Idaho Bicycle Commuter Guide

the Fun
and Rewarding Art
of Bicycle Commuting in Idaho

—Compliments of the Idaho Transportation Department

March 2009

Contact Information

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www.itd.idaho.gov/bike_ped.htm

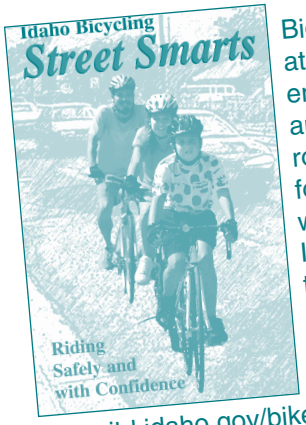
"I'm an experienced rider and I still learned a lot."

LEAGUE OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS (LAB)
League Cycling Instructors (LCI)
Founded in 1880, the LAB promotes bicycling for fun, fitness, and transportation. The league has several certified cycling instructors in Idaho who are qualified to teach in-depth "Bike Ed" courses that cover bike selection, maintenance, riding etiquette, safety skills, commuting, and other important aspects of bicycling for beginning to intermediate riders. Idaho's LCIs welcome your questions about any cycling issue. For a list of Idaho's instructors, go to the following site and select "Idaho."

www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/course_schedule.php

"Riding and learning with others was fun!"

"The league's course was educational and a great confidence builder."



Bicycle use, whether for recreation or transportation, can be enjoyable and safe—if you know and follow the basic rules of the road and understand how to comfortably and safely share the road with motor vehicles. The goal of Idaho Bicycling Street Smarts is to help you learn to ride safely in a variety of situations. To order a copy of *Street Smarts*, go to:

www.itd.idaho.gov/bike_ped/Commuter_StreetSmarts.html

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The original text for this guide was produced by the Capital Bicycling Club, Olympia, Washington, and Climate Solutions, Olympia, Washington, www.climatesolutions.org. Contact Climate Solutions at (360) 352-1763 or info@climatesolutions.org for information on developing a new guide for your area.

The Idaho Transportation Department purchased the right to modify and reproduce this guide to meet the needs of Idaho bicycle commuters. Additional copies may be obtained by contacting any of the five League Cycling Instructors or the department's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator.

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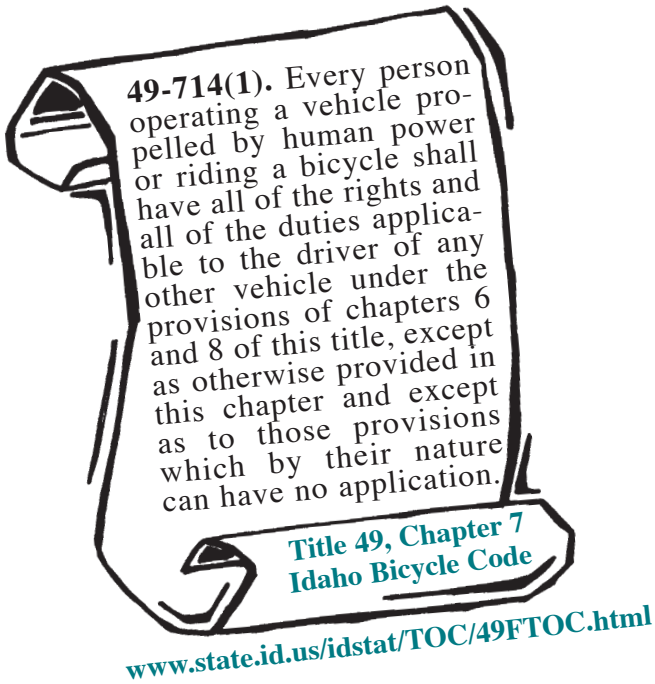
Bicycle-Related Idaho Code . . . . . .Back Cover

This Guide will Prepare You for the Fun and Rewarding Art of Bicycle Commuting...

Ready...
Set...
Ride!



See back page for Idaho bicycling laws

The morning air is clear and crisp as you set out on your bicycle. As you pedal down the street and begin to limber up you notice how a neighborhood garden has grown over the past few weeks. You exchange a friendly wave with a neighbor out for a morning walk. It's amazing—just a few months ago your bike sat in the corner of your garage, waiting for a fair-weather weekend to come along. Now you use it daily to commute and run errands, and you're surprised at how much you enjoy cycling. The newly acquired accessories and clothing that help you ride in all conditions are quickly being paid for by savings in fuel and lower maintenance costs for the family car. And best of all, you're in much better shape than you were two months ago.

Waiting in line at a traffic light, you notice that most of the cars only have one occupant. What if they were on bikes or buses or carpooling you wonder—how much traffic congestion would that reduce? When you first started bicycle commuting, you were thankful for that traffic light because it gave you a chance to catch your breath, but now your fitness level has improved to the point that only biking up the big hill on your route makes you breathe hard. You used to begrudgingly call that hill "Little Teton," but now it's just another part of your morning. You are feeling awake and motivated as you pull into your destination and lock your bike to the rack near the entrance of the building, while car drivers troll around the parking lot, searching for that elusive "close" parking space. A few minutes later, you are at work or school, relaxed and wide awake, ready for the day ahead. 👍☺

Why Commute by Bicycle?

Cycling is a quiet, clean, efficient, healthy, and fun way to travel. Since half of all daily trips in this country are five miles or less, bicycling is a practical way to travel to and from work or school, or for doing errands. Combined with transit, cycling can also be part of a commute over longer distances. Bicycle commuting is easy but it may require some small adjustments in your daily routine.

