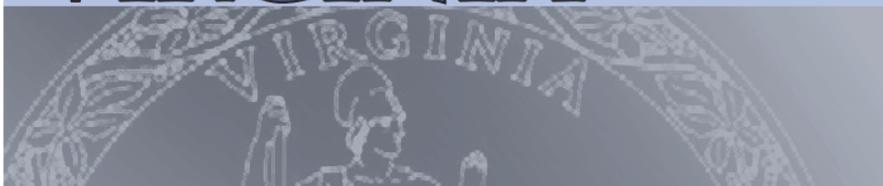


Sharing the Road in VIRGINIA



**Laws & Safety Tips for
Bicyclists & Pedestrians**
plus, What Motorists Need to Know



www.SharingtheRoadinVirginia.org

Sharing the Road in Virginia: Laws and Safety Tips for Bicyclists and Pedestrians *plus, What Motorists Need to Know*

Sharing the Road in Virginia brings together safety procedures and traffic regulations for all users of Virginia's roads. This practical guide for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as motorists helps everyone confidently navigate Virginia's transportation network.

Like motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians are subject to the Code of Virginia section on motor vehicles (Title 46.2) which may be accessed online from www.Virginia.gov, the official Web site of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Visit www.SharingtheRoadinVirginia.org to download this booklet in English and Spanish. Copies may be reproduced for distribution; contact your local office supply store, copy center, or printer for assistance.

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BikeWalk Virginia is a non-profit organization which conducts programs, supports policies, and sponsors activities that promote the benefits of biking and walking for recreation and transportation.



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Sharing the Road in Virginia

No matter why they drive, bicycle or walk, Virginians should be able to safely share the Commonwealth's transportation network to get to neighborhoods, parks, schools, stores, places of worship, and businesses.

Due to concerns about the economy, the environment, and health, bicycling and walking are increasingly viewed as sustainable, inexpensive and efficient forms of transportation for short commutes and for getting around town. In addition, by walking or riding a bicycle instead of driving a motor vehicle, the Commonwealth of Virginia's citizens reduce traffic congestion, road wear and tear, and the need for more roads and parking.

Everyone Uses the Roads

Because everyone uses the roads, it is important to recognize that motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians have mutual rights and responsibilities.

Some people drive because it is convenient. However, other people don't own a car or can't drive a vehicle so they must bike, walk, or use public transportation. Still others choose to bicycle or walk to keep the air clean and neighborhoods quiet, save fuel, and improve health.

Know the Law and Put Safety First

When all users of the transportation system know the law and respect their mutual rights and responsibilities, sharing the road is safe and predictable.

Congratulations for consulting this booklet. It is a good place to start learning the rules and the most common safety practices for all travelers sharing Virginia's streets and roads.



Know the Law

The Code of Virginia, Title 46.2 (Motor Vehicles, Chapter 8) contains laws covering bicycle and pedestrian use of the Virginia transportation network.

“Every person riding a bicycle on a highway shall be subject to the provisions of the Code of Virginia section on motor vehicles and shall have the rights and duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle unless a provision clearly indicates otherwise.”



Code of Virginia §46.2-800

Bicyclists should read the Virginia Driver’s Manual (www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/pdf/manual/manual.pdf) to become familiar with these rules.

“Pedestrians shall not use the roadways for travel, except when necessary to do so because of the absence of sidewalks which are reasonably suitable and passable ... If they walk on the hard surface, or the main travelled portion of the roadway, they shall keep to the extreme left side or edge thereof, or where the shoulders of the highway are of sufficient width to permit, they may walk on either shoulder ... ”



Code of Virginia § 46.2-928

Know the Law!

Bicycles are vehicles when ridden on roads and streets:

- Follow rules that apply to motor vehicles
- Obey all traffic signs, signals, lights, and markings
- Ride on the right side, with traffic
- Stay as far to the right as safely possible or use the shoulder
- Ride no more than two side by side
- Ride single file when moving slower than traffic
- Obey signs that restrict riding on Interstate highways and limited access roads
- Yield to pedestrians
- Call to pedestrians when approaching from behind and to pass
- Use hand signals for turns and stops
- When turning, use motor vehicle turn lanes
- Keep one hand on the handlebars when carrying articles
- Don't carry adults on bicycles not built for more than one
- Carry children securely in special seats or trailers
- Don't wear earphones in both ears
- Use white headlamps visible 500 feet when bicycling between sunset and sunrise
- Use rear reflectors at night; if using roads with speed limits of 35 mph or more, use a red taillight visible 600 feet
- Be sure brakes work properly
- Obey local ordinances for riding on sidewalks, wearing a helmet, and having a bicycle license

