

# Driving Safely Among Bicyclists - ANSWERS

## 1. True or False:

Bicyclists have no legal right to ride on a roadway, occupy a lane, or pull out of a bicycle lane to make a turn or avoid an obstruction.

**Answer: False.** Bicycles are considered “vehicles” under Washington law. In Washington and most states, bicycles have a legal right to ride in the roadway even if a bicycle lane is present. The only exception is where a road is specially restricted for bicycles. Bicyclists are required to stay on the right side of the road, unless turning, avoiding an object, or safety requires they ride in the center or left part of the lane. The fact that bicyclists may travel slower than the posted speed limit does not limit their right to use the roadway. Drivers and bicyclists share the road equally. Both should take turns according to standard right-of-way rules. These rules apply to all vehicles, bicycles included.

## 2. In turning at a corner or pulling into an driveway, a driver should?

- A. Yield to oncoming bicyclists rather than rushing to beat the bicyclist.
- B. Watch for bicyclists who are in the cross-walk or on the adjacent sidewalk.
- C. Check blindspot and side mirror to make sure a bicyclist is not beside the car.
- D. All of the above.

**Answer: D, all of the above.** Turning cars are one of the greatest causes of bicyclist fatalities and injuries. Be especially careful in making turns where bicycles may be riding on the sidewalk adjacent to the road. Bicycles on the road are often traveling faster than a motorist may assume, and attempts to turn in front of oncoming bicyclists are especially dangerous. The law requires the motorist to yield to the cyclist going straight if there is any chance of collision. The few seconds a motorist may save in rushing a turn may cost a bicyclist's life. In turning right (or left on a one-way street), the driver should check the blindspot and the side mirror to make sure the vehicle is not turning into the path of a cyclist going straight. In turning left, the driver should look not only for oncoming vehicles but also for bicycles riding on the sidewalk.

## 3. What minimum distance should a driver maintain between her car and a bicyclist when they pass on a road way or in a bike lane?

- A. At least 1 foot from the widest point of both the car and bicycle.
- B. At least 2 feet from the widest point of both the car and bicycle.
- C. At least 3 feet from the widest point of both the car and bicycle.
- D. At least 6 feet from the widest point of both the car and bicycle.

**Answer: C,** Three feet from the widest point of both vehicles is the minimum safe passing distance at slow speeds. Even if the bicyclist is riding on the edge of the bicycle lane next to the traffic lane the 3 feet rule applies. Special precaution is required by drivers of vehicles such as RVs and trucks that have mirrors or side-door steps that protrude a distance from the vehicle. At less than three feet, the driver and bicyclist have less space for safe maneuvering, and a motorist can clip a bicyclist with a mirror. A bicyclist needs the extra space to avoid a pothole, broken glass or a storm grate and not be endangered by passing cars. If the driver travels at a fast speed, the distance should be greater than three feet because of the reduced reaction time, the added severity of collisions, and the wind currents and noise blast a motor vehicle causes at higher speeds. When approaching younger bicyclists, drivers should allow even more space because children's movements can be unpredictable.

**4. When a driver approaches a bicyclist from the rear, the driver should:**

- A. Shout or throw an object to get the bicyclist to ride on the sidewalk.
- B. Race the engine or honk to warn the bicyclist.
- C. Wait until traffic clears so that the car can pull out and pass with at least 3 ft space.
- D. None of the above.

**Answer: C.** Bicyclists have a right to be on the road, so it is not appropriate to tell them to get off the road or onto a sidewalk. Further, shouting, yelling, throwing objects, or honking horns is dangerous. It may startle the cyclist and cause an accident. These acts can amount to an assault or road rage that may be punishable by law and can increase your insurance rates. Maintaining a straight line in passing a bicycle is the wrong approach. Instead, you should remember to always maintain at least 3 feet of clearance and pull out from the bicyclist where necessary to maintain a 3 feet gap.

**5. True or False:**

Motor vehicles may not park in bicycle lanes or use bicycle lanes as a turn lane at intersections.

**Answer: True.** State and local laws prohibit parking in bicycle lanes and use of the bicycle lanes as turn lanes. Motor vehicles may cross bicycle lanes when necessary to make turns, but may not otherwise ride or park in them.

**6. Even if a bicycle lane is present, bicyclists are legally permitted to use a lane of traffic in which of the following circumstances:**

- A. When passing another bicyclist or riding two abreast.
- B. When there are obstructions, glass, or other hazards in the bicycle lane.
- C. When making a left turn or using a left turn lane.
- D. All of the above.

**Answer: D.** Washington laws do not require bicycles to ride in bicycle lanes when the lane is obstructed or unsafe, the bicyclist needs to turn, or when riding two-abreast. Road debris including glass, rocks, sand, branches, and large objects often ends up in bicycle lanes and road shoulders. Motorists need to be alert to bicycles turning out of bicycle lanes and shoulders to avoid these hazards.

**7. True or False.**

When proceeding from a stop sign, a motorist must yield to a bicycle that has the right of way under right of way rules.

**Answer: True.** Bicycles are vehicles under Washington law and must be yielded to according to the rules of the road.

**8. A driver should be alert to:**

- A. A bicyclist riding into the street from a driveway or side street.
- B. Opening a car door into the path of an oncoming bicyclist.
- C. A bicyclist riding against the traffic flow.
- D. All of the above.

**Answer: D.** Driving requires being alert at all times, not just at intersections. A major cause of car-bicycle collisions occurs when a bicyclist, most often a child, rides into the street from a residential or commercial driveway or a side street without looking for traffic. A bicyclist riding along a line of parked cars may move away from the cars and farther into the lane to avoid being hit by an opening car door. Although safety experts say bicyclists should not ride against the traffic, some still do. Although a cyclist's behavior may be illegal, a driver should be alert to all these situations so a collision can be avoided.

**9. True or False:**

In Washington, bicycles may ride two abreast (side by side) on a roadway.

**Answer: True.** By state law (RCW 46.61.770), bicycles are allowed to ride two abreast.

**10. True or False:**

Motorists who are turning off a roadway have the right of way over bicyclists proceeding straight on the roadway.

**Answer: False,** Drivers and bicyclists share the road. Both must take turns according to standard right-of-way rules. These rules apply to all vehicles, bicycles included.