

CYCLE SENSE

Skills and confidence on the road



WHO WE ARE

The London Cycling Campaign is a volunteer-led, community based organisation working to make London a world-class cycling city. Since 1978, we've been improving facilities, providing information and raising the profile of cycling across London. With over 10,000 members, we are the largest urban cycling organisation in the world.

WHAT WE DO

We bring about real improvements for cyclists in London. Among our key campaigning issues are better conditions for cycling in London, increased provision of cycle parking, and more cycle training in schools and communities. See www.lcc.org.uk/campaigns for more information.

Our **local groups** are made up of LCC members who campaign on a borough level, as well as organising rides and events and providing expert advice to local authorities on routes and facilities.

The **Community Cycling Fund for London (in which LCC is a partner)** allows community groups to apply for up to £5,000 for cycling projects that will

encourage, support and promote cycling in their community: see www.lcc.org.uk/community for more information.

Our **free public enquiry line** staffed by cyclists, comprehensive website and information leaflets on everything from bike maintenance to cycling with children means new and experienced cyclists alike have access to useful advice.

We help people start and keep cycling through our membership package which includes free third party insurance, discounts in over 90 bike shops across London, free delivery of our bi-monthly magazine London Cyclist and more. Join today: www.lcc.org.uk/join

London Cycling Campaign is a registered charitable company.
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Jeremy Hughes

Travelling by bike is great fun, but busy London roads can seem intimidating if you haven't cycled much in traffic before. This leaflet is designed to give some advice on riding responsibly and assertively on the road.

If you do still feel nervous cycling in traffic, we strongly recommend getting some cycle training. Many local authorities offer free or subsidised cycle training to people who live, work or study in their borough and it's a fantastic way of boosting your skills and confidence on the road. Some

instructors will even ride your route to work with you and give you advice along the way. Visit your local authority's website, www.lcc.org.uk/info or call us at the office on 020 7234 9310 for more advice on cycle training.

We also recommend getting hold of a copy of John Franklin's *Cyclecraft*, the principal reference for the National Cycle Training Standard Bikeability and required reading for accredited instructors. Contact us if you are having trouble finding this book.



GETTING STARTED

Adrian Lewis

If you haven't cycled much on the road before, it's important to practise a few skills beforehand. When you've mastered balance, steering, using the brakes and changing gears, you should try riding single-handed so that you are able to make hand signals. Practise looking over your shoulder, first with both hands on the handlebars, and then try taking your hand off the bar on the side you're

looking behind, which will give you greater manoeuvrability and therefore better visibility. Make sure to practise looking over your left shoulder as well as your right. Practise making left and right turns and cycling over uneven surfaces.

When you are comfortable doing these things, try cycling on some quiet streets and paths.

Confidence and awareness

Cycling with confidence and with awareness of other road users can make a significant difference to how safe you will be on the road. If you are new to cycling it is a good idea to plan your route in advance, start on quieter roads and take your time. If you are cycling somewhere that will be busy during the week then try it out at a weekend to familiarise yourself with the route first.



Pollards Hill Cyclists

Cycling with a group

Cycling with a group can be a good way to improve your confidence: you will be shown new routes and have others to learn from. LCC publicises regular group rides all over London. These include short easy rides and longer faster rides, so you will find one that suits you. For more information visit www.lcc.org.uk/rides or contact the LCC office. For ideas of rides you can go on in London, see the LCC booklet 'Leisure Rides'.

Bike buddies and bike buses

Some local LCC groups will set you up with a bike buddy, who can help you to get used to riding in traffic or find a more suitable route to work. Other groups run bike buses, which will ride a certain route regularly so you can get used to cycling in the city. Some schools now run regular bike buses for children going to and from school. Contact the LCC for further information on your local LCC group.

YOU AND YOUR BIKE

If you look after your bike, it will last longer and be safer to ride, and keeping it in a roadworthy state will reduce the risk of an accident. Tyres should be pumped up to the correct pressure; worn tyres should be replaced. Brakes should be checked regularly for wear and tear, and worn brake pads replaced. Cables should be checked on a regular basis for signs of any fraying or breaking.