Pedestrians have rights and responsibilities:

- Use sidewalks if available
- Use crosswalks wherever possible
- If walking on roads, walk facing traffic and travel on extreme edge
- Obey Walk/Don't Walk control signals or countdown timers
- Use caution when crossing highway
- Make sure bicyclists and motorists can see you

Motorists respect bicyclists' and pedestrians' rights:

- Approach and pass bicyclists at a reasonable speed
- Allow at least two feet between you and bicyclists when passing
- Yield to pedestrians
- When turning, yield to pedestrians and bicyclists
- Permit pedestrians to cross roads safely
- Come to a full stop for a blind pedestrian with a cane or guide dog (Class 3 misdemeanor)

If involved in a crash:

- Stop to determine injury or damage
- Report name, etc. to police or others involved
- Report property damaged during a crash to police within 24 hours

Violation of traffic law is a civil penalty or traffic infraction punishable by a fine or points against your driver's license.



Code of Virginia § 46.2

Before you hit the road

Get a bike that fits

Size: A bike that fits is important for safety, comfort, and fun. You should be able to reach the ground and handlebars easily. This makes controlling the bike less complicated.

Style: Road bikes have narrow tires, dropped handlebars, and are designed for faster riding. Mountain bikes have wide tires and are designed for off-road use. A hybrid or city bike combines features for comfort and efficiency.

Local bike shops can help you choose a bike that fits you and your bicycling needs. They will explain features and help you learn to use gears and brakes. They can also help with safety equipment.



Bike check

Inspect your bike regularly or take it to a bike shop for inspection.

- **Air** – Are tires at recommended pressure and in good condition?
- **Brakes** – Can you reach brake levers? Are brakes powerful?
- **Chain** – Does the chain spin and change as gears are engaged?
- **Lights** – Do you have a white front light that is visible at least 500 feet and a red light that is visible at least 600 feet to the rear? More light means more visibility!

Helmet

There is no statewide helmet law, but the Code of Virginia gives a county, city, or town the authority to require anyone 14 years old or younger to wear a helmet that meets the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standard when riding or being carried on a bicycle. Check local laws for helmet regulations. When buying a helmet, look for the CPSC label.

- Helmet should sit level and not shift easily.
- V-straps should fit beneath the ear lobes.
- Chin strap should be snug, about a finger's width under the chin.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration site includes illustrated instructions at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/EasyStepsWeb/index.htm.

When the helmet hits a hard surface, replace it. Even if you don't see a dent, the foam may be damaged and unable to absorb a shock in the future. Other recommendations for replacement can be found at <http://www.helmets.org/replace.htm>

Helmets greatly reduce the risk of serious brain injury. Everyone should wear a helmet, but helmets are most important for children, who are more prone to falls.



STREETS

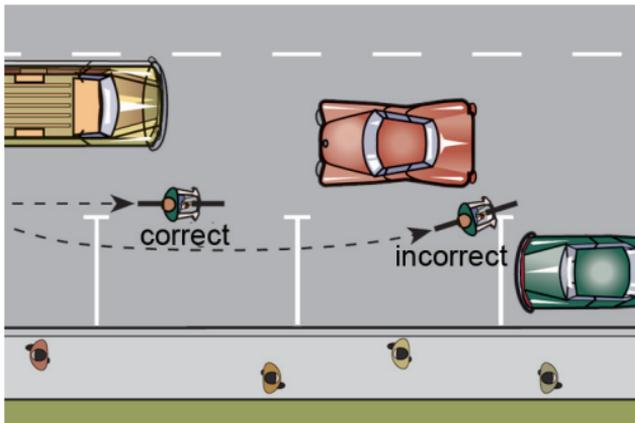
Rules to remember

Ride in a straight line

Bicyclists should generally ride single file. Be predictable; especially don't weave in and out of parked cars – bicyclists may disappear from motorists' sight and get squeezed when they need to merge back into traffic. Occupy more of the travel lane if it is narrow or if traffic is moving slowly to increase visibility. Likewise, motorists should stay in their lanes and not swerve into bike lanes.

