

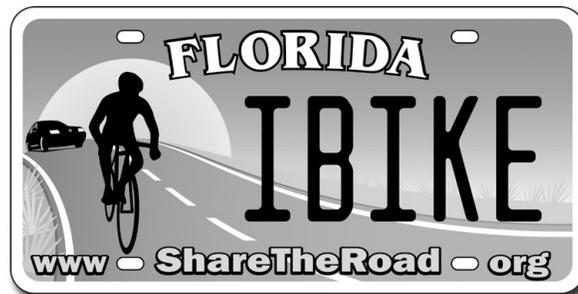
Florida

Bicycling Street Smarts

Riding Confidently, Legally, and Safely

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This manual teaches safe bicycling techniques on public roads and streets, but it’s up to you to apply them appropriately. Users of this manual assume full responsibility for their own actions and safety.



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Bicycle Drivers and the Florida Uniform Traffic Control Law

Operating a vehicle safely and efficiently in traffic requires the ability to collect and process information about traffic conditions, determine a course of action, and execute it—all on a continuous basis. As a cyclist on a roadway, you are the driver of a vehicle and are responsible for complying with the Florida Uniform Traffic Control Law. This code, set forth in Chapter 316 of the Florida Statutes, governs the operation of all vehicles operated on public roads in Florida.

A bicycle is classified as a vehicle [§ 316.003(2)]. A person in control of a vehicle on a street or highway is a driver [§316.003(1)]. As a driver, you must follow the traffic rules common to all drivers. As the driver of a bicycle, you must also obey rules developed specially for bicycles. As a cyclist, you have all of the rights to the roadway applicable to any driver, except as to special regulations for bicycles [§316.2065(1)].

Bicycle [§316.003(2)] Every vehicle propelled solely by human power, and every motorized bicycle propelled by a combination of human power and an electric helper motor capable of propelling the vehicle at a speed of not more than 20 miles per hour on level ground upon which any person may ride, having two tandem wheels, and including any device generally recognized as a bicycle though equipped with two front or two rear wheels.

Equipment and passengers

Lighting equipment [§316.2065(8), 2397 (7)] A bicycle operated between sunset and sunrise must be equipped with a lamp on the front exhibiting a white light visible from 500 feet to the front, and both a red reflector and a lamp on the rear exhibiting a red light visible from 600 feet to the rear. Lamps are permitted to flash.

Comment: Over half of fatal bicycle crashes in Florida occur after sunset, even though most cycling is done during daylight hours. LED lamps can last many hours on small rechargeable batteries. Rear reflector and tail lamp should be aimed straight back.

Brakes [§316.2065(14)] Every bicycle must be equipped with a brake or brakes that allow the rider to stop within 25 feet from a speed of 10 mph on dry, level, clean pavement.

Wearing of headsets [§316.304] A cyclist may not wear a headset, headphone or listening device, other than a hearing aid, while riding.

Comment: *Use of such devices can be distracting. A cyclist should not rely on hearing when changing lane position, crossing another roadway, etc. Sounds of an approaching vehicle may be masked by other traffic or too soft to be heard (bicycle, hybrid- electric car).*

Carrying a passenger [§316.2065(3)(a)] A bicycle may not be used to carry more persons at one time than the number for which it is designed or equipped. However, an adult cyclist may carry a child in a backpack or sling, child seat or trailer designed to carry children.

Use of helmet [§316.2065(3)(d)] A bicycle rider or passenger under 16 years of age must wear a bicycle helmet that is properly fitted, is fastened securely, and meets the federal safety standard for bicycle helmets.

Comment: By federal law, bicycle helmets sold in the US are required to meet the standard of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Head injuries account for about one third of hospital emergency room visits for bicycle-related injuries. Bicycle helmets, properly fitted and worn, have been found effective in reducing the incidence and severity of head, brain, and upper facial injury. Use of cycle helmets by adult role models promotes use among youth.

Laws for all drivers

Driving on right side of roadway

[§316.081] Upon all roadways of sufficient width, a vehicle must be driven on the right half of the roadway.

Comment: A cyclist on a roadway must ride on the side reserved for their direction of travel. Riding in the opposite direction, so as to face oncoming traffic, increases crash risk substantially and is a contributing factor in about one sixth of bicycle-motor vehicle crashes. Motorists turning onto or off a roadway at intersections and driveways do not expect traffic to approach from the wrong direction.

Yielding on entry to roadway

[§316.125(2)] The driver of a vehicle emerging from an alley, building, private road or driveway shall stop the vehicle immediately prior to driving onto a sidewalk, and shall yield to all vehicles and pedestrians which are so close thereto as to constitute an immediate hazard.

Obedience to traffic control devices

[§316.074] A driver must obey all applicable traffic control devices (traffic signs, markings, and signals).

Traffic control signals [§316.074]

A driver shall comply with indications of traffic control signals.

Intersection where traffic lights are inoperative [§316.1235]

The driver of a vehicle approaching an inoperative traffic light [signal] shall stop as for a stop intersection [stop sign].

