

Bike Law



**A bike rider's
guide to road
rules in Victoria**

A bike rider's guide to road rules in Victoria

This guide outlines the essential road rules you need to know as a bike rider.

Whether you are on the road, on a path, riding in a group or heading out at night you need to know the road rules to ride responsibly and safely.

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org.au

Contents

Before you ride – what you need	4
Essential road rules	8
Riding in traffic	16
Riding on bike lanes and paths	24
Bikes and children	30
Fines and crashes	34
More information	39

Before you ride – what you need

It is important to know what equipment you need before you ride and how to get bike insurance.

Equipment

Before you ride your bike there is certain equipment the law requires you to have. Having this equipment will help keep you safe.

Working brakes, a bell and lights

All bikes must have at least one working brake and a bell, horn or something similar.

If you ride at night or in bad weather, you must have attached to your bike:

- a white light on the front visible from 200 metres
- a red light on the back visible from 200 metres, and
- a red reflector on the back visible from 50 metres.

Wearing the right helmet

When you are riding a bike you and any passengers must wear a properly fitting and fastened helmet unless you are riding on private property.

Your helmet must meet Australian safety standard AS/NZS2063.

In exceptional circumstances, VicRoads can authorise you to ride without a helmet for medical reasons. Visit <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/medical-conditions-and-driving/exemptions-from-wearing-a-seatbelt-or-bicycle-helmet> for details.





Insurance

You are not legally required to get insurance, but it is a good idea. Insurance can cover you for some of the cost of:

- injuries you've got while riding – known as 'personal injury insurance'
- injuries to someone or damage to their property that you've caused – known as 'third party insurance'
- damage to your bike
- theft of your bike.

Some cycling organisations such as Bicycle Network and Cycling Victoria provide insurance as part of your membership.

You can also get insurance directly through an insurance company. Some companies offer stand-alone bike insurance cover, while others cover your bike as part of home contents insurance.

Remember that your insurance may not apply if you were acting illegally or riding unsafely.

Top 10 safety tips

- 1 Wear the right helmet.
- 2 Check that your brakes, lights and bell are working.
- 3 Be alert.
- 4 Be predictable.
- 5 Be visible.
- 6 Ride at a sensible speed.
- 7 Use your bell.
- 8 Ride responsibly.
- 9 Don't listen to music or use mobile phones.
- 10 Don't respond to road rage.



Essential road rules

As a bike rider you have to follow many of the same rules as motorists. This section covers what they are so you can ride responsibly and safely.

Safe riding

When you are riding your bike you must:

- face forwards and have at least one hand on the handlebars
- keep a safe distance between you and any traffic in front of you.

Make sure you have enough space to stop safely.

'Dinking' is against the law. Passengers can only sit on your bike if they are in a seat for a passenger.

Traffic lights, signals and signs

You must obey traffic lights, signals, signs and road markings, and follow the road rules on stopping and giving way.

If there are no traffic lights, signs or lines at an intersection, you must give way to any vehicle on your right that would cross your path.

Tip

Turning right at an intersection

If you want to turn right at an intersection, doing a hook turn is often a safer option.





'Give Way' sign



Bike crossing lights

Traffic lights

You must obey any traffic lights, including bike traffic lights that use bike symbols. You must also obey traffic arrows if you are about to make a turn.

You must always:

- give way to pedestrians who are crossing on the road you are turning into, even if there are no pedestrian lights or the pedestrian lights are not green
- stop at yellow lights and arrows when it is safe to do so.

'Stop' signs and lines

You must obey 'Stop' signs and lines.

At a stop line, you must come to a complete stop and usually give way to any vehicles already in, entering or approaching an intersection.

A stop line is an unbroken white line across a road lane.



Overtaking a vehicle that is turning left

You must not overtake a vehicle on the left if it is turning left and indicating left.

'Give Way' signs and lines

You must obey 'Give Way' signs and lines.

At a give way line, you must slow down and stop if necessary to avoid a collision.

If you are stationary, you must remain stationary until it is safe to go.

You must give way to any vehicles already in, entering or approaching an intersection.

A give way line is a broken white line across a road lane.

Turning and signalling

You must give way to pedestrians crossing the road you are turning into whether there are pedestrian lights or not.

