



Other Road Riding Tips

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This information from the Pennsylvania Bicycle Driver's Manual is from the Rodale Press publication "Street Smarts", by John S. Allen, with illustrations by George Retseck and project management by Pat Brown. Project management at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation was by David Bachman.

Road Riding

RIDING THROUGH INTERSECTIONS

Intersections are where all of your traffic-riding skills come together. If you ride smoothly through the intersections, you can handle almost any riding environment.

At intersections, move to the correct lane position depending on which way you'll be going. Often, you'll need to move away from your normal position near the right side of the road. If you're turning right, keep to the right. But if you're turning left, move to the center of the road. If you're going straight, go between the right- and left-turning traffic.

RIGHT TURNS

Right turns are easiest. Just stay in the right lane, look around for traffic and go around the corner. To avoid being squeezed against the curb, ride in the middle of the right lane if it's narrow, just as you would on a straightaway. Remember that the rear end of a car pulls to the right as it makes a right turn.

At a stop sign or legal right turn on red, yield to traffic coming from the left on the cross street. You're always required to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks. Bicyclists follow the same set of rules as drivers do.

A right-turn signal is a useful courtesy to drivers who would have to wait for you if you were going straight. Make your right-turn signal by pointing with your right arm.

CHANGING YOUR LANE POSITION

To prepare for most intersection maneuvers, you need to change your lane position. Even between intersections or when making a right turn, as just described, you may have to move farther into the right lane. So far, we've gotten by with a quick description of how to look back and check for traffic.

But when making a left turn, you often have to move across more than one lane. It's time to go into more detail. Before you change your lane position, you must always look back for traffic. Your sense of balance is in your head, so you need some practice to turn your head without swerving.

Some bicyclists change lane position without looking back, because they're afraid of swerving. Don't trust your ears! Many cars are very quiet, and a bicyclist behind you is quieter.

In an empty parking-lot practice area, ride along a straight, painted line. Turn your head to glance back, and then look forward again to see whether you're still riding straight. To keep from swerving, think about the position of your arms. If you don't turn the handlebars, you won't swerve.

Turn your head to look, even if you have a rear-view mirror. A mirror can help you to keep track of the traffic directly behind you, but no mirror will show cars or bicyclists at your side.

The best way to look back depends on your riding position. If you're sitting upright, swivel your neck and your back. If you're in a low crouch, duck your head sideways. Some bicyclists look over their shoulders and some even duck their heads underneath their arms.

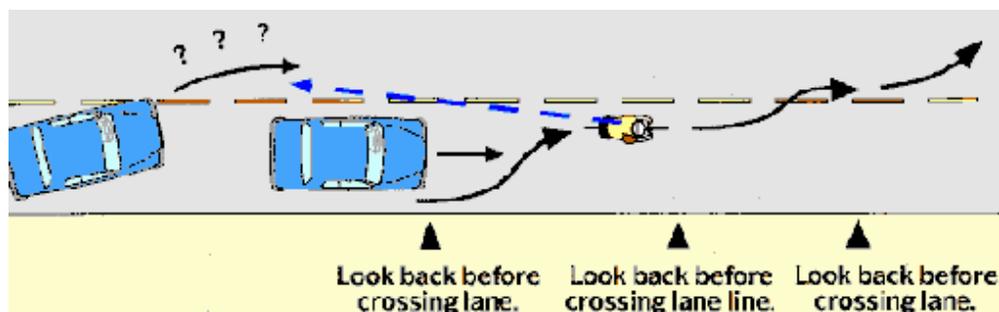
GETTING A DRIVER'S COOPERATION

So now you've looked back. What next? If there's a car close behind you, let that car go by, and deal with the next car.

Usually, the next driver will have time to react to your signals. If you make your intentions clear, the driver will almost always let you into line.

Extend your left arm to signal that you want to move to the left. Wait a couple of seconds, then look back again to check that the driver has slowed down or moved aside to make room.

Turning your head to look back is a signal, too. In slow, crowded traffic, you need to keep your hands on the handlebars, ready to brake. You can usually move into line with the cars while signaling only with a turn of the head. Whatever signal you use, always make sure that the driver behind you has noticed your signal and made room for you.



Cross a lane in two steps; one to cross the lane line and the next to cross to the other side of the lane.

Do not change your lane position until you're sure that the driver has made room for you. Most drivers will, but there's no guarantee. Your signal doesn't make it safe to change lane position. Only the driver's response to your signal makes you safe.

If you begin your lane change early enough to deal with two drivers, you'll almost always succeed; if the first one doesn't make room for you, the second one almost certainly will. So anticipate turns and plan for them in time.

In high-speed highway traffic, drivers may not have time to react to you. Then you need to wait for a gap in the traffic and move across all of the lanes at once.

LEFT TURNS

To prepare a left turn, change lanes until you reach the left-turn position in traffic. As you move toward the center of the street, this is where no cars on your left will go straight ahead. If the lane carrying left-turning traffic also carries through traffic, ride at its left side. If it's a left-turn-only lane, ride at its right side. On an ordinary two-lane street, turn left from just to the right of the centerline.