Overtaking and passing a vehicle

[§316.083; §316.085] The driver of a vehicle overtaking another vehicle proceeding in the same direction shall pass to the left thereof at a safe distance and shall not again drive to the right side of the roadway until safely clear of the overtaken vehicle. The driver of a vehicle overtaking a bicycle or other non-motorized vehicle must pass the bicycle or other non-motorized vehicle at a safe distance of not less than 3 feet between the vehicle and the bicycle or other non-motorized vehicle.

Comment: See the exception discussed below in “When overtaking on the right is permitted.” To pass a cyclist with safe clearance, it may be necessary for a motorist to enter (at least partially) the next lane, when and where it is safe and legal to do so.

When overtaking on the right is permitted [§316.084]

Overtaking on the right is permitted upon a street or highway with unobstructed pavement not occupied by parked vehicles, of sufficient width for two or more lines of moving traffic in each direction. The driver of a vehicle may overtake and pass another vehicle on the right only under conditions permitting such movement in safety.

Comment: A cyclist traveling on a roadway in a bicycle lane, or in a lane wide enough for motor vehicles and bicycles safely to share, may pass motor vehicles on the right, because there is sufficient width in this case for two lines of moving traffic—motor vehicle traffic and bicycle traffic. However, the cyclist should proceed with care—“only under conditions permitting such movement in safety.” Cars or trucks may turn at driveways, or at the next intersection.

Method of turning right at intersection

[§316.151(1)(a)] Both the approach for a right turn and the turn are to be made as closely as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway.

Comment: For this reason, a motor vehicle driver preparing to turn right should—after yielding to any cyclist present—enter or closely approach a bicycle lane, if one is present. This reduces conflicts with following drivers and makes the driver’s intention more clear than signaling alone. A motorist who makes a sharp right turn immediately after passing has turned incorrectly.

Not to stand or park in bicycle lane

[§316.1945(1)(b)6] Except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic, or in compliance with the directions of a police officer or official traffic control device, no person shall stand or park a vehicle, whether occupied or not, in a bicycle lane, except momentarily to pick up or discharge a passenger or passengers.

Not to drive under the influence

[§316.193; §316.1936(2)] It is unlawful to operate any vehicle (i.e., including a bicycle) while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, that is, “when affected to the extent that the person’s normal physical faculties are impaired.” It is unlawful to possess an open container of an alcoholic beverage while operating a vehicle, or while a passenger in or on a vehicle.

Duty to exercise due care

[§316.130(15)] Every driver of a vehicle shall exercise due care to avoid colliding with any pedestrian or cyclist and give warning when necessary and exercise proper precaution upon observing any child or any obviously confused or incapacitated person.

Special regulations for cyclists

Roadway position [§316.2065(5)] A person operating a bicycle on a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic under the conditions existing must ride in the lane marked for bicycle use or, if no lane is marked for bicycle use, as close as practicable [safe] to the roadway’s right-hand curb or edge, except under any of the following situations:

when passing another bicycle or other vehicle

- when preparing for a left turn
- when reasonably necessary to avoid any condition or potential conflict including (but not limited to), a fixed or moving object, parked or moving vehicle, pedestrian, animal, surface hazard, or turn lane
- when a lane is too narrow for a bicycle and another vehicle to travel safely side by side.

A cyclist operating on a one-way street with two or more marked traffic lanes may ride as close to the left-hand edge of the roadway as practicable.



Bicycle lane symbol marking

Comment: A bicycle lane is a lane marked with a stripe and symbols for the preferential use of bicycles on a roadway (motorists may enter or cross a bicycle lane to turn into or off a roadway at intersections and driveways). The official symbol marking used in Florida to designate a bicycle lane is shown in the above figure (FDOT Design Standards Index 17347 and Florida Greenbook).

Where no bicycle lane is marked, a white edge line is often marked to indicate the edge of the roadway. On a road with curbs, the gutter is not part of the roadway. A cyclist should avoid the gutter area; pavement joints or debris may be hazardous. On a road with flush shoulders, any pavement beyond the edge line is a paved shoulder; it is not a bicycle lane unless it is marked with the bicycle lane marking.

A cyclist may leave a bicycle lane for any of the purposes listed in the law. Bicycle lanes are typically designed for through travel. To make a right turn where a right turn lane is provided to the right of a bicycle lane, a cyclist should leave the bicycle lane, since continuing in the bike lane to the intersection and making a sharp right turn could surprise a motorist in the right turn lane.

Similarly, a cyclist using the roadway to make a left turn should leave the bike lane in advance of the intersection, rather than make a sharp left turn at the intersection that could surprise or cut off a motorist in a through lane.

Where a bicycle lane is continued along the right side of a through/right lane, a cyclist who intends to go straight may need to adjust their position to the left to reduce the hazard of being cut off by a turning motorist (in about 4 percent of bicycle-motor vehicle crashes, through cyclists were cut off by motorists who overtook the cyclists and made right turns in front of them, or who approached from the opposite direction and made left turns in front of them).

