

A guide for sharing
Vermont's roads for bicyclists,
pedestrians, motorists
and others.

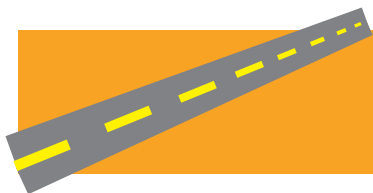


Please



VERMONT

Agency of Transportation



Vermont's roadways are used by motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and others. Our roads provide for transportation as well as recreation and fitness opportunities. The goal of this booklet is to engender safe and harmonious interaction among the diverse users that share the road.



Safety is a culture that begins with personal responsibility. Most accidents happen because of conscious decisions we make. Laws and rules that govern the roadways provide a framework for safety and guide us in the decisions we make. Familiarize yourself and your family with these guidelines and safety tips. Take a proactive approach to using Vermont's roadways safely, and please share the road.

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BICYCLE SAFETY



Known for its scenic beauty, Vermont is an exceptional place for bicycling. However, steep slopes and narrow valley corridors can be challenging. Here are some helpful tips for having a safe experience bicycling in Vermont.

Always Wear Your Helmet

Just like buckling your seat belt every time you get into your car, put your helmet on every time you ride your bike. Helmets are for everyone – kids and adults. It is estimated that as many as 85% of brain injuries can be prevented by wearing a helmet. See page 5 for more information and advice on proper helmet fit.



Be Aware

As a bicyclist, you are vulnerable. You are a person on a bicycle interacting with vehicles typically weighing 2,500-5,000 pounds, so you are assuming far greater risk. Constantly scan for situations and watch out for yourself. You have an advantage of being fairly high off the ground and have good visibility, but do not assume that you are seen. Hearing is as important as seeing. Never wear headphones.



Wear the Right Clothes

Wear light or bright colored clothing so you can be seen. A lightweight orange mesh vest with reflective striping or reflective arm or leg bands enhances your visibility. Tuck away shoelaces or other strings or cords so they don't get caught in the moving parts of your bike. Loose or baggy clothing can also be dangerous so make sure you wear snug clothes.

BICYCLE SAFETY



Vermont Statute:

Title 23, Chapter 13, Section 1136

“c) Every person riding a bicycle is granted all of the rights and is subject to all of the duties applicable to operators of vehicles, except as to those provisions which by their very nature can have no application.”

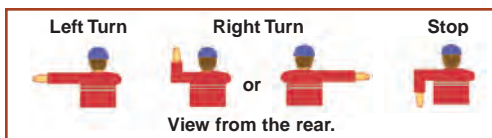
Check Your Bicycle

Have your bicycle checked thoroughly at least once a year at a bicycle shop. Check it yourself before each use: Do the tires have enough air? Do the brakes work properly? – Not rubbing on the tire, making good contact with the rim. Is the chain adequately tight? Are the gears working properly? Are the quick release levers closed tightly?



Obey the Rules of the Road

Bicyclists fare best when they operate as other vehicles do. Using proper hand signals and obeying all traffic control devices (signs, pavement markings and signals) can significantly reduce the chance of a crash. It will also show that you respect the rules of the road. Following the rules of the road will ensure that your actions are predictable by motorists. Ride in the direction of traffic as far to the right of the travel lane as practicable on the shoulder or in the bike lane in order to allow for a normal flow of traffic.



Light Your Way at Night

One third of all bicycle accidents occur at night while less than one third of bicycle trips occur at night. This clearly indicates that night riding is more hazardous. Vermont law requires bicyclists to use a white light visible from a dis-

tance of at least 500 feet to the front and either a red light or 20 square inches of reflective material on you or the bike that shall be visible at least 300 feet to the rear. Flashing or steady red tail lights enhance your visibility and are recommended. Wearing bright, reflective clothing will also help you to be seen at night.

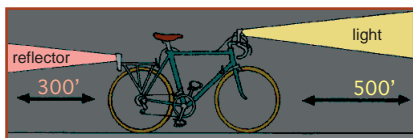


Image courtesy of *Bicycling Street Smarts* by John Allen

Common courtesy dictates that you ride single file in most cases. Communicate with motorists and other users of the road by making eye contact and using proper hand signals. Most motorists are courteous and share the road with bicyclists. However, be aware that some may not. If you are harassed, keep your cool and remember your safety comes first.

