



ILLINOIS BICYCLE RULES OF THE ROAD

2024



SECRETARY *of* STATE

| ALEXI GIANNOULIAS

Biking is a fun way to exercise and get around. To remain safe on Illinois roads, bicyclists must obey the same traffic safety laws that govern drivers of vehicles.

If involved in a vehicle collision, no amount of bicycle safety equipment can adequately protect you from the dangerous force of a car or truck. The best way to avoid injury is to prepare for the dangers that streets pose.

This manual explains the rules of the road, teaches safe bicycling on Illinois' roads and streets, and provides tips about bicycling. Understanding the information in this manual and practicing bicycling skills will enable you to ride confidently, and provide a lifetime of safe bicycling.



A stylized, handwritten signature of Alexi Giannoulias in black ink.

Alexi Giannoulias
Secretary of State



CYCLING IN ILLINOIS

Illinois has bike paths for everyone, from leisurely rides along the Chicago lakefront to trails in the striking rural landscape and through many lovely communities. The trail system stretches through beautiful state parks, rolling hills, the Mississippi River, and Lake Michigan.

Biking in Illinois offers many activities not to be missed. Please see Page 18 for links to Illinois' beautiful bike paths and biking activities.

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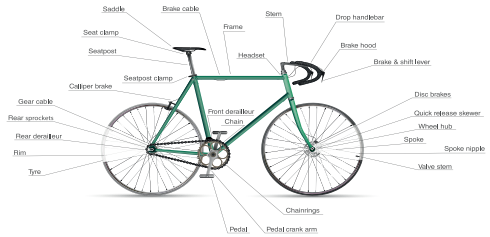
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BICYCLE SAFETY EQUIPMENT

To ride your bike safely and efficiently, it is important to have all equipment operating smoothly and properly.

Make sure your bicycle has the following safety equipment:

- ✓ Front light visible for at least 500 feet (night riders).
- ✓ Clear front reflector.
- ✓ Red rear reflector visible from 100 to 600 feet.
- ✓ Horn or bell that can be heard up to 100 feet.
- ✓ Reliable, properly adjusted brakes.
- ✓ Wheel-mounted side reflectors.
- ✓ Reflector pedals.
- ✓ Gears that are adjusted and operate smoothly.
- ✓ Properly adjusted seat.
- ✓ Handlebars and all accessories securely attached.



The structure of the bike

Bicycle Helmets

Bicycle helmets are essential to bicycle safety and must be properly fitted and adjusted. While riding, always wear an approved safety helmet to protect your head and brain from serious injury in case of a crash. Wearing a helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85%.

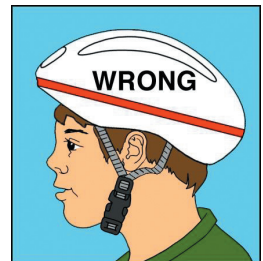
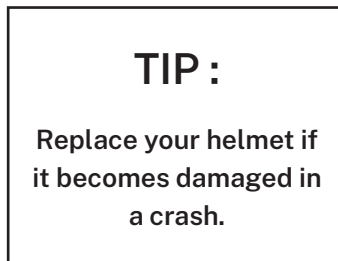
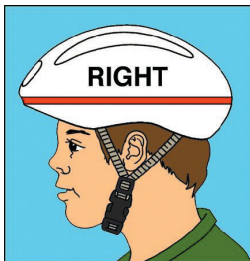
To make sure your helmet fits properly, use the “Eyes-Ears-Mouth” test.

Eyes: Position the helmet on your head and look up. You should see the front rim of the helmet.

Ears: Make sure the side straps come to a “V” just below each ear.

Mouth: Open your mouth wide. You should feel the helmet push down on your head.

If your helmet does not pass the test, adjust the straps or add bigger pads to get the right fit.



Night Riding Equipment

Illinois law requires a front light and a rear reflector when riding at night.

Equipment for night riding:

- ✓ Reflective tape on helmet.
- ✓ Reflective safety vest.
- ✓ Clip-on strobe light.
- ✓ Rear light and reflectors.
- ✓ Reflective tape.
- ✓ Headlight.
- ✓ Reflective sidewall tires.