This guide was created to ease the transition and make the experience safer and more enjoyable. If you're new to bicycle commuting, it may take a little while to develop your routine. But be persistent — you'll not only arrive at your destination alert and motivated, you'll also save a lot of money and be pleased at how quickly your fitness level increases!

Before taking your bicycle on transit vehicles, ask your local transit provider for instructions. Always communicate with the driver before you load or unload your bike.

Bicycle Commuting Options

If doing your whole commute by bicycle is impractical or you need to build up your fitness level, consider the following alternatives:

- Ride to a bus stop and take a bus the rest of the way to work.
- Ride to a park-and-ride facility, lock your bike to a bike rack or in a bike locker, and then carpool with a co-worker.
- Drive yourself and your bike to a park-and-ride facility that is closer to work and ride your bike from there.
- Drive yourself and your bike to a co-worker's house and ride from there.
- Store your bike closer to work at a friend or co-worker's house. Drive to your friend or co-worker's house and ride from there.
- Ride your bike to a co-worker's house and carpool from there.
- Drive yourself and your bike to work, and ride home. The next day, ride to work and then drive home.
- Combine biking with a vanpool if possible. Ask the vanpool manager to mount a bike rack on the van. Then you can take the vanpool in the morning and ride home in the afternoon.

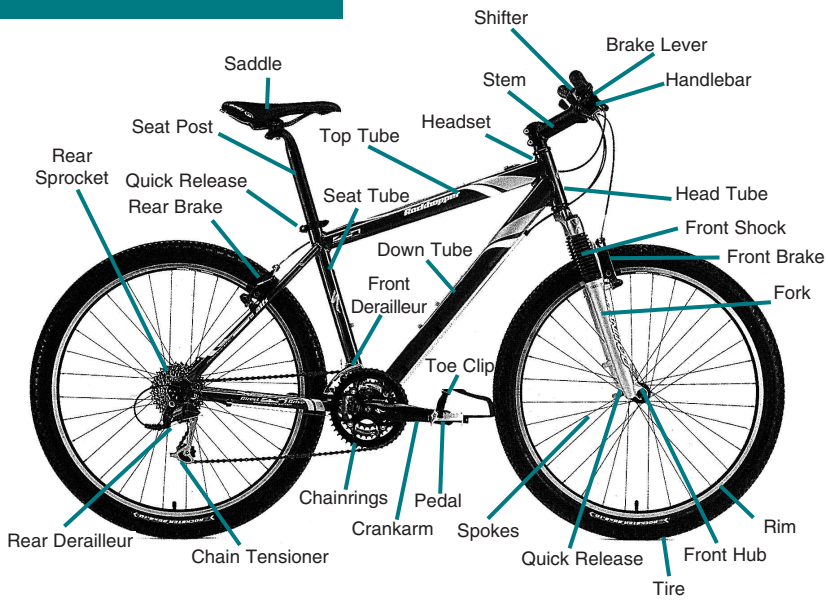
The bottom line is. . .

Be Creative, You Can Do It!

Bicycle Basics

The "Anatomy" of a Bicycle

You don't need to be a mechanical expert, but a basic understanding of your bicycle is helpful. This figure illustrates the parts of a bicycle you should be familiar with (your bicycle may differ).



Bicycle Fit

Proper sizing and fit are extremely important. Having too large or too small a bike can make it difficult to control and can lead to discomfort or injury. As a general rule for "road bikes," you should have one inch of clearance between the top tube and your crotch as you stand astride the bike. Clearance on other types of bikes should be between two and four inches depending on their use. See the Adjustments and Quick Releases section for more information on proper fit or contact your local bike shop.

Outfitting Your Bicycle

Certain accessories can make commuting safer and more enjoyable. Prioritize your spending on safety-related items first. Over time your savings in fuel expenses will more than pay for the additional accessories. To make choosing among the wide variety of accessories easier, think about your needs, talk to other cyclists or employees at your local bike shop, read equipment reviews in bicycle publications, or surf the web.

Lights and Reflectors

Headlights are required by law for night riding, and taillights are a good addition to the required rear red reflector (make sure not to block or cover your rear reflectors). Headlights and taillights vary greatly in their durability, mounting design, brightness, and "run time." There are three primary types of bicycle lights:

- Non-rechargeable—inexpensive initially, however, battery costs pile up and so does the hazardous waste they create in spent batteries.
- Rechargeable—more expensive initially, but the savings from reusable batteries offset the cost, plus rechargables reduce hazardous waste.
- Generator-powered—no batteries required, but some may not be as bright as battery-powered lights. They may only produce light when the bicycle is moving (it is safer to remain visible at night, even when stopped).

Regardless of what system you use, consider keeping a spare headlight with you on your night commutes in case you forget your main light or it is not usable (due to dead batteries or mechanical failure). Make sure the spare light can be attached to your bicycle or yourself (See Section 49-723 on back cover).

Helmet Fit and Adjustment

www.bhsi.org
(The Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute)

Since helmets significantly reduce the chance and severity of head injury, making sure your helmet fits and is always correctly adjusted is one of the most important prerequisites to cycling. Use the following steps to choose and adjust your helmet, or ask your local bike shop to assist you.

1. **CPSC Approval:** Since 1999, all bicycle helmets sold in the U.S. are required to have Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) approval.

2. **Helmet Sizing:** Try several helmets to find the correct size. Ignoring the straps for now, place a helmet on your head, making sure it is level. Wiggle the helmet around—if there is significant side-to-side or front-to-back movement, it is too large and it will not work properly. If you are having trouble getting past this first step when shopping for helmets, try other models or brands (some helmets are narrow, others are wide).

3. **Adjusting the Junction Buckles:** Ignore the chin buckle for now and adjust each pair of straps so the junction buckles are situated just below your earlobe. This step can be difficult but it is very important. Use a mirror to help.

