



shareVAroads

Virginia law and
safety tips for
pedestrians
bicyclists
motorists

FIFTH EDITION - SEPT 2016



WWW.SHAREVAROADS.ORG

shareVAroads

Share VA Roads offers safety procedures and traffic regulations for all users of Virginia's roads and paths. This guide will help bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists safely use Virginia's transportation network.

Like motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians are subject to the Code of Virginia section on motor vehicles (Title 46.2). For a summary of Virginia's pedestrian and bicycling laws, visit: www.virginiadot.org/programs/bk-laws.asp

A federal highway safety grant from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles funded *Share VA Roads*, 5th edition. It has been prepared by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission with oversight from the Technical Advisory Committee members listed on page 47.

Table of Contents

Share VA Roads

Know the Law.....	5
Knowledge to Live By.....	6
Right of Way.....	8
What to Do in a Crash.....	8
Definitions.....	9

Pedestrians

Sidewalks.....	10
Paths and Trails.....	11
Crosswalks.....	11
Pedestrians' Side of the Road.....	13
Turning Vehicles.....	13
Commuting.....	15

Bicyclists

Before Cycling.....	16
Street Travel.....	18
Sidewalks.....	21
Paths and Trails.....	21
Crosswalks.....	22
Bicyclists' Side of the Road.....	23
Signals.....	26
Turns.....	28
Passing.....	30
Turning Vehicles.....	31
Commuting.....	33

Motorists

On the Road.....	36
Crosswalks.....	38
Passing.....	41

Resources and Learn More.....	43
--------------------------------------	-----------

shareVAroads

This booklet is a good place to start learning the rules and the most common safety practices for all travelers sharing Virginia's roads, trails, and paths.

No matter why they drive, bike, or walk, everyone should safely travel in Virginia.

Some people drive because it is convenient. Other people do not own or cannot drive a car so they must bike, walk, or use public transportation. People may walk or bicycle for their health, their budgets, and the environment; or they may walk or bicycle as inexpensive and environmentally friendly options for short commutes to neighborhood parks, schools, stores, places of worship, and businesses.

Everyone uses the roads—know the law and put safety first

Everyone should recognize that motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians have mutual rights and responsibilities. When all travelers know the law and respect their mutual rights and responsibilities, sharing the road is safe and predictable.

“Every person riding a bicycle on a highway shall be subject to the provisions of the Code of Virginia section on motor vehicles and shall have the rights and duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle unless a provision clearly indicates otherwise.”

—Code of Virginia § 46.2-800 

Know the Law

Title 46.2, Chapter 8 of the Code of Virginia contains laws covering motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians in Virginia. All road users should read the Virginia Driver’s Manual. www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/pdf/dmv39.pdf

Rights and Duties	§ 46.2-800, 904, 924
Definitions	§ 46.2-100, 903, 908.1, 914, 915.2, 1051
Traffic Controls	§ 46.2-830, 833
Where to Walk.....	§ 46.2-928
Where to Ride.....	§ 46.2-802, 808, 826, 903, 904, 905, 907
Turning and Changing Directions.....	§ 46.2-846, 847, 848, 849
Passing a Bicyclist.....	§ 46.2-839
Care When Opening Motor Vehicle Doors.....	§ 46.2-818.1
Passing on a Bicycle.....	§ 46.2-839, 907
Slow Down, Move Over for Stationary Vehicles	§ 46.2-921.1
Bicycle Safety and Helmets.....	§ 46.2-906, 906.1, 932, 1078
Bicycle Lights and Equipment.....	§ 46.2-1015, 1066
Bicycle Registration.....	§ 46.2-908, 15.2-1720
Crashes	§ 46.2-894, 895, 896
Mopeds, Electric Bicycles.....	§ 46.2-100, 903, 908.1, 914, 915.2, 1051

“The drivers of vehicles entering, crossing, or turning at intersections shall change their course, slow down, or stop if necessary to permit pedestrians to cross such intersections safely and expeditiously.

Pedestrians crossing highways at intersections shall at all times have the right-of-way over vehicles making turns into the highways being crossed by the pedestrians.” –Code of Virginia § 46.2-924

Knowledge to Live By

Pedestrians have rights and responsibilities:

Always:

- Watch for motorists, other pedestrians, and bicyclists, and make sure they can be seen
- Be alert to their surroundings and listen for bicyclists and cars
- Use sidewalks or paths if available
- Use crosswalks wherever possible
- Look **LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT** when crossing
- If walking on roads, walk facing traffic and travel on the edge or shoulder
- Obey Walk/Don't Walk control signals and countdown timers
- Use caution when crossing highways

Don't:

- Walk and use mobile devices
- Wear earphones in both ears

Bicycles are vehicles when ridden on roads and streets, and bicyclists must abide by the same laws:

Always:

- Obey all traffic signs, signals, lights, and markings
- Ride on the right side, with traffic
- When turning, use motor vehicle turn lanes
- When significantly slower than other traffic, travel in the rightmost lane or any designated bike lane or paved shoulder
- Ride no more than two side by side
- Ride single file when moving slower than traffic

- Obey signs that restrict riding on interstate highways and limited access roads
- When riding on the sidewalk or paths, call out or ring a bell for others when approaching from behind and when passing
- Use hand signals for turns and stops
- When turning or crossing, look **LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT**
- Carry children securely in special seats or trailers and make sure they wear a helmet
- Use white headlamps visible 500 feet, rear reflectors, and a red taillight when bicycling between sunset and sunrise

Don't:

- Carry passengers on bicycles built for one rider
- Wear earphones in both ears

Motorists must respect bicyclist and pedestrian rights:

Always:

- Approach and pass bicyclists at a reasonable speed and with a safe gap of at least three feet
- Yield to pedestrians and bicyclists who are crossing the road in a crosswalk, especially when turning
- Allow pedestrians time to cross safely
- Leave room for bicyclists sharing the road
- Come to a full stop for a blind pedestrian with a cane or guide dog (Class 3 misdemeanor)

Don't:

- Drive while using mobile devices
- Honk, yell out to, or crowd bicyclists
- Wear earphones in both ears

Right of Way

Pedestrians have the right of way on sidewalks. Sidewalks are constructed to keep pedestrians safe.

