

Tips for Bicycling Around Cars and Driving Around Bicyclists

from the Bicycle Transportation Alliance

<http://www.bta4bikes.org>

Driving Around Bicyclists

1. **Check the bike lane** – when turning right across a bike lane, always look behind you for a bicyclist; bikes can travel fast enough to catch up with you even if you passed them more than a block ago; if someone is approaching, wait and yield rather than trying to “beat” them; think of the bike lane like a train track – never sit and idle on it, don’t start across until you know you can clear it
2. **Always signal** – if you don’t signal your turns, both right and left, bicyclists can’t anticipate them and can’t make an effort to stay out of your blind spot; if talking on your cell phone is preventing you from using your turn signal, stop talking on your cell phone, get a hands-free phone, or grow an extra arm
3. **Pass with ample room** – except over a double yellow line, you can cross the center line to pass a bicyclist safely, as long as oncoming traffic is clear; passing close, especially over 25 mph, is very scary for the cyclist
4. **Don’t honk** to communicate with cyclists, unless there’s an emergency – if your horn sounds loud from inside your car, imagine how loud and shocking it is from just in front of it
5. **Don’t follow closely** – this is scary and intimidating, and the bicyclist probably would prefer to be out of your way as soon as possible but needs to be in the lane for some reason
6. **Allow bicyclists to use crosswalks** – they are permitted to do so, and in some places bicyclists rely on them for safe crossings
7. **Look when opening your door** – especially when you are parked next to a bike lane, but also on any street; many bicyclists ride close to parked cars to leave room for drivers to pass on their left, and this means you could hit them with your door if you don’t look first
8. **Be cautious in residential neighborhoods** – bicyclists like to use quiet streets to get around, so if you are sloppy or impatient at stop signs you risk hitting someone on a silent or vulnerable vehicle; also, slow down and stop before you get to the stop sign, not as you roll by it, because children biking on the sidewalk may cross in front of you and if you aren’t already slowing down you may run them over
9. **Use good manners** – apologize if you make a mistake and it will go a long way; eye contact and waves are very humanizing, especially in the stress of rush-hour traffic

Bicycling Around Cars

1. **Be visible** - #1 safety issue we see among bicyclists – use front and back lights, and wear light colored or reflective rain gear; invisible bicyclists risk their lives, and scare and infuriate even the most empathetic of car drivers

2. **Learn to look over your left shoulder** – helps with looking before leaving the bike lane to turn left, pass another cyclist or avoid a car door; helps with changing lanes; helps with making eye contact with passing motorists
3. **Signal** – for lane changes or turns, or stopping suddenly; motorists often are very nervous driving around bicyclists because they don't know what to expect; make your intentions clear, and they'll generally give you more space and time to do what you need to do; you aren't required to signal, however, if you need both hands on your handlebars
4. **Take the lane when necessary** – sometimes if a lane is so narrow that passing is dangerous, you may need to take the lane briefly to make that clear to drivers behind you; move over as soon as you can safely and let people stuck behind you pass; if you're going the speed of traffic, as often happens downtown or on downhills, feel free to take the lane – it is safer and more comfortable
5. **Stay out of the “door zone”** – be far enough away from parked cars that if someone opens a door without looking, you don't have to swerve suddenly
6. **Use extra caution if passing on the right** – avoid doing this when there isn't much room, when people are turning into driveways, or when traveling through an intersection; remember, there is no bike lane so drivers do not know to look for you there
7. **Use good manners** – if you make a mistake, give the “my bad” wave; if someone does something nice for you, give a wave of “thanks”; never steal the right-of-way, it is very offensive and terrible PR for bikes; give pedestrians lots of space