Turning right

Whenever you are moving over to the right, including when changing lanes or turning right, you must signal with your right hand.

Turning left

You do not have to signal if you're turning left, but it's a good idea to.



Signalling right



Speed

You must obey the speed limit. It is also a serious offence to ride at a dangerous speed.

Speed limits are the maximum speed you are allowed to ride. You need to ride to the conditions. To ride safely you might need to ride more slowly than the speed limit.

Speed limits are often shown by speed limit signs – but even without signs speed limits still apply:

- In built-up areas where there are no signs, the speed limit is 50 km/h.
- In country areas where there are no signs, the speed limit is 100 km/h.
- Near schools and in shopping strips, the speed limit, marked by a sign, is often 40 km/h.
- In an area shared with pedestrians, and marked by a 'Shared Zone' sign, the speed limit is 10 km/h.

Tip

Cars overtaking bikes

When overtaking a bike, car drivers should keep at least a metre clear, and more than that if going over 60 km/h.

Causing a traffic hazard

You must not cause a traffic hazard by putting others at risk. This includes riding into the path of a driver or a pedestrian, riding too fast for the conditions or not looking before pulling out into traffic.

Mobile phones

When riding a bike, you must not hold a mobile phone, use it to send text messages or touch it in any way.

You can use a mobile phone as long as it's fixed to your bike, 'hands-free' and only used for calls, listening to music or GPS navigation.

For your safety, it is better not to use your phone at all while riding.

Taking your bike on public transport

Trains

You can take a regular bike on the train, but you can't board at the first door of the front carriage. The first door is for people using wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

If you have a folding bike, you can board at any door.

You must not block the doorway of the train or ride your bike on the platform.

Buses and trams

You cannot take your bike on a bus or tram unless it is a folding bike. For more information, visit the Public Transport Victoria website: <http://ptv.vic.gov.au/getting-around/luggage-bikes-and-animals/bikes-and-public-transport/>



Can I take my bike on a train?

You can. But you must not board at the first door of the first carriage – you'll get in the way of people using wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Parking

You can park your bike on a footpath as long as it's not in the way and you are not breaking any local laws. If you are allowed to park, use a bike rack or rail if there is one available. But you cannot park at all where there is a 'No Parking' sign or similar.

Tip

Stay safe in heavy traffic

It can be tricky riding in heavy traffic.

- Wear bright clothing and switch flashing lights on.
- Don't ride in drivers' blind spots – make sure they can see you.
- Don't move in and out of traffic – ride in a straight line as much as possible.
- Use clear hand signals when changing lanes or turning.



'No Bike Parking' sign



What is dooring?

'Dooring' is when someone causes a hazard to a bike rider by opening a car door. Dooring is an offence. Bike riders can be hit by the door and even go into the path of oncoming traffic.

Follow these safety tips:

- Slow down and stay out of the car door zone.
- Look out for people getting in and out of parked cars.
- Be visible: wear bright clothing and use flashing lights, even in daylight.

Riding in traffic

Here you can find out about the rules on riding on roads, overtaking, turning, crossings and trams.

Where you can ride

You can ride on the road unless there are signs saying otherwise, for example a 'No Bicycles' sign or similar.

One lane of traffic

If there is only one lane heading where you want to go, you must ride as near as you can to the far left side of the road.

Two or more lanes of traffic

When there are two or more lanes heading where you want to go (a multilane road), you can ride on the left or down the centre of a lane and use the right-hand lane to do a right turn.

Freeways

You can't ride on urban freeways, but you can ride on the shoulders of some rural freeways, including the Western Freeway, the Calder Freeway, the Hume Freeway and parts of the Princes Freeway to Traralgon. The shoulder is an area to the left side of the road, which can be sealed or unsealed.

To find out what rural freeways you can ride on, visit <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/traffic-and-road-use/cycling/places-to-ride> and download the 'Cycling on freeways' map.

Tip

Riding on the road

When riding on the far left side of the road, leave enough space to deal with debris and the effects of wind, and to avoid car doors.



Riding in groups

You cannot have more than two riders next to each other except when overtaking. When you are riding next to someone you must not ride more than 1.5 metres apart from them.