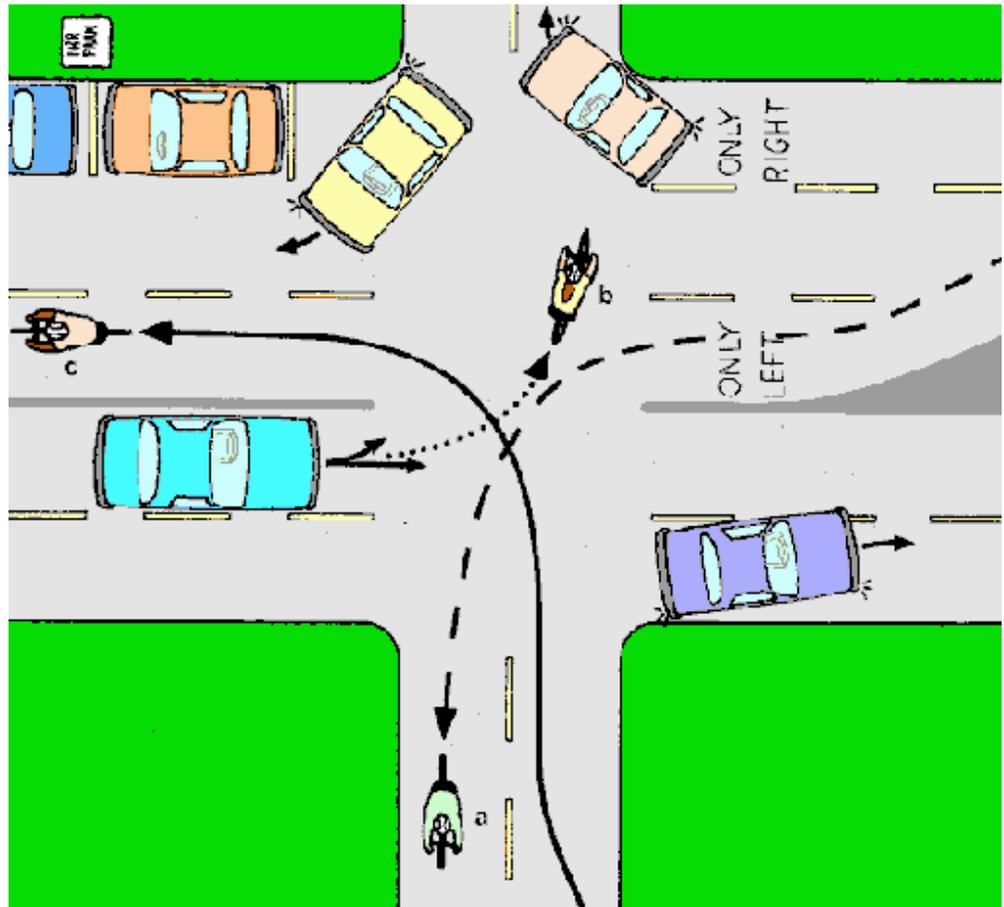
It may seem dangerous to move to the middle of the street, but in fact, the middle is the best position for a left turn. When you're in the correct position, all the traffic you have to deal with is in front of you. Since you're to the left of the through traffic coming from behind you, you don't have to look back while making your left turn. You can concentrate on the traffic from the left, right and front.

You may have to cross more than one lane to reach the left-turn position. Cross each lane in two steps. With one step, cross the lane line so you're just inside the next lane. With the next step, cross to the far side of the lane. At each step, look back and, get a driver to make room for you.

Yield to traffic from the left, right and straight ahead; so you don't have to come to a stop, you may move slowly out to the middle of the intersection, the same way cars do. Then you can get moving faster when there's a gap in the traffic. Pass an oncoming left-turning car right side to right side.

When turning left from the left side of a lane, don't let left-turning cars behind you pass you on the right. While waiting, keep near the middle or make a slow signal with your right

hand. As you enter the intersection, ride straight ahead for a few feet so the left-turning cars behind you can pull to your left.



Correct paths for left turns. a) The bicyclist has turned left from the right middle of a narrow left turn lane. b) The bicyclist has turned left from the left middle of a narrow left-and-through lane. Wait for a traffic light at the middle of such a lane unless you know which way the car behind you is going. c) The cyclist turns from near the center of a two-lane street and enters the inner lane of a four-lane street to avoid the right-turning car entering the outer lane.

If you don't make it to the left-turn position by the time you reach the intersection, go straight through the intersection. Make your left turn at the next intersection, or cross to the other side of the street, double back and make a right turn.

It's also okay to make a left turn as a pedestrian. This way, you can turn left legally at a "no left turn" sign or handle traffic situations you feel are beyond your abilities. Be sure to come to a complete stop when you reach the far right corner of the intersection. At this point, you have to look for traffic from all four directions at once; there's no safe way to do so while you keep moving.

GOING STRAIGHT THROUGH

Going straight through an intersection is easy compared with a left turn. You may have to change lanes, but not usually as many.

When going straight through, make sure right-turning traffic passes you on your right. Stay completely out of a right-turn-only lane. If there's a lane marked for right turns and through traffic, ride near its left side. You may have to move into the second or third lane from the curb to avoid the right-turning traffic.