Our booklet 'Cycle Maintenance' has a guide of checks you should perform and how to do basic maintenance: download it from www.lcc.org.uk/info or call the office on 020 7234 9310 to order a copy.



Jeremy Hughes

There are also regular local maintenance workshops and courses held in London that you may wish to go on: you can find details of these in London Cyclist magazine (delivered free to members) or on the website: www.lcc.org.uk/info.



Adrian Lewis

Visibility

Any cycle which is used during darkness or poor visibility must, according to the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 (last amended October 23rd 2005), be fitted with the following:

- white front light
- red rear light
- red rear reflector
- amber/yellow pedal reflectors

It is important that you are visible to alert other road users to your presence. It's advisable to wear light-coloured clothes, or attach reflective material to your clothing or bicycle, even in daylight.

The most recent amendment permits flashing lights on bicycles, so your lamps may be now flashing or steady, or a mixture. A steady light is recommended at the front when the cycle is used in areas without good street lighting.



Adrian Lewis

The Highway Code

Many cyclists have learnt to drive at some stage and have studied the Highway Code. If you have not, then you should read this before you start cycling. Most of the code applies to cyclists in the same way as it does for any other road user. Only where it explicitly says so should cyclists behave differently. Remember, cycling on the pavement is only legal on pavement that is signed as shared use for pedestrians and cyclists, and cyclists are required by law to obey traffic light signals.



Adrian Lewis

ON THE ROAD

Travelling by bike is a very safe way to get around. In order to be as safe as possible, you should always make sure you understand and pay attention to traffic regulations and be aware of other road users and road conditions. Ride confidently, placing yourself on the road so other road users can see you, and always signal your intentions clearly to other road users.

Road positioning

One of the key principles of safe cycling is to cycle in a prominent position on the road where you can be clearly seen. Avoid cycling very close to the kerb or edge of the road, which reduces your room for manoeuvre and makes you more likely to hit drain covers and potholes. You should ride at least about a metre away from the edge of the road.

Proper road positioning can be summed up in the following points made by the cycling expert John Franklin:

“Increase your margin of safety ... by riding where you can obtain the best view, where you can best be seen by others and your movements predicted.”

“Good road positioning is not about keeping you out of the path of other traffic as much as possible. Contrary to popular belief, this is not necessarily the best way to maximise safety.”

John Franklin, Cyclecraft, The Stationery Office (2004).

In certain situations it may be safer to use all the space that your side of the road or lane allows, i.e. take a position in the centre of the lane or your side of the road. This may be necessary if there is not enough room for cars to overtake you without forcing you too close to parked cars or the side of the road. You should also take all of your lane when approaching a junction where it might be unsafe for a vehicle to be next to you or to come alongside you (for instance where it might turn across the front of you - “cutting you up”). If there is a car behind you a quick look at the driver and a hand signal will indicate that you are about to move out into the centre of the road/lane. Once you feel that it is safe for the vehicle to overtake you can move across and allow them to do so.

Try to keep at least a door’s width from parked cars, as doors may open into your path. If the road has parked cars on both sides and there is no space for you and an oncoming vehicle to pass, slow down, and if necessary stop. You have equal right of way with other road users, but in all situations your safety should be your primary concern.

If you are stuck in traffic and vehicles are blocking your way forward you should not mount the kerb and ride on the pavement. Instead, wait until you can safely cycle forward, or get off and walk your bike until you can cycle on the road again.



Turning left and right

When turning left, it is a courtesy to signal your intention.

Turning right can be more awkward as you may have to negotiate two lanes of traffic. When turning right you need to look over your right shoulder and signal with your right hand. If the road behind you is clear, pull out into the centre of the road and turn right once there is no oncoming traffic. If there is oncoming traffic then stop in the middle of the road until it has passed.

Whenever you turn left or right, always look for pedestrians as they may be crossing the road you intend to turn into. If a junction is very busy and there is no provision for a safe right turn, or you are in doubt about how to negotiate it, then get off and cross the junction on foot.