Overtaking

When you are riding on the road, you can overtake a vehicle on the left or right as long as:

- you can clearly see any approaching traffic and
- can overtake the vehicle safely.

You must not overtake a vehicle:

- on the left if it is turning left and indicating left
- on the right if it is turning right and indicating right
- on the right if it is doing a U-turn from the centre of the road and indicating right.

Bike boxes

A bike box is a box marked at an intersection with a bike symbol inside it (see image next page).

If there is a bike box, and you need to stop, you must stop inside it.

Bike boxes are a safer place to stop and give you a head start over other traffic when the traffic lights turn green.

If there is a bike lane leading into the bike box, you must use the bike lane to enter the bike box unless that is not a practical option.

If the bike box goes across all traffic lanes you must:

- turn left from the left-lane side of the bike box
- turn right from the right-lane side of the bike box.



Hook turns

A hook turn is a right-hand turn started from the far left of an intersection.

If there is a hook turn only sign (see image below), you must do a hook turn to turn right.

At any other intersections, you can do a hook turn unless a sign prohibits it. Turning right using a hook turn is often a safer option.

For more information about hook turns, visit www.vicroads.vic.gov.au and search for 'turning'.

Hook turn only sign



Roundabouts

If there is a bike lane on a roundabout, you must use it.

Like all road users, bike riders entering a roundabout must give way to any vehicles already in the roundabout.

On a single-lane roundabout without a bike lane, it is a good idea to ride in the middle of the lane so you can be clearly seen and exit more easily.

When you are on a multilane roundabout, you can travel in the left lane to go around it or in the right lane to turn right, but you must give way to anyone leaving the roundabout at any exit on the way round. This might mean stopping to let a car exit the roundabout. This rule applies even if you are riding in a bike lane on a roundabout.



Giving way on a multilane roundabout



Do I have to give way at roundabouts?

Yes. Before entering a roundabout, you must give way to other vehicles already on it. When on a roundabout, you must give way to other vehicles leaving it.



Railway level crossing

Crossings

Level crossings

Level crossings are areas where a road crosses train tracks and some tram tracks.

When you ride across a level crossing, you must obey any signs and signals, and:

- do not stop on the train or tram tracks
- do not enter the crossing unless there is enough room for you on the other side of the tracks
- do not stop where there are yellow criss-cross lines on the road
- cross only when the train or tram has passed.

You can always get off your bike and walk it across a level crossing like other pedestrians, but you must obey all signs and signals.

Bike crossings

If there are bike crossing lights (lights with a bike symbol) you can ride your bike across when the green symbol is showing.

Pedestrian crossings

When you are riding on the road and approach a pedestrian crossing you must:

- ride so that you can stop safely at it
- give way to any pedestrian on the crossing and not overtake another vehicle stopped at it.

If you are riding on a bike path or similar and want to cross a road at a pedestrian crossing, you must get off your bike and walk it across unless there are bike crossing lights.

Children's crossings

When you approach a children's crossing, marked by 'Children Crossing' flags, you must ride so you can safely stop at it. At the crossing you must:

- stop if there is a pedestrian on it, or about to step onto it
- stop if a crossing supervisor is using a hand-held 'Stop' sign
- not cross until the crossing is clear of pedestrians.

When you want to cross the road using a children's crossing, you must get off your bike and walk it across the road.

Tip

Overtaking pedestrians

When overtaking pedestrians:

- slow down
- ring your bell in advance
- leave enough space between you and them.



Stopping behind a tram

Trams

You must give way to trams and not ride into their path.

When a tram is stopped at a tram stop on your side of the road you must stop your bike behind the tram unless there is a 'safety zone'. Once the doors have closed and the road is clear of pedestrians, you can ride past the tram at less than 10 km/h.

Safety zones

Some tram stops have 'safety zones' to protect pedestrians getting on and off trams. They are marked by a yellow 'Safety Zone' sign and have a barrier separating pedestrians from traffic.

You can ride past a safety zone at a speed that doesn't risk the safety of pedestrians crossing the road to or from the safety zone.

Riding on bike lanes and paths

It is important to know what bike lanes and paths look like and the different rules that apply to them.

