

# Go by Bike!

## \* For Convenience

Bicycles can take you door-to-door or to a train or bus. No circling for a parking space. No traffic jams. In urban areas, a bicyclist will usually beat a motorist, bus, or subway commuter into work. Shopping by bike is also fun and easy.

## \* For Your Health

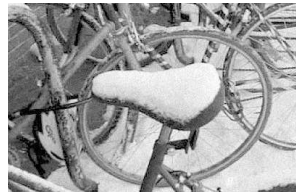
When you commute by bicycle, you don't have to make time for exercise — it becomes a normal part of your daily routine. Bicycling lowers your blood pressure, and leaves you with much less stress than driving a car. As a bonus, you'll probably be much more awake when you arrive at work in the morning.

## \* To Save Money

By going car-free or car-light you can save on fuel, maintenance, parking fees, and traffic tickets. If you can eliminate your car entirely, you'll save an average of \$5000 a year in payments, insurance, and maintenance costs! With those savings, you can afford to occasionally rent a car, take a taxi, or join a car-sharing club like Zipcar. Bicycling can even save you money even if you usually take public transportation. Twelve months of subway passes can cost over \$400, more than enough to pay for a new commuter bike every year.

## \* For the Environment

Bicycles don't pollute, keep tons of waste out of the landfills, and don't require huge roadways or parking lots. Cycling is also the world's most efficient form of transportation! The average car motor uses around 50 to 80 times more energy than a cyclist!



## Getting Started

Before you just jump on the bike that's been sitting in your basement for years, here are some suggestions that will make your commute better. For even more info, check out [www.MassBike.org](http://www.MassBike.org), or contact us and we will pair you up with one of our "commuter buddies" who can help you plan routes and can show you all the secrets.

## The Bike

A "commuter", "city", or "hybrid" bike is designed for shorter trips on busy streets, and inclement weather. These bikes have lights, 1.25 to 1.5 inch tires, straight or upright handlebars, and racks to carry bags or briefcases. However, any bike can be used as a commuter bike. So, what about that old bike in the basement? Sure! But, look it over first to make sure it's in working order. If not, bring it into your local bike shop and ask them to suggest modifications or new equipment.

As much as your friends may tell you otherwise, having an old-looking commuter bike is not so bad. Theft can be a problem with very new bikes. Creative paint jobs, stickers, duct tape, and other artistic applications can help make your bike less attractive to thieves. Also, make sure to register your bike with your city's or town's police department for free, and keep a copy of your bike's registration number in your wallet.

## Essential Equipment

You should have at least:

- a front white light, and a rear red light
- racks and/or panniers to carry stuff
- a good, solid lock — or two
- a helmet that fits correctly
- wear comfortable clothes — use reflective ankle

bands on baggy pants, and remember: layers, layers, layers!

- wet/cold weather gear like a raincoat, gloves, a balaclava or scarf, and fenders for your wheels
- a small tool kit with the basic wrenches for your bike's type of bolts, patch kit, tire levers, and a tire pump
- a change of clothes and a washcloth if you need to look professional at your workplace (you may even be able to shower at work if you get particularly sweaty)

## Optional Equipment:

- biking gloves to protect your hands in case of a fall, and to wipe the sweat from your brow from all that great exercise!
- an extra tire tube — changing a tire is faster than patching a flat
- a trailer for kids or things to take along
- a bell
- lip balm with sun protection!

## How to Get From Point "A" to Point "B"

Before you even get out there into traffic, make sure you are familiar with the rules of the road. Most bicyclists never get taught even the basics of bike safety, so be sure to check out the tips on the other side of this brochure, so you can ride like a pro.

Once you have become comfortable riding your vehicle onto busy streets, you can take the most direct route to work or school. If you aren't yet comfortable with lots of other traffic, give yourself some extra time, and locate a route with residential and/or wide, quiet streets. (A bike map can be very helpful for planning a route, if there is one available for your area.) Either way, make sure to always take up as much space as

you need for safety. You have the same right to the road as everyone else!

## Parking

Where should you store your bike and equipment while you are at work, school, or the store? There are many good options. Ask if there is a place to park inside and lock your bike to something solid. Many parking garages have bike racks inside; ask the attendant if you don't see one.

To lock the bike, put a U-lock through the front wheel, the frame, and the rack or bike ring. Use a cable lock to secure the back wheel if you like. If you want to be extra-cautious, consider using a small saddle lock to keep your seat safe and take all removable lights off, if possible.

## Have Fun!

People who begin biking to work or to the local store love it. They get lots of exercise and live in a world without the usual traffic troubles. So, as a new bike commuter on the road, have fun out there.

If you do encounter some bad driving, don't worry about it. Just be friendly and enjoy the fact that you are not stuck in a car.

