

International Bicycle Fund

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A non-governmental, nonprofit organization promoting bicycle transport, economic development and international understanding worldwide.

SAFETY AND SKILLS COURSE COMPONENTS

Bicycling is fun; it helps us keep fit, and gives us mobility. But it can also lead to serious accident and injury if not done properly. The following exercises teach and reinforce safe behavior and practical skills for safer bicycling. Note: This sheet can also be given to the student with his or her evaluation for future reference.

Maintaining Control: To take your bike out on the road you need to be in full control of it at times. This includes when starting, stopping, signaling, changing lanes, shifting gears, going slow, going fast, scanning for hazards and all the other things that go along with riding a bicycle. If you need practice, the place to practice is away from cars, perhaps in a school parking lot when school is out. If there are straight lines on the pavement you can use these as guides, or you can make your own with chalk or tape. Practice starting, stopping, signaling, shifting and scanning while keeping the bike on the line.

Recognizing and Dodging Hazards: There are a lot of hazards around bicycling, whether you are on your neighborhood street, the sidewalk, a trail or a major arterial. Hazards include: glass, rocks, sticks, sand, the door of a parked car, cats, dogs, drain grates, posts and poles, bushes and shrubs, railroad tracks, cracks in the road and cars. Some hazards will require an emergency STOP and other hazards you will have to skillfully dodge. Even riding a familiar route, trouble can skill be waiting for the next time you come dashing out of a driveway or at the next parked car. Practice emergency stops and dodging hazards by putting a paper cup, or sponge on the line in your practice area. For the stop, ride up to the object and put on your breaks. Done correctly, the back wheel should not skid--keep you weight back and low. To practice a dodge ride towards the object, dodging it, and returning to the line with as little swerve into the next lane as possible. Try to scan to see if the next lane is clear before you swerve. We you are good at this put the corner of an empty paper box on your line. This is like a car door opening. Can you get around it?

Scanning: To find and react to hazards you will have to be constantly scanning. Because you are moving the potential hazards are always changing. At every driveway, intersection, parking lot, shrub and tree you have to scan again. To practice scanning get the assistance of a friend. Have them straddle the front wheel and holding the handlebars tight with the wheel tight between their legs. Sit on bicycle as if you are riding it and practice twisting your head to scan without turning the handlebars. When this move is easy, practice scanning while riding. Ride along a straight line in an unused parking lot, have your friend run slightly behind you holding up different numbers of fingers. Scan back and tell your friend how many fingers they have showing.

Obeying Stops: As soon as you take your bicycle out of the front yard in is no longer a toy. Under state law it is a vehicle, has to follow the vehicle law and can be ticketed for disobeying the law. The law includes stopping at all stop signs, stopping when entering the street, yielding to people on foot, riding on the right with the direction of traffic. While you may not get hit every time you run a stop sign or ride out into the street without stopping and scanning, you are an accident waiting to happen. We don't want to see even a possibility of you getting smashed by a car. The following is the proper procedure for stop signs, stop lights, or when entering the street from a driveway, parking lot, side road, or sidewalk:

1. Stop and put you foot down regardless of what is happening.
2. Scan both directions for traffic.
3. Wait for any cross traffic to clear.
4. Proceed when safe.

Signaling and Turning: Turning without signaling and turning from the wrong lane are also illegal. To turn right you need to be in the outside lane and to turn left you need to be in the inside lane. To get in the correct lane may require changing lane. Here you will have to first signal, scan behind for traffic and use good judgment before making any change. The signal for a left turn is the left arm extended horizontal. The signal for a right turn is the right arm extended horizontal. You should be able to signal and scan without swerving. If the road is too busy to change lanes for a left turn then dismount and walk your bike through the intersection. If you have done your control practice, signaling practice and scanning practice, then add good judgment and you should be able to make safe and legal movements through any intersection.

SAFETY AND SKILLS COURSE EVALUATION

Name _____ Age _____

This is a summary of your performance on the safety and skills course. The paragraphs that follow sheet tell you how to sharpen your skills.

	Understood	Practice
Maintaining Control	_____	_____
Recognizing and Dodging Hazards	_____	_____
Scanning	_____	_____
Obeying Stops	_____	_____
Signaling and Turning	_____	_____

Commit yourself to bicycling safely.