Take the lane

If there is no shoulder or bike lane, and the travel lane is narrow, take the lane by riding closer to the center of the lane. This will prevent motorists from passing you when there isn't room. You should also take the lane when you're traveling at the same speed as traffic. This will keep you out of motorists' blind spots and reduce conflicts with right-turning traffic.



Keep your distance

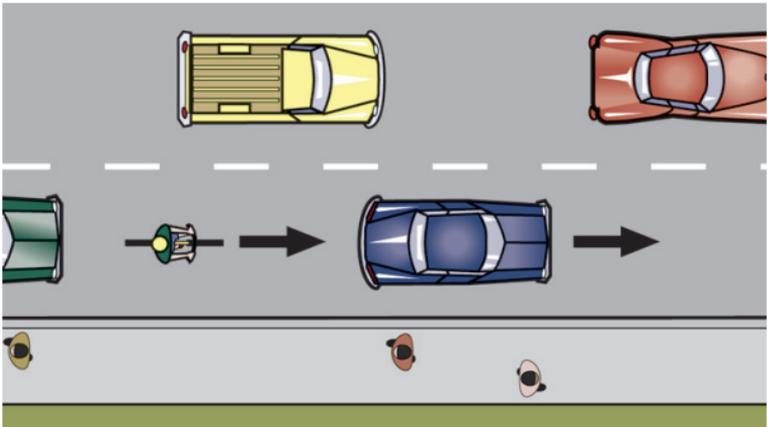
Bicyclists should avoid traveling too close to parked cars to avoid the risk of having a door open in front of them!

The bicyclist in this photo, however, is correct. He has taken the lane and is traveling three to five feet from parked cars to stay out of their door-opening zone.



Riding side by side

Two bicyclists may ride side by side, but only if they don't impede other traffic. If traffic doesn't have enough room to pass, ride single file.



Walk the line

Pedestrians are not allowed to walk on roadways when sidewalks are available. If there is no sidewalk or shoulder, any pedestrian shall walk as near as practicable

to an outside edge of the roadway, and if on a two-way roadway, shall walk only on the left side of the roadway and yield the right of way to all vehicles upon the roadway. It is safest to walk facing traffic.

A teachable moment

Parents: When walking, talk to children about the motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians you observe.



The **Safe Routes to School** program assists localities, schools and non-profit groups with developing plans, activities, and infrastructure improvements that encourage and enable children to walk or bike to school.

Walking and biking to school increases physical activity, reduces traffic congestion, improves the air, and enhances neighborhood safety.

Who has right of way?

Pedestrians have the right of way on sidewalks. Sidewalks are constructed to keep pedestrians safe.

Bicyclists should avoid using sidewalks. If they do use one, they should yield the right of way to pedestrians. Bicyclists should slow down when approaching a pedestrian, give an audible warning such as “approaching on your left!” and wait for the pedestrian to move over.

Bicyclists on sidewalks should also slow down to watch for cars preparing to turn across a sidewalk into a road or driveway.

Motorists should look for pedestrians and bicyclists and yield to them when turning across sidewalks.

Even though they have the right of way on sidewalks, pedestrians can avoid crashes by paying attention to motor vehicle and bicycle traffic!

Make eye contact to be sure to be seen when crossing roads, sidewalks, crosswalks, paths, driveways, and roads.



CROSSWALKS



Pedestrians: Scan and cross

Pedestrians are required by law to cross at crosswalks whenever possible. Crossing at crosswalks is the safest way to cross the street. However, crashes often occur there, so be alert!

Before crossing, stop, look LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT, and over the shoulder for turning traffic.

Crossing the street mid-block is not a good idea. Especially in urban areas, motorists expect pedestrians to cross at crosswalks and pedestrians expect motorists and bicyclists to watch out for them.



Crosswalks occur wherever sidewalks meet the street and where streets intersect. The code of Virginia defines this type of crosswalk an “unmarked crosswalk.”

Code of Virginia §46.2-924



Motorists: *Slow down!*

Motorist speeding is a major factor in crashes with pedestrians.

Bicyclists: *Stay on the road*

Bicyclists should not ride in crosswalks or alternate between the sidewalk and road by hopping the curb or using driveway cuts. Be consistent and predictable.

Motorists & Bicyclists: *Yield to pedestrians*

Motorists and bicyclists must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, both marked and unmarked.

