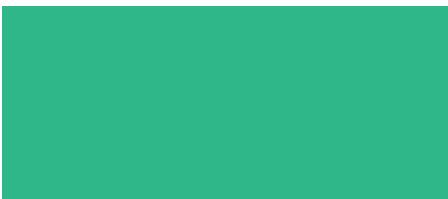


# Cycle Sense

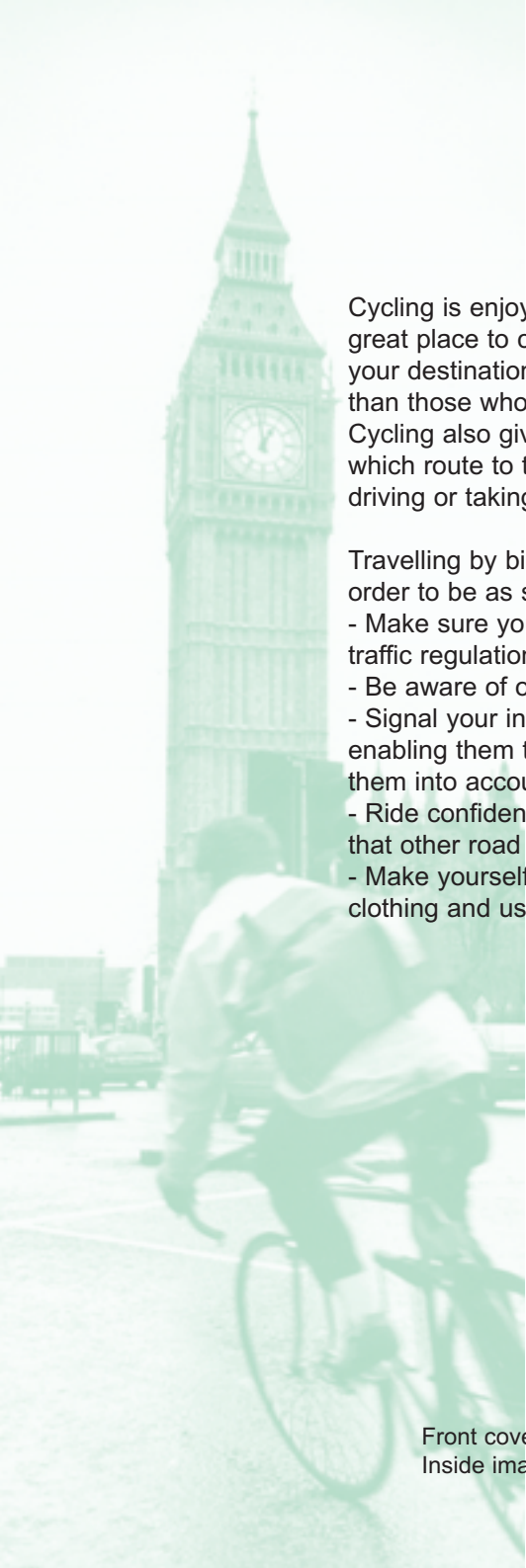


## London Cyclists' Trust



**London  
Cycling  
Campaign**

**CYCLING - GOOD FOR LONDON ... GOOD FOR YOU!**



Cycling is enjoyable and rewarding and London is a great place to cycle. You are more likely to get to your destination on time and in a good frame of mind than those who have travelled by other methods. Cycling also gives you more freedom to choose which route to take and can be less stressful than driving or taking public transport.

Travelling by bike is a very safe way to travel. In order to be as safe as possible you should always:

- Make sure you understand and pay attention to traffic regulations.
- Be aware of other road users and road conditions.
- Signal your intentions clearly to other road users, enabling them to predict your movements and take them into account.
- Ride confidently, placing yourself on the road so that other road users can see you.
- Make yourself visible by wearing bright or reflective clothing and using bright lights at night.

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## **Starting out**

When you first start cycling, you need to begin by familiarising yourself with your bike. Start cycling where there are no cars or pedestrians. You will need to master balance, steering, using the brakes and changing gears. Once you have acquired these skills you should try riding single-handed so that you are able to make hand signals. Get used to making turns and cycling over uneven surfaces. Practise looking back over your shoulder as you cycle, without swerving or wobbling. When you are comfortable doing these things, you can try cycling on quiet streets and paths. If possible, get some cycle training to improve your confidence and skills.

