

Tips and Guidance

Riding safely; Rules of the Road; Cycle Security, Written by Paul Gasson, 2002.

Inner City Cycling Tips

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Key Hazards

What to watch out for, by Paul Gasson

1. Avoid going alongside large vehicles, especially juggernauts & skip lorries, they may turn unexpectedly leaving you few escape routes; add in a set of pedestrian guard rails leaving you nowhere to escape to, and it can easily be lethal. Lorries account for the vast majority of cyclist fatalities in London. See here <http://www.cyclesafe.org.uk/cyclistandlorriesbest.pdf>
2. Assume all the doors of parked cars, & stationary taxis & buses, will open just as you pass.
3. The gutter offers many surprises, which is a good reason to stay away from it: drain gratings can trap your front wheel, potholes breed there, & you'll often find bulky objects (including pedestrians who've stepped off the pavement without looking).
4. Rain attracts poorer motorist driving standards, makes metal inspection covers slippery, & affects your braking ability. Frequent gentle application of brakes helps your bike's stopping performance.
5. Approaching a side road on the left: You should move in the middle of the left hand lane - if you are turning left it will mean you do not need to swerve out before turning. And if you are going straight on it will discourage left turning motorists from trying to overtake you, and will mean that you have better clearance from motorists who are edging out from the side road into your path.
6. Traffic queues : when cycling inside/outside/inbetween lanes of traffic go slowly and be very careful - a car door may open in your face, a vehicle may make a sudden turn, or a pedestrian may be crossing the road - where is your escape route if this happens?
7. Painted cycle lanes: the majority of London's painted cycle lanes are less than our recommended absolute minimum width of 1 metre, and thus encourage cyclists to adopt poor road positioning. So your optimal position even for the widest cycle lanes is towards the right hand side of the lane. For the rest your wheels should either be on the outer (righthand) white line of the cycle lane, or for narrow lanes you should ride to the right of (ie outside) the cycle lane.
8. Routemaster buses (whether moving or stationary) may suddenly emit or attract fast moving humanoids.
9. Bags on handlebars or long flowing clothing will eventually catch in a wheel, throwing you violently off your bike.
10. Effective brakes are vital - do not cycle until they work properly.
11. Motor vehicles are not the only cause of accidents - also watch out for pedestrians, children, & roaming dogs.
12. If a pothole appears just in front, don't swerve out unless you're sure there's no vehicle behind; if you can safely do so, stand up on your pedals before you hit it.
13. Night - always use lights - a reflective yellow 'Sam Browne' belt is often very effective.
14. Alcohol & cycling do not mix - your alertness drops, as does your ability to balance. Pub closing time is riskier for cycling even if you're sober, due to more drunk drivers. Also see below.
15. Finally, remember that you need all your attention to monitor the activities of other road users. If you are upset, angry, tired or badly stressed out, then you run a much higher risk of an incident because you may be distracted at a vital moment... its worth considering using another form of transport, if possible.

In the UK, when a cyclist is responsible for a road traffic accident that they are involved in, the most likely causes are: wet roads, bag/clothing caught in wheel, bike mechanical failure (brakes, chain falling off), cycling from pavement onto road, and collisions with pedestrians & animals.

If all the above sounds daunting, note that UK statistics indicate that if you cycled 10 miles every day the probability is you wouldn't get killed until you were around 18,000 years old - you have immeasurably more to gain through cycling just in terms of additional years of life as a result of your improved fitness, let alone all the other benefits that cycling confers. And of course if you stick to all the above tips you will greatly reduce the risk of injury.

Want to have a look at the Highway Code? Find it all online here:
<http://www.roads.detr.gov.uk/roadsafety/hc/index.htm>

Further Reading: 'Cyclecraft' by John Franklin, The Stationery Office. £9.99

Want to know about the benefits (or otherwise) of cycle helmets? See the report by Dr. Mayer Hillman. © Paul Gasson

Dealing with Conflict

Conflict situations by Paul Gasson

There are several types of occasion when as a cyclist you could encounter situations when feelings run high. You may nearly have been involved in an accident because a driver just didn't register your presence, or they were fully aware of you, but still did something stupid. You might be too shaken to do anything, but if you wish to remonstrate with them, try your hardest to be polite, matter of fact, and calm.

If the driver appears suitably apologetic, then you have probably made them think more about the possible consequences of their standard of driving. But please be very careful, for no matter how righteous your anger, incidents of motorists physically assaulting cyclists appear to be on the increase.