Pedestrians: *Don't Disregard traffic!*

“No pedestrian shall enter or cross an intersection in disregard of approaching traffic.”

What is a crosswalk?

Crosswalks may be marked or painted on the highway.

Virginia traffic Crash facts can be found on the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles site at www.dmv.state.va.us/index.asp. Go to Highway Safety, Traffic Crash Data.

Be Aware! More than 50 percent of pedestrian-motorist crashes occur at intersections.

YOUR SIDE

Walk LEFT

When there is no sidewalk or shoulder, PEDESTRIANS may walk as near as practicable to an outside edge of the roadway. It is safest to walk facing traffic.



Ride RIGHT

MOTORISTS and BICYCLISTS use the right lane of traffic.

Take a class

- Bicycle education courses are offered by League of American Bicyclists-certified instructors.
- Health and P.E. teachers may be Bike Smart certified to teach bike skills and safety in schools.
- Many bike shops and parks and recreation departments offer bicycling courses.



How far to the right?

In most cases, bicyclists should not hug the curb or road edge since hitting the curb could cause a bicyclist to lose his or her balance and fall into traffic. Bicyclists may use the shoulders or take the lane.

Choose a lane

Bicyclists should stay in the lane marked for the direction they are traveling. Don't ride in the turn lane if not planning to turn.

Never ride facing traffic

Riding a bike the wrong way through traffic is against the law and is a leading cause of crashes. Bicyclists may think they are safe if looking at on-coming traffic, but it is more dangerous. If hit head on, the impact would be greater than if hit from behind.

When wrong-way riding, bicyclists can't see signs and traffic signals. Motorists are not expecting bicyclists approaching from that direction.

Bicycle-Friendly Communities

The League of American Bicyclists offers awards to communities and states that strive to make bicycling an integrated part of their transportation system.

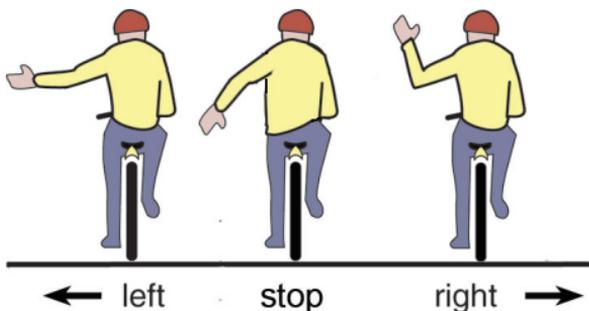
www.bicyclefriendlycommunity.org.



Bicycling with traffic

Bicycle-riding expert John Forester coined the phrase vehicular cycling in the 1970s after observing bicycling attitudes and riding styles in Europe, where bicycle-riding is far more common and motor vehicle drivers and bicyclists are more used to sharing the road. Forester said, “Cyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles.” For children and new bicyclists though, this is easier said than done! Especially since interstate highways, limited access highways, and high-speed driving have been the norm, inexperienced bicyclists are often timid. Confident bicyclists integrate themselves with motor vehicle traffic. When bicyclists are in command of their vehicles and when motorists see bicyclists acting predictably, the highways are safer for everyone.

Remember, in Virginia bicycles are vehicles. Bicyclists and motor vehicle drivers share mutual rights and responsibilities as users of public roads. Ride your bicycle with confidence!



Hand signals

To signal a left turn, look behind, and then hold out the left arm. To signal a right turn, hold out the right arm or hold the left arm up, with bent elbow. Do not signal through the turn since both hands are needed on the handlebars to maintain control.

To signal a stop, hold the left arm down at an angle. If braking is necessary when using one hand, don't squeeze the brake too hard. It may cause you to be thrown from the bike or to skid.



