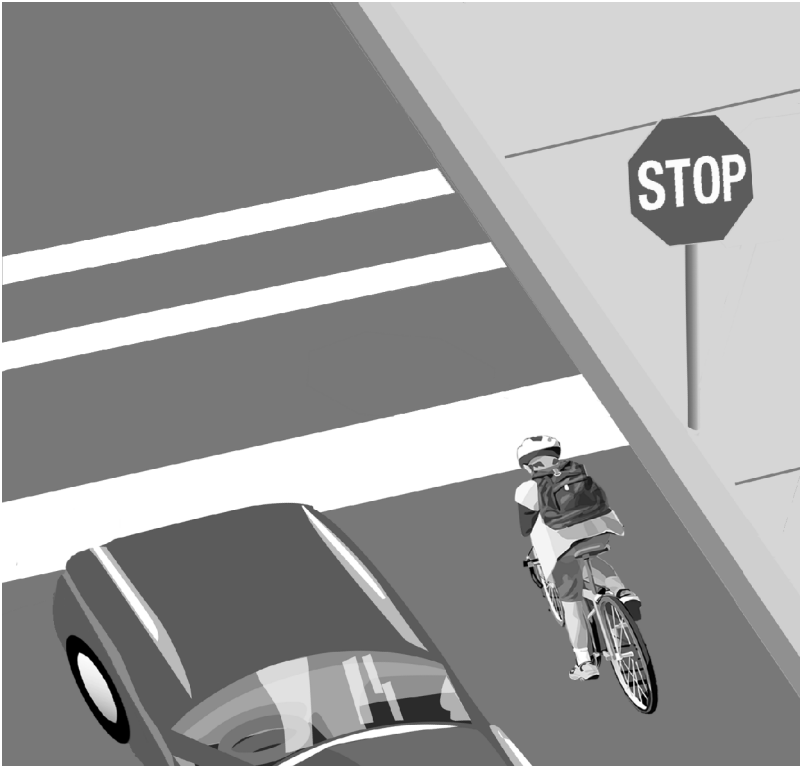
# PAVEMENT MARKINGS

**White Stop Line** — Shows where a bicyclist must come to a complete stop for a traffic light or stop sign.

**Pedestrian Crosswalks** — Many intersections have crosswalks. Watch for pedestrians in the crosswalk. Pedestrians have the right of way. Do not block the crosswalk when waiting at the intersection.

**Center Lines** — A double yellow center stripe indicates there is more than one lane of traffic moving in both directions. Crossing the line is prohibited (except to turn out of or into a driveway or alley). White dashes mark the lane separations on either side of the double yellow stripe. Bicyclists should ride on the right side of the right lane when safe, except to pass or make a left turn. When there is only one lane for traffic traveling in each direction and passing is permitted, the center of the street is marked with a broken yellow stripe.

**Directions and Arrows** — Some busy streets have lanes with specific individual directions painted on them. These directions include “left only” or “right only,” or an arrow pointing straight ahead. Bicyclists must follow the directions of the arrows painted on the lanes.



# TRAFFIC SIGNALS AND SIGNS

Bicyclists, as well as drivers, must obey all traffic signs and signals. The signs and signals warn of railroad crossings and other hazards and advise you where you may ride your bike.

## Traffic Lights

**Red Light** — You must stop before the intersection or crosswalk until the light changes to green.

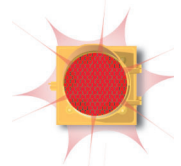
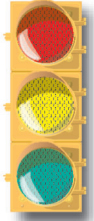
**Yellow Light** — This is a warning light that means the signal is changing from green to red. Prepare to stop.

**Green Light** — Continue on a green light, but first look carefully in all directions to determine if it is safe to proceed.

**Note:** A bicyclist may proceed after yielding the right of way to oncoming traffic if a red light fails to turn green after waiting for at least 120 seconds. Regarding red light left turns, this rule does not apply in all communities.