Even though they have the right of way on sidewalks, pedestrians can avoid crashes by paying attention to motor vehicle and bicycle traffic. Pedestrians should use eye contact and gestures to alert drivers when crossing roads from sidewalks, crosswalks, paths, and driveways.

Bicyclists must yield the right of way to pedestrians. Bicyclists can legally ride on sidewalks, unless prohibited by local ordinance or traffic control device. Bicyclists should slow down when approaching a pedestrian, ring a bell, or give an audible warning such as “bike passing” and wait for the pedestrian to move over.

Bicyclists on sidewalks should slow down to watch for motorists preparing to turn onto a road or across a sidewalk into a driveway. Motorists’ views are often obstructed by parked cars or other objects.

Motorists should yield right of way to pedestrians and bicyclists and look for them when turning across sidewalks, into driveways, or across crosswalks. By law, motorists must approach and pass a bicyclist at a reasonable speed, at least three feet away from the bicyclist.

What to Do in a Crash

First, those present should check for injuries. If someone is injured, someone must call 911 for help right away. If trained to do so, someone can administer first aid and remove the injured from harm’s way.

Severely injured persons should not be moved. Persons rendering emergency care or obstetrical services are exempt from liability, as noted in Virginia's Good Samaritan law.

Those involved in a crash, including passengers, should exchange legal names, addresses, and contact information. Drivers should provide:

- Name and address
- Vehicle registration number
- Driver's license number
- Insurance company and policy number

As soon as possible, those involved should write down what happened, document injuries and property damage with photographs, and later save all receipts and repair estimates.

If bicyclists have coverage, they should contact their insurance company.

Bicyclists and pedestrians should always carry identification and medical insurance information, especially when traveling alone.

Crosswalk: Wherever sidewalks meet the street and where streets intersect, a crosswalk exists, whether painted on the road or not.

Shared-use path: Facilities physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier. Shared-use paths may be used by bicyclists, pedestrians, skaters, users of wheelchair conveyances, and other non-motorized activities. Always yield to slower users.

Bicycle lane: That portion of a roadway designated by signs and/or pavement markings for the preferential use of bicycles, electric power-assisted bicycles, and mopeds.

Highway: The entire width between the boundary lines of every way or place open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel in the Commonwealth, including streets and alleys.



Sidewalks

Walk the line

Pedestrians are not allowed to walk on roadways when usable sidewalks are available. If there is no sidewalk or shoulder, pedestrians should walk as near as practicable to the outside edge of the roadway, yield right of way to vehicles in the roadway, and walk facing traffic.

Teachable moment

PARENTS: When walking with their children, parents should talk to them about the safest way to interact with the motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians observed.

Children who walk and bicycle to school arrive *alert* and *ready to learn*.

The Safe Routes to School program assists localities, schools, and non-profit groups with developing plans, activities, and infrastructure improvements that encourage and enable children to walk or bike to school. www.saferoutesinfo.org

Pedestrians and bicycles on the sidewalk

While sidewalks are generally intended for use by pedestrians, in most cases bicyclists are allowed to use them as well. Bicyclists need to yield the right of way to pedestrians on sidewalks; however, pedestrians must be alert to decrease their risk of collision.

Bicyclists should notify pedestrians of their intention to pass through an audible signal, so pedestrians should always be listening for approaching bicycles.

Paths and Trails

Shared-use paths and recreational trails

Faster-moving users need to yield to those who are slower. Path and trail users need to watch for dogs on leashes, children learning to bike, skaters, or, in some cases, horses. When approaching animals, others need to avoid scaring them by slowing down. Gently saying “hello there” or “is it safe to pass?” can calm a horse and rider.

Pedestrians should stay to the right on shared-use paths, except to pass on the left

All path users must obey signals. At mid-block crossings with the road, they must watch for oncoming traffic. Look **LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT**.

When on a shared-use path, bicyclists have the rights and responsibilities of a pedestrian.

Crosswalks

Pedestrians: Scan and cross

Pedestrians are required by law to cross roads at crosswalks whenever possible, and drivers expect to see pedestrians crossing at crosswalks and intersections.



Crossing the street mid-block is not a good idea; most pedestrian crashes with cars occur at mid-block crossings, between intersections. So be alert.

Before crossing, pedestrians must stop, look **LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT**, and then over the shoulder for turning traffic.

Pedestrians: Don't disregard traffic

Though pedestrians have the right of way, they must be aware and protect themselves from bicyclists and motorists.

"No pedestrian shall enter or cross an intersection in disregard of approaching traffic." –**Code of Virginia § 46.2-92**

Motorists and bicyclists must yield to pedestrians

Motorists and bicyclists must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, both marked and unmarked.

Pedestrians' Side of the Road

Pedestrians must walk facing traffic

Walk LEFT

When there is no sidewalk or shoulder, PEDESTRIANS may walk as near as practicable to an outside edge of the roadway. It is safest to walk facing traffic.

Ride RIGHT

MOTORISTS and BICYCLISTS use the right side of a two-way road.

Turning Vehicles

Pedestrian crossing

To make sure they are seen, pedestrians should make eye contact with drivers, particularly those turning right.

Be alert

Pedestrians should walk cautiously and:

- Watch others who are waiting at stop signs or in driveways, or who are in parking spaces. They may be preparing to pull out.
- Look out for others who may not see them when preparing to turn.
- Watch for oncoming traffic that may be preparing to turn left.

