KIDS ON BIKES
A SAFETY GUIDE FOR KIDS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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WHERE TO RIDE

WHAT SIDE TO RIDE ON?

Always ride in the same direction as the cars are going.

Never ride against traffic. It’s the easiest way to get hit!

Ride about 3 feet from parked cars so you don’t get hit by a car door.

WHERE TO RIDE ON

Ride in a straight line. If you do, drivers will know where you’re going. Then they’ll stay out of your way!

YES

NO

YES

NO

Ask your parents about the best places to ride.
If possible, ride on streets that don’t have much traffic.
ON STREETS COMING TO CORNERS

If the street is too busy, get off your bike and walk in the crosswalk.

1. Stop or slow down.
2. Look LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT.
3. Obey stop signs and traffic lights.
4. Don’t go until no cars are coming.

If a friend bikes across a street before you, don’t think it’s safe for you to go too. Slow down or stop, and look LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT.

HELMETS

Always wear a helmet when biking. Make sure it fits snugly!

STOP SIGNS

WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

Stop. Look LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT. Go when no cars are coming.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS

WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

Get ready to stop

Stop

Look LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT and go when it’s safe
WHY LOOK BACK?

When you ride your bike, sometimes you should look behind you. If you don’t, a car might hit you. Here’s when to look back.

**LOOK BACK** just before you ride around a pothole or sewer grate

**LOOK BACK** just before you pass a parked car that’s in your way

**LOOK BACK** before you turn, or you move to a different side of the street

While biking, never wear headphones. It’s unsafe and against the law!
LEARNING HOW TO LOOK BACK

1. Ride along a straight line. (Find a white stripe in an empty parking lot, or draw one with chalk.)

2. Turn your head around and look back for a second. Then turn your head forward. Practice until you can do it without wobbling your bike.

3. Ride forward, with a friend standing behind you. They should hold up one or two arms. Look back, and try to count how many arms they’re holding up.

THINGS TO DO WHILE BIKING

1. Always wear a bike helmet.
2. Ride in the same direction as car traffic.
3. Wear bright clothes to be visible.

LOOK OUT FOR PARKED CARS!

Watch out when you pass parked cars in the street. They might start moving or open their doors when you don’t expect it.

How to tell if a parked car might start to move:

- Driver in the seat
- Brake lights go on
- Front wheel turned
- Car is running

Learn to look over one shoulder first. Then practice looking over your other shoulder.
HOW TO TURN

AN EASY WAY TO TURN LEFT

1. Look LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT for cars. Stop if any are coming.

2. Walk in the crosswalk, or ride your bike next to the crosswalk. Cross the street.

3. Stop just before you reach the curb. Stand in front of the crosswalk, facing the way you want to go. (If you got off your bike, get back on.)

4. When there are no cars coming, ride on. (If there’s a traffic light, wait until it’s turned green.)
ON STREETS

MOVING OR TURNING LEFT LIKE A CAR

1. Look back over your shoulder for cars coming from behind you.

2. When no cars are coming, move to the middle of the lane. Look back again for cars.

3. If you’re turning, point your arm in the direction you’re going.

4. If you’re turning onto another street, look LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT down that street. If cars are coming, let them pass. Then turn.
GIVE WALKERS A BREAK

When you ride near people walking, don’t surprise them! Slow down, and say “Excuse me!” or use a bell or horn.

ALLEYS & DRIVEWAYS: LOOK OUT!

Always look LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT before an alley or driveway. If it’s not easy to see, slow down or stop first.

Think you’re ready for street riding? See page 1.

YES

NO
**SIDEWALKS**

**AT CORNERS**

Stop and look **LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT** for cars. If a car’s stopped at the corner, make sure the driver is waiting for you before you go.

**ENTERING A STREET**

You shouldn’t go into a street from the middle of a block. But if you do: ① Stop at the curb and make sure parked cars aren’t about to move. ② Go to the edge of the parked cars. Before you cross, look **LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT**.

**LOOKING LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT**

Whenever you look both ways to check for cars:

1. Look **LEFT**.

2. If no cars are coming, look **RIGHT**.

3. Look **LEFT** again. If no cars are coming, go. But if a car’s coming, wait for it to pass. Then look **LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT** again.

Watch behind you for cars turning.
IS IT READY TO RIDE?

Before you let your child use a bike, check these items. If you’re not sure whether a bike fits or works right, take it to a bike shop.

**Frame Height:** Check that your child’s bike isn’t too tall or too short. Have your kid stand with the bike between their legs with feet flat on the ground, just in front of the seat. ① For a horizontal top tube, there should be one to three inches between the tube and the child’s crotch. If the tube’s not horizontal, tie string to where the top tube meets the front of the bike. Hold it horizontally to make the measurement.