And finally.....

## BECOME A MASSBIKE MEMBER!

[www.massbike.org](http://www.massbike.org)

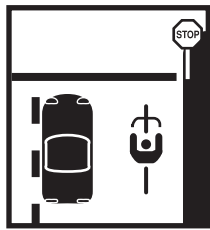
- \* Help make bicycling better, safer and more fun in Massachusetts!
- \* Get 10 percent discounts at bike stores and B&Bs across the state
- \* Receive our acclaimed quarterly newsletter and keep track of the bike paths being built in your area
- \* Be able to receive individualized help from our staff on your biking questions

# Bicycles are Vehicles and Belong on the Road

Bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as operators of motor vehicles, according to Massachusetts State law. This means that you are required to follow all traffic rules, and you are allowed to drive your bicycle on any road or highway in the state, except for limited access expressways (like I-93).

Following the same rules as other vehicles makes you predictable, and significantly reduces the likelihood of a crash. Obeying the law also sends the message that you belong in traffic and that you respect other road users.

## Give respect — Get Respect

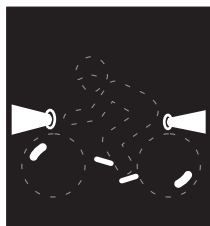


### Traffic signals are for bicyclists too

Obey all traffic signs and signals. Stop behind the stop line, so pedestrians can cross safely in the crosswalk.

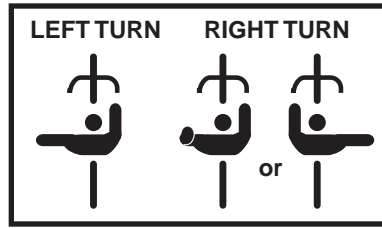
### Avoid the right hook

Avoid passing any moving vehicle on the right. If there is a bicycle lane on the right, pass other traffic slowly and carefully, and watch for right turning vehicles.



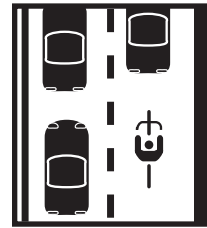
### Don't be invisible!

Bikes are, by law, required to have a front white light, a rear red reflector or light, side reflectors, and pedal (or ankle) reflectors at night.



### Look and signal before turning

Always look behind you to see if it is clear before turning or changing lanes.

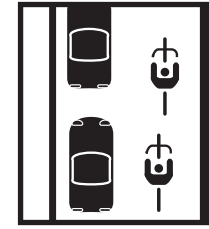


### Take the lane when necessary

If a lane is too narrow for sharing with a car, move into the center of the lane. Motorists may act impatient, but they aren't likely to pass unsafely.

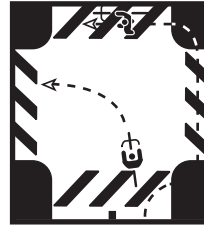
### Ride single file

Unless passing, ride single file. Notify other cyclists of overtaking cars by announcing "Car back".



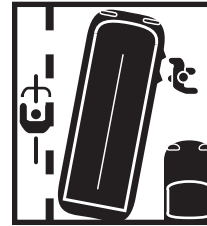
### Left turns

Turn left as a vehicle by merging into the left turn lane or left side of single lane. Or, stop, dismount the bike, and cross as a pedestrian in crosswalks.



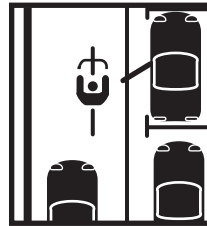
### Pass busses on left

Busses pull to the right to drop off passengers, so always pass on the left, or wait behind the bus until it starts moving again.



### Beware of the door zone!

Ride at least 4 feet away from parked cars, even if there is a bike lane, or traffic trying to pass you.



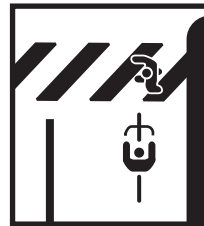
### Sidewalks are for walking

Bike riding on sidewalks is prohibited in business districts. Residential sidewalks are OK to ride on at a slow pace.



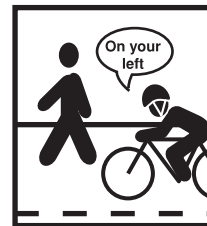
### Yield to pedestrians

Stop for all pedestrians in crosswalks. Do not pass other vehicles stopped at crosswalks—there might be a pedestrian you can't see coming from the other side.



### Don't swerve

Ride in a straight, predictable line. Car drivers may not be able to avoid hitting you if you suddenly move into their path.



### Pass pedestrians with care

When on a path or sidewalk, pass other users with care, and announce your presence with a bell or a friendly "Passing on your left".

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## A guide to commuting on a bicycle