Pedestrians should always be prepared to stop suddenly or to take other evasive action.

Walking at night, or in rainy or snowy conditions

Pedestrians need to make themselves visible, by using lights and reflectors and wearing reflective or bright-colored clothes.

Pedestrians should wear white, yellow, or lime-green clothing. Red is NOT a good color since it looks black in the fading light.

Pedestrians need to take extra care when daylight savings changes, since it stays dark later or gets dark earlier.

Crash facts

According to the Virginia Highway Safety Office, in 2015 in Virginia there were:

- 1,704 motor vehicle crashes involving pedestrians
- 1,718 pedestrians injured in a motor vehicle crash
- 78 pedestrian fatalities resulting from a motor vehicle crash
- Additionally, in 42% of crashes involving pedestrians, the pedestrian was alcohol-impaired





Commuting

Tips for exiting and entering traffic from buses and other transit

- Data shows that entering and exiting public transportation, especially buses, can be dangerous for pedestrians.
- To avoid incident, commuters must leave a safe distance between themselves and the curb when walking or boarding and exiting transit.
- Additionally, commuters should not run for the bus. In a rush to catch a bus, people often focus on their destination rather than their surroundings and put themselves and others at a greater risk of a crash.
- If bringing on a bicycle, cyclists must make sure that the bus is stopped and the driver is aware before they load or unload a bike from the front of the bus.
- After exiting, commuters should wait until the bus leaves and traffic clears before they cross the street.

Before Cycling

Bike fitting

- Bicyclists need to get a bike that fits.
- Local bike shops can identify a bike that fits the rider's needs. They will explain features and teach gear and brake use. Most bike shops also sell safety equipment.
- Size: Having a bike that fits the user is important for safety and comfort. A rider should reach the pedals and handlebars easily; this reduces difficulty in controlling the bike.
- Style: Road bikes have narrow tires and dropped handlebars and are designed for faster riding. Mountain bikes have wide tires and are designed for off-road or winter use. A hybrid or city bike combines features for comfort and efficiency.

Bike check

- Cyclists should regularly inspect their bicycle or take to a bike shop for inspection.
- Air: Tires should be at the recommended pressure and in good condition.
- Brakes: The rider should be able to reach the brake levers, and the brakes should stop the wheels.
- Chain: The chains should spin and change as gears are engaged.
- Lights: Bikes require a white front light that is visible from at least 500 feet and a red rear reflector that is visible at least 600 feet to the rear after dusk. If a cyclist is riding on roads

with a speed limit of 35 mph or greater, they must have an additional rear red taillight that is visible from at least 500 feet. More light means more visibility.

Bike helmets

- Everyone should wear a helmet while bicycling. Bicycle helmets greatly reduce the risk of serious brain injury from a bicycle crash.
- There is no statewide helmet law, but the –**Code of Virginia § 46.2-906.1** gives a county, city, or town the authority to require anyone 14 years old or younger to wear a helmet when riding or being carried on a bicycle.
- VDOT maintains a list of localities with helmet laws. [www.vdot.virginia.gov/programs/bk-laws.asp#helmet use](http://www.vdot.virginia.gov/programs/bk-laws.asp#helmet%20use)
- When buying a helmet, look for the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) label. Helmets should sit level and not shift easily. V-straps should fit beneath the ear lobes. The chin strap should be snug, about two fingers' width under the chin.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration offers illustrated instructions. <http://www.nhtsa.gov/bicycles>
- Crash it, trash it. If a helmet hits a hard surface in a crash, the cyclist should replace it due to potentially hidden damage to the helmet.





Street Travel

Bike lanes

Bike lanes are for bicyclists. They are marked with white lines and icons/symbols on the pavement.

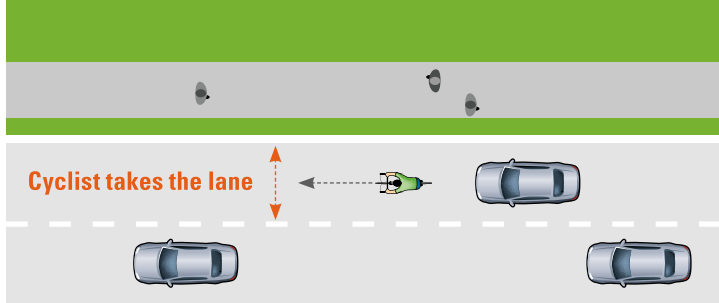
Bicyclists and motorists must share the road, whether or not bike lanes are provided.

Ride in a straight line

Bicyclists need to be predictable; cyclists must not weave in and out between parked cars. Drivers can't always see bicyclists in the parking areas and may unintentionally squeeze them when they try to merge back into traffic.

Bicycling side by side

Two bicyclists may ride side by side, but only if they don't impede other traffic. If riding side by side will prevent cars from passing the bicycles at a safe distance (three feet), bicyclists must ride single file.



Take the lane

Bicyclists are generally safest if they “take the lane.” They should ride near the center of any travel lane of ordinary width (10-12 feet), when traveling close to the speed of other traffic and when approaching intersections, driveways, and alleys. Controlling the lane improves a bicyclist’s visibility by keeping the bicyclist out of motorists’ blind spots. It improves positioning at intersections to reduce conflicts with turning traffic. It also prevents motorists from trying to squeeze by within the same lane when there is inadequate space.

Sharrows

Shared Lane Markings (Sharrows) are road markings used to indicate the safest place to ride within the lane.

They are used next to parked cars to help a bicyclist avoid being hit suddenly by car doors being opened and on lanes that are too narrow for cars and bicycles to comfortably travel side by side in the same lane. Occasionally they are used on steep downhill slopes to allow the bicyclist more maneuvering space to react when traveling at a high speed.



