



Other Road Riding Tips

[Where to Ride on the Road](#)

[Riding Through Intersections](#)

[Getting Across Non-standard Intersections](#)

[Ways to Deal with Tough Situations](#)

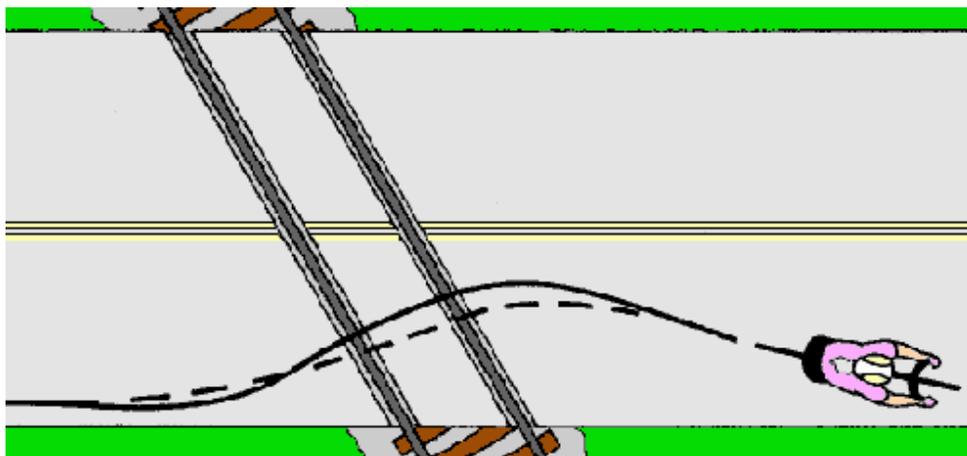
This information from the Pennsylvania Bicycle Driver's Manual is from the Rodale Press publication "Street Smarts", by John S. Allen, with illustrations by George Retseck and project management by Pat Brown. Project management at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation was by David Bachman.

Road Riding

STEER OUT OF TROUBLE

A bicycle is a highly maneuverable machine, but that maneuverability makes it quite tippable. You have to take extra care to stay upright and read the road for the special hazards that can cause a bike to fall.

Beware of any slippery or loose surface: gravel, snow, ice, leaves, oil patches, wet manhole covers and crosswalk markings. Avoid these, or ride over them slowly. Don't turn, brake or accelerate. Be ready to put a foot down for balance.



Check behind yourself for traffic, then cross a diagonal railroad crossing at a right angle.

Be especially careful of diagonal railroad crossings, trolley tracks, a row of raised lane-line dots or a step between the shoulder and the travel lane. Any of them can push your front wheel to the side and sweep your bike out from under you. When you can't avoid them, cross them as nearly as possible at right angles.

Beware of steel-grid bridge decks, which, especially when wet, will steer your bike parallel to the gridding, making balancing difficult. Test a grid deck at a low speed, and walk or use the bridge sidewalk if necessary.

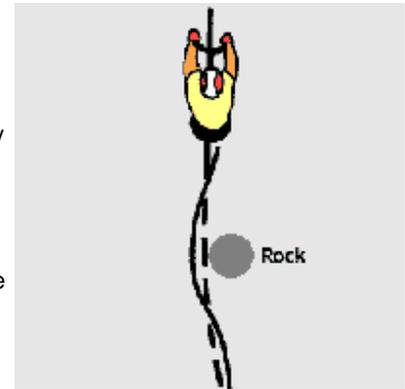
Any bump, rock or pothole more than an inch high can squash your bicycle's tires flat against the rims, damaging the wheels. Avoid the bumps if you can, and walk your bike if the going gets too rough.

GOOD NEWS

Now for the good news: Thanks to your bicycle's small size and quick steering, you can prepare yourself for situations like this one. It's a pleasant, two-lane country road, just wide enough for cars to pass you in your lane. You look up at the scenery and then down at the road. There's a rock directly in front of you. And there's a car just behind you. You can't swerve left into the traffic and you don't want to swerve to the right, into the gravel and dirt. What to do?

Make your wheels weave around the rock while riding in a straight line -- the rock-dodge maneuver. Just as you reach the rock, steer quickly left, then right to correct your balance, then straight again.