So be prepared for the motorist who denies that that they were to blame... this is when matters are most likely to get out of hand. Shouting is totally understandable in these circumstances, and may make you feel much better, but you are unlikely to change their view, and also run a considerable risk. It may be difficult, but unless your physique is clearly superior to the driver's, it is best to cycle away; also remember that they have a potentially lethal vehicle, so if you leave them fuming, watch out for when they pass.

You may also encounter a driver who harasses you either physically with their vehicle, or verbally. If it was a serious incident, get their registration number, and if possible a description of the driver and names and phone numbers of any witnesses; then make a report to the police.

Black Cabs

Best practice is to take note of the taxi's number (ideally its registration number on the white plate at the back, but the normal index plate will do). Note the time and date of the incident (many cabs are owned and run by a number of drivers).

Then inform the police and the Public Carriage Office (PCO) It's worth reporting them to the PCO as well because *previous* is very important to them when judging substantive complaints about drivers; send the details to the Public Carriage Office, 15 Penton Street London, N1 9PU.

The PCO is part of Transport for London and licenses cabs and drivers. They do act on complaints and, if a driver starts to get a bit of a *history*, they risk losing their licence.

If you get into a *discussion* with a cab driver, say you'll be reporting them to the PCO and this usually pacifies them - if nothing else, it demonstrates that you know where they're vulnerable!

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Drinking & Cycling

Legal information from Paul Gasson

- Cyclists who like an occasional drink should be aware that it is an offence to ride a bicycle (or tricycle) on a road or other public place whilst unfit through drink or drugs.
- But, the police have no powers to breathalyse you or to take a blood or urine sample. It follows that refusal to give such samples is not an offence.
- The police have to fall back on the old-fashioned tests, such as making you walk a straight line. They have to prove that you are incapable of having proper control.
- The offence is punishable by a fine up to £1,000. There is no truth in the urban myth that they can dock points on your driving licence, should you have one.

Drinking & Cycling information provided by member John Lloyd, who is a barrister-at-law. © Paul Gasson

If You Have an Accident

Key things to remember should you have an collision (formerly known as an 'accident')

In the Event of a Collision

... what to do if you have a collision with another vehicle.

This information used to be printed on the reverse of LCC membership cards.

1. Never admit it was your fault
2. Note the driver's name, address, vehicle registration number and insurance details.
3. Take the names of names, phone numbers and addresses of at least two witnesses.
4. Report the incident to the police
5. See a doctor even if you feel OK
6. If you are an LCC member, contact them for support and legal advice.

Further suggestions

1. If you are on the ground stay there; it may help potential witnesses decide to actually stop and offer their services. If you are in danger of being run over by more vehicles, drag yourself (theatrically if need be) to the pavement.
2. When the driver asks if you are all right, don't say yes. This may be taken by them as an excuse to leave. You or your bike may well be far more damaged than you initially realise - shock tends to numb your senses and thus limits your ability to assess you or your bikes injuries.
3. Say as little as possible to the driver. Try to get the information you need, without antagonising them, or allowing them to leave the scene without exchanging details.

Courtesy to Pedestrians

How to relate to pedestrians by Paul Gasson

Just as cyclists get harassed by some thoughtless or aggressive car drivers, pedestrians do get harassed by a few cyclists; this cycling minority turns trying to get better facilities for cyclists into a more difficult task. Yet pedestrians and cyclists are in the same boat, with the motor car causing by far the biggest threat to our collective safety.

And just because you have been given a hard time by a car driver, does not mean that it is appropriate to take it out by bullying a pedestrian. Intimidating behaviour towards pedestrians, whether its not stopping for them when they are on zebra crossings or crossing the road at a red light, or cycling aggressively on the pavement, does no one any favours. The main result is a lessening of support for cyclists from the general public, which in turn makes it much trickier to get cycle facilities in place.

You might even consider stopping to let a pedestrian cross the road when you are under no legal obligation to do so. Give it a try - the chances are that your thoughtfulness will be acknowledged by the pedestrian, and you will cycle off with a warm glow from having helped offset the growing tide of travellers in our city who seem to have no time for anyone other than themselves.

So chill out a little, and enjoy the more relaxed benefits of cycling round our wonderful city.

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Pavement Cycling

Advice, facts and figures by Paul Gasson

The Campaign believes that it is better for cyclists to use the road because pavement cycling is probably the biggest single issue which causes a haemorrhaging of support for cyclists and cycle facilities. And it is illegal, and the police can prosecute you. So we strongly recommend that you do not do it, and that you wheel your bike on the pavement instead.

