

Outdoor Club of South Jersey

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Guide for Cyclists

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Rules of the Road

Bike riding can be a lot of fun - feeling the breeze in your face (at many miles an hour - we won't say how many since we are talking rules here.....), exploring new paths or finding somewhere peaceful to have a snack and take in the beauty of the world.



But there are rules we need to follow when on our bikes, remember - On a bike, you are a vehicle, subject to the laws for vehicles. Let's get down to business with the boring legal laws.

NJ BICYCLING REGULATIONS

Bicycling in New Jersey is regulated under Title 39 of the Motor Vehicles and Traffic Regulation laws.

Every person riding a bicycle should ride in the same direction as vehicular traffic. In New Jersey, the law states a bicyclist must obey all state and local automobile driving laws.

39:4-14.2, 39:4-10.11 OPERATING REGULATIONS

Every person riding a bicycle on a roadway shall ride as near to the right roadside as practicable exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction. A bicyclist may move left under any of the following conditions:

1. To make a left turn from a left turn lane or pocket
2. To avoid debris, drains, or other hazardous conditions on the right
3. To pass a slower moving vehicle
4. To occupy any available lane when traveling at the same speed as other traffic
5. To travel no more than two abreast when traffic is not impeded, but otherwise ride in single file

39:4-11 AUDIBLE SIGNAL

A bicycle must be equipped with a bell or other audible device that can be heard at least 100 feet away, but not a siren or whistle.

39:4-10 LIGHTS ON BICYCLES

When in use at nighttime every bicycle shall be equipped with: 1) A front headlamp emitting a white light visible from a distance of at least 500 feet to the front; 2) A rear lamp emitting a red light visible from a distance of at least 500 feet to the rear; 3) In addition to the red lamp a red reflector may be mounted on the rear.

For more information or to see updates:

<https://www.state.nj.us/transportation/commuter/bike/regulations.shtm>

Non Legal Rules of The Road

RIGHT HAND TURNS

The best way to avoid right hand turning cars cutting you off is to take the lane before you get to the intersection. Taking the lane means riding in the middle or slightly left of the middle of the lane. If there is a right hand turning lane, ride along the white line on the **LEFT** of the turning lane. These techniques prevent a car from passing you and then turning right in front of you.

DEFENSIVE CYCLING

Be focused and alert to the road and all traffic around you; anticipate what others may do, before they do it. This is defensive cycling—the quicker you notice a potential conflict, the quicker you can act to avoid a potential crash

At intersections many drivers look right through a cyclist mainly because they are only expecting to see other cars. Sit up straight on your bike, make eye contact if possible. Wave your hand to alert a driver that you are there. Before proceeding, always go under the assumption a driver does not see you.

Group Riding Etiquette

Biking in a group can be very different from biking by yourself. You need to communicate with your group and follow some procedures and rules.

Stopping Distance - It is very important to keep a safe stopping distance just like driving. You never know what a cyclist in front of you is going to encounter or get distracted by or have a mechanical problem that would force them to stop suddenly.

DO NOT follow too closely in case you need to avoid a situation

Roles

Leader - This is the person or persons responsible for leading the group. This person may change the course/route of the ride so stay alert. You should never pass the leader unless you need to do so for safety purposes. Let the leader lead.

Sweep - This is the person responsible for being at the back of the group and ensuring the entire group gets through intersections and lights safely.

Actions

Breakaway - These can be called during the ride and it means you can ride ahead of the group to a certain stopping point if you want - there is no pressure to do this and should be done safely. First, the leader will call the breakaway AND the stopping point. Make sure you listen for and remember the stopping place. Be careful when pulling out of the group for a breakaway. Look for traffic both cars AND your biking group mates who are also looking to do a breakaway.

Single Line - There will be times we need to single up into one line for the safety of the group. This can be indicated by a hand motion or calling "Single Line" or "Single Up".

Take the Lane - As we discussed earlier it is important to sometimes "Take the lane (road)"

Call Outs for All Riders - *Everyone needs to communicate with others in the group*

- **Slowing** - Whenever you are slowing - this means **not maintaining speed, decelerating or engaging your brakes** - use the hand signal AND call it out..... "**SLOWING**"
- **Stopping** - Whenever you are going to stop, use your hand signal AND call it out... "**STOPPING**"

- **Full Stop** - The leader will call this out if at the next stop sign we are going to all come to a full and complete stop. This is time to grab water and take a quick break or other as the leader sees fit.
- **Car/s Back** - This means there is a car coming behind the group. When you hear someone else say it, you say it too! If you see the car coming first - you get to say it. Just because one person said it does not mean everyone heard it - pass it up and back. COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY TO SAFE GROUP RIDING

Tip : Don't think of it as a chore - (I like to imagine I am one of the people at the Baseball stadiums selling food and put my own little accent on it.)