4. **Adjusting the Chin Buckle:** Close the chin buckle and adjust the straps so it is snug but comfortable.

5. **Final Check:** When the helmet is properly adjusted, you should be able to slip a finger under the straps. The straps should move back into position when you remove your finger. Do a final check of the helmet fit by gently yet firmly trying to push it off your head from the front, back, and sides.

Basic Repairs

It's a good idea to carry a basic tool kit with a small set of allen wrenches, a tire patch kit or spare tube, and tire levers. Mount a pump on your frame as well and make sure you know how to fix a flat before you need to! Flat repair is often featured in bicycling magazines and is always included in repair manuals. Products such as puncture-resistant tires and tubes, liquid sealants, and tire liners can help prevent flats. Inquire at your local bike shop. Include a rag in your tool kit to help you clean up after fixing a mechanical problem. Carry emergency bus fare in case you encounter a problem you cannot address immediately. A cell phone is also handy to have with you if you get stranded or encounter an emergency. The chance of an occasional flat tire didn't keep you from getting a driver's license, and it shouldn't keep you from riding a bike either. The benefits greatly outweigh an occasional inconvenience.

Fenders

Fenders are a must for cycling in wet conditions. They nearly eliminate spray from your wheels, keeping you dry, clean, and comfortable. They also keep your bike cleaner, reducing the need for maintenance. Various fender designs are available from your local bike shop.

Mirrors

Many cyclists use mirrors to keep track of traffic behind them. Mirrors come in two basic types: helmet-mounted and bar-mounted. Helmet-mounted mirrors are constantly in your field of view, requiring just a quick glance to check the road behind, but some find them distracting. Bar-mounted mirrors are not in the field of view, and may be subject to vibration. Although mirrors can help you keep tabs on traffic, they are not a substitute for looking behind you, especially before turning, changing lanes, or passing.

Outfitting Yourself

Outfitting yourself for bike commuting consists of wearing safety and comfort clothing. Safety clothing should be your priority, while comfort clothing can make your commute more enjoyable. Wearing eye protection will also increase your comfort and safety.

Helmets

Approximately three out of every four bicycle-related deaths that occur in the U.S. are due to head injuries. Using a helmet can significantly reduce the chance and severity of a head injury and may even save your life.

- Bicycle helmets are designed to withstand one crash only. Structural damage is not always visible, so always replace a helmet that has been in a crash and never buy used helmets.
- Light- or fluorescent-colored helmets make you more visible to motorists. Reflective tape, available at bike shops, can be applied to helmets to enhance visibility at night.
- Wear your helmet every time you ride, no matter how short the trip.

Highly Visible Safety Accessories

In daylight conditions, fluorescent or light-colored jerseys, vests, and jackets increase the ability of other vehicle drivers to see you on the road.

At night, retro-reflective items greatly increase your visibility. Clothing or accessories (e.g. retro-reflective arm/leg bands, front and rear reflectors, etc.) make you more conspicuous and can help motorists to see you easier. Always consider visibility when purchasing cycling clothes.

Retro-reflective Clothing:

vests or jackets

arm or leg bands

Retro-reflective material greatly increases visibility in low-light conditions because it returns light directly toward its source, such as an approaching car or truck.

Specialized Clothing

Pants and Shorts

Cycling pants and shorts reduce crotch friction and provide additional seat cushioning. However, they are not for everyone, and some commuters prefer to wear regular clothing. When wearing long pants, use a leg band to keep your pant leg from getting caught in the chain or from getting greasy.

Rain Gear

Rain gear comes in two main types: breathable and non-breathable. Non-breathable fabric can cause you to overheat and sweat, though even breathable fabrics will do the same when you are cycling vigorously. The comfort of rain gear depends a lot on the ventilation it offers. Look for large "pit-zips" in the jacket to allow perspiration to evaporate. Rain pants should be long enough to cover the top of your footwear to help keep your feet dry.

Gloves

Gloves enhance both safety and comfort. Cycling gloves protect your hands in the event of a crash, improve your grip on the bars, and have special padding to reduce road vibration. Warm, full-finger gloves make riding in cold or wet weather more comfortable.

Footwear

Ideal cycling footwear is stiff-soled, waterproof, and comfortable to walk in. Some cyclists use special shoes, but common footwear such as sneakers may suffice for your commute. Experiment to see what footwear gives you the best combination of comfort, efficiency, and convenience. You can also get waterproof booties that fit over your footwear.

Cold-Weather Clothing Tips

If you're warm when you leave home, you're overdressed. You may feel chilly at first, but remember, cycling generates significant heat and you will warm up after a few minutes in the saddle. In cold weather, put a thin, non-cotton wicking layer against your skin to keep yourself dry. Then use an insulating layer on top of that, and finally, if you need it, a wind or rain jacket. Make sure the jacket has full front zippers and/or pit-zips to allow for ventilation.

Ear warmers and head coverings like hats or balaclavas enable you to cycle comfortably in cold weather. Head coverings may require helmet readjustment.

If you have to be wet (due to rain or perspiration), at least be warm. If possible, avoid cotton, which loses its ability to insulate when wet. Ask your local bike shop to give you some pointers and show you their cold-weather cycling clothes.

Riding Tips

Braking

Brakes are among the most important parts of your bike to keep in good working order. The front brake should deliver approximately 70% of a bicycle's stopping power, yet many underutilize it because they are afraid of flipping the bike. By shifting your body weight backwards as you brake, your bike will remain stable. The harder you need to brake, the more you should shift your weight backwards.

For maximum stability, brake before (not during) a turn, especially in wet or gravelly conditions.