Children should always have on-road training before they are allowed to cycle on the road. For more information see the LCC booklet "Cycling with Children".

## **Confidence and awareness**

Cycling with confidence and with awareness of other road users can make a significant difference to how safe you will be on the road. If you are new to cycling it is a good idea to plan your route in advance, start on quieter roads and take your time. If you are cycling somewhere that will be busy during the week then try it out at a weekend to familiarise yourself with the route first.

## **Cycle training**

An excellent way to improve your skills and confidence is to get some cycle training. There are a number of excellent cycle training providers in London, and some local authorities offer free training. Cycle training is useful for beginners, returning cyclists and even old hands. You may learn the basics, or learn about road positioning and roundabouts or how to best tackle a route to work by riding with an instructor. For further information on cycle training contact the LCC or see the LCC website: [www.lcc.org.uk](http://www.lcc.org.uk).



### **Cycling with a group**

Cycling with a group can be a good way to improve your confidence: you will be shown new routes and have others to learn from. The LCC publicises regular group rides all over London. These include short easy rides and longer faster rides so you will find one that suits you. For more information visit the LCC website [www.lcc.org.uk](http://www.lcc.org.uk) or contact the LCC office. For ideas of rides you can go on in London, see the LCC booklet "Leisure Cycling".

### **Bike buddies and bike buses**

Some local LCC groups will set you up with a bike buddy, who can help you to get used to riding in traffic or find a more suitable route to work. Other groups run bike buses, which will ride a certain route regularly so you can get used to cycling in the city. Some schools now run regular bike buses for children going to and from school. Contact the LCC for further information on your local LCC group.



Photo: Alix Stredwick WDS Cycle Maintenance

## **You and your bike**

### **Maintaining your bike**

It is important to keep your bicycle in a roadworthy state. You should have your bike serviced at least once a year. Look after your bike and it will last longer and be safer to ride.

Tyres need to be pumped up to the correct pressure to improve performance and reduce the risk of punctures. You should replace your tyres when they become worn. Air pressure differs between different types of bikes. Fat tyres fitted to mountain bikes need less pressure than those used in narrower touring tyres.

Brakes need to be checked regularly for wear and tear, and worn brake pads replaced. The cables need to be checked on a regular basis for signs of any fraying or breakages. If you are not sure how to replace brake blocks or cables then take your bike to a reputable cycle shop to be serviced.

There are also regular local maintenance workshops promoted by the London Cycling Campaign that provide helpful guidelines on how to maintain a safe bicycle. Contact the LCC for further details on these. You can also use the LCC booklet "Cycle Maintenance".

## **Visibility**

It is important to be visible to other road users and pedestrians whilst cycling, particularly at night. Motorists cannot hear you and may be distracted. Pedestrians may not see or hear you coming and can step out in front of you.

It is advisable to wear light-coloured clothes, or attach reflective material to your clothing or bicycle, even in daylight. By law, cyclists are required to use front and rear lights at night. Front lights are usually white and rear lights should be red. It is well worth investing in good quality lights. Some cheap lights can be very dim and can almost be useless. Halogen lights have a bright beam and are particularly effective if you cycle at night in unlit areas. Carry a set of spare batteries with you as they require frequent battery changes. Lights using LEDs (light emitting diodes) are increasingly popular but not all meet legal requirements. They can easily be seen by other road users, are light to carry and have a long battery life. It is not legal to only use flashing lights, though you could use these in combination with steady beam lights.

### **Lights which meet British standards:**

Front white light: BS6102/3 (or equivalent)

Rear Red light: BS3648 or BS6102/3 (or equivalent)

Rear Red Reflector: BS6102/2 (or equivalent)

Pedal Reflectors (amber) BS6102/2 (or equivalent)

### **The Highway Code**

The Highway Code includes a section on cycling. Many cyclists have learnt to drive at some stage and have studied the Highway Code. If you have not then you should read this before you start cycling. Most of the code applies to cyclists in the same way as any other road user. Only where it explicitly says so should cyclists behave differently.

## Road positioning

One of the key principles of safe cycling is to cycle in a prominent position on the road where you can be clearly seen.

Avoid cycling very close to the kerb or edge of the road, which reduces your room for manoeuvre and makes you more likely to hit drain covers and potholes. You should ride at least about a metre away from the edge of the road.