Share the Road

Common courtesy dictates that you ride single file in most cases. Communicate with motorists and other users of the road by making eye contact and using proper hand signals. Most motorists are courteous and share the road with bicyclists. However, be aware that some may not. If you are harassed, keep your cool and remember your safety comes first.



Taking the Lane

If you are making a left hand turn or staying in a through lane when there is a right turn lane, it is legal, and safer, for you to "take the lane." Sometimes, you may wish to take the lane if the road shoulder is too narrow or is filled with debris, especially on downhills where you can maintain a speed close to that of other traffic.

Proper Helmet Fit

Helmets come in different sizes. Use one that is not too small or too large, but fits snugly and comfortably. Use the changeable pads to fine tune the fit. The helmet should be level on your head, not tipped forward or back. Straps should meet right under your ears to form a Y. Buckle it tight enough to feel the strap when you open your mouth, but loose enough so you can breathe. Make sure your helmet is certified to meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission standard for bicycle helmets.



BICYCLE SAFETY

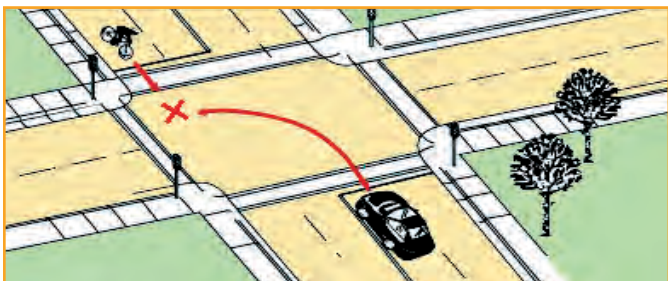


Common Bicycle Crashes

VEHICLE LEFT TURN

Bicyclist and motorist are on parallel paths coming toward each other and motorist turns left into the path of the bicyclist.

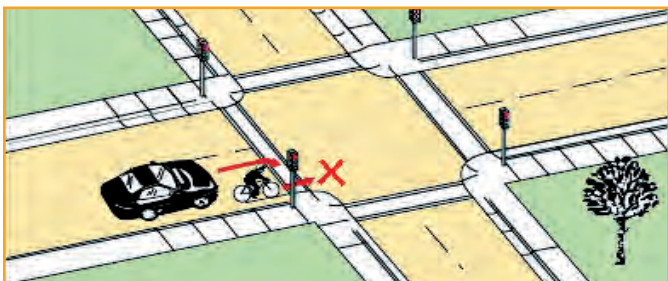
Watch for approaching vehicles making turns



VEHICLE RIGHT TURN

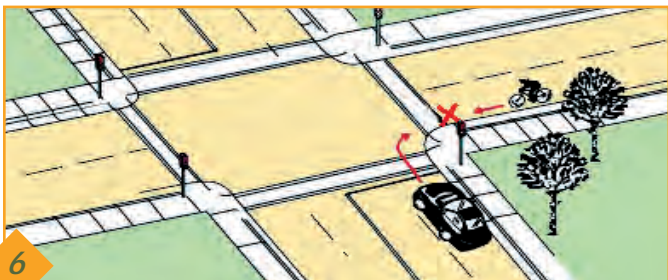
Bicyclist and motorist are on parallel paths in the same direction and motorist turns right directly in front of bicyclist.

When a motorist passes you and an intersection is just ahead, anticipate that they may turn.



INTERSECTIONS

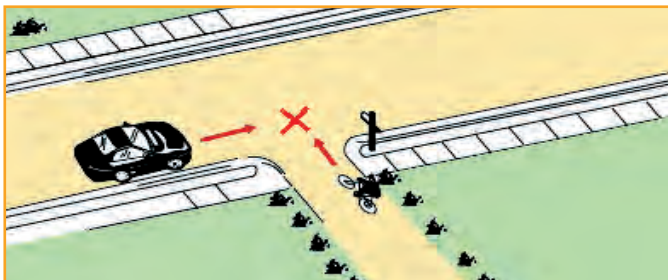
Bicyclist and motorist are on perpendicular paths and motorist hits bike at an intersection. 60% of these involve bicycles going in the wrong direction. *Ride with traffic.*



BIKE FAILS TO STOP

Bicyclist fails to stop for a stop sign at an intersection. Related causes are darting out mid-block from either a driveway, path or from the sidewalk.