For more in-depth information, click on the "brakes" link at: www.sheldonbrown.com

Looking Behind

Cyclists often swerve when they look over their shoulders prior to changing lanes or turning. To minimize this tendency, concentrate on not moving your shoulders as you turn your head to look. Try bringing your chin to the shoulder you want to look over instead of just turning your head to the side. Practice this technique in an empty parking lot until you can look behind you without swerving. Using a rear-view mirror is not a substitute for actually looking over your shoulder.

Getting the Most From a Multi-speed Bike

Using a multi-speed bicycle is similar to driving a stick-shift car. In a car, you shift gears to keep the engine running at a reasonable pace. On a bicycle, *you* are the engine, and you should use the gears accordingly. A "cadence," or pace, of 60-80 revolutions per minute is a good target for novice cyclists, with higher cadences appropriate as your body and muscles adapt. Try pedaling at a constant cadence at different speeds by using different gears. Shifting to maintain a comfortable cadence may initially require a little practice but will soon become intuitive.

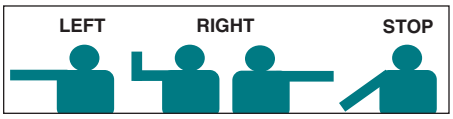
Riding Safely and Legally

Riding safely and legally starts with having a well-maintained bike. See the Adjustments and Quick Releases section to make sure your bicycle is in proper working condition.

Hand Signals

For left turns: extend your left arm straight out to the side.

For right turns: either extend your left arm to the side, bent upward at the elbow, or extend your right arm straight out to the side.



View as seen from behind cyclist.

For a stop or a decrease in speed: extend your straightened left arm to the side and down, with your palm facing to the back.

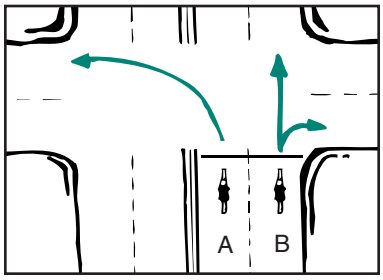
Tips for Riding in Traffic

(Also see www.bikeleague.org/resources/better)

In his book *Effective Cycling*, John Forester writes, *"Cyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles."* When cyclists obey traffic laws they travel in a predictable fashion. Idaho defines bicycles as vehicles (see back cover).

- Ride with the traffic flow and as far right as conditions safely allow.
- If they are present, use designated turn lanes (not bike lanes) when turning at an intersection. As you approach a stoplight-controlled intersection, if your direction of traffic is stopped or slowing and you are not going to turn, your safest position is in the through lane. Do not use the bike lane to pass cars on the right because vehicles may swerve into the bike lane to turn right. You can move back to the right after crossing the intersection.
- Obey all traffic-control devices.
- Have at least one hand in control of your bicycle at all times.
- "Always" yield the right-of-way to pedestrians.
- Be predictable by maintaining a steady line of travel. Avoid swerving in and out of lanes (including the parking lane). If possible, stay approximately three feet from parked cars. This can keep you from hitting opened doors and also makes you more visible to other drivers approaching from a side street or driveway.
- Be alert. Continually scan ahead for potential hazards such as road debris, potholes, car doors that may suddenly open in your path, and vehicles pulling into your line of travel.
- Ride with confidence and make eye contact with other road users.
- At intersections, position yourself in the rightmost lane that best reflects your travel intentions (i.e. use through lanes when traveling straight, use dedicated turn lanes when turning).
- Sidewalks are more dangerous to ride on than streets. If you must use a sidewalk, be extremely cautious, especially when approaching and crossing driveways and intersections. Drivers watch for and expect pedestrians on the sidewalk—not fast-moving bicycles. Always yield to pedestrians and watch for objects such as trash cans or mailboxes in your path.

- At intersections with no designated turning lanes, occupy the lane nearest the direction you plan to travel (see illustration below).
- You may occupy the center of a travel lane for safety reasons when (1) passing, (2) preparing to turn left, (3) avoiding obstacles, and (4) when you and another vehicle cannot safely occupy the same lane due to road width.
- Although shared-use or off-road paths may not have motorized traffic, they may have a mix of other users who are less predictable and make the path more dangerous than a street. Yield the right-of-way to anyone who is not riding a bike, and be aware of less-experienced cyclists. Use hand signals and clearly announce "passing on your left" well in advance of passing. Never try to pass by quickly squeezing around or between a slower user and an oncoming user. Be patient and wait until it is safe to pass.



Rider A has "taken the lane" to make a left turn. Rider B has "taken the lane" and can either turn right or continue straight ahead. (Section 49-717, Idaho Code)

For an on-line tutorial, visit www.bikexprt.com/streetsmarts/usa/index.htm

Riding in the Rain

Riding in wet conditions affects your bike's handling.

Remember these wet-weather cycling tips:

- Allow more time for braking.
- Sewer covers, drainage grates, traffic-lane striping, and railroad tracks are slippery when wet. Avoid braking or turning while traveling on them.
- Avoid puddles, they often hide potholes or other road hazards that can cause you to lose control.
- Rain makes it difficult for drivers to see you, so be sure to wear highly visible clothing and ride with appropriate caution.

Riding at Night

At night, road hazards are less visible, and you are less visible to drivers. Idaho law requires you to use a headlight visible for 500 feet and a rear reflector. Blinking rear lights are effective, but are not necessarily an acceptable substitute for a rear reflector. If you use only a blinking rear light, make sure it also serves as a reflector. Using both a rear light and a reflector is a good idea. Rear lights can fail (dead batteries, electronic or mechanical failure) and reflectors need incoming light from properly aimed headlights to function.