Proper road positioning can be summed up in the following points made by the cycling expert John Franklin:

"Increase your margin of safety ... by riding where you can obtain the best view, where you can best be seen by others and your movements predicted."

"Good road positioning is not about keeping you out of the path of other traffic as much as possible. Contrary to popular belief, this is not necessarily the best way to maximise safety."

John Franklin, Cyclecraft, The Stationery Office. 2004

In certain situations it may be safer to use all the space that your side of the road or lane allows. This may be necessary if there is not enough room for cars to overtake you without forcing you too close to parked cars or the side of the road. You should also take all of your lane when approaching a junction where it might be unsafe for a vehicle to be next to you or to come alongside you, (for instance where it might turn across the front of you - "cutting you up").



LCC

Try to keep at least a door's width from parked cars, as doors may open into your path. If the road has parked cars on both sides and there is no space for you and an oncoming vehicle to pass, slow down and if necessary stop. You have equal right of way with other road users, but in all situations your safety should be your primary concern.

If you are stuck in traffic and vehicles are blocking your way forward you should not mount the kerb and ride on the pavement. Instead wait until you can safely cycle forward, or get off and walk your bike until you can cycle on the road again. You are still likely to be faster than other traffic.



Photo: Tower Hamlets Wheelers

### **Turning left and right**

When turning left, it is a courtesy to signal your intention.

Turning right can be more awkward as you may have to negotiate two lanes of traffic. When turning right you need to look over your right shoulder and signal with your right hand. If the road behind you is clear, pull out into the centre of the road and turn right once there is no oncoming traffic. If there is oncoming traffic then stop in the middle of the road until it has passed.

Whenever you turn left or right, always look for pedestrians as they may be crossing the road you intend to turn into. If a junction is very busy and there is no provision for a safe right turn, or you are in doubt about how to negotiate it, then get off and cross the junction on foot.

### **Cycle lanes, bus lanes and cycle paths**

Cycle lanes are often created to encourage cycling in certain areas or along busy roads that may have previously been difficult to negotiate. Cycle lanes with unbroken white lines are for the sole use of cyclists.

Some lanes have been designed in such a way that they encourage cyclists to ride near the kerb or close to parked cars where the risk of collision is higher. In some cases parked vehicles obstruct cycle lanes.

Use cycle lane if you feel it is convenient or safer. Otherwise use the road space in the same way you would if there was no cycle lane.

Many cycle paths on footpaths and through parks will be for shared use with pedestrians.

Bus lanes can be used if signposted for shared use. They may also be shared with powered two wheelers and taxis and at certain times of day other motor vehicles may use them as well.

Some bus lanes along busy arterial roads are wider than normal. An example can be seen along the southbound carriageway of Park Lane. This allows cyclists and buses to use the lane at the same time. Be careful when using bus lanes. Avoid passing the bus on the pavement side as the driver will not be able to see you easily and may pull into the kerb without warning.

### **Advanced stop lines**

Advanced stop lines (ASLs) allow you to stop in front of other traffic at traffic lights. This means that when the traffic light turns to green you can start off before other traffic. They consist of a green or red box with a bicycle painted on it. Some have a feeder lane running up to them. Motorists are required to stop at the solid white line at the rear of this box. However, these are a fairly recent provision for cyclists and are not yet fully understood or acknowledged by all motorists. If a motorist does stop on the box, pull up alongside the stationary vehicle and try to make eye contact with the driver. Be careful in case the motorist turns left unexpectedly.

### **Overtaking**

It is often necessary to overtake stationary or slow-moving vehicles in traffic. Whatever the circumstances, watch for pedestrians stepping through lanes of traffic or doors opening as you pass. When you overtake it is important to be aware of what is moving around you.

When overtaking parked vehicles, take a look behind over your right shoulder. If it is clear, signal and pull out towards the middle of the road. Leave at least one metre between yourself and a parked vehicle to allow for the hazard of an opening door. If you are not crossing over a lane marking during the manoeuvre, you have right of way over vehicles behind you.

When overtaking a slow-moving vehicle, you should again take a look over your right shoulder before signalling and pulling out. You should also check for oncoming traffic to ensure there is no risk of collision.