Because you correct the balance quickly, your body doesn't have time to follow the bike's weave. You continue nearly in a straight line. To give yourself better odds against rocks and potholes, go to an empty parking lot and practice the rock dodge until it becomes easy.



Avoid a rock by turning the handlebars to one side; then correct your balance by turning them the other way.

QUICK TURNS

Picture yourself in another pinch: You're riding along a street, approaching an intersection, and a car on your left suddenly begins a right turn. The side of the car is headed straight for you! You have to turn quickly alongside the car to get out of trouble.

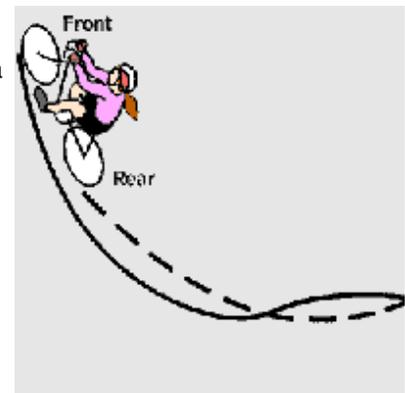
To begin a turn quickly, you have to lean your bike over quickly. But how do you maneuver?

Your bicycle balances the same way you balance a yardstick on the palm of your hand. If you want to move the yardstick to the right, you move your hand to the left. Then, the yardstick leans to the right, and you follow it with your hand.

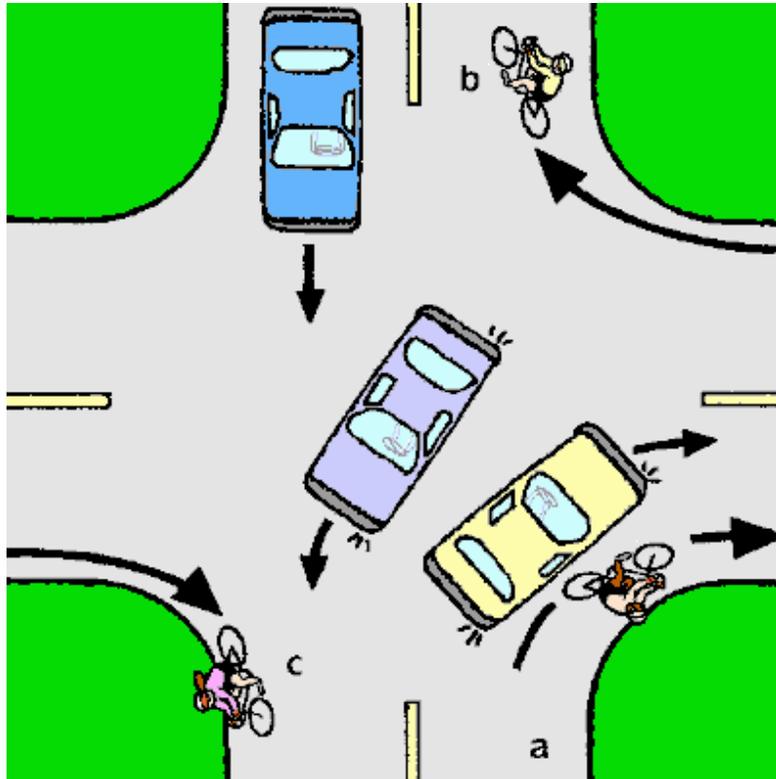
Just the same way, if you steer your bicycle out from under you to the left for a moment, then you can turn to the right. You must first steer momentarily toward the car you're trying to avoid.

Try this technique in your parking-lot practice area. At slow speeds at first, yank the handlebars quickly to the left. Your bicycle will lean to the right, and then you can steer right. Practice first at slow speeds, then at faster ones. The faster you go, the less sharply you have to steer.

The instant turn is useful in many situations. If a car coming toward you begins a left turn, turn right into the side street with it. If a car pulls out of a side street from the right, swerve into the side street. It's best to turn to the right, behind the car -- but if it's too late for that, turn left with the car. Even if you hit the car, the nearer you're going in the same direction, the lighter the impact.



In order to turn sharply to the right, twitch the handlebars to the left first to start your lean to the right.