Additional reflectors or reflective tape on any moving part of the bike (wheels, pedals, etc.) will increase your visibility. Helmets—the highest point on your body when cycling—are also good places for reflective tape and front and rear lights. Helmet-mounted headlights illuminate wherever you look and allow you to get other drivers' attention by momentarily aiming your headlight at them.

Try This. . .

Think you've got all the visibility bases covered? See how you look to motorists by having a friend wear your visibility clothing and ride your light-equipped bike at night. Shine car headlights on your friend from the front, sides, and back. You may find the results illuminating!

Be Conspicuous

Depending on the color or type of clothing you are wearing, drivers will first be able to see you at night from the following distances:

55 feet (blue)

80 feet (red)

120 feet (yellow)

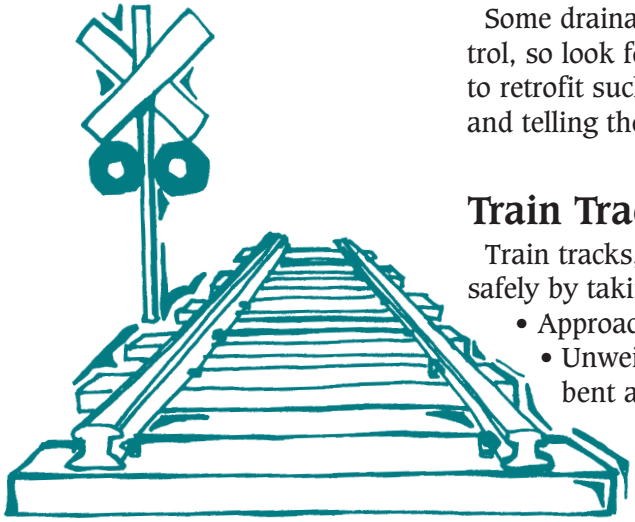
180 feet* (white)

500 feet (retro-reflective)

WARNING! At 40 mph, the stopping distance of most motor vehicles is more than 180 feet (including reaction time). Wearing retro-reflective clothing allows drivers to see you from a greater distance.

BE SAFE, BE BRIGHT, WEAR RETRO-REFLECTIVE MATERIALS AT NIGHT

To be safe, use both the required red rear reflector and a red flashing rear light.



Drainage Grates

Some drainage grates can trap or deflect front wheels, causing loss of control, so look for and avoid them. Public works departments are often willing to retrofit such grates with "bike-friendly" designs. Help them out by calling and telling them where safer grates are needed.

Train Tracks

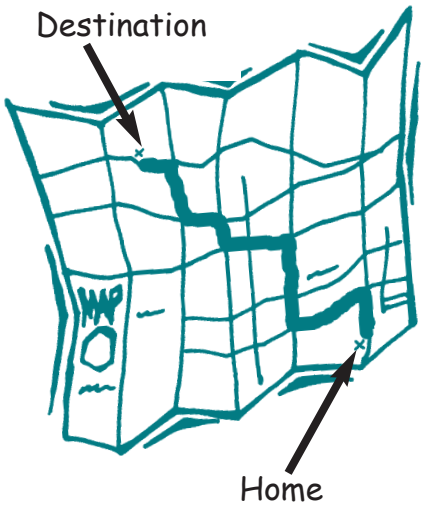
Train tracks, a significant hazard for cyclists, can almost always be crossed safely by taking a few precautions:

- Approach the tracks at a 90-degree angle.
- Unweight your front wheel slightly and stand with knees and elbows bent as you cross, in order to absorb road shock from the uneven road surface.
- Tracks can be slippery, so try not to pedal, brake, or alter your course as you cross them.

Discourteous Motorists

Most motorists are courteous and understand the need to share the road with cyclists. However, a few motorists feel like they own the road and sometimes forget their manners. Fortunately, these occurrences are rare. If it happens to you, keep your cool and remember that your safety is the priority. Avoid a confrontation, there is no sense in further aggravating an already tense situation. Your best bet is to know your rights, ride legally, and stay calm in all situations. If a motorist intentionally jeopardizes your safety, note the driver's description and memorize the car's license plate and description. This will allow you to file a report to the authorities.

Let's get going!



Getting Started

Plan your commute route before you ride it the first time, then test it out on a day off. Prepare for your test ride as if you were actually going to work so that you get a good idea of how long it will really take you. Leave a little early the first few times until you get used to the routine and your fitness level increases. Consider asking around the workplace for bike commute buddies to ride with. You may find others who already bike commute or are considering doing so.

Talking with Your Employer

Let your supervisors know that you're going to start bicycle commuting and ask for their support. If you work at a large organization, you may be helping your workplace to meet alternative transportation goals, and you may qualify for transportation-related incentives. Even small employers should be supportive of employees improving their health and making the community more livable by bicycling.

Pro-bicycle-commuting employers often supply secure bike parking and places to change and store your cycling and working clothes. You might even inspire or challenge your friends to join you in cycling to work!

Dressing for Work

If your workplace has an informal dress code, you might find it easy to ride in some or all of your work clothes, especially on nice days. If your work requires that you wear formal business clothing most or all of the time, or you have a lengthy commute that makes biking in your work clothes impractical, you'll probably find it easier to keep a variety of clothing at work. You can store your clothes in a locker room or other area approved by your employer.

- Suit separates, like jackets, slacks, and skirts, are ideal for keeping at work because they require less-frequent cleaning and need only be switched as seasons change. When they need cleaning or pressing, look for a cleaner near your office that provides pick-up and delivery service. Or, swap clothing on days that you drive, carpool, or take transit.

- If you plan to bring your work clothes in daily, it's a good idea to keep at least one spare set of clothes at work in case you forget. Roll several pieces of clothing together, with the most wrinkle-prone clothes on the outside. Placing a plastic garbage bag between layers can also reduce wrinkling.