**Seat Height:** Ask your child if the seat feels too high or too low. If they’re not sure, have them sit on the bike with feet on the pedals. With one pedal in the six o’clock position, their knee should be only slightly bent. But if they’re used to a lower seat height, don’t raise it too much at once.

*How to change the height:* Loosen the seat post nut. ② Twist the seat to move it. Don’t raise it so high that there’s less than two inches of the seat post inside the frame.

**Coaster Brakes:** If your child can pedal backward to apply the rear brake, the bike has coaster brakes. Here’s how to check them: While pushing the bike forward with one hand, use your other hand to pedal backward. ③ This should stop the bike.

**Hand Brakes:** Here’s how to check each hand brake: While pushing the bike forward with one hand, use your other hand to squeeze the brake lever. ④ You should be able to stop the bike without squeezing the lever all the way to the handlebar.

**Handlebars:** Hold the front wheel between your legs. ⑤ Using moderate pressure, try to turn the handlebars without moving the wheel. If you can turn the handlebars, tighten the stem bolt, using either an allen wrench or crescent wrench.
**HELMETS**

**Why kids need helmets:** Kids need helmets as much as adults do. No matter how careful they are, they can’t control everything around them. Make sure kids wear their helmets snugly—and set an example by wearing yours!

**Rating:** The inside of the helmet should have a compliance label from the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC).

**Fit:** Your child must have a snug fit—so that if your kid’s head hits more than once, the helmet stays in place. Use the **eyes, ears, mouth** method:

**Eyes:** When you look up you should see the helmet’s front rim—not just the visor, if it has one. (A tilted helmet won’t protect your skull in a frontal impact.) If you can’t see the rim, tilt the helmet forward until you can. **Right**  **Wrong**

**Ears:** Snap the chin buckle closed. On each side of your head, the helmet’s two straps should meet under your ear to form a V. If they don’t, move the straps up or down through the junction.

**Mouth:** With the chin buckle closed, open your mouth wide. You should feel the helmet push down on your head. If it doesn’t, remove the helmet and make the chin strap shorter by sliding the strap through the buckle.

If you can’t keep the helmet from moving around, add thicker inner pads or try a different brand helmet.

**Cost:** You can get a good CPSC-rated bike helmet for under $25. More costly helmets usually aren’t safer, but might fit better, have more vents, weigh less, and look cool. (For helmet sources, see the back cover.)

**Ventilation:** A helmet’s ventilation depends on front-to-back air flow. **Good air flow** comes from long, wide air vents, and air passages (or troughs) between the vents.

**Look:** Get bright colored helmets to be more visible. You can help your child decorate their helmet with paint or stickers to encourage helmet use. Avoid attachments that stick out—they could catch on something and cause kids to lose their balance.
**Literature and videos**

“Get the Big Picture” (video)
AAA Traffic Safety ■ 1000 AAA Drive
Lake Mary FL 32746 ■ 407/444-7000

“Bicycle Skill Tests for Groups and Rodeo Events,” #3282 (booklet)
AAA Traffic Safety (address: see above)

**Bicycle helmets**

Bell Sports Cycle Right Program
Route 136 East ■ PO Box 927
Rantoul IL 61866 ■ 800/494-4543 x260
Provides discounted helmets to schools, community groups, police departments.

**Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute**

4611 7th St. South ■ Arlington VA 22204
703/486-0100 ■ www.helmets.org
Provides information about the latest helmet developments, and why helmets work.

**Safety training near you**

Humboldt Bay Bicycle Commuters Assoc.
PO Box 9054 ■ Eureka CA 95502-9054
707/445-1097 ■ www.humbike.org
The Association conducts free Bike Smart training programs for kids and adults throughout northern California. It also provides free helmets to those that need them.

League of American Bicyclists
1612 K Street NW, Suite 800
Washington DC 20006 ■ 202/822-1333
bikeleague@bikeleague.org
www.bikeleague.org
The League’s BikeEd program certifies bicycling instructors who teach bike safety to kids throughout the U.S.

**Pre-packaged training**

“A Kids-Eye View” video for parents
League of American Bicyclists
1612 K Street NW, Suite 800
Washington DC 20006 ■ 202/822-1333
bikeleague@bikeleague.org
www.bikeleague.org/store

“Bike Safety with Bill Nye the Science Guy”
Disney Educational Programs ■ 800/295-5010
105 Terry Dr., Suite 120 ■ Newtown PA 18940
http://dep.disney.go.com/educational/store

“Ride Safe Bicycle Rodeo Guide”
Available on-line at the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute Web site:
www.helmets.org/ridesafe/rswelcom.htm

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