TIP :

Ride with extra caution at night.
It is harder to see drivers and predict their moves.

Carrying Equipment

Carrying any package, bundle, or article that prevents using both hands in the control and operation of a bicycle is not only dangerous but illegal. Use **baskets, panniers, saddlebags, or a plastic crate to carry items.** Any load should be carefully attached.

Trailers can also be used to haul large, heavy, or awkward loads. There are trailers specifically designed to transport children (see *Bicycling with Children* Pages 15-16) and others for hauling cargo.

SAFE BIKE/“ABC” QUICK CHECK

Making sure your bike is in good condition before each ride is an important part of riding safely. Before riding, conduct an “ABC” Check.

A is for Air. Check the air pressure, spin the wheels, and ensure the tires are not worn out.

B is for Brakes. Check to determine if the coaster brakes will stop the bike by spinning the back wheel and applying the brake. If the bike has hand brakes, check to see that the levers do not hit the handlebars when squeezed. Lift one tire up at a time and spin it; squeeze the brakes to see if it stops.

C is for Chains and Cranks. Pull on the cranks to determine they are not loose. Check the chain to make sure it is not rusted or full of gunk.



BICYCLE RULES OF THE ROAD

As a bicyclist in Illinois, you have all the rights and responsibilities applicable to the driver of any other vehicle. You must obey the rules of the road and be responsible for your actions, for your safety, and for the safety of others.

Where and How to Ride

Ride on the Right — Ride as close as practicable and safe to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway.

When You Can Move Left — You may move left under the following conditions:

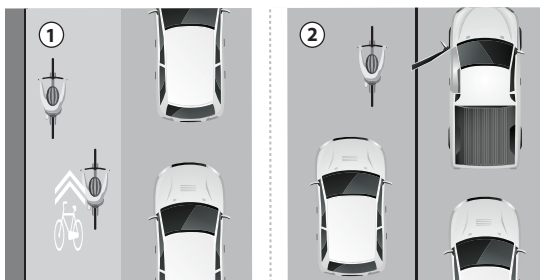
1. When overtaking or passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction.
2. When preparing for a left turn.
3. When necessary to avoid fixed or moving objects, parked or moving vehicles, motorized pedal cycles, animals, surface hazards, or a lane that is too narrow (less than 14 feet) for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane.
4. When approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.
5. When riding on a one-way highway with two or more marked traffic lanes.

Ride in the Same Direction as Other Traffic — You must ride in the same direction as other traffic. Riding in the opposite direction of traffic is both dangerous and illegal.

Riding Side by Side — Riding two abreast is permitted as long as the normal and reasonable movement of traffic is not impeded. Riding more than two abreast is prohibited except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.

Ride One to a Bike — Ride one to a bike unless it is specifically designed to carry additional passengers or cargo. A bike is harder to balance with another person on it. Also, a passenger may block the view of the surroundings.

Avoid the “door zone” — The “door zone” extends 4 feet along the left side of a lane of parked cars, where a person opening a door while exiting a car can hit and seriously injure a person biking. As shown below, (1) Ride at least 4 feet away from parked cars on the street. (2) Take the full lane if there is no room to safely pass open car doors and to avoid exiting passengers.



Riding on Sidewalks (where permitted) — When riding on sidewalks, you must:

- ✓ Obey all pedestrian signs and signals.
- ✓ Yield the right of way to pedestrians on sidewalks or crosswalks. Slow down and go around pedestrians when possible.
- ✓ Slow down and provide an audible signal (such as a bell or horn) to alert your presence before passing a pedestrian from behind.

Using Hand Signals

Use hand signals to communicate your intent to motorists. There are four important hand signals you must know and use every time you prepare to turn or stop. When turning, you must signal about one-third of a block before you turn.



