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The Broward Sheriff's Office would like to thank  
AAA Auto Club for input on bike safety tips and  
material contained in this handout.



# BICYCLES ARE VEHICLES

## BICYCLE LAWS and SAFETY TIPS



Pride in Service with Integrity<sup>SM</sup>  
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## LEGAL STATUS

In Florida a bicycle is legally defined as a vehicle. Bicyclists have rights to the roadway with exceptions, and must obey the same traffic laws, as the operators of other vehicles. The laws include: stopping for stop signs and red lights, riding with the flow of traffic, using lights at night, and yielding to right-of-way when entering a roadway.

### Bicycle Regulations FSS 316.2065

- A bicyclist must obey all traffic controls and signals.
- A bicyclist must use a fixed, regular seat for riding.
- No bicycle may be used to carry more persons at one time than the number for which it is designed or equipped. (Exception: Adults may carry a child securely attached to his or her person in a sling or backpack.)
- Except as provided in previous paragraph, a bicycle rider must carry any passenger who is a child under 4 years of age, weighs less than 40 lb's, in a seat or carrier that is designed to carry and protect the child from moving parts of the bicycle.
- Riders must keep at least one hand on the handlebars while riding.
- Every bicycle must be equipped with a brake or brakes that allow the rider to stop within 25 feet from a speed of 10 miles per hour on dry level, clean pavement.
- Parents and guardians must not knowingly allow a child or minor ward to violate any provisions of this section.

### Wearing Helmet FSS 316.2065 (3) (D)

- A bicycle rider or passenger who is under 16 years of age must wear a bicycle helmet that is properly fitted and is fastened securely upon the passenger's head by a strap, and meets the federal safety standard for bicycle helmets. The term "passenger" includes a child who is riding in a trailer or semitrailer attached to a bicycle.
- Effective October 1, 2012, Florida statute requires compliance with the federal safety standards for bicycle helmets contained in 16 C.F.R., part 1203. Helmets purchased prior to October 1, 2012, in compliance with the existing statutory standards (American National Standard Institute or the standards of the Snell Memorial Foundation) may continue to be worn legally by riders or passengers until January 1, 2016.

### Sidewalk Riding FSS 316.2065 (9) (10)

- When riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks, a bicyclist has the same rights and duties as a pedestrian.
- A bicyclist riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and must give an audible signal before passing.

### Lighting FSS 316.2065 (7)

- A bicycle operating between sunset and sunrise must be equipped with a lamp on the front, exhibiting a white light visible from 500 feet to the front and both a red reflector and a lamp on the rear exhibiting a red light visible from 600 feet to the rear.
- Additional lighting is permitted and recommended. See the "Night Riding" section for safety tips.

### Roadway Position FSS 316.2065, 5(b) 6

- A bicyclist who is not traveling at the same speed as other traffic must ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway, or designated bike lane. A bicyclist may leave the right-most portion of the road in the following situations: when passing, making a left turn, to avoid hazards, or when a lane is too narrow for a bicycle and a car to share it safely.
- A bicyclist operating on a one-way street with two or more traffic lanes may ride as close to the left-hand edge of the roadway as is practicable.
- Persons riding bicycles upon a roadway may not ride more than two abreast except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. Persons riding two abreast may not impede traffic when traveling at less than the normal speed of traffic at the time and place and under the conditions then existing and shall ride within a single lane.
- A bicyclist traveling on or crossing a roadway must yield right of way to pedestrians.

### Left Turns 316.151 (1) (b, c)

- A bicyclist intending to make a left turn is entitled to full use of the lane from which the turn is made. After scanning, signaling and moving to the center of the lane, the bicyclist must check the signal, and then proceed when it is green and safe to do so.
- In addition to the normal left turn, a bicyclist may proceed through the right-most portion of the intersection and turn as close to the curb or edge as possible at the far side. After complying with any official traffic control device, the bicyclist may proceed in the new direction of travel.
- A bicyclist is to dismount and walk through the intersection in the crosswalk like a pedestrian.