- Cotton knit dresses, separates, and sweaters don't wrinkle easily, can be stored in a drawer, and can look as formal as pressed shirts and skirts.

- Keep a supply of shoes in the colors you need at work (your shoes will also last longer from not being worn outside as often).

- It's handy to keep a stash of accessories like ties, scarves, socks, stockings, and clean undergarments at work.

Cleaning Up After Your Commute

Cleaning up is easy, even if your workplace doesn't have shower facilities. At a minimum, you can wash up in a rest room. You may want to keep a stash of toiletries and clean towels at work.

If you would like to take a shower after your commute but your workplace doesn't have one, find a nearby gym where you can shower and change. From there you can walk, ride slowly, or take transit to your workplace. Another option if your workplace does not have showers is to commute at a more leisurely pace.

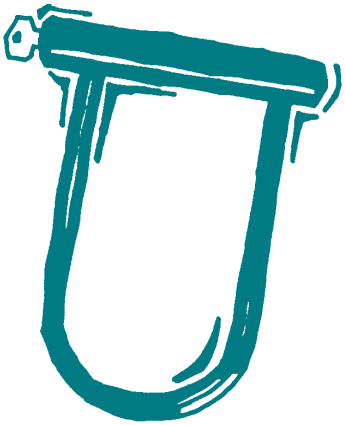
The Commute Home—*Time to Have Some Fun!*

While you may not want a "workout" on your way to work, the ride home may be the perfect time for a refreshingly vigorous ride. Try timing your first few rides home, then when you feel you are up to the challenge, see if you can begin reducing the time it takes you to get home.

You can make the ride home a real workout by pedaling at a faster, more aerobic pace. If your commute home is short, try taking a longer route to increase your level of exercise. For variety, you may want to choose several different alternative routes that vary in length and degree of difficulty. Remember:

Variety is the Spice of Life!

Bicycle Security



U-Locks

U-locks are among the strongest locks available, but they are heavy and rigid—if they cannot get around an object they cannot secure your bike. One of the main ways U-locks are broken is by inserting tools inside the "U" to pry them open. Minimize this space by getting as small a U-lock as is practical. Then, take up the remaining space by locking your removable front wheel along with the rear wheel and frame.

Cable Locks

Cable locks offer more flexibility and are lighter weight than U-locks. Because they usually offer less security, they're best used in well-traveled areas and on quick errands. Cable locks with the lock built in are lighter and more convenient than those requiring a separate combination or padlock. Some all-in-one cables are opened with keys while others use combination locks.

Additional Security Measures

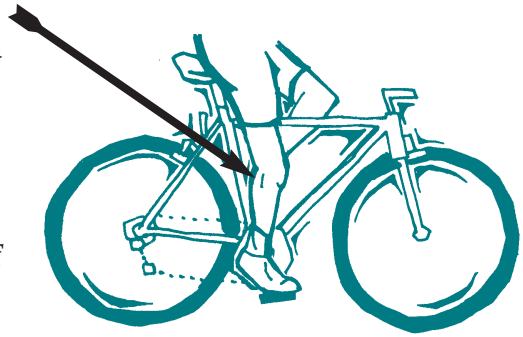
Nothing is theft-proof and no locking system is perfect, but you can take steps to ensure that your bike is a less-attractive target for theft:

- If possible, keep your bike inside your workplace or in a secure storage area at your workplace.
- If your bike must be parked outside, lock your frame and both wheels to an immovable object. Don't lock them to a sign or other object that can be easily unbolted, bent, cut, or removed. Choose a well-traveled, lighted place—thieves dislike working in exposed areas.
- Consider using both a U-lock and a cable lock. Some thieves only carry tools to break one kind of lock, not both, making your bike much more difficult to steal.
- When not in use, cable locks can be wrapped around the seatpost and U-locks can often be mounted on the frame or carried on a rear rack.
- Many lock manufacturers offer warranties that will replace your bike if it is stolen while using their lock. Be aware that such insurance may not be free. Read the product's fine print.
- Take all easily removed accessories with you when leaving your bike unattended (quick release seats, tools, helmet, pumps, etc.).
- Take a photograph of your bike and record the serial number for future reference in case of theft.

Adjustments and Quick Releases

Before riding, you will need to adjust the seatpost height, saddle fore/aft position, and degree of saddle tilt. When properly adjusted, your bike will handle better and be more comfortable. Your local bike shop can assist you in determining the proper adjustments.

Bicycle Adjustment Tips



- Seatpost height should be adjusted so that when seated on your bike, there is a slight bend in your knee when your leg is at the bottom of a pedal stroke.

- Fore/aft saddle position: Adjust the saddle so it provides you with a strong, comfortable riding position (ask a bike shop for help).

- Adjust the saddle so it is level initially, and make small adjustments if necessary. You may have to adjust the "reach" (horizontal size) of your bicycle so that your back, neck, and arms are comfortable. Reach adjustments are made by either adjusting stem height, or exchanging the stem or handlebar for one that gives you proper positioning. Your arms should be slightly bent to provide cushion from road shock and your hands should completely enclose the handlebar and easily reach the brakes.

Quick Releases

Many bicycles are equipped with quick releases that hold and adjust the seatpost and clamp the wheels to your bicycle's frame and fork. Learning the proper way to use quick releases is very important for safe bicycle operation and, fortunately, it's very easy.

Quick releases have a lever on one side and an adjusting nut on the other. The adjusting nut is used to change the amount of clamping force generated as the lever is moved from the open to the closed position. When correctly adjusted, clamping action will start when the lever is approximately halfway through its travel. Practice using your quick releases by opening and closing them a few times while changing the adjusting nut's position.