Comfort levels

Easy: Multi-use paths and quiet neighborhood streets are recommended for users of all ages and abilities due to lower traffic speeds and volume.

Medium: Roads with moderate volume of traffic, where riders may interact more with motor vehicles, especially at intersections.

Difficult: Routes with higher traffic volumes or high traffic speeds, often without bike lanes or shoulders.

Keep a safe distance

Bicyclists should avoid traveling too close to parked cars to avoid the risk of having a door open in front of them.

The bicyclist in the photo below is correct. He has taken the lane and is traveling at least five feet from parked cars to stay out of their door-opening zone.

Virginia law fines drivers who open a vehicle door on the side of passing traffic without confirming that it was “reasonably safe to do so.”

–Code of Virginia § 46.2-818.1



Sidewalks

Bicyclists are permitted to ride on the road or sidewalks (unless prohibited by the local jurisdiction). When a cyclist is riding on a sidewalk, he/she must yield to pedestrians and be especially mindful of slower sidewalk traffic. Bicyclists must audibly warn pedestrians when passing them, preferably with a bell. They must always pass on the left.

Paths and Trails

Shared-use paths and recreational trails

Shared-use paths and recreational trails are facilities physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier. They are located either within the highway right of way or within a separate right of way. Shared-use paths may be used by bicyclists, pedestrians, skaters, users of wheelchair conveyances, joggers, and other users. Users are moving at different speeds and faster users need to yield to those who are slower.



Bicycling with pedestrians and animals on the trail

Bicyclists must watch for unpredictable users, such as dogs on leashes, children learning to bike, skaters, or, in some cases, horses. When approaching animals, cyclists can avoid scaring them by slowing down. Gently saying “hello there” or “is it safe to pass?” can calm a horse and rider. In tight places, cyclists should dismount and walk past.

Bicyclists and pedestrians should stay to the right on shared-use paths, except to pass on the left.

At mid-block crossings with the road, users need to watch for oncoming traffic and look **LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT**. All path users must obey signals.

Bicyclists have the rights and responsibilities of pedestrians when on a shared-use path.

Bicyclists on multi-use trails and on the road must obey the laws pertinent to the trail or road.

Crosswalks

Yield to pedestrians

Bicyclists must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, both marked and unmarked.

Experienced bicyclists stay on the road

Experienced bicyclists should ride as vehicles,



not riding in crosswalks or alternating between the sidewalk and road by hopping the curb or using driveway cuts. Bicyclists should ride with consistency and predictability. Before making a trip on their bicycle, cyclists should plan ahead to ensure their route is safe. Resources produced by local governments, as well as online mapping tools, allow bicyclists to know the road conditions they will encounter and plan according to their skill level.

Less-confident bicyclists

Newer or less steady bicyclists who feel more comfortable riding on sidewalks must follow pedestrian rules at crosswalks. When riding on the sidewalk, bicycles must maintain a lower speed and give way to pedestrians.

Bicyclists' Side of the Road

How far to the right?

Bicyclists should not hug the curb or road edge since this position makes them less visible to motorists, promotes unsafe motorist passing, and exposes bicyclists to various hazards. While bicyclists are required to stay “as far right as safely practicable,” when a lane is less than 14 feet wide it is not practical to share the lane with a car. Bicyclists should position themselves to maximize visibility and vantage, and to discourage motorists from turning right into them. Bicyclists may use the shoulders or take the lane.





Ride **RIGHT**
BICYCLISTS use the right side of a two-way road.

Choose a lane

When approaching an intersection, bicyclists should select the rightmost lane that serves their destination. They should not ride in a turn lane unless planning to turn. Bicyclists should not travel between lanes of traffic moving in the same direction, except where one lane is a separate or mandatory turn lane.

Never face traffic

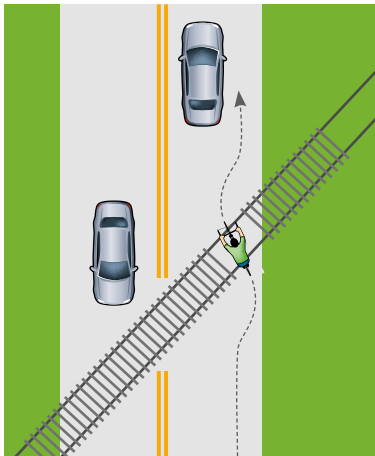
Riding a bike the wrong way through traffic is against the law and is a leading cause of crashes. Bicyclists may think they are safe if looking at oncoming traffic, but it is more dangerous. If they are hit head on, the impact would be greater than if hit from behind. When wrong-way riding, bicyclists can't see signs and traffic signals. Also, motorists are not expecting bicyclists to be approaching from that direction.

Take a class

Classes offer opportunities to learn how to ride a bike in a safe environment, improve riding skills, and increase rider confidence. Bicycle education courses are offered by League of American Bicyclists-certified instructors and are designed for people of all ages and riding abilities. www.bikeleague.org

Bicycling across railroad tracks

Cyclists need to cross railroad tracks carefully. They must watch for uneven pavement and grooves that could catch a wheel, and they must stay in control of the bicycle. Cyclists should rise up from the bicycle seat and bend arms and legs so the body acts like a shock absorber.

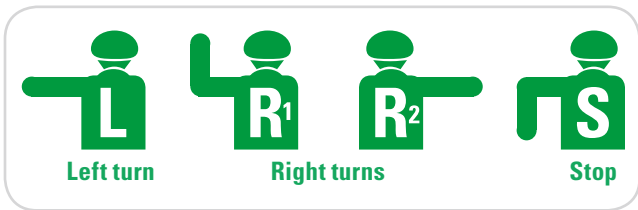


If the tracks cross the road at a sharp angle, cyclists should signal and scan for approaching traffic, then angle the bicycle to cross perpendicular to the tracks.