### Signaling Turns FSS 316.155 (2) and FSS 316.157

- A signal of intention to turn must be given by the bicyclist during the last 100 feet traveling before turning. If a bicyclist needs both hands for control, the signal need not be given continuously.
- A bicyclist may signal intent to turn right either by extending the left hand and arm upward or by extending the right hand and arm horizontally to the right side of the bicycle.

# BSO WESTON DISTRICT BICYCLES ARE VEHICLES



## Headsets FSS 316.304

- A bicyclist must not wear a headset, headphone, or other listening device (other than a hearing aid) when riding. Wearing a headset blocks out important audio cues needed to detect the presence of other traffic.

## Bike Registration

- The Broward Sheriff's Office has developed the Bike Tracking Registration System to help reduce the number of bicycle thefts in Broward County and to support law enforcement officers in their efforts to recover lost or stolen bicycles. In order to register your bicycle go to [sheriff.org](http://sheriff.org), locate the District you reside in and follow the directions on registering your bicycle.

## AVOIDING ACCIDENTS

### Night Riding

Nearly 60% of all adult fatal bicycle accidents in Florida occur during twilight and night hours, although less than 3 percent of bicycle use takes place at that time.

Many factors compound the danger of riding at night, such as:

- Motorists driving under the influence of alcohol.
- Motorists' abilities to see what is ahead is limited to the area illuminated by headlights. Visibility is further reduced by the glare from lights of oncoming cars.
- Roadways with motor vehicle speeds above 40 MPH pose extreme risk at night.
- Red reflectors on the rear of a bicycle may be mistaken for reflectors on roadside mail boxes.
- Are you wearing highly reflective clothing? Is your bike light operating? Before riding at night every bicyclist should consider the extreme risk.

### Night Riding Tip

When a car approaches from the rear at night, watch your shadow as it is cast by the headlights. If it moves to the right as the car nears, the driver has moved to the left to pass. If it is stationary, the driver may not have detected you, move out of the way!

For those who must ride at night, use of additional lighting and reflectors is strongly encouraged. The use of leg lamps or any other lights that create motion should be considered. Battery-powered and generator-type systems are readily available and a small investment when it comes to staying alive. Reflective tape on the bicycle and reflective clothes are additional insurance.

### Failure to Yield

A crash may be caused by failure on the part of the bicyclist or motorist to yield the right-of-way at driveways

and intersections. Making eye contact with a motorist will help. Bicyclists can help prevent accidents by yielding the right-of-way when required to, stopping for red lights and stop signs, and scanning to make sure the way is clear before turning left.

### Wrong-Way Riding

Another cause of bicycle/car crashes is bicyclists riding against traffic. By riding against traffic, bicyclists remove themselves from the normal scanning pattern of other vehicle operators, making them more likely to be hit. In addition, the reaction time of both the motorist and bicyclist approaching one another is cut dramatically. Riding on the right side of the roadway can help prevent crashes from happening.

### Opening Car Doors/Parked Cars

Some crashes are the result of a motorist opening the door of a parked car in front of a passing bike. Avoid this by riding no closer than three feet to a parked car. Also, be sure to watch for signs that a motorist wants to move into traffic. Be prepared to use the "panic stop".

### Overtaking Cars

Statistically, this is not a big problem during daylight hours. It usually occurs at night on rural roads and involves an unlighted bicyclist and a motorist who has been drinking. Many bicyclists worry about what is behind them (this is why some ride against traffic). Becoming proficient at scanning (see Scanning Tips) to occasionally check traffic to the rear will ease worries about involvement in this type of accident.

### Communicating With Motorists

Do your part in educating motorists to bicyclists' needs. Always signal your intentions and needs. If a motorist had been delayed temporarily while you are maneuvering, give a friendly wave of thanks. Being courteous promotes a safer riding environment and reduces incidents of road rage or aggressive driving.

### Scanning Tips

Like most riding skills, scanning to the rear takes practice. If you have trouble looking over your shoulder without swerving, try the following:

- Get a friend to hold your handlebars while you sit on the bike. Look over your left shoulder keeping both hands on the handlebars, and notice what your hands, arms, and shoulders are doing. Your left side is probably pulling back on the handlebar.
- After a little practice at moving only your head, find an empty parking lot and try it while riding in a straight line. Then try dropping your left hand and resting it on your thigh while looking over your left shoulder and coasting for a while.