Bike lanes



Bike lanes are on-road lanes reserved for bike riders identified with a bike symbol on the road and a sign which says that it is a bike lane. They will usually be signposted at the beginning and end, but they may also end at an intersection. High-risk sections of bike lanes are sometimes painted green.

You must use a bike lane if there is one, unless that is not a practical option – for example, if the lane is blocked.



Can I ride my bike with my dog on a lead?

No. It is illegal to have your dog on a lead while you ride your bike. You must only walk your dog on foot.



Bike lane

Bike paths



Bike paths are separate, usually off-road, paths reserved for bike riders. Bike paths are marked by a 'Bicycles Only' sign on a signpost, which has a bike symbol and the word 'only' underneath it. They end where the path meets a road or footpath or where indicated by a sign.

Shared paths



Shared paths are off-road, public areas that bike riders and pedestrians are allowed to use. They are marked by painted images of a pedestrian and a bike on a signpost or the path itself.

Overtaking on a shared path

On a shared path, you must keep to the left and give way to pedestrians. Pedestrians include people:

- using wheelchairs and mobility scooters
- on rollerblades, rollerskates, skateboards, non-motorised scooters or something similar.

When overtaking pedestrians, ring your bell in advance, slow down and make sure you leave enough space when overtaking.

Tip

Riding at a safe speed

Ride at a safe speed, especially around pedestrians on shared paths and footpaths and slower bike riders.

Separated footpaths

A separated footpath is a path divided in two – with one side reserved for bike riders, the other for pedestrians. It is usually marked by a sign on a signpost. This sign has, side by side, a pedestrian symbol with the word ‘only’ underneath it and a bike symbol with the word ‘only’ underneath it.

You must not ride on the side reserved for pedestrians. This is marked by the pedestrian symbol on the signpost with the word ‘only’ underneath it.



Separated footpath sign

Footpaths

You can only ride on a footpath if you:

- are under the age of 12
- are an adult (18 years or older) supervising a child under 12
- have a disability that means it's difficult for you to ride on the road.

If you have a disability and are riding on a footpath, you must be able to show police a medical certificate if you're asked.

When riding on a footpath, you must keep to the left and give way to pedestrians.





➔ **When can cars enter bike lanes?**

Bike lanes are reserved for bike riders. But car drivers can enter and drive in a bike lane for up to 50 metres:

- to enter or leave a road
- to overtake to the left of a vehicle turning right or doing a U-turn from the centre of the road
- to park
- to get from one part of the road to another
- to enter traffic, having been parked on the side of the road
- to pick up or drop off passengers – but only if they are driving a taxi or public bus
- if there is a sign saying car drivers can also use the lane.

Car drivers must always give way to any bike riders already in the lane.

Bikes and children

Some different rules apply when you are riding with children.

Helmets

All children – whether they are riding a bike or they are a passenger – must wear a properly fitting and fastened helmet that meets Australian safety standard AS/NZS2063.

Where to ride

Children can ride on the road, but it may be safer for them to ride on the footpath. Children under the age of 12 can ride on footpaths, bike paths, shared paths and separated footpaths (see Separated footpaths on page 27). If you are an adult (18 years or older) supervising a child under 12 you can ride with them on a footpath.

Child seats

Your child can be a passenger on your bike if you have fitted a properly designed child seat. Unless the bike is parked, your child must remain in the child seat. Make sure you get a safe child seat. For further information, call the Safety Centre at The Royal Children's Hospital on (03) 9345 5085.

Trailers and cargo bikes

Trailers

To take a child in a trailer towed behind a bike you must be at least 16 years old and the child must be under 10 years old, unless they are carrying a medical certificate for a disability or medical condition. The trailer must also be able to safely carry the passenger.

You must not use a trailer on a footpath.



It is a good idea to attach a flag to the trailer so it can be seen more easily. If you're riding at night or in bad weather, you must attach lights and a reflector to your bike (see page 4 for details). It's also a good idea to attach:

- red lights and reflectors to the back of the trailer, and
- yellow reflectors to each side of the trailer.

Cargo bikes

'Cargo bikes' have a box or other carrier which is part of the front of the bike. They can be used to carry a child, preferably in a fitted child seat.