However, when it comes to young children, we recommend that when they are introduced to road riding they are accompanied by an adult and that they have been given a good grounding in bicycle control skills. As there are so few places where children can cycle safely, we regard unaccompanied young children using pavements as infinitely preferable to the road, although they are at risk when they have to cross side streets. If we deny children the opportunity to learn to cycle, then they are highly unlikely to consider it as a viable mode of transport in later life. Note that to its credit Camden Council runs cycle training for children and adults - see above.

Of greatest concern to the Campaign is the very few cyclists who speed down the pavement with breathtaking disregard for pedestrians. This is totally unacceptable, and causes understandable public outrage. Of this particular category of cyclist, they can expect no support whatsoever from the Campaign; indeed, we fully support any prosecutions that the police are able to bring.

Camden Council accepts that many roads are dangerous for cyclists, and that this is the reason that some people cycle on the pavement. And the Campaign is opposed to one way streets (see our official policy on one way streets & sustainable transport), as they are more dangerous for cyclists, and can cause long and very inconvenient detours; this is a further reason why cyclists may take to the pavements. We have recommended to the council that they investigate road conditions in the borough where pavement cycling is most prevalent, and design safe and convenient on-road cycle facilities in order to reduce the problem; we welcome feedback from you if you have suggestions for such facilities.

Pedestrian injuries on the pavement caused by bicycles and cars

In response to a Parliamentary question in 2002, David Jamieson (a DfT minister) stated that 2001 64 pedestrians were injured in collisions with cyclists on the pavement, and 148 on the carriageway.

The DfT provided the following statistics on pedestrian casualties arising from motor cars on the pavement (note this is for cars only - figures exclude all other types of motor vehicle)

Year	Killed	Seriously injured	Slightly injured	Total
1999	4	76	394	474
2000	9	109	498	616
2001	7	77	520	604

Legislation on pavement cycling

Section 72 of the Highways Act 1835 provides that a person shall be guilty of an offence if he : "shall wilfully ride upon any footpath or causeway by the side of any road made or set apart for the use or accommodation of foot-passengers or shall wilfully lead or drive any carriage of any description upon any such footpath or causeway ". Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1888 extends the definition of "carriage" to include "bicycles, tricycles, velocipedes and other similar machines".

Note: The object of Section 72 Highways Act 1835 was intended not to protect all footpaths, but only footpaths or causeways by the side of a road.

On 1st August 1999, new legislation came into force to allow a £20 fixed penalty notice (FPN) to be served on anyone who is cycling on the pavement. The new regulation clears up an anomaly where only some police forces could issue FPNs because pavement cycling was defined as an offence under a local by-law. Offenders will not face on-the-spot fines; they will have 28 days to pay.

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Traffic Regulations

Cyclists are bound by the same traffic laws as motorists by Paul Gasson

As a cyclist you are bound by the same road traffic law as motorists. There are occasions when you may feel you need to infringe a traffic regulation in order to remain safe - you may have a moral right to do so, but the law will not recognise this unless the situation is exceptional. And flagrantly flouting the rules of the road brings cycling into disrepute; furthermore, your actions may irritate a motorist so much that they take it out on the cyclist behind you.

Having said this, we recognise that the poor standards of motor vehicle driving is hardly conducive to cyclists respecting road traffic law, especially as careless or dangerous driving by a motorist will usually have far more potentially serious consequences than the same action by a cyclist.

We want to see higher standards of behaviour and courtesy on the roads from all vehicle users, and suggest that the police could start by setting a good example. It is worrying how frequently police vehicles (when not on an emergency call) fail to indicate, and ignore many other principles and good driving practices laid down in the Highway Code.

This police car was on a routine visit to the Chalk Farm Safeway supermarket, and was parked in this cycle lane for an hour whilst Campaign members were handing out "Drive Safe, Cycle Safe" leaflets (which asks motorists and cyclists to behave courteously on the road).

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Cycle Theft & Security

In London in 1991 30,000 cycles were reported stolen to the police; LCC believes that the true bike theft figure for that year was nearer 50,000, as many thefts are not reported to the police. The vast majority of bicycles costing £800 or over are stolen within a year of purchase. Mountain bikes are much more likely to be stolen than touring/racing bikes.