**Flashing Red Light** — Stop. Look left, then right, then left again. Proceed when safe to do so.

**Flashing Yellow Light** — Slow down and ride carefully.



## Traffic Signs



**Stop**  
Come to a complete stop.



**Bike Traffic**  
This sign alerts other drivers that there is bike traffic on a street.



**Yield**  
Slow down and let other vehicles or pedestrians go before you proceed.



**Pedestrian Crosswalk**  
Bicyclists and motorists must always yield the right of way to pedestrians.



**One Way**  
Traffic may go only one way on this street. Ride in the direction the arrow points.



**School Crossing**  
At a school crossing, you must let pedestrians go first.



**Wrong Way**  
This sign advises you are riding in the wrong direction on a street.



**Railroad Crossing**  
Stop, look and listen. Never ride through, around or under any crossing gate.



**No Bikes**  
Where this sign appears, bicycles are not allowed on streets or sidewalks.



**Road Construction**  
Watch for bumpy roads and large equipment.

# SHARING THE ROAD

Whether driving, bicycling or walking, we all have the responsibility to share the road safely with other vehicles and users. The following laws and safety tips will help drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians share the road and reach their destination safely.

## Bicyclists

- ✓ Obey the same traffic laws, signs and signals that apply to motorists.
- ✓ Be visible.
- ✓ Ride as close to the right edge of the road as is safe.
- ✓ Communicate using hand signals.
- ✓ Avoid the “door zone.”
- ✓ Ride in the same direction as other traffic, not against traffic.

**Note:** Bicyclists are prohibited on controlled-access highways, expressways and certain other marked roadways.

## Pedestrians

- ✓ Always stop before leaving a driveway or sidewalk.
- ✓ Before crossing, stop at the curb, edge of the road or corner before proceeding.
- ✓ Look left, look right and look left again before crossing.
- ✓ Continue to check for traffic while crossing.
- ✓ If there is a pedestrian signal, only cross when allowed to do so.

### Pedestrian Signals:

A flashing **DON'T WALK** signal indicates you **DO NOT CROSS** the street. If you are in the middle of the street and the **DON'T WALK** signal starts flashing, continue walking. Newer pedestrian signals now have a countdown timer for the flashing **DON'T WALK** signal. If you see a steady **DON'T WALK** signal, do not begin to cross the street. Wait for the next **WALK** signal.

The **WALK** signal and the **GREEN** traffic light indicate that it is your turn to cross the street, but does not mean it is safe to cross. The **WALK** signal and the **GREEN** light mean: Look, and then if it is safe, proceed.



**TIP :**  
Remember to make eye contact  
with drivers to ensure they see you.



# Motorists

**Passing a bicyclist** — When passing a bicyclist, you are required by law to allow at least 3 feet of space between your vehicle and the bicyclist. More space is better, especially when driving at higher speeds. Since lanes on most roads are too narrow (less than 14 feet) to legally pass a bicycle within the same lane, drivers usually must merge over at least partially into the next lane to pass. If needed, wait to merge over and do not pass until it is safe to do so.

**Passing a bicyclist in a no-passing zone** — When driving in a no-passing zone, you may pass people biking in the same direction if:

- ✓ They are traveling at a speed of less than half of the posted speed limit.
- ✓ You are able to overtake and pass the bicyclist without exceeding the speed limit.
- ✓ There is sufficient distance ahead on the left side to pass safely.

**Prevent “Dooring”** — When exiting a vehicle, you should use the “Dutch Reach” method: reach across with the hand farthest from the vehicle door when preparing to exit. By using this simple method, you automatically turn your body to the vehicle door, forcing you to look for oncoming bicyclists or other traffic.



**Respect the bike lane** — Some municipalities have roadways with designated bike lanes. Even if bicyclists biking are not present, do not drive, park or stand in the bike lane. Wait for bicyclists to pass before entering the lane to park.

**Check for bicyclists before turning** — Yield to bicyclists and do not underestimate their speed. Watch for oncoming bicycle traffic when turning left. Do not pass and then cut in front of a bicyclist when turning right. Check all mirrors and blind spots for bicyclists.

**Stop at the stop line** — Coming to a stop in front of a stop line places pedestrians and bicyclists who are in the crosswalk at risk. Even if a stop line is placed too far back from the intersection to see well, stop at the stop line first and look both ways before moving forward for a better view. When turning right on red or at a stop sign, be sure to look to your right before turning.