## SAFETY EQUIPMENT

### Helmets

Nearly 75% of all bicycle-related deaths are the result of head injuries. The use of helmets would prevent many of these deaths. Some tests suggest that a hard-shell helmet lined with polyester is more effective than other types in preventing head injury.

A bicycle shop is a good place to buy a helmet. A knowledgeable professional should assist you with selection and proper fit. Make sure the helmet meets the "Consumer Product Safety Commission 1999" helmet safety standard. Code of Federal Regulation Title 16, part 1203, Helmet safety standard.

### Gloves

Gloves provide protection for hands in case of a fall and a better grip of the handlebars.

### Mirrors

Use a rearview mirror to keep track of traffic approaching from behind. Mirrors that attach to glasses or a helmet allow for scanning by turning your head from side to side. Some mirrors attach to the handlebars, research which would be more comfortable for you before purchasing.

### Safety Flag or Vest

A pennant shaped flag or vest made of "day-glow" orange material helps where heavy traffic conceals a bicyclist from view. Being visible is a very important part of avoiding collisions. It is encouraged that every bicyclist be equipped or wears highly reflective clothing or vest.

### Bike Carriers

Bicycle riding requires total concentration. Do not add to distractions by trying to carry things in your hands such as cell phones, electronic devices or packages. Use a carrier.

## EMERGENCY MANEUVERS

*Note: There is an element of risk in practicing the following emergency maneuvers. You may fall, so wear long pants, long sleeves, gloves, and a helmet. Start slowly, then work up to normal speed.*

**Rock Dodge:** A wide swerve around a pothole or rock can send you into the path of an overtaking auto. A "rock dodge" will allow you to avoid any last-minute hazards without swerving.

For practice, toss a sponge into a clear area in an empty parking lot. Slowly pedal directly toward the sponge and at the last second turn your handlebars left to avoid it.

Quickly turn back to the right to prevent a fall. Then straighten out. Hitting the object with your rear wheel is not serious, since the front wheel steers the bicycle. Once you become accomplished at this maneuver, traffic behind you will not even notice it.

**Emergency Turns:** If a car suddenly turns into your path, what do you do? Hopefully, you anticipate the problem and can stop in time. If you cannot stop, then turn **with** the car. To do this, turn the front wheel to the left toward the car, forcing your body to lean to the right. Now quickly turn to the right at a sharp angle to follow alongside the car. In most cases, you will avoid the collision. Practice this technique in the parking lot. It will probably feel uncomfortable at first.

**Panic Stop:** Stopping fast requires a harder use of the front brake and than the rear brake. However, this can cause you to catapult. To counteract this tendency, practice the following in an empty parking lot wearing a helmet: Ride slowly; then, at a predetermined point, apply both brakes evenly while moving back on the saddle and lowering your chest horizontally. As you move back and down, apply greater pressure to the front brake until it is about three times the pressure on the rear brake.

Continue practicing at gradually faster speeds, but remember, if you feel the rear wheel beginning to skid, let off a bit on the front brake.

## HANDLING HAZARDS

**Railroad Tracks:** Be sure to cross railroad tracks at a 90-degree angle; otherwise, the tracks may trap the front wheel, causing a fall.

**Potholes:** Hitting a pothole can cause a fall and injury or, at a minimum, damage wheel rims, spokes, and forks. A wide swerve around a pothole can send you into the path of an overtaking car. Use the "rock dodge" maneuver to avoid potholes.

**Grates:** Tires may fall through sewer and drainage grates. When the front tire drops, you go over the handlebars. Scan for traffic and move further into the lane to go around.

**Rain:** Watch out for slippery surfaces, especially leaves/branches, motor oil, and paint strips. Corner slowly, avoid puddles, and brake early.

**Sand, Gravel, Leaves:** Steer around these when possible. If you must ride over them, steer a straight line and never brake or turn sharply.