Jeremy Hughes

Cycle lanes, bus lanes and cycle paths

Cycle lanes are often created to encourage cycling in certain areas or along busy roads that may have previously been difficult to negotiate. Cycle lanes with unbroken white lines are for the sole use of cyclists.

Some cycle lanes have been designed in such a way that they encourage cyclists to ride near the kerb or close to parked cars where the risk of collision is higher. You do not have to use such lanes. In some cases you may find parked vehicles obstructing cycle lanes.

Adrian Lewis



Adrian Lewis

Use cycle lanes if you feel it is convenient or safer. Otherwise use the road space in the same way you would if there was no cycle lane.

Many cycle paths on footpaths and through parks will be for shared use with pedestrians. Remember that pedestrians have priority on such paths and you should cycle considerably.

Bus lanes can be used if signposted for shared use. They may also be shared with powered two wheelers and taxis and at certain times of day other motor vehicles may use them as well. Be careful when using bus lanes. Avoid passing the bus on the pavement side as the driver will not be able to see you easily and may pull into the kerb without warning.

Advanced stop lines

Advanced stop lines (ASLs), or bike boxes, allow you to stop in front of other traffic at traffic lights. This means that when the

traffic light turns to green you can start off ahead of other traffic. They consist of a green or red box with a bicycle painted on it. Some have a feeder lane running up to them. Motorists are required to stop at the solid white line at the rear of this box. Not all motorists obey this regulation. If a motorist does stop on the box, pull up alongside the stationary vehicle and try to make eye contact with the driver. Be careful in case the motorist turns left unexpectedly.



Rosie Collins



Adrian Lewis

Overtaking

It is often necessary to overtake stationary or slow-moving vehicles in traffic. Whatever the circumstances, watch for pedestrians stepping through lanes of traffic or doors opening as you pass. When you overtake it is important to be aware of what is moving around you.

When overtaking parked vehicles, take a look behind you (over your right shoulder). If it is clear, signal and pull out towards the middle of the road. Leave at least one metre between yourself and a parked vehicle to allow for the hazard of an opening door. If you are not crossing over a lane marking during the manoeuvre, you have right of way over vehicles behind you.

When overtaking a slow-moving vehicle, you should again take a look over your right shoulder before signalling and pulling out. You should also check for oncoming traffic to ensure there is no risk of collision.

Jeremy Hughes



Roundabouts

Some roundabouts are relatively safe as traffic speeds are usually low. However, others are very busy and require care when negotiating them. Roundabouts should be approached with the same care as any other junction.

When approaching a roundabout you should join the appropriate lane for the exit you need. You should wait for traffic already in the roundabout to clear before you enter. If you are going to take the first turning then use the left lane. If you are going straight-on then you will need to be in the middle lane or in the left lane but adopting a position in the centre of the lane. Be aware of traffic that may be exiting

to the left and could cut across you.

If you are turning right then you will need to be in the centre of the right hand lane until you are past the intermediate exits, after which you will need to signal left and move into the left hand lane. Beware of traffic coming up fast on the inside lane.

If you feel that other road users may not understand your intentions, then you can indicate right at the entrances prior to the one you will exit at, and then left when you get to your exit.

Good positioning in the road is extremely important as it indicates where you will be turning before you signal. You should practise on quiet roads until you can signal and turn at the same time.

Some large roundabouts have traffic lights to control the speed of vehicles. Even so, beware of motorists who accelerate through red lights in order to gain advantage.

SHARING THE ROAD

All road users should respect each other's space, especially on busy London streets where space is at a premium. When cycling in traffic be aware of other road users so you can anticipate their movements. If you are unsure if someone has seen you, then if possible make eye contact with them.



Jason Patient



Jeremy Hughes

Lorries

The draught of a large vehicle, such as an articulated lorry, can be a hazard for a cyclist if it passes too closely. Positioning yourself well out from the kerb and taking the centre of the lane where necessary will leave you room for manoeuvre.

