Project Ride Smart is a comprehensive youth bicycle safety and skill development program with the goal of providing children with the knowledge and experience to travel safely and predictably under their own power, in their community. This includes riding safely to and from school. In the program, students learn the skills to ride safely on school grounds before gaining valuable real-world experience riding in the street, following the rules of the road. The main skills taught by Project Ride Smart are outlined in this City Biking Handbook.

Jibe is a local, community based nonprofit organization with the mission to foster transportation behaviors that enhance placemaking in our community through advocacy, programs, education, and services.

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Check your helmet and clothing

If you are unsure about helmet fit or the safety of your bike, ask your local bike shop for help.

Before you ride, check that your helmet covers your forehead. There should be no more than 2 finger widths between your eyebrows and your helmet.

**Sliders** should be slightly below and in front of your ears. Only two fingers should fit between the chinstrap and your chin.

Keep pant legs and shoelaces out of moving parts by rolling and tucking them in.

Wear bright and reflective clothing to help you be visible to motorists.

Clearance from top tube should be 1-2 inches when you pull both wheels off the ground for road bikes; 3-4 inches for mountain bikes.

Sliders should be slightly below and in front of your ears. Only two fingers should fit between the chinstrap and your chin.

Keep pant legs and shoelaces out of moving parts by rolling and tucking them in.

Wear bright and reflective clothing to help you be visible to motorists.

Check that the **quick releases**, usually on the seat and wheels, are locked down and tight. Tighten if needed and make sure levers on the wheels point up or to the back.

Squeeze the **brakes** and rock your bike forward. Both brakes should grip the rims smoothly and evenly. When braking, the levers should be at least one finger’s width from the handlebars.

Check that the **chain** is running smoothly by pedaling backwards. Add lube to the chain if it looks dry or squeaks. Clean your chain with degreaser to remove rust and lube build-up.

Check that your tires are properly inflated with **air** and in good condition. You may need to replace your tire if you notice cracks in the sides or worn spots that bulge.

Make a few quick checks before you ride your bike.

Is your helmet properly adjusted? Are you dressed to ride? Does your bike fit you?

Is your bike in good condition? If the answers are yes, you’re ready to ride!
Rules of the road

Ride on the right side of the road with traffic.
When riding in a group, ride in single file. Bicycles are considered vehicles according to most state and city law — this means you have a right to the road. It also means you must obey all traffic laws.
Always wear your helmet to protect yourself.

Hazards

Hazards can be anything that blocks your view of traffic, causes you to lose control of your bike, or crashes into you while riding. Some examples are parked cars, potholes, opening car doors, dogs, and railroad tracks.
You can avoid hazards by looking ahead and to the sides to anticipate approaching hazards. Riding over and around hazards may require looking back for cars and a change of lane position (see Road Positioning below). To safely cross railroad tracks, ride over them at a 90-degree angle, which prevents your wheels from getting trapped between the track and the road.

Road positioning

Proper road position is essential to get where you are going safely and predictably.

Right Position
Right side of the lane, 3 feet from the curb and 3 feet from parked cars. Used for the majority of riding.

Middle Position
Center of the lane. Ride in middle position to avoid road hazards or when the road is too narrow for two vehicles to share. Look back for car traffic before moving to middle position.

Left Position
Far left of the lane. Use this position to turn left.

Using hand signals

Use your hand signals to communicate where you are going.
Use lights at night — white in front and red in back. Bright clothing and reflectors are also recommended.

Leaving driveways and alleyways

Stop at the end of the driveway or alley and look for traffic before proceeding onto the road. If you are crossing a sidewalk remember to yield to pedestrians. Move forward until you have a clear view around buildings and parked cars that may block your view.

Traffic signs

Stop sign
Come to a complete stop. Put one foot down and look both ways for traffic.

Yield sign
Slow down and watch for traffic. You must yield right-of-way to oncoming traffic.

Signal
Red = Stop
Yellow = Stop unless you are already in the intersection
Green = Go

RR sign
Slow down, look and listen. Stop if you see a train. See Hazards to cross tracks safely.

One way
Shows you which way traffic is travelling on that street.

The road can hold many surprises. How do you avoid hazards like opening car doors and train tracks? Where do you ride? What does a “yield” sign mean? To prepare for upcoming hazards, practice these skills.
Bikes are a part of traffic, like cars. Bikes have the same rights and responsibilities as cars. Ride predictably, visibly and be aware. Make eye contact with drivers, and look back for oncoming traffic before changing lane position.

