

TRAFFIC LAWS AND HELENA BICYCLISTS

BASICS OF STATE LAW

“Every person operating a bicycle shall be granted all of the rights and shall be subject to all of the duties applicable to the driver of any other vehicle...”

This means:

- Stop at stop signs & red lights.
- Comply with all traffic signs .
- Ride the same direction as traffic.
- Use lights at night.
- Yield the right-of-way when entering the roadway.
- Yield to pedestrians at marked and unmarked crosswalks.

The law gives cyclists and motorists duties, rights and responsibilities. Cyclists must ride as safely and predictably as possible. Motorists must provide bicyclists equal status and respect given to other vehicle drivers – the right to use the road responsibly – and understanding that bicyclists have legal protection in court. A motorist is required by law to yield right-of-way to a bicyclist just as he or she would to another motorist.

RELEVANT LAWS



Ride with Traffic

Don't ride against traffic— it's illegal and dangerous. If you approach an intersection with a right turn lane and

intend to continue straight, ride in the through lane.

Road Position. Unless there are designated bike lanes, cyclists are required to ride as close as practicable to the right hand curb or edge of the roadway, with the following exceptions: when going the speed of traffic, you can move to the middle of the lane; When making a left turn, you can move left and do so just like a car; On roads where the lanes are too narrow to safely share, or if the edge is hazardous (contains debris or parked cars), you can move out from the curb to avoid being sideswiped. On one-way streets, you can ride close to the left hand curb or edge of the roadway.

Signaling turns. Cyclists must signal their turns: left hand and arm held straight out for a left turn. For a right turn, right hand and arm held straight out, or do the usual left arm out and bent upright at the elbow. See back for diagram.

Lights at night. It is required by law that you have a headlight and a rear reflector when riding at night. A tail light is recommended. Lights at night help you see hazards on the road, AND help motorists see you!

Riding side-by-side. In most situations, it is illegal to ride any other way except single-file. If you are riding on a paved shoulder or in a parking lane, you may ride two abreast. You can pass another bicyclist on the left when it is safe to do so. On a road with two or more lanes in your direction, you can ride two abreast in the right lane if you can do so without impeding traffic any more than you would by riding single file.

Making Left Turns. You have three legal options for making a left turn. The first is to do it just like a car would: look behind for traffic, signal your intentions, move left when clear, and then make your left turn.

The second is to ride straight across the intersection, stop on the right side, turn your bike to the left, and wait for traffic to clear or for the light to change, then ride across to the left.

Third, you can get off and walk your bike across, in the crosswalk .

Sidewalk riding. Montana state law permits riding a bicycle on sidewalks. When bicycling on the sidewalk, bicyclists need to follow pedestrian regulations and must yield to pedestrians.

Cell Phones. Bicyclists are prohibited from talking and texting while riding a bike. Hands free devices are allowed.

COMMON SENSE

Ride Predictably. Ride in a straight line and do not weave in and out between traffic or parked cars. The more predictable you are, the safer, and the more drivers will respect you.

Establish Eye Contact with Drivers. Seeing a driver is not enough. Be sure drivers see you.

Look for Drivers in Parked Cars. Be ready for a vehicle door to open or the vehicle to move into traffic.

Be Visible. Wear brightly colored clothing. At night, wear light clothes, use reflective materials, and lights. Ride where traffic can see you.

Wear a Helmet. its not the law but only you can protect your head.

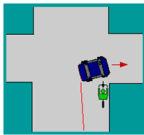
References: Pertinent state laws are at 61-8-601 M.C.A. through 61-8-609 M.C.A, 61-8-320 M.C.A., 61-8-328 M.C.A, and 61-8-338 M.C.A.
City laws are at 10.42.010 M.M.C. through 10.42.150 M.M.C.

MOTORISTS

Look for and yield to bicyclists before entering an intersection

Many cyclists use "studded snow tires" for winter riding. These provide more traction and help you from sliding on the ice.

Don't make a right turn in front of bicyclists.



Bicyclists may be traveling faster than you realize.

Look before you open the car door.



Cyclists cannot tell when a car door is about to be opened.

Pass with at least 3 feet to spare.



Ample space creates a safe zone for the bicyclist.

Yield on left turns to oncoming cyclists

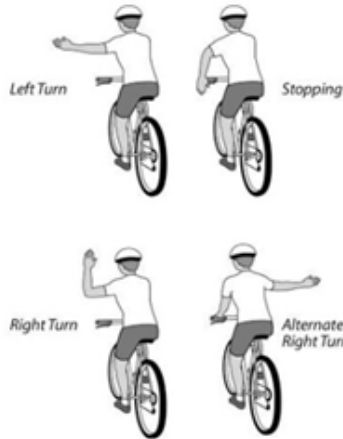


Bicyclists may be traveling faster than you realize. Yield to cyclists as you would any other vehicle.

Understand Bicycle Signals.

Cyclists must signal their turns but may be unable to in some situations, i.e. going downhill or on treacherous roads. Look for other indications of movement such as the cyclist looking over their shoulder.

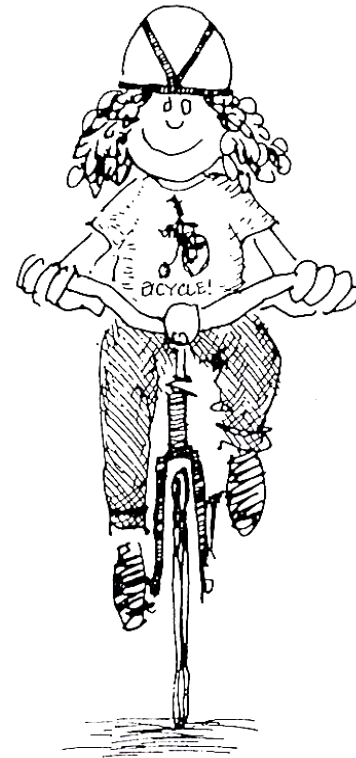
Legal Bicycle Signals



Signaling appropriately helps a cyclist to be visible by motorists.

COURTESIES: Bicyclists and motorists in Montana have exactly the same rights and responsibilities. As a motorist, you can help prevent accidents by driving carefully around bicyclists. Do your part by being a good ambassador of driving safely with cyclists.

DO YOU KNOW HELENA'S BICYCLE LAWS?



www.bikewalkhelena.org

City of Helena
Non-Motorized Travel Advisory
Council (NMTAC)