Left-turn Signal



Right-turn Signal
(using left arm)



Right-turn Signal
(using right arm)



Stop Signal

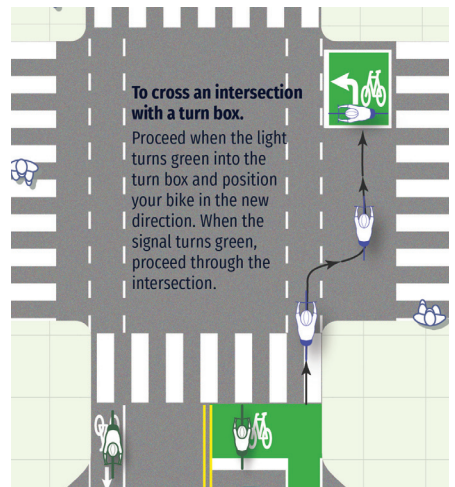
Turning

Before turning, look over your shoulder for any traffic. Proceed only when it is safe. By law, you must stop for pedestrians at crosswalks and intersections as is done by motorists.

Right Turns — Right turns must be made from the right lane. If a vehicle is turning right ahead of you, it is important to wait. Do not assume motorists can see you. Avoid squeezing by on the right at intersections.

Left Turns — When making a left turn, you have two choices:

1. Complete the turn as a vehicle would. When a left-turn lane exists, you should stay on the right side of that lane. After entering the intersection, look in all directions and complete the turn when it is safe.
2. Stay as close as necessary to the right curb or edge of the roadway when entering the intersection. Proceed straight across the roadway to the opposite corner and wait at this location. After obeying any traffic control device, you may directly cross the street again to complete the turn in the new direction. Some municipalities have bicycle turn boxes (see image) at certain intersections to facilitate this movement.



Yielding the Right of Way

Since you have the same rights and responsibilities as drivers of vehicles and pedestrians, the rules that govern the right of way for motorists and pedestrians apply to you also. When bicycling, you must follow rules that govern the right of way.

Two-way Intersections — When coming to a stop sign at a two-way stop intersection, you must yield the right of way to pedestrians and vehicles on the cross street before proceeding.

Four-way Intersections — When arriving at a four-way stop intersection, the vehicle or bicyclist who arrives first at the intersection should be the first to go. Take turns and go one by one through the intersection after coming to a complete stop. Proceed only when it is safe to do so.

Unmarked Intersections — When arriving at an unmarked intersection or crossing without traffic signs or signals, the driver or bicyclist on the left must yield to those on the right. When proceeding out of an alley or driveway, you must stop and yield the right of way to pedestrians and vehicles before crossing the sidewalk or entering the street.

Emergency Vehicles — Emergency vehicles with their lights flashing and sirens sounding always have the right of way. The law requires that drivers or bicyclists pull over to the side of the road and stop, if necessary until the emergency vehicle passes.

Disabled Persons — Persons who are blind, hearing impaired, or physically disabled can be identified by their white canes, support, or guide dogs. Always yield the right of way to them.

Police — If a police officer directs otherwise, the right of way laws do not apply; riders and pedestrians must obey the officer's directions.

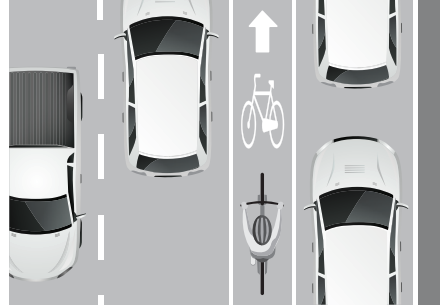


BICYCLE LANES

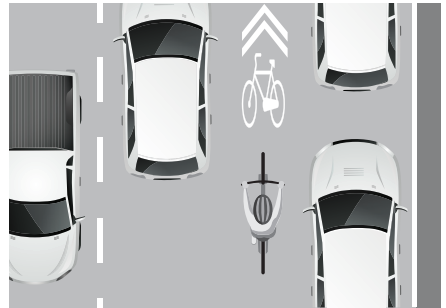
When a bicycle lane is properly marked on city streets, you should stay within this space when practical. As you are riding in your designated lane, you should be aware of parked vehicles and the possibility a motorist could unexpectedly open the door.

Types of Bicycle Lanes:

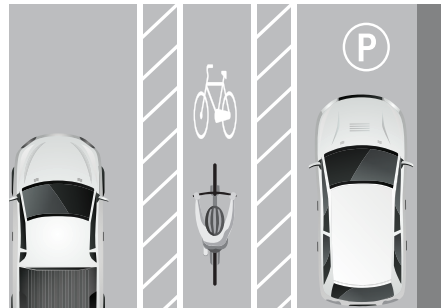
Bike Lanes are striped, on-street lanes with a bicycle symbol and an arrow. Avoid riding in the “door zone,” where a door can open into the bike lane.



