

Youth Bike Safety Tips

Ride Illinois wants you to have fun and to be safe when riding your bike!

Learn to Drive Your Bike

Riding your bike can be great fun and is good for you! But, do you know how to drive your bike? There are laws that people riding bikes need to follow, just like when driving a car.

- ✓ Ride on the **right side** of the road or trail.
- ✓ **Obey traffic laws** such as signs and signals, including stoplights.
- ✓ Ride straight and **don't make sudden changes** to your path.
- ✓ **Ride single file** if there are cars behind you.
- ✓ **Look behind before turning left** or if moving left to avoid something.
- ✓ **Use hand signals** to communicate with drivers and other bicyclists.
- ✓ **Don't ride too close** to parked cars.
- ✓ Announce "passing" or **sound a bell before passing** someone on a sidewalk or trail.
- ✓ Watch for **vehicles backing up near driveways**. Is someone in the car? Are the taillights on?
- ✓ Ride at night **only if your parents say it's OK**. Use a white front light and red rear light.
- ✓ Stop before exiting a driveway. Then **look left, right, then left again** before pedaling.
- ✓ If you feel unsafe, **it's OK to walk your bike.**



Check Your Bike For Safety

Complete the **ABC Quick Check** before every ride. It only takes a minute or two!

- ✓ **Air**: squeeze the tires. They should be firm, not squishy.
- ✓ **Brakes**: squeeze the brake levers. Make sure they work and aren't rubbing against the tire.
- ✓ **Chain**: spin the pedal backwards. The chain should spin freely and not have any rust.
- ✓ **Quick**: the quick release levers should be tight and closed.

Wear Your Helmet the Right Way

First, put the helmet on your head to make sure it's the right size. Then check these:

- ✓ **Eyes**: you should see the front edge of your helmet when you look up.
- ✓ **Ears**: the straps should meet under your ears to make a Y or V shape.
- ✓ **Mouth**: when you open your mouth wide, the helmet should tug a bit. The strap should be snug, but loose enough so you can breathe and insert 1 or 2 fingers between the buckle and your chin.



Note for Adults

This activity sheet contains information relevant to children age 9 and up. To learn more, visit rideillinois.org/safety and use our Child Bicyclist quiz at BikeSafetyQuiz.com. Contact Ride Illinois at info@rideillinois.org or 630-216-9282 with questions. Thanks!



Learn more at BikeSafetyQuiz.com

Tips for Adults Teaching Children



Riding a bike is a great way for children (and adults) to have fun, go places, and stay active! Bicycling is an activity and mode of transportation that has many benefits. A child who bikes regularly can become more independent and aware. Adults feel more confident when a child has the skills and knowledge to ride their bike safely. Ride Illinois is happy to offer some tips and suggestions for adults to use when teaching bike safety to children.

First and foremost, set a good example by riding on the right side of the street or trail. Follow traffic laws – many of which apply to people on bikes just as they do motorists. Also, don't forget to fit and wear your helmet properly!

Make sure the child has a bike that is in good working condition and fits properly. **Demonstrate the ABC Quick Check:** Air (firm tires), Brakes (stopping and not rubbing), Chain (lubed and moving freely), and Quick release levers (tight and closed). If a bike needs some maintenance or repairs, bring it to your local bike shop.

Children are not simply small adults. They have a narrower field of vision, lack the ability to judge speed or distance, and may be impatient and impulsive. It's important to teach them some skills they need to avoid the most common causes of crashes. Learning these skills takes time and practice – that's where you come in!

Cause of Crash	Ways to Avoid a Crash
Failure to yield when exiting a driveway	Teach the child to look left, right, and left again. Only enter the roadway when no vehicles are coming.
Failure to stop at stop sign	Stop at stop signs. Bike with the child and explain how to look for traffic and communicate with other road users.
Sudden left swerve into traffic	Practice riding straight while turning their head to look back to look for approaching vehicles. This is called scanning.
Riding against traffic	Ride on the right in the same direction as traffic. It's safer and it's the law!
Riding at night or in bad weather	Use a white front headlight and red rear reflector or tail light when biking at night. Wear bright-colored clothing too.

Generally, a young child should begin riding their bike on the sidewalk. Teach the child to:

- Be extra careful at intersections! Look left, right, and left again and wait for vehicles to travel through the intersection. Then, take their turn while paying attention to nearby vehicles.
- Remember that motorists might turn into a driveway. A motorist may not see a child on a bike on the sidewalk.
- Look for clues that a vehicle may exit a driveway: engine noise, lights on, exhaust, person in car, garage opening.
- Announce “passing” or “passing left” or sound a bell before passing someone on a sidewalk or trail.

As a child grows and rides faster on the sidewalk, conflicts with vehicles increase. It is more difficult for motorists to see faster-moving bicyclists on a sidewalk than on the right side of the road. Also, studies have shown that riding a bike against traffic results in many more car-bike crashes than bicyclists who travel in the same direction as traffic. Very few bicyclists are hit from behind and many car-bike crashes occur at intersections. As children get stronger and ride faster, biking on the road is typically safer than on the sidewalk.

When the child is ready and you are comfortable, practice riding together on the road. Teach skills such as riding defensively, scanning for traffic, looking back (and listening) for cars, proper lane position (especially when turning), using hand signals, and identifying safe places to ride.

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