Signals

Hand signals

Before turning or moving laterally, cyclists should always look behind for, and yield to, any closely approaching traffic in their new line of travel. To signal a left turn, they must look behind and then hold out the left arm. To signal a right turn, cyclists must look behind and then either hold out the right arm or hold the left arm up, with elbow bent up. They must return both hands to the handlebar before turning, to maximize control while turning. To signal a stop they must hold either arm down at an angle, but use both hands for braking when necessary.



Traffic signals

Some traffic signals are triggered by electrically charged wires buried under the pavement. As a vehicle passes over them, the metal in the vehicle disrupts the current, turning the signal. Not all bicycles have enough metal to trip the signal. To trigger the camera, “white line get behind” is common practice. Some jurisdictions may



have a bicycle symbol near the line to show where to stop to turn the signal. If a light does not trigger, a bicyclist can move forward to let a car trigger the signal, go to the sidewalk and cross with pedestrians, or proceed with caution after waiting two minutes or through two cycles if all traffic is clear.

Bicycling with traffic

In Virginia, bicycles are vehicles when on the road. Bicyclists and motor vehicle drivers share mutual rights and responsibilities as users of public roads. When bicyclists are in command of their vehicles and when motorists see bicyclists acting predictably, the highways are safer for everyone.

Stay alert

Bicyclists should use mirrors and/or turn their head and look back to scan, just as they would if driving a motorized vehicle.

In Virginia, it's against the law for bicyclists to wear earphones in both ears while riding. –**Code of Virginia § 46.2-1078**

Turns

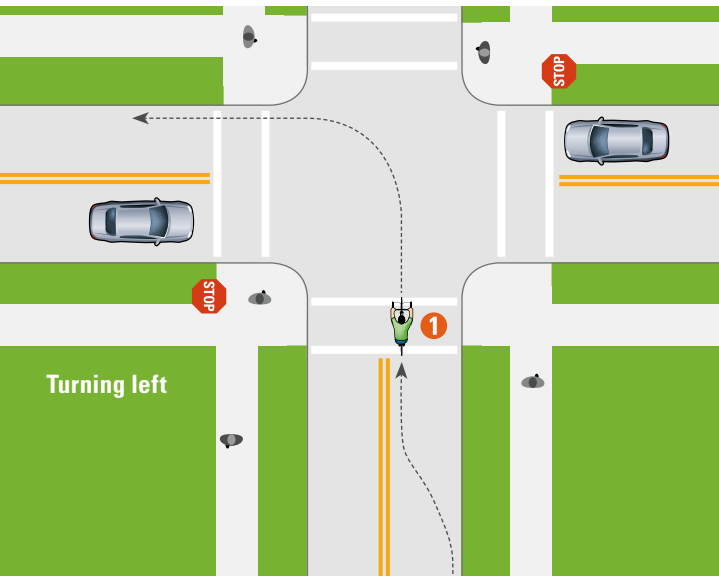
When approaching an intersection with several lanes, bicyclists should choose the rightmost lane appropriate for their intended direction, using turn lanes if appropriate.

Turning right

Bicyclists should always scan for vehicles that may be turning right. They should signal ahead of the intersection. Cyclists should turn right from the right side of a straight lane or right turn lane if available. Bicycles must stop at red lights before turning right. Motorists must watch for bicyclists.

Turning left

1. The illustration to the right shows how bicycles turn left as a vehicle. Bicyclists must:
 - Look over their left shoulder for traffic while approaching the intersection. They should practice this until they can perform it without swerving.
 - Watch for approaching motor vehicles.
 - Signal a left turn.
 - When traffic is clear, move over to the left side of the lane (on a two-lane road), left lane, or left turn lane, whichever is appropriate.
 - Be positioned so vehicles going straight through can't pass them on the left.
 - Yield to oncoming vehicles before turning.



- If riding in a bike lane or on a road with several lanes, look and signal before each lane change.
 - Never make a left turn from the right side of the road.
- 2.** If less comfortable in traffic, bicyclists should use the crosswalks and:
- Cross as a pedestrian in the crosswalk.
 - If there is a signal, wait for the green or WALK signal before crossing.

Passing

Passing requires special caution. Bicyclists should watch ahead for vehicles planning to turn right at an intersection or driveway. They should not pass to the right of motorists at intersections, because motorists might turn right and will not see the bicyclist. Bicyclists should avoid the motorist's blind spot or other position where visibility is limited. Bicyclists should stay in front of or behind vehicles to always remain visible. On a shared-use path, call out or ring a bell and pass on the left.

Passing with bike lanes

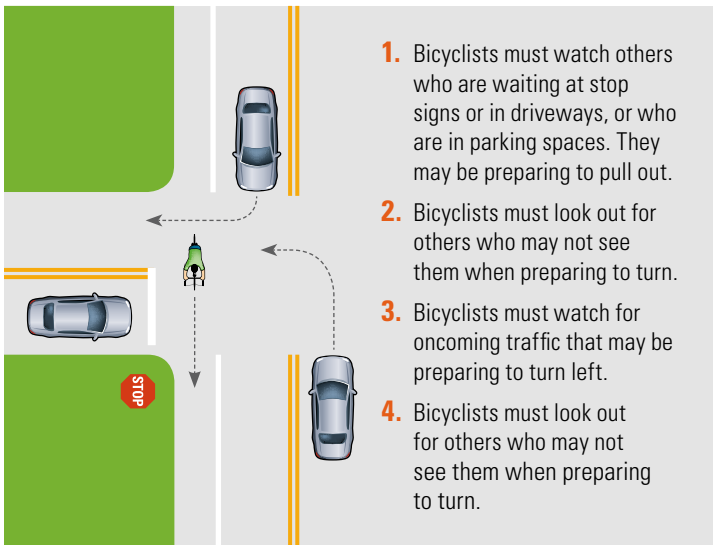
Motorists should not drive in a bike lane, but may turn across a bike lane after using signals. Bicyclists and motorists must share the road, whether or not bike lanes are provided.