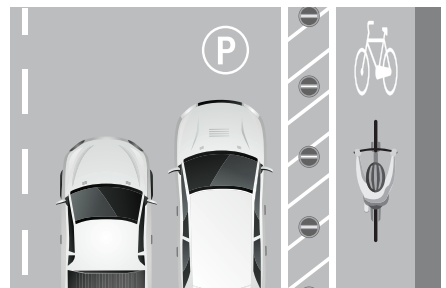
Marked Shared Lanes are not striped but show the bicycle symbol and a chevron. They are typically installed when there is not enough width for a full bike lane.



Buffer-Protected Bike Lanes are similar to conventional bike lanes, with extra space to keep you away from parked vehicles and opening doors.



Barrier-Protected Bike Lanes use physical barriers between yourself and moving cars to help people of all ages feel more comfortable on the street. The lane is usually located next to the curb. Cars park between the bike lane and car travel lane.



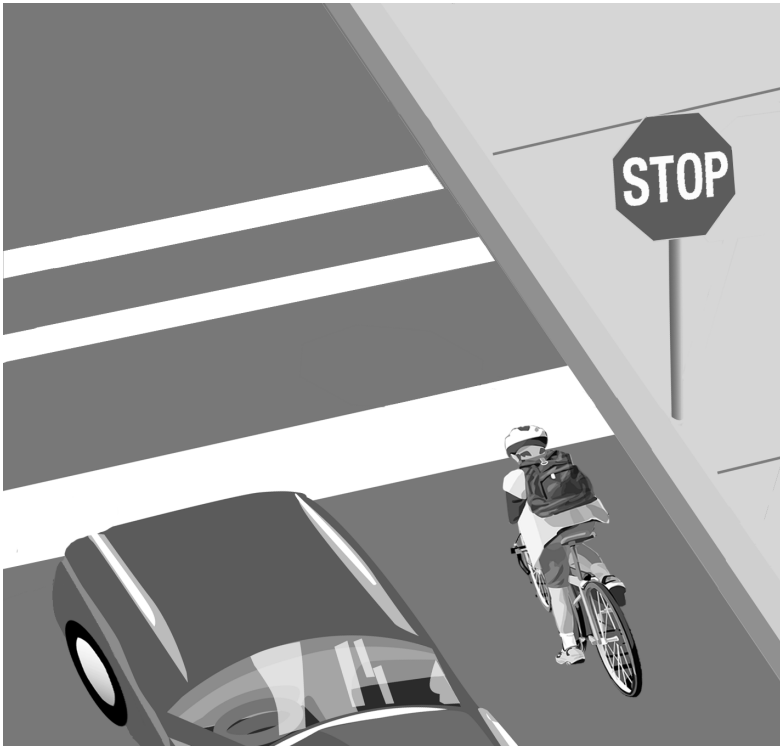
PAVEMENT MARKINGS

White Stop Line — Shows where you must come to a complete stop for a traffic light or stop sign.

Pedestrian Crosswalks — Many intersections have crosswalks. Watch for pedestrians in the crosswalk. Pedestrians have the right of way. Do not block the crosswalk when waiting at the intersection.

Center Lines — A double yellow center stripe indicates more than one lane of traffic is moving in both directions. Crossing the line is prohibited (except to turn out of or into a driveway or alley). White dashes mark the lane separations on either side of the double yellow stripe. You should ride on the right side of the right lane when safe, except to pass or make a left turn. When there is only one lane for traffic traveling in each direction and passing is permitted, the center of the street is marked with a broken yellow stripe.

Directions and Arrows — Some busy streets have lanes with specific individual directions painted on them. These directions include “left only” or “right only” or an arrow pointing straight ahead. You must follow the directions of the arrows painted on the lanes.



TRAFFIC SIGNALS AND SIGNS

Bicyclists, as well as drivers, must obey all traffic signs and signals. The signs and signals warn of railroad crossings and other hazards and advise you where you may ride your bike.