Minimise the risk of theft:

- Always lock your bike, even if you are just popping into your local newsagent for 15 seconds and can see it through the window; a thief can be off with it in 2 seconds.
- Put your lock around your frame, front wheel and an immovable object; note that some street signs can be easily removed, allowing the thief to raise the bike off the top of a sign post.
- Use a steel D-lock, unless you have a bike that is virtually worthless (which we refuse to accept!).
- The closer fitting the lock is around the bike, the more difficult it will be for an amateur thief to break the lock without damaging the frame.
- For middle range bikes or better you are best to use 2 locks; it is best to use one D-lock and one heavy duty hardened chain (like some motorcyclists use). For regular commuting you can leave one lock behind bolted at your place of work, college etc.
- If you have a saddle with a quick release lever, take the saddle with you; a lot of thieves will be deterred as the bike is less rideable, and involves more hassle to get it roadworthy. Mind the rain though, as it can drip into your open tubing, and start rusting.
- If you have quick release wheels, either lock them to the frame, take them with you, or fit allen key attachments in place of the quick release levers.
- Remove all accessories which may be easily detached, such as lights, pump, cycle computer, panniers.
- Lock your bike in a well lit and busy area, and with other parked bikes - the chances are that someone else's is more desirable than yours.
- If your lock has been glued or tampered with so that you cannot unlock it, or someone has added an extra padlock, do not leave your bike overnight as the thief will return with appropriate lock breaking gear when the coast is clear.
- Don't keep better looking bikes in your hallway if opportunists can see it by peering through your letterbox; they may break down your front door to get the bike.
- Keep a record of the frame number, colour, size, make, and model.
- Have your postcode stamped under the bottom bracket at your local police station (see below).
- Consider purchasing a folding bike, which does not need to be left outside your destination, but which you can carry with you into the building.

LCC offers cycle insurance schemes to its members. If you have house contents insurance it is worth checking first to see if your insurer will add your bicycle to your policy; but check the small print, as a few may incorporate exclusions which make the cover virtually useless.

Westminster Parking 'Exclusion Zone'

The area around the Houses of Parliament and Whitehall has a total ban on all cycle parking (and car parking) due to former terrorist activity.

The ban is often indicated by swathes of no-parking bollards along the kerb; ask the police if you are unsure, as all bikes are quickly removed.

Summary of CCC's knowledge about cycle theft in Camden.

1. There seems to be a hot-spot outside the Town Hall, though nowhere is really safe.
2. Leo Chapman's extensive study a few years ago found that D locks are not very effective.
3. He recommended a hardened ABUS lock plus hardened steel chain as the best defence.
4. Recent article on the subject recommends using two different forms of locking ie D lock plus a chain.
5. Some evidence indicates that locations where it is easy to park a van right up to the bike should be

avoided.

6. Even old bangers are not entirely safe, though have a much better chance of survival than new bikes.
7. Any unusual bike is at great risk.
8. The stands outside Camden Town tube (very high numbers of pedestrians and railings screening all access from the street) seem more secure than most.
9. Stands at main railway stations (except perhaps Euston) seem more secure than some.

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A Theft Caught on CCTV

CCC committee member David Arditti describes what the camera showed during the theft of his bicycle in March 2002 outside Camden Town Hall; the cycle racks in question are an experimental 'higher security' design in which the cycle lock is partially enclosed by a metal box.

The CCTV pictures from the Council's system, though the detail in the pictures is unlikely to provide enough evidence to allow the thief to be apprehended, do show his method of working, and so show what behaviour to look out for and be suspicious of. It was a professional operation which is probably being repeated daily.

The thief was a tallish, thinnish man probably in his thirties, with balding, greying short hair and a prominent nose and forehead. However, he was careful to present himself to the cameras as little as possible. He first approached the racks in ordinary clothing, of a light green jacket, ordinary trousers and no headgear, with a black rucksack on his back. After briefly inspecting the bikes, he then left the field of the camera. He returned two minutes later having dressed as a cyclist, with a helmet and yellow sash, and carrying a yellow cape or mac bundled up: this was to conceal the cutting tool. Placing this bundle by the rack, as if he was doing something with it, or getting a key out, he was able to cut the cable easily unsuspected by the many passers by. These "box-type" hinged stands seem to very disadvantageous from this point of view, as they conceal the lock and make this crime easier. The cutting only took a few seconds: he then quickly opened the stand, taking the cut lock in the yellow bundle, continuing to conceal it. He quickly put the bundle in his rucksack and cycled off with the nearside flow of traffic.

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