SHARE THE ROAD
RULES FOR MOTORISTS

Using Washington’s roads requires care and courtesy whether you are driving a car or riding a bicycle. Washington law requires every driver to respect the rights of others to be on the road. You can do your part by being a safe and courteous driver every time you get behind the wheel. Share The Road.

Bicyclists and motorists in Washington have exactly the same rights and responsibilities. As a motorist, you should drive carefully around bicyclists. In some areas, bicycling is very popular and you may encounter groups of bicyclists. It is legal for bicyclists in Washington to ride two-abreast [RCW 46.61.770]. However, bicyclists must show courtesy and not impede other road users. Some of the roads that are popular with bicyclists have curves, blind corners and uphills: be aware that you might suddenly come across a single rider or a group of bicyclists on scenic roads and drive accordingly. Here are some tips to more safely share the road with bicyclists:

- Reduce your speed when passing bicyclists, especially if the roadway is narrow.
- Don’t blast your horn when approaching bicyclists – you could startle them and cause an accident.
- Give bicyclists adequate space to maneuver around such hazards as lowered drain grates, potholes, debris and glass. These might not be a problem for a motor vehicle but are potentially dangerous to bicyclists.
- Pass with at least 3 feet to spare. Ample space between your vehicle and the bicyclist you are passing creates a zone for the bicyclist that’s safe from the effects of a passing car.
- Provide extra passing room to bicyclists during rain and other bad weather.
- Wait to pass if you are uncertain about road or weather conditions.
- Do not pass bicyclists if oncoming traffic is near. Wait as you would with any slow-moving vehicle. It’s required by state law [RCW 46.61.125 (1)(d)].
- Check before you move back into your lane. Some bicyclists may be traveling at 25-30mph. Make sure you provide adequate distance between you and the bicyclists before merging back into your travel lane.
- Don’t make a right-turn in front of bicyclists. Assume bicyclists are traveling straight ahead at intersections unless they have signaled otherwise. If you are making a right-turn, do so only when it is safe to do so. Remember, bicyclists may be traveling faster than you realize.
- Yield on left turns to oncoming bicyclists. Bicyclists may be traveling faster than you realize. Yield to bike riders as you would any other vehicle.
- Look before you open a car door. Bicyclists are often hit by unthinking motorists and passengers who open their car doors without looking carefully. Be sure you check for bicyclists before you open your door.
- Allow for the inexperience of children on bicycles. Extra care is needed when near kids on bikes. Make sure you anticipate the unexpected turn or swerve.

NOTE: On roads that are too narrow to permit a bicycle and a car to safely share a lane, bicyclists are permitted to “take the travel lane” which means riding in the center of the travel lane.

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Graphics courtesy of Bicycle Coalition of Maine.