Traffic Lights

Red Light — You must stop before the intersection or crosswalk until the light changes to green.

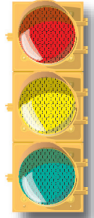
Yellow Light — This is a warning light that means the signal is changing from green to red. Prepare to stop.

Green Light — Continue on a green light, but first look carefully in all directions to determine if it is safe to proceed.

Note: You may proceed after yielding the right of way to oncoming traffic if a red light fails to turn green after waiting at least 120 seconds. This rule does not apply in all communities regarding red light left turns.

Flashing Red Light — Stop. Look left, then right, then left again. Proceed when it is safe to do so.

Flashing Yellow Light — Slow down and ride carefully.



Traffic Signs



Stop
Come to a complete stop.



Bike Traffic
This sign alerts other drivers that there is bike traffic on a street.



Yield
Slow down and let other vehicles or pedestrians go before you proceed.



Pedestrian Crosswalk
Bicyclists and motorists must always yield the right of way to pedestrians.



One Way
Traffic may go only one way on this street. Ride in the direction the arrow points.



School Crossing
At a school crossing, you must let pedestrians go first.



Wrong Way
This sign advises you that you are riding in the wrong direction on a street.



Railroad Crossing
Stop, look, and listen. Never ride through, around, or under any crossing gate.



No Bikes
Where this sign appears, bicycles are not allowed on streets or sidewalks.



Road Construction
Watch for bumpy roads and large equipment.

SHARING THE ROAD

Whether driving, bicycling, or walking, we are all responsible for sharing the road safely with other vehicles and users. The following laws and safety tips will help drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians share the road and reach their destination safely.

Bicyclists

- ✓ Obey the same traffic laws, signs, and signals that apply to motorists.
- ✓ Be visible.
- ✓ Ride as close to the right edge of the road as is safe.
- ✓ Communicate using hand signals.
- ✓ Avoid the “door zone.”
- ✓ Ride in the same direction as other traffic, not against traffic.

Note: As a bicyclist, you are prohibited on controlled-access highways, expressways, and certain other marked roadways.

Pedestrians

- ✓ Always stop before leaving a driveway or sidewalk.
- ✓ Before crossing, stop at the curb, edge of the road, or corner before proceeding.
- ✓ Look left, look right, and look left again before crossing.
- ✓ Continue to check for traffic while crossing.
- ✓ If there is a pedestrian signal, only cross when allowed.

Pedestrian Signals:

A flashing **DON'T WALK** signal indicates you **DO NOT CROSS** the street. If you are in the middle of the street and the **DON'T WALK** signal starts flashing, continue walking. Newer pedestrian signals now have a countdown timer for the flashing **DON'T WALK** signal. If you see a steady **DON'T WALK** signal, do not begin to cross the street. Wait for the next **WALK** signal.



The **WALK** signal and the **GREEN** traffic light indicate that it is your turn to cross the street, but this does not mean it is safe to cross. The **WALK** signal and the **GREEN** light mean: Look, and then if it is safe, proceed.



TIP :

Remember to make eye contact with drivers to ensure they see you.

Motorists

Passing a bicyclist — When passing a bicyclist, you are required by law to allow at least 3 feet of space between your vehicle and the bicyclist. More space is better, especially when driving at higher speeds. Since lanes on most roads are too narrow (less than 14 feet) to legally pass a bicycle within the same lane, drivers must usually merge at least partially into the next lane to pass. If needed, wait to merge over and do not pass until it is safe.

Passing a bicyclist in a no-passing zone — When driving in a no-passing zone, you may pass people biking in the same direction if:

- ✓ They are traveling at a speed of less than half of the posted speed limit.
- ✓ You can overtake and pass the bicyclist without exceeding the speed limit.
- ✓ There is sufficient distance ahead on the left side to pass safely.

Prevent “Dooring” — When exiting a vehicle, you should use the “Dutch Reach” method: reach across with the hand farthest from the vehicle door when preparing to exit. Using this simple method, you automatically turn your body to the vehicle door, forcing you to look for oncoming bicyclists or other traffic.