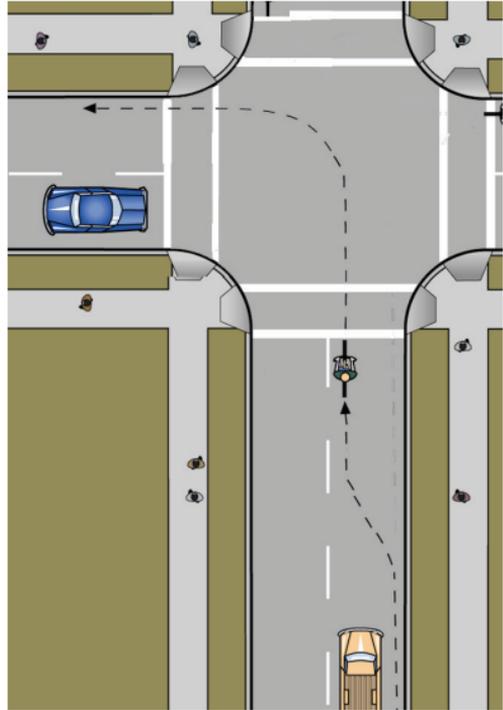
Traffic signals

Some traffic signals are triggered by electrically charged wires buried under the pavement. (Look for cut lines filled with tar.) When a vehicle goes over them, the metal disrupts the current, which trips the signal. Most bicycles contain enough metal to trigger the light when stopped over it.

If a light is not triggered, a bicyclist can move forward to let a car to trigger it, proceed as traffic allows, or go to the sidewalk and cross with pedestrians.

URNS

When approaching an intersection with several lanes, a bicyclist should choose the one with the arrow pointing where he or she wants to go. Don't use the straight through bike lane when a left turn lane is available; use the straight through lane only if going straight ahead or turning right in an intersection without a right turn lane.



Bicycles turning left

1. Make a left hand turn as a vehicle.
 - While approaching the intersection, look over your left shoulder for traffic.
 - Make eye-contact with approaching motor vehicle drivers.
 - When clear, signal a turn.
 - Move over to the left side of the lane (on a two-lane road) or into the turn lane.
 - Be positioned so cars going straight through can't pass you on the left.

- Yield to on-coming cars before turning.
 - If riding in a bike lane or on a road with several lanes, look and signal at each lane change.
 - Never make a left turn from the right side of the road.
2. If less comfortable in traffic, use the crosswalks.
- Dismount and cross as a pedestrian in the crosswalk.
 - If there is a signal, wait for the green or WALK signal before crossing.

Bicycles turning right

Always scan ahead for cars that may be turning right. If a car ahead is signaling a right turn, do not pass on the right. Bicycles must stop at red lights before turning right. Do not pass stopped cars at a crosswalk or intersection; they may be preparing to turn right.

Stay alert!

Use mirrors and scan, just as you would if you were driving a motor vehicle.

In Virginia, it's against the law for bicyclists to wear earphones in both ears while riding.



PASSING

Bicyclists should watch ahead for vehicles planning to turn right at an intersection or driveway. Don't get into the motorist's blind spot or other position where visibility is limited. Passing requires special caution.

Avoid passing on the right at intersections where motor vehicles frequently make right turns.

Bicyclists should stay in front of or behind vehicles to always remain visible. Bicyclists should call out and pass pedestrians on the pedestrian's left.

To warn bicyclists not to pass on their right, motorists turning right should use their turn signal and occupy a bike lane marked with a dashed line.

Bicycle lanes

Designated bike lanes separate bicyclists from other traffic. They are marked by signs as well as white lines and icons applied to the pavement.

Motorists should not drive in a bike lane. However, when turning across a bike lane, motorists should enter the lane as noted above

Bicycle lanes are frequently unavailable and sometimes unsafe due to potholes and litter. Bicyclists and motorists must share the road, whether or not bike lanes are provided.



What to do if in a crash

First, check for injuries. If someone is injured, call 911 for help right away. If trained, administer first aid and remove the injured from harm's way. Severely injured persons should not be moved.

Virginia law requires that bicyclists must stop when they are in an accident involving death, injury, or property damage.

If you are involved in an accident with a motor vehicle, ask for the driver's:

- Name and address
- Vehicle registration number
- Driver's license number
- Insurance company and policy number
- Other information usually needed by police and insurance companies

Give your name and address. Ask witnesses, including passengers, for their names and addresses.

As soon as possible, write down what you think happened. Document injuries and property damage with photographs. Save all receipts and repair estimates.