Turning Vehicles

Be visible and be aware

Even if bicyclists are obeying all traffic laws, there is a risk of being involved in a crash if another bicyclist, pedestrian, or motorist isn't obeying the law or is not able to see a dangerous situation ahead. Bicyclists should ride cautiously.



Bicyclists must always be prepared to stop suddenly or to take other evasive action.

Traveling at night in rainy, low light, or snowy conditions

Bicyclists need to make themselves visible by using lights and reflectors and wearing reflective or bright-colored clothes. They should wear white, yellow, or lime-green clothing. Red is NOT a good color since it looks black in the fading light.

Every bicycle ridden between sunset and sunrise must (by law) have:

- At least one white headlamp on the front of the bike with a light that is visible from at least 500 feet (10-watt halogen, 1-watt LED minimum).
- A red rear reflector visible for 500 feet. On roads with speed limits of 35 mph or greater, one red taillight visible from 600 feet to the rear is required. Rear lights are safer than reflectors.

Taillights may be steady or blinking and may be attached to the bicycle or rider. Additional lights and reflectors will improve visibility even during the day.

Cyclists need to take extra care when daylight savings changes in the fall, since it gets dark earlier and crash rates tend to increase.



Crash facts

Most vehicle and bicycle collisions occur when turning at intersections. Cyclists should watch for vehicles turning at intersections and driveways.

Fatal crashes peak in the evening, often with alcohol as a contributing factor. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

Commuting

Commuting by bicycle helps reduce pollution and is a great way to keep fit and increase stamina. When bicycling, riders should always carry identification and medical insurance information, especially when alone. Before deciding to commute by bicycle, cyclists need to consider the length of the trip, the amount of motor vehicle traffic, and the terrain. They need to choose routes with less traffic and accommodations for bicyclists—such as bike lanes, wider lanes, or shared-use paths—to make the ride more pleasant. Carry a map or plan an alternate route in case of a detour.

Shared-use paths

Shared-use paths are often used for recreation. Bicycle commuters and fast-moving road bicyclists are not required to use these paths unless a sign is posted prohibiting them from the road. If they do use the paths, they should use care when passing slower users.





Tips: When commuting, bicyclists should:

- Wear a helmet and dress for safety by wearing reflective clothing and securing loose pant legs and shoe laces. Commuting can be done without special “bicycling” clothing.
- Carry gear in a manner that will not obstruct their vision or bike control.
- Cyclists need to ride defensively by anticipating the actions of other road users and watching for road hazards.
- Cyclists need to pass with care because they may not be seen by turning vehicles.
- Cyclists need to maximize their visibility at twilight, at night, and in rainy conditions; they need to wear reflective clothing, use lights, and use reflective tape on the bicycle.

- Cyclists should walk bicycles in traffic situations beyond their cycling abilities and walk on the right side of the bike for safety.
- Cyclists need to use caution around buses and large trucks, especially when they are pulling to and from curbs and when passengers are getting on and off. Bicyclists need to avoid blind spots and give large vehicles plenty of room to maneuver.
- Cyclists should not block sidewalks, handicap and building accesses, or emergency drives.



On the Road

Bike lanes

Bike lanes separate bicyclists from other traffic. They may be marked by signs as well as white lines and symbols applied to the pavement. Motorists should not park in bike lanes.

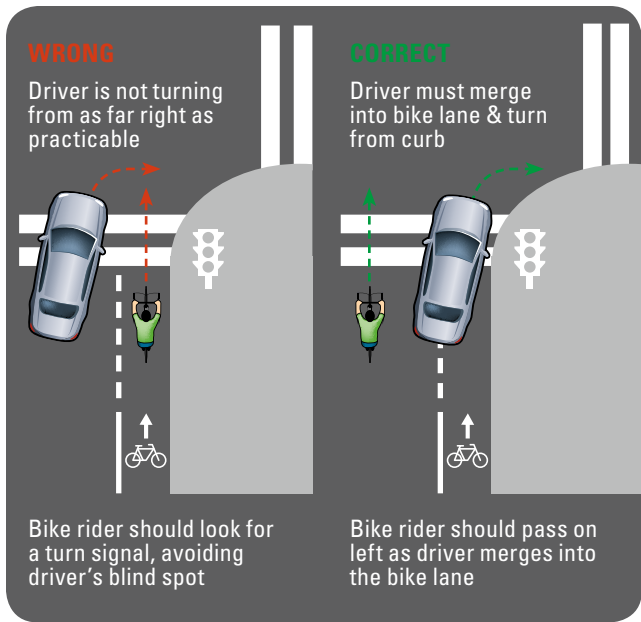
Motorists should not drive in a bike lane except when turning right. Before crossing a bike lane to turn, they need to scan for bicyclists to the right and rear, use a turn signal, scan again for bicyclists, and then merge into the bike lane for the turn.

Bicyclists and motorists must share the road, whether or not bike lanes are provided.

Sharrows

Shared Lane Markings (Sharrows) are road markings used to indicate where a bicyclist should be riding in the lane. They are used next to parked cars to help a bicyclist avoid being hit suddenly by car doors being opened and on lanes that are too narrow for cars and bicycles to comfortably travel side by side in the same lane. Occasionally they are used on steep downhill slopes to allow the bicyclist more maneuvering space to react when traveling at a high speed. Sharrows on a road are an indicator that motorists should not attempt to pass the cyclist; there is not enough room for the cyclist and motorist to fully share the lane.



