



Tips for driving safely around cyclists

Read the tips for driving around cyclists provided in our guide to help make the highways safer for everyone.

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In recent years, the number of cyclists on the roads has increased significantly. Not only is it a cheaper and healthier way to travel, but cities such as London are now offering bike hire schemes and cycle lanes that make travelling on two wheels easier than ever. While cycling is generally considered a safe activity, collisions and accidents with motorists do happen. To make the highways safer for everyone, here are our tips for driving around cyclists.

1. Check your mirrors and blind spots

As a driver, you should regularly check your mirrors so you know what's going on around you. A high number of collisions happen when a motorist hasn't seen the cyclist because they are hidden by other vehicles or are in a blind spot. Cyclists can also be difficult to see when pulling out of junctions, on roundabouts or when weaving in and out of traffic.

2. Check before opening your door

After parking, most drivers won't do a proper check behind them before opening their car door, or will only look out for other vehicles. However, this can be extremely dangerous. Cyclists are much harder to see than cars, and they may be travelling past at speed when you want to get out. To avoid a collision, look in your wing mirror and check your blind spot before opening your door. It's also worth getting into the habit of opening the driver's door with your left hand, as this can prompt you to look over your shoulder.

3. Make your intentions clear

It might sound obvious, but using your indicators in good time can make a huge difference when it comes to improving road safety. Doing this should come as second nature when you're in a car, but far too many accidents occur when drivers have failed to give others warning as to what they're about to do. Remember to give plenty of time when indicating to turn right or left, when moving over or pulling out of a parking space. Not only does this help to show other drivers what your intentions are, but it also means cyclists can react accordingly and stay safe on the roads.

4. Give them enough space

When overtaking cyclists, you must give them enough space. The Highway Code states that you should leave as much room as you would if you were overtaking a car. Although it doesn't state an exact distance, about 1.5 metres is a good rule of thumb. This is especially important if there's a strong wind or the roads are wet, as the cyclist may veer over into the road or skid off course. If there isn't enough space to pass safely, or if the road ahead appears to narrow, it's best to hold off.

Remember, the cyclist may be travelling faster than you think, and you could end up pushing them off the road. If there is an oncoming car, you're approaching a hill or it's a blind turn, you should also avoid overtaking. Bear in mind that cyclists may be required to move suddenly if there is a hazard on the road. For example, they may need to avoid a pothole or an opening car door. If you're unsure about their intentions, always wait rather than making an irrational decision.

Be a considerate driver

Keep safe distance



5. Learn to recognise their signals

Cyclists often use arm signals to show their intentions, but sometimes they can't do this because they need to brake and steer. Certain movements, such as looking over their shoulder, may also indicate that they are turning, changing direction or pulling out. Look out for these signals when driving, and make sure you give them the time and space they need to manoeuvre.

To familiarise yourself with the way cyclists think, it might be worth swapping your vehicle for a bike for a few days. This way, you'll get first hand experience of riding on the roads and will understand the type of risks they face.

6. Follow the rules of the road

A sure fire way to improve road safety for both motorists and cyclists is by following the Highway Code. Always make sure you abide by road signs, including 'stop', 'give way' and traffic light signals. It's also worth bearing in mind that some stop lines allow cyclists to get to the front of the traffic so they can see better. As a driver, you must always avoid driving into these areas and give the cyclist plenty of time to set off when the light is on green. You should also never park or drive in marked cycle lanes. Not only is this a road offence that could see you getting fined, but it can also put cyclists in danger.