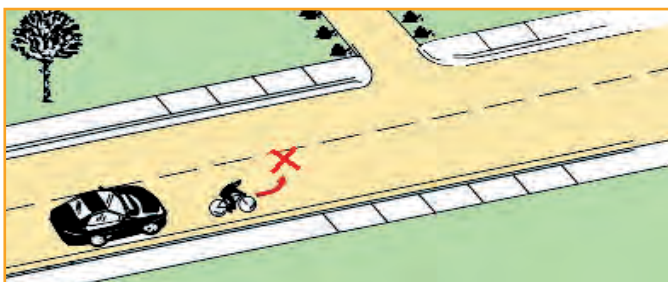
Always stop before entering or crossing a street



BIKE LEFT TURN

Bicyclist swerves left into path of motorist.

Look over your left shoulder for cars and signal before you move left.



Use Extra Care in Difficult Conditions

Riding in the rain can be hazardous because wet conditions affect your bicycle's handling. Be aware of drainage grates, manhole covers, railroad tracks and other obstacles that can cause you to lose control. Riding in winter can be even more hazardous because motorists do not anticipate bicyclists in the winter. In winter, visibility is challenged by fogged windshields, high snow banks, low sunlight angle and fewer daylight hours.



In May 2010, Act 114, the Safe Passing bill, was signed into law. Among other things, the Safe Passing law requires motorists to pass bicyclists with increased clearance. All of the changes enacted in the bill can be found in Title 23 of the Vermont state statutes.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY



Vermont's pedestrians include walkers and runners who use the roads for health, fitness and transportation. With limited sidewalks, few shared use paths and a predominantly rural landscape, Vermont's roads become important paths for walking. These tips can help you walk safely as you share the road with others.

Obey the Rules of the Road

Did you know you are three times more likely to be involved in a crash if you are walking with traffic? Use sidewalks if they are present. It is safest (and Vermont law) to walk facing traffic when there are no sidewalks adjacent to the road. Use crosswalks when they are provided. Crossing in the middle of a block, especially where cars are parked on the street, can be dangerous. Do not dart out when crossing. Children darting out mid-block or from a driveway is a common cause of crashes.



Be Visible

Never assume that you are seen by motorists. Wear light or bright colored clothing to enhance your visibility. Reflective striping on your shoes, ankles or legs is recommended, especially at times of low light. Carrying a flashlight will help you see and be seen at night.

Be Aware

As a pedestrian, you are vulnerable. You are a person interacting with vehicles weighing 2,500-5,000 pounds. Constantly scan for situations and watch out for yourself. Be especially wary of traffic entering and exiting side roads and driveways. Make eye contact with



drivers when crossing in front of them. Hearing is as important as seeing. Turn off your headphones when you are around traffic.

Use Crosswalks Responsibly

Vermont's crosswalks empower pedestrians but do not necessarily offer safety. Vermont law requires that motorists yield to pedestrians in crosswalks but also require pedestrians not to step out into the roadway when a vehicle is so close "that it is impossible for a driver to yield." When using crosswalks, even when a signal is present, look left, right and left again. Never assume that you are seen or that a motorist will stop. Especially watch out for turning vehicles. Establish eye contact and wait for a safe opportunity to cross. The responsibility for safety at crosswalks is more incumbent upon the pedestrian than the motorist.



RUNNERS ON THE ROAD

Runners Are Pedestrians Too

Runners should use the same tips as walkers. Run against traffic, cross at crosswalk locations when they are available and be aware of surrounding traffic. Do not dart out when crossing. Be extra alert because you could be moving at a faster pace than may be predicted by motorists.

Safety Tips for Runners

- Run on the road shoulder, sidewalk or a path or trail whenever possible, especially if you run with your dog. The less you interact with motorized traffic, the safer you will be.
- If you have to run on a road, use secondary town roads. Enjoy the scenery, but be alert for wildlife, domestic animals, low shoulders, narrow bridges, curves and hills.
- Run during the daylight hours when possible. If you run before dawn or after dark, wear reflective material or

light colored clothing.

- Stay alert! Runners are prone to fall into a trance, especially during long runs. Keep your attention on the road and traffic at hand. Do not assume that you are seen by motorists.
- Share the road with others. Make eye contact with approaching bicyclists and pass each other safely. Use a smile and friendly wave.