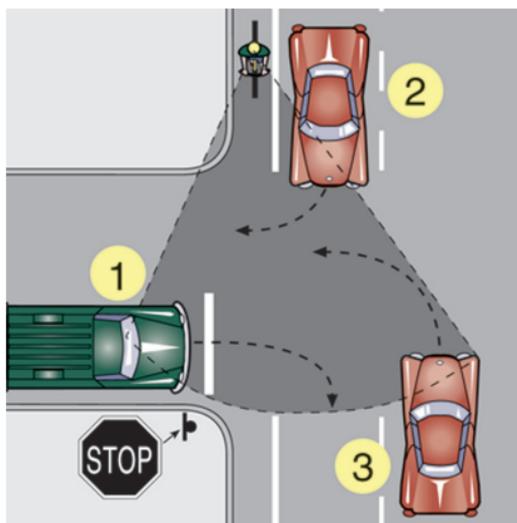
Contact your insurance company if you have coverage on your bicycle. You may want to contact an attorney. When bicycling, always carry your identification and medical insurance information, especially when traveling alone.

BE ALERT

Be visible and be aware

Even if you are obeying all traffic laws, there is a risk of being involved in a crash if another bicyclist, pedestrian, or motorist isn't obeying the law or is not able to see a dangerous situation ahead. Ride or walk cautiously!

1. Watch others who are waiting at stop signs or in driveways, or who are in parking spaces. They may be preparing to pull out.



2. Look out for others who may not see you when they are preparing to turn.
3. Watch for oncoming traffic that may be preparing to turn left.

Always be prepared to stop suddenly or to take other evasive action.

Riding at night

Increase visibility by using lights and wearing reflective or light colored clothes.

- Every bicycle ridden between sunset and sunrise must (by law) have at least one white headlamp on the front with a light that is visible at least 500 feet.*
- At night, a bicycle must have a rear red reflector. On roads with speed limits of 35 mph or greater, one red taillight visible from 600 feet* to the rear is required. Rear lights are safer than reflectors!
- Taillights may be steady or blinking and may be attached to the bicycle or rider.
- Wear clothing made of reflective material. Yellow and lime green are somewhat visible. Red is NOT a good color for evening riding since it looks black in the fading light.

* 10-watt halogen, 1-watt LED minimum.



COMMUTING

Commuting by bicycle or walking helps reduce pollution and is a great way to keep fit and increase stamina.



When bicycling, always carry your identification and medical insurance information,

Crash facts

Most car and bike collisions occur when turning at intersections. Watch for cars turning both left and right at intersections and driveways.

Fatal crashes peak in the evening, often with alcohol as a contributing factor. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

especially when you are alone. Before deciding to commute by bicycle or on foot, consider how far you will be traveling, how much motor vehicle traffic will be traveling on the roads at the same time, and the terrain.

Choose a route or streets that have less traffic or better accommodations for bicyclists - such as bike lanes, wider lanes, or shared-use paths - to make the ride or walk more pleasant. Carry a map or plan an alternate route in case you need to make a detour.

Tips for commuting by bicycle

- Dress safely - wear a helmet, wear bright colored clothing, and secure loose pant legs.
- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes that are intended for bicycling. They will make the ride more enjoyable and efficient.
- Ride defensively - anticipate the actions of other road users and watch for road hazards.
- Pass with care - turning vehicles may not see you.
- Maximize visibility at twilight and night - wear reflective clothing and apply reflective tape to your bicycle.
- Walk your bicycle when you get into traffic situations beyond your cycling abilities. Walk to the right of your bike for safety.
- Use caution around buses and large trucks. Watch for buses pulling to and from curbs and passengers getting on and off. Stay out of blind spots and give large vehicles plenty of room to maneuver.
- Park your bicycle so you do not block sidewalks, handicap and building accesses, or emergency drives.

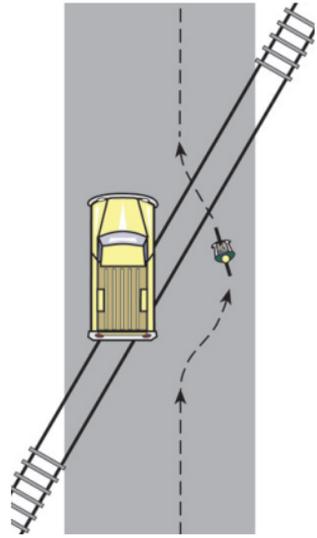
Lock your bicycle - secure both wheels and the frame to a stationary object using a sturdy lock.

Shared Use Paths are provided for recreation. Bicycle commuters and fast-moving road bicyclists are not required to use these paths. If they do, use care when passing recreational bicyclists, walkers, and other users.