Where no bicycle lane is marked, a cyclist who intends to proceed straight through an intersection should not ride in a lane marked or signed exclusively for right turns, since all drivers are required to obey applicable traffic control devices (see “Obedience to traffic control devices” above).

Roads with flush shoulders: where no bicycle lane is marked, a white edge line is typically

marked to indicate the edge of the roadway; any pavement to the right of the edge line is shoulder pavement, not a bicycle lane unless it is marked with the bicycle lane symbol.

Since the definition of “roadway” excludes shoulders, a cyclist is not required to ride on a paved shoulder that is not marked as a bicycle lane, although they may prefer to do so. A cyclist who rides on a paved shoulder should still travel on the right because (1) this reduces crash risk at intersections and driveways (drivers don’t expect traffic on shoulders to approach from the “wrong” direction) and (2) whenever the cyclist enters the roadway (e.g., to pass a pedestrian or other cyclist, cross an intersection, keep clear of a vehicle approaching to enter the roadway at a driveway, avoid debris or obstructions, etc.), right-side operation becomes mandatory.

As the minimum clearance for passing a bicyclist is 3 feet (see “Overtaking and passing a vehicle” above) and the total width of larger motor vehicles (with extending mirrors) is commonly 8 feet or more, an outside traffic lane less than 14 feet wide is commonly not wide enough to accommodate passing motor traffic within the lane. The Florida Department of Transportation’s Manual of Uniform Minimum Standards for Streets and Highways (www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/FloridaGreenbook/FGB.shtm) advises: “Wide outside lanes are through lanes which provide a minimum of 14 feet in width. This width allows most motor vehicles to pass cyclists within the travel lane, which is not possible on more typical 10-ft to 12-ft wide lanes.”

Where restricted conditions prevent inclusion of bicycle lanes or paved shoulders on urban roadways, Florida Department of Transportation engineering guidance recommends an outside lane width of 14 feet to “allow passenger cars to safely pass bicyclists within a single lane,” i.e., without the need for passing motor vehicles to change lanes (Florida GreenBook, chapter 9).

Operation on limited access highways

[§316.091] No person shall operate a bicycle or other human-powered vehicle on the roadway or along the shoulder of a limited access highway, including bridges, unless official signs and a designated, marked bicycle lane are present at the entrance of the section of highway indicating that such use is permitted pursuant to a pilot program of the Department of Transportation.

Comment: A limited access facility is “a street or highway especially designed for through traffic and over, from, or to which owners or occupants of abutting land or other persons have no right or easement, or only a limited right or easement, of access” [§316.003(19)].

Riding two abreast [§316.2065(6)] Cyclists may not ride more than two abreast except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. Cyclists riding two abreast may not impede traffic when traveling at less than the normal speed of traffic and must do so within a single lane.

Methods of turning left at intersection

[§316.151(1)(b,c)] A cyclist intending to make a left turn is entitled to full use of the lane from which a driver may legally make a left turn. Instead of making a vehicular left turn, a cyclist may proceed through the rightmost portion of the intersection and turn as close to the curb or edge as practicable at the far side. Before proceeding in the new direction of travel, the cyclist must comply with any official traffic control device.

Comment: When using the second method, a cyclist should never swerve left from the far right corner. There are risks of conflict with traffic from several directions. The cyclist should stop at the far corner and move to a point where traffic can be reentered safely.

Signaling a turn or stop

[§316.155(2)(3); §316.157(1)] A signal of intention to turn must be given during the last 100 feet traveled by the vehicle before turn-

ing. If a cyclist needs both hands for control, the signal need not be given continuously. A cyclist signals intent to turn left by extending the left arm horizontally. A cyclist may signal intent to turn right either by extending the left hand and arm upward or by extending the right hand and arm horizontally to the right side of the bicycle. Signal of intent to stop or suddenly to reduce speed is given by extending the left hand and arm downward.

Riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk

[§316.2065(10)] When riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk, a cyclist has the rights and duties of a pedestrian. [§316.2065(11)] A cyclist riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk must yield the right of way to pedestrians and must give an audible warning before passing. [§316.1995] Vehicles may not be propelled by other than human power on sidewalks or bicycle paths.

Comment: Sidewalks are not designed for bicycle speeds, but bicycle use is allowed except where prohibited by local ordinance (e.g. the central business districts of many cities). Although a cyclist riding on a sidewalk has the rights and duties of a pedestrian, they are still a “bicycle rider” and their bicycle is still a “bicycle.” Consequently, laws that pertain to equipment or carriage of passengers (see above) are still applicable.

Since a cyclist riding on a sidewalk has the rights of a pedestrian, they may ride in either direction. (However, it is safer to ride in the direction of traffic, since drivers do not expect cyclists to come from the other direction at driveways and crosswalks.) At a signalized intersection, they must obey the instructions of any applicable pedestrian control signal. That is, they may start to cross a roadway in a crosswalk only during a steady Walk phase, if one is displayed. If no pedestrian signal is provided, the cyclist may proceed in accordance with the signal indications for the parallel roadway traffic flow [§ 316.084].