



Every move you make: checking for bikes before passing or turning helps keep all road users safe

I'LL BE SEEING YOU

With bike season on the horizon, here's a refresher for both drivers and cyclists on watching out for each other and sharing the road safely

SPRING IS AROUND THE CORNER, and that means cyclists across Canada will soon be emerging from hibernation.

But despite a growing number of protected bike lanes and other cycling infrastructure, many will still face the risks of sharing the road with cars, trucks and buses. And make no mistake, the danger is real. On average, 7,500 Canadian cyclists are seriously injured every year, and 74 are killed, according to Statistics Canada numbers from 1994 to 2012.

"Getting from point A to point B shouldn't be a risky activity," says Jamie Stuckless, the executive director of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, an advocacy group. "People want to ride bikes, but they don't feel safe doing it."

Here are four safety tips to help everyone feel more confident on the road.

1. LEAVE A SAFE SPACE

When a driver is passing a cyclist, they should leave at least one metre between the bike and their car. (In fact, that's the law in Ontario and all Atlantic provinces.) That space is crucial because cyclists need room to steer around the myriad of obstacles that litter roads, including potholes and sewer grates, Stuckless says. If the lane isn't wide enough to accommodate a one-metre buffer, drivers should change lanes to pass a cyclist, just like they would any other slow-moving vehicle.

2. GO DUTCH

They are the bane of cyclists everywhere: car doors. In 2016, more than 200 cyclists in Toronto alone barrelled into vehicle doors as they were

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being opened, a collision so common it has its own name: dooring. Those crashes are “incredibly painful” and, in the worst-case scenario, can send a cyclist careening into traffic, with potentially deadly consequences, says Stuckless. That’s why she recommends drivers exit their vehicle using what’s known as the Dutch Reach. The maneuver, which is *de rigneur* in the bike-loving Netherlands, sees drivers use their right hand to open their door. The move forces them to reach across their body, turn their torso and, in the process, check their blind spot.

But lights aren’t just for late at night. Stuckless says they should be on 30 minutes before sunset, 30 minutes after sunrise and any other time when visibility is low.

4. AVOID GETTING HOOKED

One of the most frequent collisions between bikes and cars is what’s known as a right hook.

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3. LIGHT UP

Cycling can be dangerous during the day, but the risks are magnified after the sun sets. “It’s easy to underestimate how invisible you can be biking at night,” Stuckless says. “Without lights, it’s really hard for other road users to see you.” That’s why it’s important for cyclists to put two lights on their bike: a white one at the front and a red one (or a reflector) at the rear. (In Ontario, it’s also the law.)

That’s when a right-turning vehicle runs into a bike going straight at an intersection. Avoiding collisions like this requires the attention of both cyclists and drivers. Cyclists should never pass cars on the right in a shared lane; going into a vehicle’s blind spot is asking for trouble. At the same time, drivers must make sure that bike lanes are free of cyclists before they make a right turn through them. Importantly, when the line marking the bike lane is solid, drivers aren’t even allowed to creep into the lane; they must wait until the coast is completely clear before turning. **GAA**

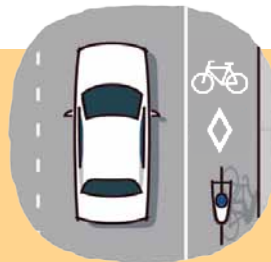
SIGN LANGUAGE

As communities across Canada build bike lanes and other cycling-related infrastructure, new lane markings are appearing on our roads. Here are two common ones you’ll come across.



SHARROWS

In Ontario, you’ll find these on lanes that are wide enough for both bikes and cars. Cyclists should stick to riding over the chevrons, while cars should stay to the left of them.

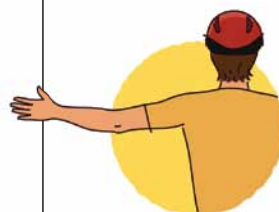


BIKE LANE

A diamond indicates the lane is for bikes only. If the line is solid, cars must stay out at all times. If it’s broken, drivers can enter the lane to turn left or right, but they must check for cyclists first.

TO THE POINT

If you don’t understand what a cyclist means when they stick out their left arm and point toward the sky, don’t worry—some biking hand signals aren’t the most intuitive. Here’s a quick primer on what all that waving means.



LEFT TURN

Left arm pointing straight left



RIGHT TURN

Left arm bent at 90 degrees, fingers pointing skyward



RIGHT TURN (alternative)

Right arm pointing straight right



STOP

Left arm bent at 90 degrees, fingers pointing at the ground