GETTING TO SCHOOL



Many schools in Vermont are in rural settings making it challenging to get to school by means other than a school bus or automobile. City schools and schools in village settings can be accessed by walking or riding a bicycle safely. Whether your children walk, ride a bicycle or take the bus, these tips can improve their safety.

Walking to School

Children under ten years old may be too young to walk to school on their own and should be escorted by an adult or older sibling. Teach your children safe walking skills. Walk to school with your child on the first day and periodically thereafter so that you can observe the route and make any changes and safety suggestions. Take special care at road crossings, even when marked crosswalks exist. Form a neighborhood walking group where one or two adults or older children walk through the neighborhood and pick up kids on the way. This is sometimes called a “Walking School Bus” and more information about them can be found at: www.walkingschoolbus.org.



Riding Your Bicycle to School

Children under ten years old should not ride their bike to school by themselves. Children should wear a helmet at

all times while riding a bicycle. Heavy backpacks or book bags can interfere with safe bicycle operation. Morning commuter traffic can be heavy, so a route on less traveled roads is recommended.

If your child has to ride on the road, make sure he knows the rules and observes all signs, pavement markings and crossing guards. Children should walk their bicycles while crossing streets. Form a neighborhood biking group with one or two adults or older kids.



Riding the Bus

Safety is also important for kids waiting for and riding school busses. Children should:

- Leave home early enough to prevent running to the bus.
- Wait for the bus on the sidewalk, shoulder or driveway away from the road.
- Avoid horseplay next to the road
- Wait for the bus to make a complete stop before leaving the sidewalk or shoulder
- Never walk behind the bus
- Walk ten feet in front of the bus to make sure they are seen
- Use the bus hand rails when getting on or off



Teaching Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Vermont has an active Safe Routes to School program, which includes providing education to school children on safe walking and bicycling. The curriculum for this education is called WalkSmart/BikeSmart Vermont! and BikeSmart – OnBike and can be downloaded for free at <http://www.healthandlearning.org/new.html>.

Confident, safe bicycling and walking start at an early age and it is important to continually remind young walkers and bicyclists about the basics of sharing the road safely with other users. Classroom lessons are best reinforced by actual practice which can be incorporated into Phys Ed classes or town Recreation programs.



WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

Parents should take an active role in their child's safety! Learn and use these safety tips and teach them to your children. Parents should set an example by modeling good motorist, pedestrian and bicyclist behavior. Practice what you teach.

Children Are NOT Small Adults!

Children:

- Act impulsively, without thinking about consequences.
- Do not have the ability to judge complex situations like how fast a car is moving towards them and whether they have time to cross a street.
- Are easily distracted.
- Mix fantasy and reality.
- Are smaller than adults which limits what they can see and how well they can be seen by drivers.

Young kids will often ride on sidewalks. Many collisions between cars and bikes happen when bicyclists use sidewalks. When kids ride on sidewalks, they should always yield to pedestrians. Teach them not to swerve between the sidewalk and the road.

Kids and Bikes

In addition to teaching kids standard bicycle safety rules such as following signs, using hand signals and making eye contact, emphasize the following:

- **No helmet – No bicycling** – Even if they are just riding around the driveway, insist on them wearing a properly fitted helmet.
- Make sure their bike fits them and works properly – don't get them bicycles that they will "grow into."
- Teach the concept of **always stopping at edges** – curbs, ends of driveways, road intersections, stop lines, and others – even when practicing on the sidewalk.
- **After stopping, look left, right and left again for traffic before continuing.**
- Once they are old enough to ride on the road, they should always **RIDE WITH TRAFFIC.**

Kids Can Walk Safely

In addition to all the basic tips about walking safely, focus on crossing streets safely by teaching kids to:

- **Stop at edges** like ends of driveways, curbs, the outside of parked cars
- **Look left, right, then left again** and keep looking as they cross, even in a marked crosswalk
- **Walk, don't run**, across streets
- Watch for signs that cars are about to move (lights, exhaust, sound of the motor, wheels turning)

Also teach them to:

- **Be especially aware of motorists backing up** and turning or entering from a driveway or side street.
- Be especially aware in parking lots, drive-through areas and other off-road automobile zones.
- Never play in the street.
- **Dress in bright clothing.** Reflective accent striping looks cool and will improve their visibility.

TIPS FOR MOTORISTS



Bicyclists, pedestrians and others are welcome and expected users of the roadways that link our rural, village and urban communities. It is the responsibility of all road users to share the road safely. Residents and visitors enjoy the slower pace of Vermont's scenic roads. However, motorists are responsible for paying constant attention for the unexpected around a curve or over a hill. Here's how you can safely share the road in your car.