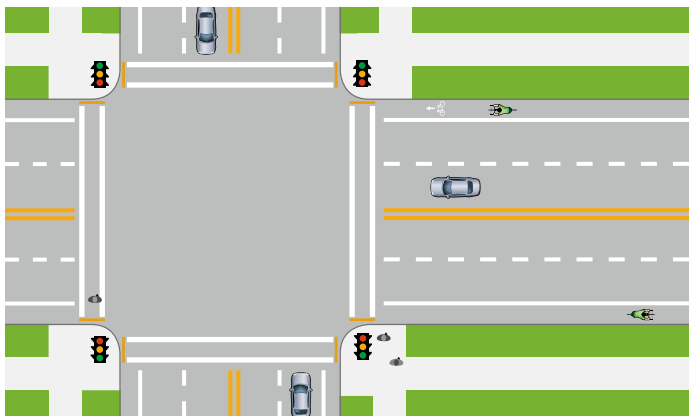


Motorists: Stop

Motorists are required to come to a complete stop at red traffic signals and STOP signs. Before turning right on red, motorists must STOP, look **LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT**, then proceed. The most dangerous situation for bicyclists and pedestrians is at intersections where motorists fail to come to a stop.

Marked Crosswalks

Mid-block



Backing out

Before backing out of a parking space or driveway, motorists need to check to make sure there is nothing in the way; they need to take the time to look behind and left and right to make sure it is clear before proceeding.

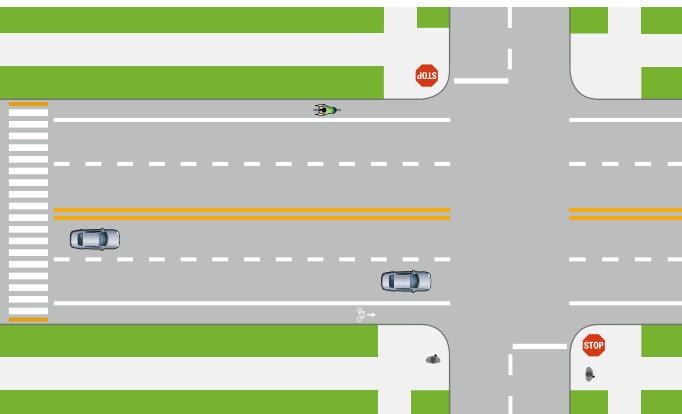
Crosswalks

What is a crosswalk?

Crosswalks might not be marked or painted on the highway. Wherever sidewalks meet the street and where streets intersect, a crosswalk exists, whether painted on the road or not. —**Code of Virginia § 46.2-924**

Crosswalk

Unmarked Crosswalk



Motorists and bicyclists: Yield to pedestrians

Motorists and bicyclists must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, both marked and unmarked.

Don't block the crosswalk

A driver should not pass the white stop bar and encroach on the crosswalk while waiting for the signal to change. Doing so prevents walkers and bicyclists from safely using the crosswalk in front of the car.

Similarly, a driver should not enter the intersection until there is sufficient space to clear the intersection on the other side. Otherwise he will end up blocking the crosswalk on the far side.

Be aware

Many pedestrian-motorist crashes occur when the pedestrian is crossing the road, either mid-block or at intersections.

Drivers, look left-right-left

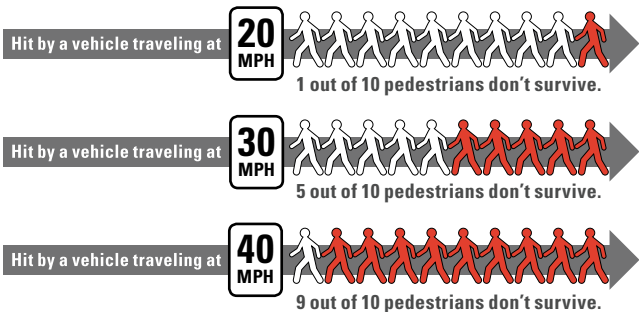
In addition to looking for other motor vehicles, motorists should look **LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT** for bicyclists and pedestrians, particularly at heavily used intersections and trail intersections.

Trail and road intersections

Motorists should consider trail intersections as they would other intersections. Trail crossings are intersections even if crosswalks are not marked.

Motorists: Slow down

Motorists' speeding is a major factor in crashes with pedestrians. According to a 2011 study by the AAA Foundation, the fatality rate



for pedestrians struck by vehicles traveling at 32 mph is 25%. This rate is doubled when speed is increased by 10 mph (50% fatality rate at 42 mph).

Passing


Slow Down to Get Around: Passing emergency and stopped vehicles, mail and trash trucks

Motorists need to watch out for stopped emergency vehicles and trash collectors. Waste collection workers are frequently at risk, as they are in our neighborhoods on a daily basis collecting our waste and recyclables. Drivers need to be mindful that when they see a collection vehicle on the road, there often is a worker on the street or near the truck. The Slow Down to Get Around law requires drivers passing stopped collection vehicles to slow down to at least 10 miles per hour below the posted speed limit and provide at least a two-foot cushion between their vehicle and the collection vehicle. Violations are punishable by fines. —**Code of Virginia § 46.2-921.1**



Encountering bicyclists and pedestrians

When there is no sidewalk or shoulder, motorists need to look for PEDESTRIANS that may walk along the shoulder or edge of the road. Pedestrians are safest if they walk facing traffic.



Ride RIGHT
Watch for BICYCLISTS using the right side of a two-way road.

Driving with bicyclists on the road

The law requires that motorists distance themselves at least three feet away from bicyclists as they pass them. Motorists may legally cross the double yellow line in order to safely pass a cyclist, as long as the oncoming lane is clear.

Motorists should give cyclists extra room and use caution when turning, in case cyclists are in the blind spot. When turning at an intersection, motorists need to watch for bicyclists and pedestrians crossing in front.