- **On Your Left** - If you are going to pass someone to move up in the group or take the breakaway make sure you first, look for traffic and alert your group mates by calling out **"On Your Left"** BEFORE you pass them. Call it out each time you are going to pass someone in the group. Rides can be windy which means a rider two ahead may not have heard you already. When in doubt - Over Communicate. NEVER PASS ANOTHER RIDER ON THE RIGHT!
- **Riders Off** - If the group doesn't make it through any and all who notice should say **"Riders Off"** this alerts the group to the split and to slowly and safely slow down and wait in a **safe** area for the group to rejoin them.
- **All Aboard** - Once the group makes it safely through the light/intersection, the sweeper would say **"All Aboard"** to let the group know we're all together. Carry it up to the front so the leader knows too!
- **Mechanical** - Call this out if you have a mechanical issue that you need to stop for. This will alert cyclists around you to be alert, and give you space to stop. Don't be alarmed if some of the group goes ahead. They may be looking for a safe spot to stop at - we wouldn't want to block a road or stop in a place that is unsafe for a group of riders.
- **Rough Road** - This is the most common call out for a rough road/potholes up ahead...ex: say.....**"HOLE RIGHT"**



What other things should I call out?

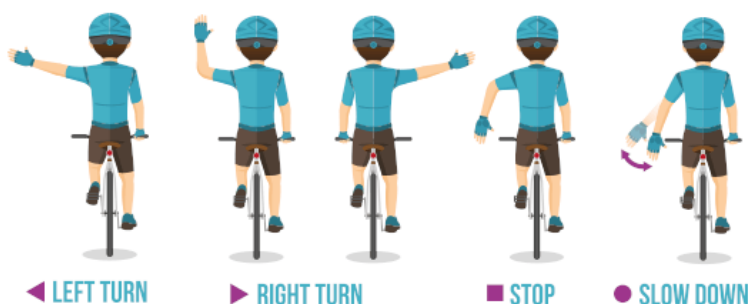
1. Debris
2. Grate/Cover
3. Crossing Animals
4. Roadkill

If you are comfortable with taking one hand off handlebars, POINT to the obstruction in addition to calling it out

MORE ETIQUETTE TIPS

When going through an intersection do NOT say “all clear”. What is clear for you can change and there could be cars for the next person. If there are cars right or left call them out.

1. If you are the last person riding through an intersection, say “ALL ABOARD”
2. If you need to clear your nose, get to the back of the line.
3. Keep both hands on handlebars, except to point out hazards or signal turns or slowing.
4. Do not use earbuds.
5. Do not ride ahead of the leader except for designated breakaways.
6. Respect the pace that the ride leader sets.
7. Do not tell the leader you have to be back by a certain time. Remember anything can happen on a ride to cause delays, mechanicals, accidents; It is about the group, not individuals.
8. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled time of a bike ride so you can be ready to roll at the designated time.



Hand signals that communicate with other cyclists, vehicles and pedestrians

Gear for Cyclists....listed from head to toe -

HELMET (required on all OCSJ rides)

In cold weather: skull cap, balaclava (all dependent on your tolerance for cold)

SUNGLASSES used for sun protection AND protection from road debris and insects

REARVIEW MIRROR These either mount on your handlebar (left side) or on your glasses or helmet.

CYCLING JERSEY preferably with 3 rear pockets

In cold weather: wear a wicking base layer...NEVER WEAR COTTON!

WINDRESISTANT JACKET - Having a convertible wind resistant jacket can be a crucial wardrobe piece that can help when the weather changes rapidly. Normally you can find a jacket with removable arms which increases the functionality.

PADDED CYCLING SHORTS *Everyone is different, the general rule is do not wear underwear under shorts!* This is because of the friction it can cause leading to chafing and sores.



In cold weather: wear tights **OVER** your shorts.

CHAMOIS CREAM - This can help with saddle sores - good especially on long rides.

SOCKS synthetic materials like nylon or **polyester**, both of which **wick** moisture and dry quickly. If you prefer natural fibers, you can wear wool. **NEVER WEAR COTTON!**

SHOES If you are not wearing specific cycling shoes with cleats, wear stiff soled footwear. Be careful with laces and make sure you double tie the lace on the chain side of the bike. Getting laces caught in the drivetrain will ruin your day!

For cold weather wear toe covers or cycling booties over your shoes to reduce air flow.

General rule of thumb:

- If the temperature is 55 degrees or lower wear leg warmers or tights
- Dress in layers for change in temperatures while on bike
- Wear a backpack if you plan on shedding clothing, especially jackets. Tying a jacket on your body is not the safest thing to do. Jackets will fit nicely in a backpack. There are backpacks

specific to cycling. Get the one with a water bladder, up to 100 ounces. You can take it out and have more storage.

- In warm weather wear a wicking headband that is made specifically for use under helmets; nothing is worse than having sweat drip in your eyes while riding.

AGAIN WE STRESS: DO NOT WEAR COTTON!