Please Slow Down

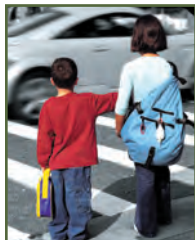
Enjoy your motoring experience at a pace that is safe for all. Remember the posted speed is the speed limit. **A pedestrian hit by a car traveling 40 mph has an 85% chance of being killed. At 20 mph, the chance drops to 20%.**

Speed (MPH)	Stopping Distance (feet)
20	115
25	155
30	200
35	250
40	305
45	360
50	425

Adhere to the speed limit and observe warning signs. If there is a “curve ahead” sign, you can bet that there is a curve ahead.

Practice Safe Driving Habits

Clean your windshield, properly adjust your mirrors, use two hands on the steering wheel and be constantly aware and alert. Always wear your seat belt. Obey all laws, signs, pavement markings and traffic signals. Use your directional signals for all turns and lane changes. Avoid distractions like changing CDs, eating, drinking or using cell phones while driving. Texting while driving is very dangerous and is illegal in Vermont. Make eye contact with bicyclists and pedestrians. Communicate with a nod of your head or a wave of your hand.



Be Prepared for the Unexpected

Some users of the road may not necessarily behave predictably. Be especially alert when children are present. Bicyclists may unexpectedly swerve to avoid a hazard on the road. Pedestrians may be walking on the wrong side of the road. Do not assume that they know the laws. Please be patient and use caution when around bicyclists or pedestrians.



Give Bicyclists Enough Space

Bicycles have the same rights to the road as motor vehicles. However, they are obligated to ride as far to the right as practicable. Out of courtesy, motorists should only pass when there is enough room to safely pass the bicyclist by at least a three-foot margin. It is Vermont law for motorists to exercise due care, including providing increased clearance when passing bicyclists or pedestrians.

Other Tips for Safely Sharing the Road

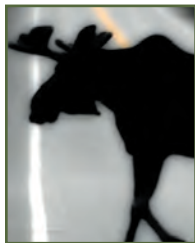
- Be aware of pedestrians in parking lots, drive-through areas and other off-road zones.
- Be especially aware of pedestrians at crosswalks or when turning.

- Look for bicyclists or walkers, especially kids, when backing up.
- Check your mirror and look before opening your door into traffic, where a bicyclist may be travelling.
- Make eye contact with other users.
- Be careful when passing stopped motor vehicles because they may be stopping for a pedestrian to cross.
- Be especially aware around schools and in neighborhoods where children are present.
- Wherever you are, drive as you would have people drive in your neighborhood.

OTHERS ON THE ROAD

Vermont drivers also share the road with horseback riders, farm vehicles, livestock, wildlife, trucks, busses and tourists. Here are some other important considerations for sharing the road.

- There are numerous recognized cattle crossings on state highways in Vermont. Horseback riders are frequently seen along or crossing Vermont roads. It is not uncommon to encounter tractors, other farm machinery or farm animals along or crossing Vermont roads, especially in the warmer months. Slow down and use caution when passing them.
- Every year there are around 100 vehicle/moose crashes in Vermont. Use extra caution in areas warning of moose or deer activity – these are areas where crashes have historically occurred. While less likely to cause serious damage or injury, numerous deer collisions occur annually.
- Large trucks are often found on narrow and hilly two-lane roads. Remember that the roads are used by those on business as well as those enjoying leisure. Please be patient with each other and respect each other's right to share the road.
- Sightseeing is a popular pastime in Vermont. Many visitors may not be in the habit of observing pedestrians' rights at crosswalks. The scenic opportunities in Vermont may encourage tourists to stop at unpredictable times. Please stay alert, be patient and smile.



RESOURCES

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
www.nhtsa.gov

National Center for Safe Routes to School
www.saferoutesinfo.org

National SAFE KIDS Coalition
www.safekids.org

Walk to School Day
www.walktoschool-usa.org

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center
www.pedbikeinfo.org

Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition
www.vtbikeped.org



For specific information or to discuss how to get safe bicycling or walking information presented in your community, please contact:

Vermont Agency of Transportation
Bicycle and Pedestrian Program
Local Transportation Facilities
1 National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05633
(802) 828-0059 or 828-5799



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