Respect the bike lane — Some municipalities have roadways with designated bike lanes. Even if bicyclists are not present, do not drive, park, or stand in the bike lane. Wait for bicyclists to pass before entering the lane to park.

Check for bicyclists before turning — Yield to bicyclists and do not underestimate their speed. Watch for oncoming bicycle traffic when turning left. Do not pass and then cut in front of a bicyclist when turning right. Check all mirrors and blind spots for bicyclists.

Stop at the stop line — Coming to a stop in front of a stop line places pedestrians and bicyclists in the crosswalk at risk. Even if a stop line is placed too far back from the intersection to see well, stop at the stop line first and look both ways before moving forward for a better view. When turning right on red or at a stop sign, look to your right before turning.

Yield the right of way to a bicyclist just as you would another vehicle.

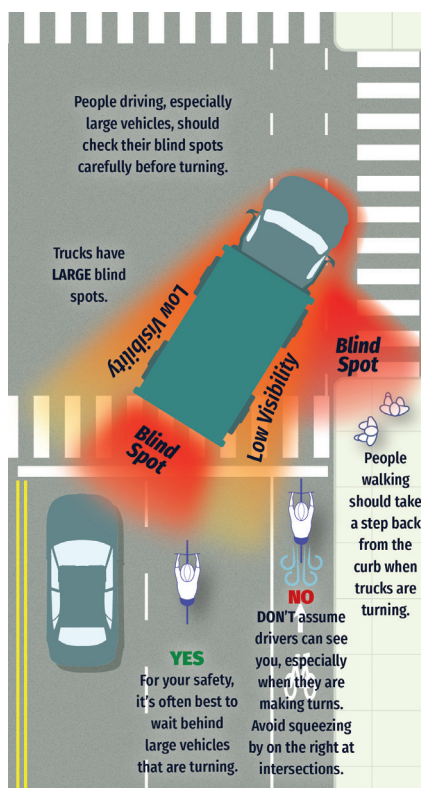
Respect bicyclists — If a person drives recklessly, unnecessarily close to, or toward a bicyclist, and it results in a crash, the motorist may face misdemeanor or felony charges depending on the severity of the injury. Bicyclists may need to ride outside a bike lane, and motorists should be prepared to move safely around them. The bicyclist must be aware of the direction a vehicle is traveling when properly completing a left or right turn.

Sharing the Road with School Buses

When approaching a school bus with flashing signal lights and the extended STOP arm out, you must give the stop hand signal and come to a complete stop. You may proceed when the extended STOP arm retracts and the school bus's flashing signals are turned off.

Sharing the Road with Trucks

Be cautious around trucks and large vehicles. Motorists driving large vehicles should check their blind spots carefully before turning. For your safety, it is often best to wait behind large vehicles that are turning. Do not assume drivers can see you, especially when they are making turns. Trying to squeeze by on the right at intersections can be especially dangerous.



DISTRACTED BICYCLING/WALKING

Some of the main causes of being distracted while walking or bicycling are:

- ✓ Looking at a cellphone.
- ✓ Listening to music.
- ✓ Talking to a walking companion.
- ✓ Crossing streets.
- ✓ Riding in the rain.

TIP :

**Never wear headphones when bicycling.
They block other sounds you need to hear.**

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF A CRASH

Follow these steps if you are involved in a crash:

- ✓ Call (or ask someone to call) 911 and ask for the police. Do not hesitate to ask for an ambulance if you are injured.
- ✓ Ask the motorist to provide ID and stay at the scene until the police arrive.
- ✓ Obtain the motorist's name, phone number, address, driver's license number, and license plate number.
- ✓ Obtain names and phone numbers of any witnesses — the more, the better. A business card is great. If someone seems friendly, ask for their help.
- ✓ Obtain the name of the car owner's insurance company and the policy number. If the driver does not own the car, make sure you obtain all insurance information on the vehicle AND the driver.

TIP :

**Always carry identification with you in
case of a crash.**

BICYCLING WITH CHILDREN

Parental Responsibility

Parents and guardians should be aware of their responsibilities when their children ride bikes or walk near streets or highways. These responsibilities range from selecting the proper equipment for the child to wear to teaching the child all traffic laws.