Gear for Bicycle

Lightsnot just for nighttime!

We highly recommended that you have at least a blinking red back light in operation even in the daylight. You greatly improve your visibility to motorists. We also recommend a blinking white headlight in the front. If it is foggy out BOTH should be turned on.

Water Bottle Cage

You should have at least one cage, preferably two if you ride longer distance

Tools

The following is a list of items you should carry on every ride:

1. At least one spare tube (2 is better)
2. A set of tire levers for removing tire
3. Small pump or Co₂, many people carry both. Floor pump for home is a MUST
4. A multitool. This is a set of allen wrenches/flathead/phillips screwdriver. Make sure they are the correct sizes for your bicycle fittings
5. First aid kit. This is a must for everyone! Gauze pads, alcohol wipes, bandages, ointment. Place everything in a watertight ziplock bag
6. Identification with emergency number

Bag

A saddle bag is recommended to carry your tools, spare tubes, first aid kit and any other personal items. Some people put snacks in the bag or in their jersey pockets.

Maintenance

Cycling is a great activity, however nothing will ruin your ride and day more than a mechanical breakdown. Not only can you crash and hurt yourself or worse, if your bicycle is improperly maintained, you may be very far from home and someone may not be able to pick you up for quite some time.



Here are some basic diy tips that are extremely important:

- Keep the drivetrain clean and lubricated
- Keep your **tires** inflated! Check them and pump them up to proper psi before every ride. The proper psi is always stamped on the sidewall
- Keep all nuts and bolts tight, but don't over tighten them
- Make sure your **brakes** are adjusted correctly, check them before every ride. Brakes sometimes need to be recentered. Make sure they are in the LOCKED POSITION
- Learn how to fix a flat

As far as tires, inspect them and remove all stones, glass and debris. This is much easier to do while the tires are off the rims. Sometimes glass is embedded in the rubber and you will not be able to remove the debris with the tires still on the rim. You may need tweezers to get out the debris.

Know how to remove your wheels from your frame. Always carry the right tool (if you need one) to get your wheel off of the frame.

IF YOU CANNOT DO MAINTENANCE YOURSELF TAKE YOUR BIKE TO A BIKE SHOP AND HAVE IT INSPECTED AND TUNED UP AT MINIMUM ONCE A YEAR! DEPENDING ON HOW OFTEN YOU RIDE, YOU MAY NEED TO DO THIS MORE OFTEN.

Nutrition and Staying Healthy

Before Biking....While Biking....After Biking

Skip bars and other meal replacements in favor of real food. Have a meal that combines protein and carbohydrates. Real food can work just as well if not better than engineered nutrition and is likely going to be easier to digest. As a general rule, sports nutrition should come from your kitchen, not just from a package. Take the time to prepare delicious, high-carb meals and snacks that you will look forward to eating. Hydration is also key before a ride. Drink enough water to quench your thirst. Hydrating while on your way to the ride is highly recommended.

Make sure you snack and hydrate while on the bike. Snacks may consist of energy bars, dried fruit, fresh fruit, nuts, muffins, etc. Many people also use energy gels. Do not wait until you feel hungry to eat. It is better to munch along the way. Once you start to feel hungry or thirsty it may be too late and your body may not recover. This is called “bonking” and your ride is basically over. *Essentially it means that you haven't taken in enough carbohydrates and have exhausted your body's glycogen stores, leaving you with abnormally low blood glucose levels.*

Two water bottles are recommended for longer rides. You can fill one with plain water and the other one can contain a sports drink with electrolytes. Your body will lose salt and electrolytes faster in warmer weather so you need to constantly replenish. Having a hydration backpack as was previously discussed can be a lifesaver on rides longer than 40 miles.

After a ride you need to hydrate and have a snack. Carbs and protein are your friend. Drink some chocolate milk or have some fruit or peanut butter. Anything is better than nothing. This will jumpstart the recovery process so you can tackle your next ride as strong as possible. Hydrate on the way home!

Resources

<https://www.parktool.com/blog/repair-help>

<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/health-fitness/cycling/>

<https://www.parktool.com/blog/repair-help/bike-washing-and-cleaning>

SUMMARY

- Cycling is a great activity that keeps you in shape, energetic and feeling like a kid again!
- Never let your guard down, be aware of cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles around you. You certainly want to be biking for many years to come
- Be courteous and follow all rules of the road, you ARE considered a vehicle
- Be prepared with all the proper gear both on your person and on your bike, keeping all your gear in a bike bag will help you not forget anything. Nothing is worse than arriving to the ride and you do not have your helmet!
- Check to be sure your bike is always in good condition and in proper working order; all bolts tightened, brakes working properly, proper air pressure, etc

We hope this guide offered help for beginners and experienced cyclists. If you have any other questions feel free to contact the cycling chair of OCSJ with any questions or concerns. (biking@ocsj.org)

HAPPY CYCLING!