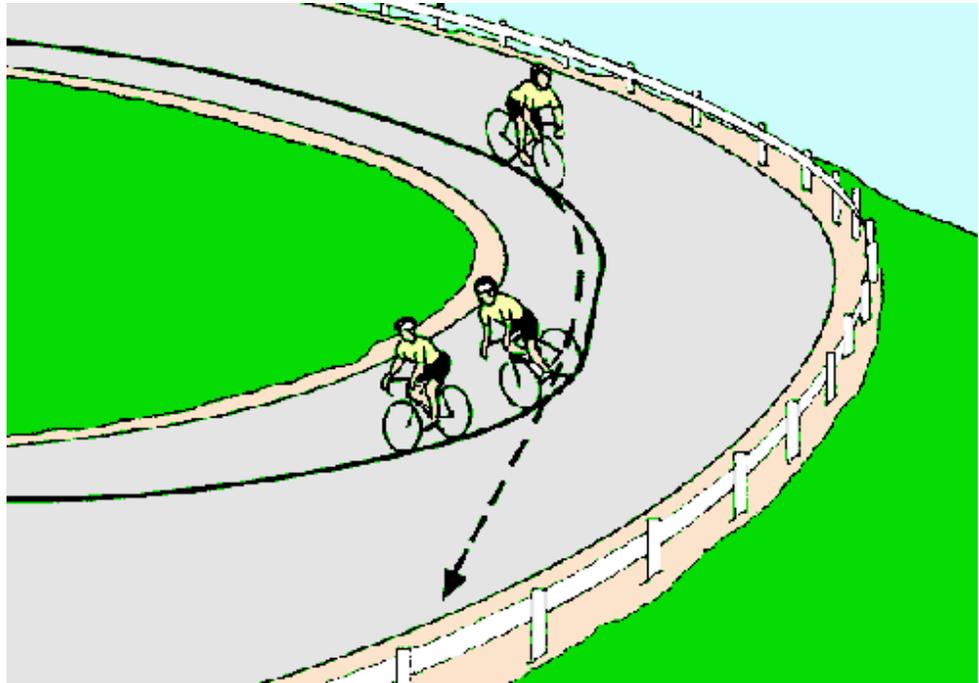


Accident avoidance. a) Instant turn to the right of a right-turning car. b) Instant turn to avoid a car running a stop sign. c) Instant turn ahead of a left-turning car.

TOO FAST!

Sooner or later, you may find yourself going around a downhill curve too fast. A variation on the instant turn can get you through this situation in one piece.

The usual, panic reaction is to steer straight and brake. But then you're likely to go headfirst off the road before you can stop. Instead, steer with the curve. Don't brake. Straighten the handlebars momentarily, as in the instant turn, to drop your bike into a deeper lean.



If you're going around a curve too fast, straighten the handlebars momentarily to drop into a deeper lean.

Usually, you'll make it around the curve -- your tires have more traction than you normally use. If you do skid out, you'll fall on your side and slide to a stop.

If you're about to ride into a wall or over a cliff, you may decide to deliberately skid out. Lean into a turn, then hit the brakes. The fall may hurt -- but not as much as the alternative.

JUMP?

There is a pothole straight ahead, and no time for even a rock dodge. You were so busy looking up at the traffic that you didn't see the pothole ahead, and now you're about to trash your wheels. If only you could fly . . .

Unfortunately, you can't fly your bike like the kid in E.T., but you can jump your bike. Holding the pedals horizontal, squat down and pull up on the handlebars. Then jump up and yank your legs up under you. You'll be past the pothole faster than reading "squat-pull-jump-yank."

Jumping is the quickest last-resort way to avoid a pothole or other road-surface hazard. Once you get good at it, you can even use it to climb low curbs or to cross diagonal railroad tracks. In your empty parking lot, practice jumping your bike. You must lift first the front wheel, then the rear wheel as it takes its turn with the bump. Your timing depends on how fast you're riding.

Once you know your emergency maneuvers, you'll gain a much expanded sense of security, confidence and style. You'll be able to "ride loose," to use the language of California all-terrain riders. It's a sign of an experienced rider, and it saves your bike a lot of wear and tear.

[Ways to deal with tough situations](#) >

[Back to top](#)

Copyright ©2002, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. All rights reserved.

Disclaimers associated with this site • Download Adobe Acrobat Reader • Contact the Webmaster

[For the visually challenged users, Adobe provides versions of Acrobat Reader that include support for screen readers (Accessibility) via the Microsoft Active Access API (MSAA).]