Cargo bikes can only carry as many passengers as they are designed to – usually this will mean one or two children.

If you're riding at night or in bad weather, you must attach lights and a reflector to your bike (see page 4 for details). It's also a good idea to attach:

- white lights to the front of the cargo part of the bike, and
- yellow reflectors to each side of it.





Melbourne Bike Share bikes

Fines and crashes

This section covers your responsibilities and rights if you break a road rule, are stopped by police or are involved in a crash.

Breaking the rules

When you break a road rule you commit a traffic offence. Minor traffic offences, such as failing to give a hand signal when you have to, are often called traffic ‘infringements’. They will usually be dealt with by an on-the-spot fine.

For more serious offences, such as riding dangerously, you could be convicted of a crime and go to prison.

Traffic infringements

If you commit a traffic infringement you will be given an ‘infringement notice’ by a police officer. The notice lists the road rule you broke, the amount of the on-the-spot fine, the due date for payment and how to pay.

For more information about traffic infringement penalties, visit the State Government of Victoria’s fines website:
<http://online.fines.vic.gov.au/fines/Content.aspx?page=85&s=1>

Tip

Carry identification

It’s a good idea to carry ID – this will help people know who you are if you are in a crash.



Dealing with fines

When you get an on-the-spot fine for a traffic infringement you can usually pay it and avoid a court hearing and possible criminal conviction. But if you decide not to pay the fine straight away, you can ask for it to be reviewed by the body that issued it or challenge it in court. If you're going to court, get legal advice first.

More serious traffic offences

Just like a motorist, you can be charged with more serious traffic offences. If convicted of these offences you can get a large fine or even a prison term. Here are two examples.

Careless riding

You must not ride your bike carelessly on a road. For example, riding too fast for the conditions and not looking where you are going could amount to careless riding. If you are convicted of careless riding you could receive a substantial fine.

Dangerous riding

You must not risk public safety by riding your bike dangerously. For example, riding too fast for the conditions and not looking out for pedestrians could amount to dangerous riding. If you are convicted of dangerous riding, you could receive a large fine or even a prison term.

Being stopped by police

If you are riding your bike and are stopped by police for questioning regarding an offence, you must give the police your correct name and address. It is a criminal offence not to give it, or to give a false name or address. You are not required to say anything else, even if you are arrested.

Tip

Keep calm if you're stopped by police.

You have the right to ask a police officer for their name, rank and the police station they are from. If asked, the police must give you those details.

If the police arrest you, they must tell you why. If you are arrested, you must go with the police, usually to a police station. You do not have to say anything, and you have the right to call a relative or friend (to tell them where you are), as well as a lawyer.

Crashes

If you are involved in a crash with another rider, pedestrian or driver, you have certain responsibilities and rights.

If you are in a crash in which someone is hurt, you must:

- stop and help them
- give your name and address to anyone involved, and to any police present
- report the crash to the police.

It is a serious offence if you do not. There are different penalties depending on whether anyone was killed or seriously injured. They may include a large fine or a prison term.



Don't drink or use drugs and ride

It's not only dangerous to ride your bike if you're drunk or drug-affected – it's also against the law.

Insurance

Bike insurance can cover you for some of the cost of your injuries, damage to your bike or injury and damage to someone else and their property. See Insurance on page 6 for more details.

TAC compensation for injury or death

What the TAC covers

If you are injured in a crash in Victoria involving a moving motor vehicle, train or tram that is registered in Victoria, you may be eligible for supports and services under the TAC scheme. It also covers you when you crash into an open or opening car door, or if you collide with a stationary vehicle while you are riding to or from work. To be eligible, you must report the crash to police.

What the TAC does not cover

The TAC scheme does not cover crashes that only involved you and another bike rider or a pedestrian. Note, also, that the TAC will not cover you when you can be compensated under another scheme, such as WorkSafe.

What you can get

Under the TAC scheme, you can get the cost of reasonable medical expenses covered, as well as compensation for lost earnings from your job while you recover. If you were seriously injured in a crash that was the fault of a motorist or train or tram driver, you can also sue for compensation ('damages').

Call the TAC on 1300 654 329 or visit their website (www.tac.vic.gov.au) for more information on making a claim.