Keep a safe distance

Motorists must be mindful of their surroundings whenever they open their door on the side of passing traffic. It is the responsibility of the motorist to ensure that their door will not obstruct the path of a passing bicyclist.

When passing bicycles, motorists must allow at least three feet to keep a safe distance.

If a motorist or passenger gets out of a vehicle in line with a cyclist, hitting them with the door, the vehicle is at fault. In March of 2016, Virginia passed a law that levies a fine on drivers who open a vehicle door on the side of passing traffic without confirming that it was “reasonably safe to do so.” **–Code of Virginia § 46.2-818.1**

Resources and Learn More

- **AAA** | Safety resources | www.exchange.aaa.com/safety
- **America Walks** | Advocacy for local, state, and national pedestrian issues | www.americawalks.org
- **Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute** | A clearinghouse of bicycle helmet information serving consumers, parents, teachers, the media, and more | www.bhsi.org
- **Bike Arlington** | www.bikearlington.com
- **Bike Sharing** | Available in Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax | www.capitalbikeshare.com
- **Bike Virginia** | Resources for bicyclists, runs statewide bicycle trips | www.bikevirginia.org
- **Birding and Wildlife Trails** | www.virginia.org/birdingandwildlifetrail
- **City of Alexandria Local Motion** | Active transportation resource in Northern Virginia | www.alexandriava.gov/localmotion
- **Crash Facts** | Virginia crash data at the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles | <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/safety/>
- **Federal Highway Administration** | A Resident's Guide for Creating Safer Communities for Walking and Biking | safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_cmunity/ped_walkguide/index.cfm

- **Laws and Safety Tips** | Laws and tips to make bicycling and walking safe and enjoyable on Virginia's highways | www.virginiadot.org/programs/bk-laws.asp | <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/safety/> | www.dmv.virginia.gov/safety/#programs/pedestrian/index.html for pedestrians
- **League of American Bicyclists** | Promotes bicycling for fun, fitness, and transportation; certifies bicycling instructors; and advocates for bicycle-friendly communities, regions, and states | www.bikeleague.org
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** | Pedestrian safety program with publications, activities, information about National Safe Routes to School program and more | <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Pedestrians>
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center** | Resources to increase viability of walking and bicycling as a means of transportation and physical activity | www.pedbikeinfo.org
- **Safe Routes to School** | Program that assists interested localities, schools, and non-profit groups in making bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing to children | http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/ted_rt2_school_pro.asp
- **San Francisco Bike** | Family biking and kidical mass groups in Virginia | <http://www.sfbike.org/resources/> | <http://www.kidicalmass.org/>
- **Street Smart** | Public safety program of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia | <https://www.mwcog.org/transportation/planning-areas/walking-and-biking/>

- **U.S. Department of Federal Highway Administration** | Pedestrian Safety Resources | http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/
- **Virginia Bicycling Federation** | Volunteer organization working to promote bicycling; change public policy and community attitudes; and improve the safety, convenience, and acceptance of bicycling throughout Virginia | www.vabike.org
- **Virginia Department of Health** | Injury and Violence Prevention site with bicycle safety information and resources
- **Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles** | Virginia Driver's Manual | www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/citizen/drivers/manual.asp
- **Virginia Department of Transportation** | Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, including VDOT Safe Routes to School Program | http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/tes_Rt2_school_pro.asp
- **Virginia Highway Safety** | <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/safety/>
- **Virginia Maps** | Bicycling in Virginia | www.virginiadot.org/bikeped
- **Washington Area Bicyclist Association** | The Commonwealth of Virginia's largest metropolitan area bicycling group's website offers many resources | www.waba.org
- **Women and Bikes** | www.waba.org/programs/women-bicycles

For More Copies

www.sharevaroads.org

Northern Virginia Regional Commission

www.novaregion.org

dspilio@novaregion.org

Credits

Photo: Arlington County; Bike Arlington, Tim Kelley; Bike Virginia; BikeWalkRVA; Dan Burden; Eric Robitall; Kimberly Perry; Laura Sandt; Libby Thomas; Lyubov Zuyeva; Northern Virginia Regional Commission, Debbie Spiliotopoulos; Northern Virginia Regional Parks; Oregon.gov; Ped Bike Images; Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center Image Library; Reconnect Rochester, Urbanist; Solid Waste Association of North America and Fairfax County Department of Public Works; Tiffany Robinson; VinnieR; and Washington & Old Dominion Trail

Design: DELANO Creative

shareVAroads

Laws and Safety Tips for Bicyclists, Pedestrians, and Motorists 2016 Technical Advisory Committee

Arlington Police: Officer Ken Dennis
Bike Arlington: Tim Kelley and Erin Potter
Bike Loudoun: Pat Turner
Department of Conservation and Recreation: Jennifer Wampler
Department of Education: Vanessa Wigand
Department of Health: Lisa Wooten
Department of Motor Vehicles: Lori Rice and Melanie Stokes
Department of Transportation: Cindy Englehart, John Bolecek,
and George Rogerson
Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling: Bruce Wright
Fairfax County: Nicole Wynands
Fairfax County Police: Officer Jason Long
Fairfax Safe Routes to School: Sally Smallwood
Inova Trauma Services: Linda Watkins
LAB Certified Trainer, Kelley Westenhoff
Loudoun County: Judy Galen
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments: Mike Farrell
Northern Virginia Regional Commission: Debbie Spiliotopoulos
Phoenix Bikes: Meg Rapeleye
Prince William County: George Phillips
Town of Herndon: Cindy Roeder
Washington Area Bicycling Association: Daniel Hoagland

shareVAroads

WWW.SHAREVAROADS.ORG



Northern Virginia Regional Commission
3040 Williams Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax, Virginia 22031
(703) 642-0700 | dspilio@novaregion.org | www.sharevaroads.org