Be careful crossing railroad tracks

Cross railroad tracks carefully. Watch for uneven pavement and grooves that could catch a wheel. Stay in control of your bicycle. Rise up from your saddle and bend your arms and legs so your body acts like a shock absorber.

If the tracks cross the road at a sharp angle, change course to cross them at a right angle.



Tips for commuting on foot

Walking, instead of driving a motor vehicle, improves the environment and personal health, and reduces traffic congestion. Consider walking, especially when the distance is less than a mile.

Wear comfortable shoes. Use a backpack or messenger bag so that your arms can swing free, allowing you to maintain better balance and increase the length of your stride.

If just beginning, start slowly and don't test your limits. You will want to feel energized and exhilarated, not exhausted, when you arrive at your destination.

International Walk to School Day

Walk a child to school or participate in a Walk to School Day event in October. Walking benefits the physical and emotional health of children when they get more exercise, notice their environment, and socialize with parents and other children.

www.walktoschool.org

www.vcuhealth.org/virginiasafekids



Bike and walk for long-term benefits!

The long-term benefits of bicycling and walking include:

- Lower blood pressure
- Lower cholesterol
- Strengthened heart and cardiovascular system
- Increased bone density
- Increased hormone production that counteracts the effects of aging
- Increased endorphins that decrease stress, depression, and anxiety while increasing relaxation
- Loss or maintenance of weight
- Strengthened nervous system and reflexes
- Increased flexibility
- Reduced diabetes complications

America Walks

Advocacy for local, state, and national pedestrian issues

www.americawalks.org

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute

A clearinghouse of bicycle helmet information serving consumers, parents, teachers, the media, and more

www.bhsi.org

BikeWalk Virginia

Resources for bicyclists and pedestrians

- www.bikewalkvirginia.org/resources/bicyclists.asp
- www.bikewalkvirginia.org/resources/peds.asp

City of Alexandria Local Motion

Active transportation resource in Northern Virginia

<http://alexandriava.gov/localmotion/>

Effective Cycling

By John Forrester (MIT Press, 6th Ed., 1992) Instruction in the theory and practice of vehicular bicycling

Federal Highway Administration

Resident's Guide for Creating Safe and Walkable Communities

safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped/ped_walkguide

Laws and Safety Tips

Laws and tips to make bicycling and walking safe and enjoyable on Virginia's highways

www.virginiavdot.org/bikeped

League of American Bicyclists

Promotes bicycling for fun, fitness, and transportation; certifies bicycling instructors; and advocates for bicycle-friendly communities, regions, and states

www.bikeleague.org

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Pedestrian safety program with publications, activities, information about National Safe Routes to School program and more

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/ped/>

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

Resources to increase viability of walking and bicycling as a means of transportation and physical activity

www.pedbikeinfo.org

Safe Routes to School

Program that assists interested localities, schools, and non-profit groups in making bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing to children

www.saferoutesva.org

Street Smart

Public safety program of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia

www.mwcog.org/streetsmart

U.S. Department of Federal Highway Administration

Pedestrian Safety Resources

http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/

Virginia Bicycling Federation

Volunteer organization working to promote bicycling; change public policy and community attitudes; and improve the safety, convenience, and acceptance of bicycling throughout Virginia

www.vabike.org

Virginia Department of Health

- Injury and Violence Prevention site with pedestrian and bicycle statistics, tips, and links to resources

www.vahealth.org/civp

- Bike Smart Basics training provides bike safety certification to health and physical education teachers in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education

www.vahealth.org/civp/bike/schools.asp

Virginia Department of Transportation

Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, including VDOT's Safe Routes to School Program

<http://www.vdot.virginia.gov/programs/bk-proginfo.asp>

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles

- Virginia Driver's Manual
www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/pdf/manual/manual.pdf
- Virginia Highway Safety
www.dmvnow.com/webdoc/safety/index.asp

Virginia Maps

- Bicycling in Virginia
www.virginiadot.org/bikeped
- Birding and Wildlife Trails
www.virginia.org/site/features.asp?FeatureID=213

Washington Area Bicyclist Association

The Commonwealth of Virginia's largest metropolitan area bicycling group's Web site offers many resources
www.waba.org

NOTES

Sharing the Road in Virginia: Laws and Safety Tips for Bicyclists and Pedestrians *plus, What Motorists Need to Know*



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Learn More at
www.SharingtheRoadinVirginia.org