Since children perceive traffic situations differently than adults, it is important for parents or guardians to teach children the dangers of traffic. With proper training, bicycling can be a safe, healthy, and fun activity for the whole family.

Bicycle Fit

One size does not fit all. Children should be able to comfortably straddle the top bar of the frame while standing flat footed. Learning to ride on a traditional girl's bike is a choice to consider for both girls and boys, as the sloping top tube reduces the risk of injury to the groin. When children first learn to ride, they should be able to sit on the seat and put both feet flat on the ground.

Transporting Children

Parents can take advantage of many options for transporting children. Whether in a bike trailer or a child's seat, children should not ride or be carried on a bike or a trailer until they can sit upright while supporting the weight of their own heads and helmets. Check local laws. In some places, carry a child under 12 months old on a bike is illegal.

Bike Trailers

Bike trailers provide a very stable and secure way to transport kids. They offer a good amount of hauling capacity (some trailers will fit two children side by side). Since trailers are lower to the ground, use a flag to increase visibility.



Child Seats

Before riding with a child, practice mounting, dismounting, and riding with the seat loaded with extra weight (bricks, etc). These seats should not be used for kids over 40 pounds. (Kids should not be given toys or objects, which might be dropped into the bike's wheels.)



Trailer Cycles

A trailer cycle, which attaches by a hitch to the back of another bike, is a good option for a child learning to ride. It is also designed for longer rides when a child lacks the stamina to keep up. Geared trailer cycles allow the child to pedal and contribute to propelling the bike, or the rider can coast independently.



Riding with Kids on Their Own Bikes

When riding bikes with children, always ride in a single file line. Adults should ride behind and slightly to the left of the children. If two adults are riding in the group, one should ride in front of the children, and the more experienced rider should ride at the back. All adults in the riding group should maintain communication with the children, advising them where to go and coaching them on their position on the bike and the road.

Sidewalk vs Street Riding

Here are some helpful tips for using the street or sidewalk when riding or jogging with children. First, check with the local municipality for the required age to ride in the street. If jogging, you should have the children ride on the sidewalk and run beside them. If riding, you should have the children ride on the sidewalk, and ride on the street beside them. Coach the children to watch for cars entering and leaving driveways and alleys.



ELECTRIC BICYCLES

Illinois has implemented a three-class electric assist bicycle system (e-bikes). All e-bikes operating in Illinois must comply with equipment and manufacturing requirements adopted by the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission. You may operate an e-bike on any highway, street, or roadway authorized for use by bicycles including, but not limited to, bicycle lanes. You may operate an e-bike upon any bicycle path unless the municipality, county, or local authority with jurisdiction prohibits using e-bikes or a specific class of e-bike on the path. You may not operate an e-bike on sidewalks. The three classes of e-bikes in Illinois are as follows:

- Class 1 e-bike – Low-speed electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches speeds of 20 mph.
- Class 2 e-bike – Low-speed electric bicycle equipped with a motor that can be used exclusively to propel the bicycle and cannot provide assistance when the bicycle reaches speeds of 20 mph.
- Class 3 e-bike – Low-speed electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a speed of 28 mph.



RESOURCES

Illinois Bicycle Laws

Illinois Vehicle Code – 625 ILCS 5/11-1501 thru 625 ILCS 5/11-1516

Bicycle Safety Quiz

Ride Illinois

rideillinois.org/safety/bike-safety-quiz

Bicycle Trails

Ride Illinois

rideillinois.org/maps

traillink.com/state-activity/il-bike-trails

enjoyillinois.com/travel-illinois/biking-in-illinois

Illinois Department of Transportation

idot.illinois.gov/travel-information/recreation/trails-paths-streets/index

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

illinois.gov/dnr/publications/Documents/00000642.pdf#search=bike%20trail%20maps

Community Resources

ilsos.gov

ilsos.gov/publications/pdf_publications/dsd_a143.pdf

ilsos.gov/departments/drivers/traffic_safety/bikepedsaftey.html

ilsos.gov/publications/pdf_publications/dsd_a170.pdf

Ride Illinois

rideillinois.org

For additional questions, please call:

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Toll Free IL resident

(888) 261-7864

TTY for Vehicles Department

(217) 785-3000

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