

# What does it take to commute by bike?

## #1 The desire to ride!

People ride for all sorts of reasons:

- Exercise
- The environment
- To save money
- Family time

## Why do you want to ride?

## #2 A bicycle.

All you need to start is a bike that fits you and is in good working order. If you haven't ridden for a long time, take your bike to a bike shop for a tune-up. Before every ride, do an ABC Quick Check: [www.bikeleague.org/resources/better/beginningcycling.php](http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/better/beginningcycling.php).

## #3 A helmet.

Wear a helmet and make sure it fits correctly. Check [www.bhsi.org/fit.htm](http://www.bhsi.org/fit.htm) if you need a reminder on helmet fit.

## #4 A safe route.

You don't have to ride the same route you drive. Find a safe, enjoyable route using:

- Your area's bike map, available from the Bicycle Alliance or your local bike shop.
- Google biking directions.
- Local bike clubs ([www.bicyclealliance.org/resources/clubs.html](http://www.bicyclealliance.org/resources/clubs.html)).
- Other bike commuters ([www.bikely.com](http://www.bikely.com)).

# Common Concerns

## I'm afraid of riding with cars.

It takes practice and experience to become comfortable riding on the road. The more you ride, the more comfortable and capable you will feel. Start with short trips in safe places. Avoid sidewalks. Try riding:

- On bike paths.
- Close to home on familiar streets.
- On low-speed, low-traffic neighborhood streets.

Consider finding an experienced riding buddy or taking a class with your local bike club.

## How do I carry my stuff?

What do you want to carry on your bike?

**Minimal volume:** Small pouches sold at bike shops that easily attach under a seat for just a wallet, keys, and a cell phone.

**Small trips:** Backpacks or front handlebar baskets for a few grocery items, a jacket, or a couple library books.

**Large trips:** A rack and panniers for a gallon of milk or a large stack of library books.

Once you know what you are most likely to carry, bike shops are well stocked to help you find the right option for you.



## What am I allowed to do?

### Where am I allowed to ride?

Bicycles are legal vehicles with full use of the road, but only ride where you feel comfortable. Even if a bike lane is present, you are not required to ride in the lane. Put yourself where you are safe.

As legal vehicles, cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as motorists. "Drive" your bike the same way you'd drive your car. Refer to [www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/laws.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/laws.htm) for Washington cycling laws.

## How do I secure my bike?

Carry a cable or U-lock or bring your bike into the store with you. Many businesses provide bike racks, but if you can't find one, any pole or metal fence works.

## What if something happens while I'm riding?

Call for help with your cell phone, catch a bus, or walk home. Bike shops repair flats on the spot. You can learn how to fix flats yourself from bike club classes or online [www.bicycleuniverse.info/eqp/fixflat.html](http://www.bicycleuniverse.info/eqp/fixflat.html).





## More Bike Tips

**Bicycle Alliance of Washington**  
[www.bicyclealliance.org/resources](http://www.bicyclealliance.org/resources)

**Beginning Cycling Tips**  
[www.bikeleague.org/resources](http://www.bikeleague.org/resources)

**Tips for Women**  
[forums.teamestrogen.com](http://forums.teamestrogen.com)

**People for Bikes**  
[www.peopleforbikes.org](http://www.peopleforbikes.org)

# Safe Riding Practices

## Be Visible

**For you:** Brightly-colored clothes, such as a reflective jacket or vest. Yellow stands out on cloudy days.

**For your bike:** Washington law mandates a front light and rear red reflector; many commuters add a rear blinking light. Turn on your lights if you get caught in the dark or rain.

## Be Predictable

Obey all traffic laws.

- Ride with traffic.
- Ride on the road, not on sidewalks.
- Ride in a straight line, not weaving in and out between parked cars.
- Signal turns.
- Stop at stop signs and red lights
- Stay 1 foot from the edge of good pavement.

## Be Comfortable

You don't need Lycra. Everyday clothes, with your right pant leg rolled up or secured, work great. Ride at a comfortable pace, shifting into easier gears as you go up hills so you don't arrive at your destination sweaty.

# GO BY BIKE!

TIPS FOR TAKING SHORT TRIPS AROUND TOWN BY BICYCLE



www.peetbikeimages.org / Carl Swickstrom



Photo by Kat Murriner



Share the Road vehicle license plates raise awareness of bicyclists on the road, and the purchase of plates raises much needed funding for bicycle education and safety such as this brochure. To learn more about Share the Road, visit us on the web at [www.BicycleAlliance.org](http://www.BicycleAlliance.org)