**Yield the right of way to a bicyclist just as you would another vehicle.**

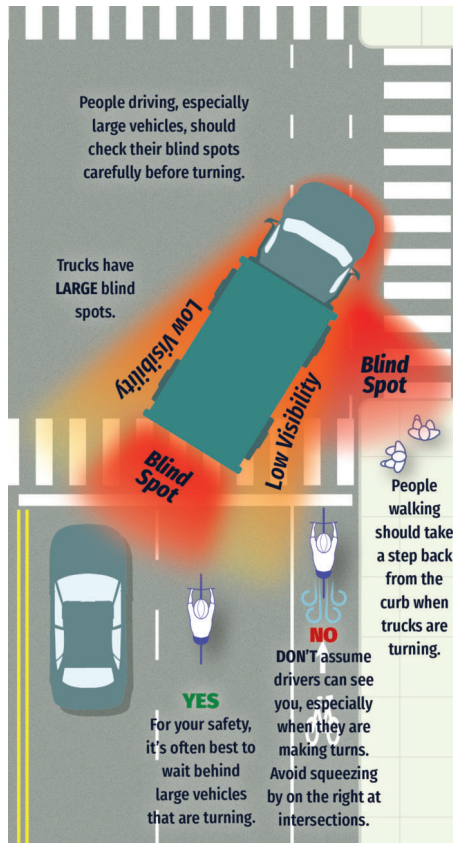
**Respect bicyclists** — If a person drives in a reckless manner, unnecessarily close to or toward a bicyclist, and it results in a crash, the motorist may face misdemeanor or felony charges depending on the severity of the injury. Bicyclists may need to ride outside a bike lane, and motorists should be prepared to move safely around them. The bicyclist must be aware of the direction a vehicle is traveling when properly completing a left or right turn.

## Sharing the Road with School Buses

When approaching a school bus with flashing signal lights and the STOP arm out, bicyclists must give the stop hand signal and come to a complete stop. A bicyclist may proceed when the STOP arm retracts and the school bus's flashing signals are turned off.

## Sharing the Road with Trucks

Be cautious around trucks and large vehicles. Motorist's driving large vehicles should check their blind spots carefully before turning. For a bicyclist's safety, it is often best to wait behind large vehicles that are turning. Do not assume drivers can see you, especially when they are making turns. Trying to squeeze by on the right at intersections can be especially dangerous.



## DISTRACTED BICYCLING/WALKING

Some of the main causes of being distracted while walking or bicycling are:

- ✓ Looking at a cellphone.
- ✓ Listening to music.
- ✓ Talking to a walking companion.
- ✓ Crossing streets.
- ✓ Riding in the rain.

### **TIP :**

**Never wear headphones when bicycling.  
They block other sounds you need to hear.**

## WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF A CRASH

Follow these steps if you are involved in a crash:

- ✓ Call (or ask someone to call) 911 and ask for the police. Do not hesitate to ask for an ambulance, if injured.
- ✓ Ask the motorist to provide ID and stay at the scene until the police arrive.
- ✓ Obtain the name, phone number, address, driver's license number and license plate number of the motorist.
- ✓ Obtain names and phone numbers of any witnesses — the more the better. A business card is great. If someone seems friendly, ask for his or her help.
- ✓ Obtain the name of the car owner's insurance company and the policy number. If the driver does not own the car, make sure you obtain all insurance information on the vehicle AND the driver of the vehicle.

### **TIP :**

**Always carry identification with you in  
case of a crash.**



# BICYCLING WITH CHILDREN

## Parental Responsibility

Parents and guardians should be aware of the responsibilities they must assume when their children ride bikes or walk near streets or highways. These responsibilities range from selecting the proper equipment for the child to wear to teaching the child all traffic laws.

Since children perceive traffic situations differently than adults, it is important for parents or guardians to teach children the dangers of traffic. With proper training, bicycling can be a safe, healthy and fun activity for the whole family to enjoy.

## Bicycle Fit

One size does not fit all. Children should be able to comfortably straddle the top bar of the frame while standing flat footed. Learning to ride on a traditional girl's bike is a choice to consider for both girls and boys as the sloping top tube reduces the risk of injury to the groin. When children are first learning to ride, they should be able to sit on the seat and put both feet flat on the ground.

## Transporting Children

Parents can take advantage of many options for transporting children. Whether they are in a bike trailer or a child's seat, children should not ride or be carried on a bike or a trailer until they can sit upright while supporting the weight of their own head and helmet. Check local laws. In some places, it is illegal to carry a child under 12 months old on a bike.

