



Rules for Riding a Bicycle on the Road

As a person riding a bicycle in Missouri, you must be aware that bicycles are considered vehicles. **People riding a bicycle have the same rights, duties, and responsibilities as vehicle drivers.**

In the absence of special markings or directions—and the specific situations outlined below—people biking must ride in the direction of traffic and as near to the right side of the travel lane as is safe. On a one-way street in a city, a bicyclist may ride as near as practical to either the right or left side of the street or roadway.

Do not ride *too far right*: The right edge of the road often has hazards like ditches, gutters, sand, gravel shoulders, and so on. Leave space between yourself and these hazards as needed for safety. Generally people bicycling should leave at least 3-4 feet between themselves and any road hazards such as pothole, gutter seams, or ditches—and more if safe operation requires it.

There are some **very important exceptions to the general rule to ride to the right as far as safe, such as:**

- When a bicyclist is **overtaking and passing** another bicycle or vehicle
- When a bicyclist is **getting ready to make a left turn**
- When a **bicyclist is riding close to the speed limit or generally the same speed as traffic**
- When **the lane is too narrow to let a bicycle and another vehicle travel side-by-side safely.**

Note that this exception applies to the vast majority of travel lanes in Missouri: *The generally accepted minimum lane width for sharing a lane between a bicycle and another vehicle is 14 feet. That is the minimum that allows a safe shy distance between the bicyclist and the edge of the road and between the automobile and the bicyclist, while still allowing the automobile to fit completely in the lane.*

So the minimum lane width for safe side-by-side traveling is 14 feet, but the vast majority of travel lanes in Missouri are 12 feet wide or narrower.

- When **riding close to the edge of the roadway is unsafe** because of
 - parked vehicles
 - fixed or moving objects
 - animals
 - or road surface hazards

In all those situations, or when riding to the right is unsafe for any other reason, the person operating the bicycle may ride to the left, center, or right portion of the travel lanes as needed.





Riding too close to the right edge of a road that is too narrow to safely share encourages motorists to try to pass when there is not enough room to do so safely. In this situation, a bicyclist is safer riding in the center of the lane, and motorists should change lanes to pass, waiting until the other lane is clear of oncoming traffic.

Generally, many bicyclists tend to ride too far to the right—further right than is safe—especially cyclists who do not ride on the road very often. If you are unsure about where to ride, please check the resources below under **Bicycle Lane Position**.

People biking may ride side by side along Missouri roads, but only if it does not impede other traffic.

Increase your visibility. It will help protect you on the road. Brightly colored clothing during the day and white or reflectorized clothing at night will help you be seen. **At night, you must have a headlight and rear reflector on your bicycle;** a red taillight and additional reflectors are also helpful.

Other rules include: **signal before making a turn or a stop**, always **keep at least one hand on the handlebars**, don't carry more passengers than there are seats available, **yield to people walking**, have adequate **brakes**, and **never perform stunts** while riding on streets or highways.

Bicycle Education Classes

The Cycling Savvy, the League of American Bicyclist, and local bicycle organizations across Missouri have a variety of training for traffic safety and skills and there are League Certified Instructors across the Missouri.

The League has online resources and a calendar of Bike Ed classes and instructors available across the U.S.: <https://www.bikeleague.org/ridesmart>

Cycling Savvy has online resources and class and instructor listings: <https://cyclingsavvy.org/>

Bicycle Lane Position

League of American Bicyclists – Speed Positioning: <https://bikeleague.org/content/traffic-laws>

Bicycling Street Smarts – Where to Ride on the Road:
<http://www.bikexpert.com/streetsmarts/usa/chapter2a.htm>

International Police Mountain Biking Association, [The Complete Guide to Public Safety Cycling, Chapter 8: Vehicular Cycling, “The Speed Positioning Principle”, pp. 77-78.](#)
<http://ipmba.org/resources/merchandise>

