

A learner driver's guide to safer driving in relation to... Cyclists

80% of cyclists hold a driving licence and 1 in 5 drivers cycle at least once a month (National Travel Survey statistics, 2010).

Most car drivers are also cyclists and most cyclists are also car drivers. Cyclists are especially vulnerable to injury and even death when sharing the road with cars. Think about your own experience when you have been riding a cycle. How vulnerable did you feel when you were sharing the road with cars?

Now think about your experience of cyclists when you are driving a car. Do you give cyclists as much care, courtesy and consideration as you would have liked to have been given when you were riding a cycle?

Make a note in the box below of the things you would have liked car drivers to have done differently to make riding your cycle a more enjoyable and safer experience.



How good are you at doing these things when you are driving a car? Discuss these things with your driving instructor and ask them to give you feedback on how well you show care, courtesy and consideration to cyclists when you are driving. Ask them if there are other things you should also take into consideration.

As you are driving see how many places you can identify to your driving instructor where cyclists can come into conflict with cars. This will include:

- Cycle paths alongside the road
- Cycle paths crossing the road
- Toucan crossings
- Advanced stop lines at junctions
- In slow moving traffic
- At junctions and especially at roundabouts when the cyclist uses the left lane to turn right (see Highway Code rule 77)
- Near houses, schools, shops, offices, factories, sports and recreational areas – in fact you can expect to find cycles anywhere that you can expect to find people



Sometimes cyclists can appear to behave unpredictably. Often when this happens there is a good reason, for example cyclists may:

- Weave about at slow speed
- Slow down, or stop and get off on a hill
- Make sudden sideways movements into your path to avoid potholes, inspections covers or tramlines
- Swerve to avoid being hit by a car door being opened
- Have problems in bad weather, particularly strong crosswinds
- Be carrying objects which affect their control and balance

When you see a cyclist, discuss what you observe with your driving instructor. In particular try to identify and understand factors that may cause the cyclist to behave unpredictably.

The good news is that the number of cyclists killed fell by 4 per cent from 111 in 2010 to 107 in 2011. However the number of cyclists seriously injured has increased in recent years. In 2011, 92% of cyclist KSIs (killed and seriously injured casualties) occurred in accidents involving another vehicle (usually a car). Cyclists have the second highest KSI rate per billion passenger miles travelled of any road user group. The number of cyclists reported to the police as seriously injured in a road accident increased by 16 per cent to 3,085. Pedal cyclist traffic levels are estimated to have risen by 2.2 per cent over the same period (DfT Think! Campaign).

So, when driving near cyclists remember to give them plenty of room. If necessary be ready to hold well back, until it is safe to pass leaving an adequate gap. An adequate gap is 2 metres, sufficient to avoid hitting the cyclist if they wobble or fall over.



The Highway Code rules 211 – 213 set out the advice car drivers should follow in regard to cyclists. The rules for cyclists are 59 – 82. You should read and understand the rules that apply to you when you drive a car and also the rules that cyclists should follow. If there is anything you are unsure of, discuss it with your driving instructor. Check out theAA.com for further advice to help cyclists and drivers share the road - theAA.com/motoring_advice/safety/cyclists-and-drivers-sharing-the-road

The AA has enjoyed a long association with cycling since the first patrols took to the road on their bicycles in 1905. Many of our staff, including AA President Edmund King, are enthusiastic cyclists. One of the arguments some people make against cyclists is that they don't pay 'road tax' which doesn't actually exist as it was abolished in 1937 when it became a car tax. We hope that AA cycle safety initiatives will help cyclists and motorists, who are often the same people, coexist in harmony on our roads. For more information visit theAA.com/motoring_advice/safety/cycle-safety-debate