More information

Want to find out more about being a good bike rider or your rights? There are a number of organisations that can help.

Cycling organisations

Amy Gillett Foundation

A national organisation dedicated to bike rider safety. Leads multiple initiatives directly to the public to improve safety, funded through donations, charity rides, corporate sponsorship and assistance. Runs the award-winning Cycle Safe Communities program, which provides the community, councils and organisations access to bike rider safety campaign resources.

☎ (03) 8506 0675

🌐 www.amygillett.org.au/

Bicycle Network

An independent organisation that encourages Australians to make riding a bike part of everyday life. Membership comes with insurance cover and bike rider support. It provides information about choosing and maintaining your bike, riding to work and school, safety tips and parking your bike at train stations and public transport hubs. It also publishes the *Ride on* magazine.

☎ 1800 639 634 (free call)

☎ (03) 8376 8888

🌐 www.bicyclenetwork.com.au

Cycling Victoria

The peak body in Victoria for racing and recreational cycling. Membership comes with insurance for recreational bike riders. Provides expert information about how to ride safely and responsibly in a group.

☎ (03) 8480 3000

🌐 www.vic.cycling.org.au

Melbourne Bicycle User Group (BUG)

An organisation that campaigns for better conditions for bike riders.

 www.melbournebug.org

There are also BUG groups in many other municipalities across Victoria. To find out if there is a BUG in your area, visit Bicycle Network's website: <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/find/club/>

The Bike Shed

An organisation that runs a bike shed where you can learn how to repair and maintain your bike.

 www.thebikeshed.org.au

The Squeaky Wheel


A not-for-profit organisation that presents bike tours, training and events.


 www.thesqueakywheel.com.au/

Government organisations

Civic Compliance Victoria

Provides information about your rights and responsibilities with traffic, parking, public transport and local council fines.


 (03) 9200 8111 (metro)

 1300 369 819 (regional)

 <http://online.fines.vic.gov.au/fines/>

TAC

The TAC (Transport Accident Commission) pays for treatment and benefits to eligible people who have been injured in a transport accident, including some bike crashes.

 1300 654 329 (local call) or

 1800 332 556 (toll-free outside Melbourne metro area)

 www.tac.vic.gov.au/clients/treatment-and-support-services



VicRoads

Manages Victoria's roads and provides information about road rules and safety for bike riders.

☎ 13 11 71

🌐 www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/cyclist-safety

Legal help

Victoria Legal Aid

Victoria Legal Aid's Legal Help phone service is a good place to start to find out how to deal with a legal problem. You can speak to someone in English or in your own language.

☎ 1300 792 387

🌐 www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

☎ 13 14 50

🌐 <https://www.tisnational.gov.au>



Community legal centres


Community legal centres provide legal information, initial advice and sometimes ongoing help. The Federation of Community Legal Centres can direct you to your local centre.

 (03) 9652 1500

 www.communitylaw.org.au

Law Institute of Victoria

Hiring a private lawyer can be the best option in some circumstances. Use the Law Institute of Victoria's Find Your Lawyer Referral Service to help find a lawyer that best suits your needs. All lawyers on this service give a free 30-minute inquiry interview.

 (03) 9607 9550 (referral service)

 www.findyourlawyer.com.au

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Accurate at November 2015

© Victoria Law Foundation, 2015

ISBN 978 0 987 3303 3 8

PUB14-05

First edition 2015

Reprinted 2017

Photographs: All photographs by Tobias Titz © Victoria Law Foundation, except: pp. 5, 23 courtesy of VicRoads; p. 12 Pat Scala © Fairfax Syndication; pp. 15, 29 Craig Abraham © Fairfax Syndication; p. 19 (bottom) Stephen James © Victoria Law Foundation; p. 20 Joh Kirby © Victoria Law Foundation; p. 28 Edwina Pickles © Fairfax Syndication; p. 32 Karen Alcock © Victoria Law Foundation; p. 35 © Victoria Police; p. 41 Peter Stoop © Fairfax Syndication

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Victoria Law Foundation helps Victorians understand the law and their legal system. We are a not-for-profit organisation funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board Public Purpose Fund.

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