## Roundabouts

Some roundabouts are relatively safe as traffic speeds are usually low. However, others are very busy and require care when negotiating them. Roundabouts should be approached with the same care as any other junction.

When approaching a roundabout you should join the appropriate lane for the exit you need. You should wait for traffic already in the roundabout to clear before you enter. If you are going to take the first turning then use the left lane. If you are going straight-on then you will need to be in the middle lane or in the left lane but adopting a position in the centre of the lane. Be aware of traffic that may be exiting to the left and could cut across you.

If you are turning right then you will need to be in the centre of the right hand lane until you are past the intermediate exits, after which you will need to signal left and move into the left hand lane. Beware of traffic coming up fast on the inside lane.

If you feel that other road users may not understand your intentions, then you can indicate right at the entrances prior to the one you will exit at, and then left when you get to your exit.

Good positioning in the road is extremely important as it indicates where you will be turning before you signal. You should practise on quiet roads until you can signal and turn at the same time.

Some large roundabouts have traffic lights to control the speed of vehicles. Even so, beware of motorists who accelerate through red lights in order to gain advantage.

## Sharing the road

### Lorries

The draught of a large vehicle, such as an articulated lorry, can be a hazard for a cyclist if it passes too closely. Positioning yourself well out from the kerb - taking the centre of the lane where necessary - will leave you room for manoeuvre.

Be particularly wary of lorries turning left. Remember that an articulated lorry may swing right before it turns sharply left at a junction. Never edge forward alongside a long vehicle, even if there is a cycle lane, as you may be trapped when it turns leaving you no escape route. The presence of pedestrian guard railings increases the danger by blocking your escape route.

Large vehicles have blind spots, which can make it difficult for the driver to see a cyclist. Keep well behind a lorry in front, and position yourself so that you can be seen in its side mirrors. If you can see the driver in the side mirror, then he or she is able to see you - but you should never assume that you have been spotted. It is particularly easy for your presence to go unnoticed at busy junctions and gyratory systems.



Photo: Jason Patient

## **Cars, motorbikes and mopeds**

When cycling in traffic be aware of other road users so you can anticipate their movements. If you are unsure if someone has seen you, then if possible make eye contact with them.

Beware of cars overtaking you and then turning left across your path, and of vehicles pulling out from side roads.

Motorbikes and mopeds can come up behind you very quickly, so always check behind you before moving sideways, even within a lane.



Photo: Alix Stredwick

## **Cycling near pedestrians**

If you are cycling on a path signposted for shared use with pedestrians, you should show consideration by cycling at an appropriate speed and giving way at all times. You should alert pedestrians to your presence if there is any risk of collision by sounding your bell or giving a polite verbal warning. Pedestrians can feel threatened when people cycle close to them.

Some parks and open spaces have segregated cycle and pedestrian paths. Some pedestrians may not understand this and walk on the cycle path. Cycle with consideration and be prepared to slow down.

There are 12 information booklets in this series. The other topics are:

Bicycle Security - lock it or lose it!

Transporting Your Bicycle

Cycling with Children

Cycling - what to do if you are in a collision

Getting started on a Bicycle

Buying a Bike

Cycling to Work

Cycle Parking - home, workplace and city

Cycle Maintenance

Leisure Cycling

Cycling and the Workplace

These can be ordered by calling the LCC or downloaded from [www.lcc.org.uk](http://www.lcc.org.uk). Published March 2004.

Written by Martin Ireland

Thanks to cycling expert John Franklin for consultation and advice.

For more information on skilled cycling techniques for adults see

**Cyclecraft**, by John Franklin, The Stationery Office. 2004, or visit: [www.lesberries.co.uk](http://www.lesberries.co.uk).

Selected images: Jason Patient [www.cycling-images.co.uk](http://www.cycling-images.co.uk)

Many thanks also to the London Cycling Campaign staff and volunteers for sharing their expertise for these information sheets.

London Cyclists' Trust in partnership with London Cycling Campaign (LCC) works to improve conditions for cycling in London. For further information on the LCC and membership benefits such as insurance, bike shop discounts, legal advice and social rides call 020 7928 7220, email [office@lcc.org.uk](mailto:office@lcc.org.uk), or go to the website: [www.lcc.org.uk](http://www.lcc.org.uk).

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London Cyclists' Trust Registered charity No 1054952

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