

RIDING FOR BEGINNERS

Photo Source: Tomi Vadász

BENEFITS OF BICYCLING

- Simple solution to two major problems: congestion and greenhouse gas emissions
- Increased physical activity
- Boost to brain
- Freedom of movement
- No need for a car
- Be social on group rides and with family

GETTING READY TO RIDE

PLANNING TO GET OUT ON THE BIKE

- Inflate tires regularly
- Start slow, build up the skills
- Careful getting on and off
- Consider adaptations to the bike
- Practice in a parking lot
- Avoid traffic/find the off-street pathways
- Start with short trips
- Go on quieter days

3 KEYS TO BIKE RIDING SUCCESS

- Comfort
- Knowledge
- Awareness

PHYSICAL CHALLENGES TO KEEP IN MIND

- Limited flexibility
- Risk of injury
- Shifting balance
- Limited vision (especially peripheral)
- Slower response time
- Hearing limitations
- Getting on/off the bike

FLEXIBILITY IS KEY TO COMFORT

- Stretch before
- Try a stationary bike
- Fit your bike to your body

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PLANNING YOUR RIDE

START AND END OF TRIP CONSIDERATIONS

- Think about where you'll be parking your bike
- If your workplace/home has an indoor bike parking secure room, use it
- Try to get something out of the way flow of sidewalk, out of way where it's identifiable

PLANNING YOUR BIKE ROUTE

- Start by checking a bike map
- Find a fun route that feels safe
- Get familiar with bicycle infrastructure and get to know the different comfort levels associated with different types of roads, frequency of traffic, speed, and more. There are instances where bike infrastructure is available, but is placed in high traffic corridors which might not be the most comfortable to ride in. Sometimes using lower stress inland roads without bike infrastructure could be helpful, but will require you to build a route, as all preferred roads might not make a complete network. A good resource for this is the City of Boston's [Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress map](#) or [Trailmap.mapc.org](#) where you can filter out different types of roads and learn about Boston's cycling network.
- Try out new routes with a bike buddy or members of your local community to know the best routes around. It's also important to be open-minded, but also lean on other folks who have it figured out.
- Suggestions for routes to try out as new riders: rail trails, closed streets (Memorial Drive in Cambridge), and more.

TRAFFIC LAWS AND SAFETY TIPS

- A bicycle = a vehicle
- When starting your ride onto the street, wait until the lead pedestrian interval when drivers are stopped at a red light. Be aware of others on the streets when starting on your ride.
- Ride with traffic: Drivers only look where traffic is coming from, so when biking, you should go with the direction of traffic. If a bike lane has an arrow, you have to go by the direction of the arrow.
- Choose your line and be predictable: You'll likely be riding with the line of traffic. If you're thinking of merging out, you'll also have to remember that you will need to re-merge with traffic.
- Avoid the "Door Zone": The Door Zone is a 3 foot area next to a car, where drivers may unintentionally open a door without looking
- Avoid the "Right Hook": The Right Hook is when a driver does not see a cyclist or signal and hangs a right, cutting a cyclist (who is on the right side of the road). When in this situation, tap your brake, signal, and merge. To signal to cyclists behind you that you are planning on slowing down, verbalize "slowing down".

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- Remember to signal while riding when moving left or right and stopping.
- When at a stop light, put your pedal at “power stop” at the 2 or 3 o’clock position, so when you step down, you can get moving and gain momentum.
- Know your options at intersections: merge, signal, or move out. If making a left turn, try using a two-stage turn: continue moving straight, hang out on the right side of the far end of the lane, and continue straight.

FINDING THE RIGHT BIKE

Think about the type of biking you want to do and match your bike for those needs.

COMMUTER BIKE

Features: Geared for shorter distances (5-15 miles), heavy, less efficient, multiple gears, upright posture

ROAD BIKE

Features: Geared for long distances 50+ miles, thinner wheels with less friction and energy on the road, parallel to the ground, leaned over posture

MOUNTAIN BIKE

Features: Lower pressure and wider tires to dig into gravel and grass, cushier ride, less efficient through lost energy lost in the shock system

FOLDING BIKE

Features: Good for multimodal trips, as it affords the ability for freedom to use a bike

E-BIKE

Features: Motor (up to 20 miles/hour) is available for many different bike types, can help break the barrier of biking up hills and over long distances. There are three standard classes for e-bikes: pedal assist (< 20 mph), throttle assist (< 20 mph), and pedal assist (< 28 mph).

CARGO BIKE & TRAILERS

Features: Useful for hauling heavy loads and ability to link with an electric assist

BLUEBIKES

Features: Public share bikes, convenience (alleviates concerns regarding parking, theft, maintenance), step through frame, 43 pounds, adjustable seats, basket, fenders

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NECESSARY EQUIPMENT

HELMET: Make sure it fits and covers your brain. Important to note that helmets have a shelf life of ~5-7 years and are designed as a one time use device. Helmets are designed to break into pieces, so if they are at all compromised, replace with a new helmet.

LIGHTS: Lights that are bright, low, and pointed down to have visibility for 500 feet are ideal for riding. Lights that are red should be placed in the back and lights that are white should be placed in the front. Lights that could be use include daylight running lights and usb rechargeable lights. As the best way to stay safe is to be predictable, make sure lights are used to stay visible on the road!

U-LOCK: A steel u-lock is needed to keep your bike safe. Compared to a cable lock, steel u-locks can deter thieves with cold cutters.

HELPFUL EQUIPMENT

ACCESSORIES FOR SAFETY AND FLEXIBILITY

- Mirrors
- Gloves
- Glasses
- Handlebar extensions

ACCESSORIES FOR COMFORT

- Ergonomic grips and pedals
- Bicycle seat

BASIC BIKE MAINTENANCE

GUIDELINES ON HOW TO KEEP YOUR WHEELS ROLLING

- Air: Inflate tires regularly
- Brakes: Adjust tightness of front and back brakes
- Chain: Lube/clean chain often
- Get empowered to learn how to fix a dropped chain and fix a flat and learn more with our [ABCs of Bike Maintenance guide](#)

GUIDELINES FOR LOCKING YOUR BIKE

When scouting for a location to lock your bike, look for a designated bike rack. If you have access to a secure indoor bike cage, use that as it's the gold standard. If designated bike parking is unavailable, look for something secure and give it a good shake to make sure it's affixed to the ground. If it's a sign or post, make sure it's not a handicap access point or fire exit. Learn more about locking your bike with our [How to Lock Your Bike guide](#).