Remember to follow these rules with quick releases:

- Take a quick glance at the quick releases on your wheels and seat before each ride to make sure they are properly closed.

- Make sure the wheel axles are all the way in the dropouts and that the wheel is centered in the frame/fork before closing the quick release.

- When closed, most quick-release levers curve towards the bike, and the word "close" or "closed" can be seen. These visual cues can help you notice when quick releases are and are not closed properly.

Special Notes for Women

Many bicycles are designed primarily to fit men. If you are shopping for a new bike, you may want to spend a little extra time to find one that fits you properly. Bike shop personnel have the expertise to help you find one that will fit you comfortably, which will make your rides much more enjoyable.

If you already have a bike, but it feels uncomfortable in any way, check with your local bike shop to see about adjusting it or retrofitting it with items like different length stems, better brake levers, a more comfortable saddle, etc.

Safety Checks

A well-maintained bicycle is safer and more enjoyable to ride. An occasional professional tune-up is money well spent. The following checklist will help ensure the safe day-to-day operation of your bike:

Before You Ride

Here's a recap of the things you should address before bicycle commuting:

- ✔ make sure your bike operates safely;
- ✔ acquire safety equipment and clothing;
- ✔ choose a route to and from your destination;
- ✔ decide if you need a change of clothes, and if so, determine storage options;
- ✔ find secure storage for your bike; and
- ✔ decide if bicycle commuting will require any schedule adjustments.

"REMEMBER"

If you need advice about bicycle commuting, feel free to contact Idaho's League Cycling Instructors or the State Bicycle Coordinator, all listed on page 1.

✔ Saddle, Handlebars, and Pedals

These allow you to control your bike, so make sure they are securely fastened. Stems and seatposts have "minimum insertion" marks, which should not be exposed (if either mark is visible, the component is over-extended and may break without warning during use). Bike shops carry longer seatposts and stems to safely accommodate any riding position.

✔ Tire Inspection and Inflation

Make sure tires are in good condition (no splits in sidewall or tread). Inflating tubes to their recommended pressure keeps them in place, helps prevent flats, and increases your bike's efficiency (it will be easier to pedal). Make sure your quick-release levers are tight before each trip. If one of your tires wobbles, have it checked by a bike mechanic.

✔ Brake Inspection

Squeeze both brake levers. If the levers touch the handlebar, your brakes are too light and need to be adjusted. Bike shops or repair manuals can show you how to make adjustments. Have frayed or rusted cables and damaged housing replaced. Inspect the brake pads to make sure they contact the rim squarely and will not touch either the tire or the spokes. The small cutouts on brake pads are "wear indicators," when they are no longer visible, replace the pads.

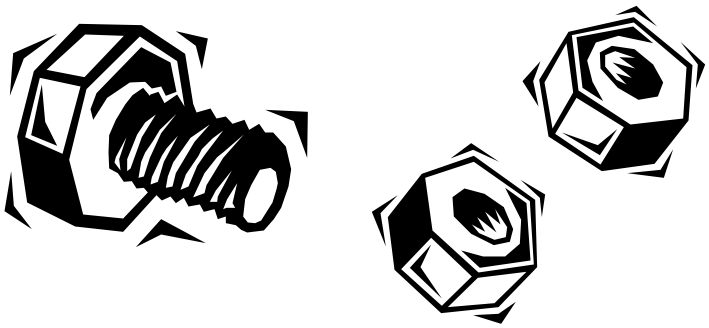
✔ Nuts and Bolts

Regularly check your racks, fenders, and other accessories to make sure they are mounted securely and do not obscure your lights or reflectors.

✔ General Maintenance

Consult your local bike shop or owner's manual to learn the basics for keeping your bike in good operating condition. Regularly cleaning, lubricating, and inspecting your bike will help you spot potential problems and will indicate when a professional tune-up is needed.

See www.bikeleague.org/resources/better for more information.



You Can Do It!

Many people find that when they give bicycle commuting a try, their initial concerns fall by the wayside and they discover what a fun and exhilarating experience it is. Bicycle commuting is a great way to:

- meet new people and discover your community,
- get exercise on a regular basis and reduce stress,
- increase your energy level,
- reduce your transportation and vehicle-maintenance costs,
- save wear and tear on your car, and
- produce less pollution and traffic congestion.

Here is an E-mail from a first-year bicycle commuter in Meridian:

> ***"Did I tell you that in comparing this February with last February, my cholesterol dropped from around 217 to 179, my triglycerides dropped from around 350 to 141, and my body fat decreased from around 31% to between 12 and 20%? With everything else constant—diet, other exercise, etc., the only change was continuing to ride my bike to work a few days a week through the winter. Man, how can you beat that?***
>
> ***—Barry T.***

Hopefully this guide has been helpful in making bicycle commuting in your community easier and more enjoyable. More help is available! The More Resources box on this page lists additional places to get more information on bicycle commuting.

Ride safely and have fun!

More Resources

Organizations

- **National Center for Bicycling and Walking** (dedicated to supporting an active lifestyle) www.bikewalk.org
- **League of American Bicyclists** (national advocacy & safety information) www.bikeleague.org.

Books

- *A Woman's Guide to Cycling* by Susan Weaver. This book provides a wealth of moral support from women cyclists.
- *Bicycle Commuting Made Easy* from Bicycling Magazine. This book covers riding in traffic, eating right, and commuting in poor weather.
- *Idaho Bicycling Street Smarts*, a complimentary, in-depth guide to safe and efficient cycling. To obtain a copy, contact the State Bicycle Coordinator (see page 1).
- *League Guide to Safe and Enjoyable Cycling* from LAB. A guide to give entry-level cyclists the knowledge and secrets of road-savvy cyclists.