Lorries turning left are the most dangerous hazard to cyclists. Remember that large lorries may move to the right before they unexpectedly turn left at a junction. Never edge forward alongside a long vehicle, even if there is a cycle lane, as you may be trapped when it turns leaving you no escape route. The presence of pedestrian guard railings increases the danger by blocking your escape route.

It is difficult for drivers of large vehicles to see cyclists. Keep well behind a lorry in front, and position yourself so that you can be seen in its side mirrors. It is particularly easy for your presence to go unnoticed at busy junctions and gyratory systems.

Cars, motorbikes and scooters

Beware of cars overtaking you and then turning left across your path, and of vehicles pulling out from side roads. Watch out for opening doors - leave plenty of space when overtaking parked cars.

Motorbikes and scooters often go much faster than other traffic. They can come up behind you very quickly, so always check behind you before moving sideways, even within a lane.



Adrian Lewis



Cycling near pedestrians

If you are cycling on a path signposted for shared use with pedestrians, you should show consideration by cycling at an appropriate speed and giving way at all times. You should alert pedestrians to your presence if there is any risk of collision by sounding your bell or giving a polite verbal warning. Pedestrians can feel threatened when people cycle close to them.

Some parks and open spaces have segregated cycle and pedestrian paths. Some pedestrians may not understand this and walk on the cycle path. Cycle with consideration and be prepared to slow down.

CONTACTS

London Cycling Campaign

Find this info and more on the LCC website, including listings of shops that offer a discount to LCC members and a list of second bike shops.

t: 020 7234 9310

w: www.lcc.org.uk/info

Transport for London

The London Cycle Guides produced by LCC and TfL include addresses of bike shops across London. Order them for free from the website or by phone.

t: 020 7222 1234

w: www.tfl.gov.uk

Department for Transport

Find out more information about the Cycle to Work scheme.

t: 020 7944 8300

w: www.dft.gov.uk

Cycle Training UK

Cycle Training UK is a not-for-profit workers' co-operative promoting cycling for all.

t: 020 7231 6005

w: www.cycletraining.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Free London Cyclist magazines

For all the news affecting cyclists in the city plus features, reviews, maintenance tips, great rides and offers.

Free third party insurance

Covers you for up to £2million worth of damages if you injure someone or damage their property.

Up to 10% off bike gear

You'll get great discounts at bike shops throughout London where you can save money on everything from a new bike to a puncture repair kit.

Free legal advice

If you ever find yourself involved in an accident you can call any one of our cyclist-friendly solicitors for free advice.

A world class cycling city

LCC is the only organisation campaigning and lobbying exclusively to ensure the best possible routes, facilities and services for people who cycle in London.

PLUS special deals on theft insurance, discounts on cycle maintenance training, free leisure rides, events and campaigns in and around your borough.

ABOUT THESE LEAFLETS

There are 13 information booklets in this series.

Getting started

Buying a bike

Getting started on a bicycle

Cycling for people with disabilities

Cycle Sense

Workplace

Cycling to work

A guide for employers

Parking and storage

Leisure

Leisure rides

Cycling with children

Travelling with your bicycle

Practical

Cycle maintenance

Bike security

Protection: insurance and incidents

These leaflets can be downloaded from www.lcc.org.uk/info or ordered from the LCC office by calling 020 7234 9310.

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Many thanks to Che Sutherland,
Tom Bogdanowicz and Rosie Downes
for their contributions to these leaflets.

Get more out of cycling in London

Join the London Cycling Campaign to save money and get all the support you need to cycle in London - from free and specialised insurance, updates on the latest cycle routes and social rides, to London Cyclist magazine, the essential read for everyone who cycles in London.

Add to this the discounts you'll get in bike shops and on cycle training and you'll see why LCC membership is as necessary to you as your pedals.

In turn your membership will help us to make your cycling safer, quicker and more pleasant around London: we are constantly lobbying and campaigning on your behalf to win real improvements that affect us all.

This edition published in 2007. Many thanks to Martin Ireland who wrote the original edition of this leaflet.



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cycling... good for London, good for you!