



Safety Spotlight FAQs

Bicyclists: Rules of the Road



People riding bicycles have the same rights and responsibilities as drivers, except where specific bicycle laws apply. Understanding these laws improves predictability, reduces conflicts, and helps keep everyone safer on Florida's roadways.

Note: The information below only highlights common and frequently misunderstood road rules for bicyclists. Bicycle traffic laws are primarily found in Chapter 316, Florida Statutes, including §316.2065.

Q: Are bicyclists required to follow the same traffic laws as drivers?

A: Yes. Under Florida law, a bicycle is legally considered a vehicle, and the person operating it has all the rights and duties applicable to a driver of a vehicle, except where those duties do not apply to bicycles. This means bicyclists must obey traffic control devices, stop and yield signs, red lights, and other roadway rules just like motorists.

Q: Where should a bicyclist ride on the roadway?

A: When traveling slower than the normal speed of traffic and a bike lane exists, bicyclists should ride in the designated bike lane. If no bike lane exists, they must ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway. "Practicable" means reasonable under the conditions, and cyclists may leave the right edge to avoid hazards, pass another vehicle, prepare for a left turn, or when the lane is too narrow for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel side by side safely.

Q: Can bicyclists ride on sidewalks?

A: Yes, except where local ordinances prohibit it. When riding on sidewalks or in crosswalks, bicyclists have the same rights and duties as pedestrians. They must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and give an audible signal, such as a bell, horn, or verbal warning, before passing. Drivers entering or exiting driveways must yield to bicyclists on sidewalks.

Q: Do motorists have to give bicyclists space when passing?

A: Yes. Florida law requires motorists to provide at least three feet of clearance when overtaking a bicyclist. Drivers must pass at a safe distance and only when it is clear to do so.

Q: Why do bicyclists sometimes ride in the middle of the lane?

A: Bicyclists are entitled to the full use of a lane when conditions make it unsafe for a vehicle and a bicycle to travel side by side, such as narrow lanes, obstacles, parked vehicles, or when preparing for a left turn or passing another bike or slow vehicle. In such cases, occupying the center of the lane improves visibility and safety.

Q: What equipment is required on a bicycle?

A: Florida law requires:

- **Brakes** capable of stopping the bicycle within 25 feet from 10 mph on dry, level pavement.
- A **white front light** visible from at least 500 feet, a **red rear light**, and a **reflector** visible from at least 600 feet between sunset and sunrise.
- A bicycle may only carry the number of riders for which it is designed and equipped.

Q: Are helmets required?

A: Yes, for riders under age 16, they must wear a properly fitted, securely fastened helmet that meets recognized safety standards. Helmet use is strongly encouraged for all ages.

Q: Can bicyclists ride two abreast?

A: Yes. Two bicyclists may ride side by side within a single lane. They must not impede the normal flow of traffic and should ride single file when conditions require vehicles to pass safely. If a bike lane is too narrow to accommodate two abreast, riders must use a single file.

Q: Are bicyclists required to signal turns?

A: Yes. Bicyclists must use standard hand signals to indicate turns or stops. Signals should be given continuously during the last 100 feet before turning when practicable.