### Bike Trailers

Bike trailers provide a very stable and secure way to transport kids. They offer a good amount of hauling capacity (some trailers will fit two children side by side). Since trailers are lower to the ground, be sure to use a flag to increase visibility.



### Child Seats

Before riding with a child, practice mounting, dismounting and riding with the seat loaded with extra weight (bricks, etc). These seats should not be used for kids who weigh more than 40 pounds. (Kids should not be given toys or objects, which might be dropped into the bike's wheels.)



## Trailer Cycles

A trailer cycle, which attaches by a hitch to the back of another bike, is a good option for a child learning to ride. It is also designed for longer rides when a child lacks the stamina to keep up. Geared trailer cycles allow the child to pedal and contribute to propelling the bike, or the rider can coast independently.



## Riding with Kids on Their Own Bikes

When riding bikes with children, always ride in a single file line. Adults should ride behind and slightly to the left of the children. If there are two adults riding in the group, one should ride in front of the children and the more experienced rider should ride at the back. All adults in the riding group should maintain communication with the children, advising children where to go, and coach them on their position on the bike and on the road.

## Sidewalk vs Street Riding

When riding or jogging with children, here are some helpful tips for utilizing the street or sidewalk. First, check with the local municipality for the required age to ride in the street. If jogging, you should have the children ride on the sidewalk, and run along next to them. If riding, you should have the children ride on the sidewalk, and ride on the street beside them. Coach the children to watch for cars entering and leaving driveways and alleys.



# ELECTRIC BICYCLES

The state of Illinois has implemented a three-class electric assist bicycle system (e-bikes). All e-bikes operating in Illinois must comply with equipment and manufacturing requirements adopted by the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission. A person may operate an e-bike upon any highway, street or roadway authorized for use by bicycles including, but not limited to, bicycle lanes. A person may operate an e-bike upon any bicycle path unless the municipality, county or local authority with jurisdiction prohibits the use of e-bikes or a specific class of e-bike on the path. A person may not operate an e-bike on sidewalks. The three classes of e-bikes in Illinois are as follows:

Class 1 e-bike – Low-speed electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches speeds of 20 mph.

Class 2 e-bike – Low-speed electric bicycle equipped with a motor that be used exclusively to propel the bicycle and is not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle reaches speeds of 20 mph.

Class 3 e-bike – Low-speed electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a speed of 28 mph.



# RESOURCES

## **Illinois Bicycle Laws**

Illinois Vehicle Code – 625 ILCS 5/11-1501 thru 625 ILCS 5/11-1516

## **Bicycle Safety Quiz**

Ride Illinois

[rideillinois.org/safety/bike-safety-quiz](http://rideillinois.org/safety/bike-safety-quiz)

## **Bicycle Trails**

Ride Illinois

[rideillinois.org/maps](http://rideillinois.org/maps)

[trailink.com/state-activity/il-bike-trails](http://trailink.com/state-activity/il-bike-trails)

[enjoyillinois.com/travel-illinois/biking-in-illinois](http://enjoyillinois.com/travel-illinois/biking-in-illinois)

Illinois Department of Transportation

[idot.illinois.gov/travel-information/recreation/trails-paths-streets/index](http://idot.illinois.gov/travel-information/recreation/trails-paths-streets/index)

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

[illinois.gov/dnr/publications/Documents/00000642.pdf#search=bike%20trail%20maps](http://illinois.gov/dnr/publications/Documents/00000642.pdf#search=bike%20trail%20maps)

## **Community Resources**

ilsos.gov

[ilsos.gov/publications/pdf\\_publications/dsd\\_a143.pdf](http://ilsos.gov/publications/pdf_publications/dsd_a143.pdf)

[ilsos.gov/departments/drivers/traffic\\_safety/bikepedsafety.html](http://ilsos.gov/departments/drivers/traffic_safety/bikepedsafety.html)

[ilsos.gov/publications/pdf\\_publications/dsd\\_a170.pdf](http://ilsos.gov/publications/pdf_publications/dsd_a170.pdf)

Ride Illinois

[rideillinois.org](http://rideillinois.org)

**For more information on  
bicycle safety, please contact:**

**Secretary of State  
Driver Services Department  
Traffic Safety Division  
2701 S. Dirksen Pkwy.  
Springfield, IL 62723**

**ilsos.gov**