Bike lanes
Use bike lanes when available. Bike lanes provide a space on the road for only bicyclist to use. Motorists are reminded to pass bicyclists safely.

Here are some of the bike lane symbols you’re likely to see:

Changing lane positions
When preparing for left hand turns, avoiding hazards in the road, and riding on one way streets you will need the skills to change lane positions. Each time you change lane position you will need to look back. Here are the steps:

1. In the right position, look back over your shoulder for a gap in the traffic,
2. signal your intent to change position,
3. and move left into the middle position.

Then, depending on whether you plan to turn or simply avoid an obstacle, you will return to the right position or proceed through a turn. (See Left turn on page 9 for more instructions.)

If you can’t find a break in traffic you may need to slow down and wait for an opening. Before proceeding, make sure that all motorists see you — it’s a good idea to make eye contact with drivers.

You will need to repeat steps 1, 2, and 3 each time you change lane positions.

Eye contact
Make eye contact (A-C) with drivers at intersections to be recognized as part of traffic and to communicate right-of-way. Double-check to make sure you’ve been seen, and be very careful if someone waves you through when you don’t have right-of-way.

Looking back
Looking back over your shoulder for traffic is an important skill. Cyclists often ride one-handed when looking back before changing positions or to signal a turn. Checking over your shoulder for traffic is similar to the way motorist use mirrors and visual checks when preparing for left hand turns, lane changes, and to be aware of traffic. Here are some pointers to make looking back easy. (Practice on a playground, empty parking lot, or low-traffic street.)

1. Practice riding with your right hand on the handlebars and your left hand on your hip.
2. Sit up tall and look back over your left shoulder.
3. Repeat until you can comfortably ride and look for traffic without swerving.

The right attitudes
**Right-of-way**

All vehicles must follow right-of-way rules to safely cross intersections. Right-of-way helps you decide who goes first at an intersection.

**First come, first served**

If two vehicles arrive at the intersection at different times, the vehicle that gets there first has right-of-way and goes first.

**Straight before turn**

If two vehicles traveling in opposite directions get to the intersection at the same time, the vehicle going straight goes first, before the vehicle turning left.

**Right goes first**

If two or more vehicles arrive at the intersection at the same time, the vehicle on the right has the right-of-way and goes first.

**At a two way intersection**, vehicles at stop signs must wait for all other vehicles to pass before moving through the intersection.

**Turning right**

Stay in the right position as you ride up to the stop sign. Stop if there is a stop sign, and look left and right and left again for traffic. Give your right turn signal and move into the right position on the adjacent street. Keep your turn tight and avoid swinging wide.

**Going straight**

Stay in the right position as you ride up to the intersection. Stop if there is a stop sign and look left and right and left again for traffic. Continue riding in the right position through the intersection.

**Riding through intersections can be tricky.** Decide where you are going before you get to the intersection. Pay attention to other vehicles. Signal your turn. Who was first at the intersection? Who has the right-of-way?
**Left turn**

- **Look back** for a break in traffic.
- **Signal left** to change positions.
- **Move** from the right position into the middle position. **Look back** again. Then move from the middle position into the left position.
- **Stop** at the stop sign and look left, right, and left again for traffic.
- **Give** left turn signal again and turn into the right position on the adjacent street.

**Intersections**

Let **pedestrians** cross the street safely before proceeding. Remember to make **eye contact** to communicate with drivers. Before moving into the intersection, make sure all motorists see you!

**The other left turn**

Heavy traffic may make it difficult to turn left. In cases where the traditional left turn is not possible, the other left turn to get where you’re going.

**Left turn #2: Walking in crosswalk**

- **Stay** in the right position as you arrive at the intersection.
- **Stop** for stop signs, yellow or red lights. **Get off your bike** and walk it to the crosswalk. Wait for the “Walk” signal.
- **When** the walk signal lights, **walk your bike** across the intersection to the opposite corner.
- **Look back** for traffic, then **get back on your bike** in the right position. When traffic is clear, **ride on** with traffic.

**For a fun, safe ride remember to:**

- **Ride Predictably**
- **Be Visible**
- **Be Aware**

There are a few different ways to make a left turn. How busy are the streets you ride on? Do they have multiple lanes? These answers will help you choose the correct left turn for each situation.