Internet

- The following sites contain a wide variety of cycling information and helpful/interesting links:
  - www.kenkifer.com
  - www.bicyclesource.com
  - www.jimlangley.net
  - www.bikexprt.com

Bicycle-related Idaho Code Title 49, Chapter 7

49-714. TRAFFIC LAWS APPLY TO PERSONS ON BICYCLES AND OTHER HUMAN-POWERED VEHICLES — DUE CARE. (1) Every person operating a vehicle propelled by human power or riding a bicycle shall have all of the rights and all of the duties applicable to the driver of any other vehicle under the provisions of chapters 6 and 8 of this title, except as otherwise provided in this chapter and except as to those provisions which by their nature can have no application.
(2) Every operator or rider of a bicycle or human-powered vehicle shall exercise due care.

49-715. RIDING ON BICYCLES. (1) A person propelling a bicycle shall not ride other than upon or astride an attached permanent and regular seat.
(2) No bicycle or human-propelled vehicle shall be used to carry more persons at one (1) time than the number for which it is designed and equipped.
(3) An adult rider may carry a child securely attached to his person in a backpack or sling or in a child carrier attached to the bicycle.

49-716. CLINGING TO OR FOLLOWING VEHICLES. (1) No person riding upon any bicycle, coaster, roller skates, skateboard, sled or toy vehicle shall attach it or himself to any vehicle upon a highway.
(2) The provisions of this section shall not prohibit the attachment of a bicycle trailer or bicycle semitrailer to a bicycle if that trailer or semitrailer has been designed for that attachment.
(3) No person riding upon any bicycle or human-powered vehicle shall follow a vehicle so closely as to constitute an immediate hazard to the rider.

49-717. POSITION ON HIGHWAY. (1) Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic at the time and place and under the conditions then existing shall ride as close as practicable* to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway except under any of the following situations:
(a) When overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction.
(b) When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.
(c) When reasonably necessary to avoid conditions including fixed or moving objects, parked or moving vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, animals, surface hazards or substandard width lanes that make it unsafe to continue along the right-hand curb or edge.
(2) Any person operating a bicycle upon a one-way roadway with two (2) or more marked traffic lanes may ride as near the left-hand curb or edge of the roadway as practicable*.

49-718. RIDING TWO ABREAST. Persons riding bicycles upon a highway shall not ride more than two (2) abreast except on paths or parts of highways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. Persons riding two (2) abreast shall not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic and, on a laned roadway, shall ride within a single lane.

49-719. CARRYING ARTICLES. No person operating a bicycle shall carry any package, bundle or article which prevents the operator from using at least one (1) hand in the control and operation of the bicycle.

49-720. STOPPING — TURN AND STOP SIGNALS. (1) A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a stop sign shall slow down and, if required for safety, stop before entering the intersection. After slowing to a reasonable speed or stopping, the person shall yield the right-of-way to any vehicle in the intersection or approaching on another highway so closely as to constitute an immediate hazard during the time the person is moving across or within the intersection or junction of highways, except that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a turn or proceed through the intersection without stopping.
(2) A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a steady red traffic control light shall stop before entering the intersection and shall yield to all other traffic. Once the person has yielded, he may proceed through the steady red light with caution. Provided however, that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a right-hand turn. A left-hand turn onto a one-way highway may be made on a red light after stopping and yielding to other traffic.
(3) A person riding a bicycle shall comply with the provisions of section 49-643, Idaho Code.
(4) A signal of intention to turn right or left shall be given during not less than the last one hundred (100) feet traveled by the bicycle before turning, provided that a signal by hand and arm need not be given if the hand is needed in the control or operation of the bicycle.

49-721. BICYCLES ON SIDEWALKS. (1) A person operating a bicycle upon and along a sidewalk, or across a highway upon and along a crosswalk, shall yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian, and shall give an audible signal before overtaking and passing a pedestrian or another bicyclist.
(2) A person shall not operate a bicycle along and upon a sidewalk or across a highway upon and along a crosswalk, where the use of bicycles is prohibited by official traffic-control devices.
(3) A person operating a vehicle by human power upon and along a sidewalk, or across a highway upon and along a crosswalk, shall have all the rights and duties applicable to a pedestrian under the same circumstances.

49-722. BICYCLE RACING. (1) Bicycle racing on the highways is prohibited except as authorized in this section.
(2) Bicycle racing on a highway shall not be unlawful when a racing event has been approved by the department or local law enforcement authorities on any highway under their respective jurisdictions. Approval of bicycle highway racing events shall be granted only under conditions which assure reasonable safety for all race participants, spectators and other highway users, and which prevent unreasonable interference with traffic flow which would seriously inconvenience other highway users.
(3) By agreement with the approving authority, participants in an approved bicycle highway racing event may be exempt from compliance with any traffic laws otherwise applicable, provided that traffic control is adequate to assure the safety of all highway users.

49-723. LIGHT AND REFLECTOR REQUIRED AT NIGHT. Every bicycle in use at the times** described in section 49-903, Idaho Code, shall be operated with a light emitting device visible from a distance of at least five hundred (500) feet to the front, attached to the bicycle or the rider, and with a reflector clearly visible from the rear of the bicycle.

49-724. ADDITIONAL LIGHTS AUTHORIZED. A bicycle or its rider may be equipped with lights or reflectors in addition to those required in section 49-723, Idaho Code.

** Practicable per the dictionary means capable of being put into practice or of being done or accomplished; feasible.*
***Section 490-903, Idaho Code, requires lights to be used from sunset to sunrise and when visibility is under 500 feet.*

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