

# BIKING TO WORK



**CLOTHES**  
**TRAFFIC**  
**YOUR ROUTE**  
**SAFETY TIPS**  
**PARKING & LOCKING**  
**BIKING RESOURCES**



# CLOTHES

## Work clothes to bike in

**Sunglasses or goggles**  
Keeps airborne debris out of your eyes.

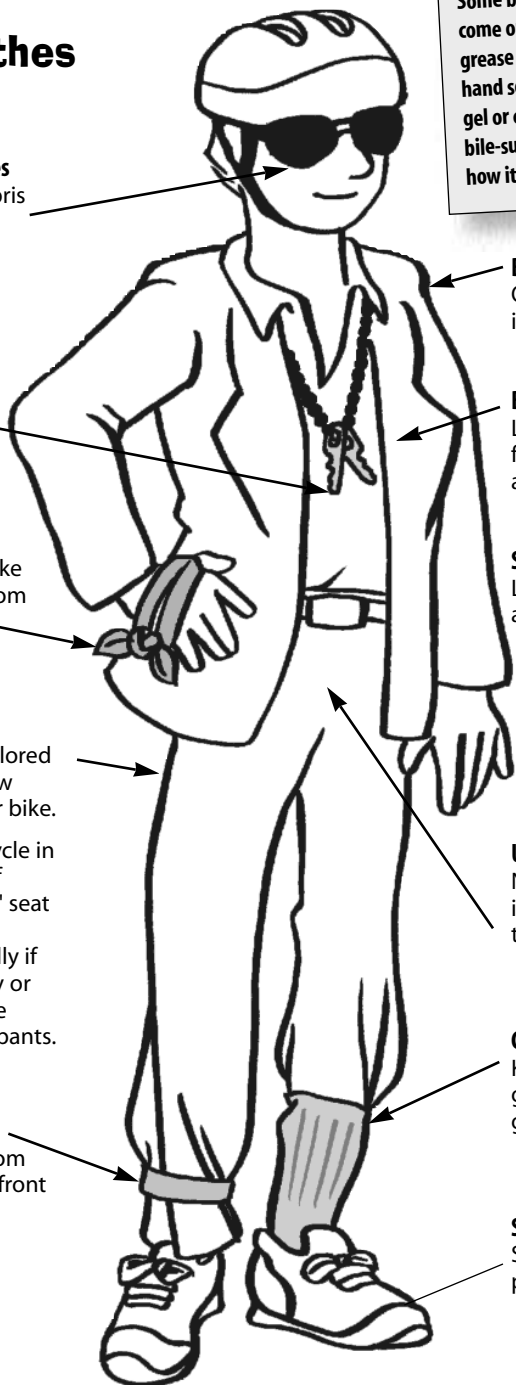
**Key holder or chain**  
When you bike in clothes without pockets.

**Kerchief**  
Comes in handy to wipe grime from bike contact or sweat from exertion.

**Slacks**

- Black or dark-colored pants don't show grime from your bike.
- If you often bicycle in the same pair of pants, the pants' seat can get shiny or faded—especially if they're corduroy or wool. Wear loose shorts over the pants.

**Ankle strap**  
Keeps pants cuff from getting in chain or front gears.



**Smart Idea**  
Some bike-grease stains won't come out in the wash. For tough grease stains, apply a degreasing hand soap (usually a waterless gel or cream) found in automobile-supply stores. (First check how it affects the fabric's color.)

**Blazer or sports coat**  
On cool days, wear instead of windbreaker.

**Bra**  
Large-breasted women find more comfort in athletic support bras.

**Shirt or blouse**  
Loose enough to let air in.

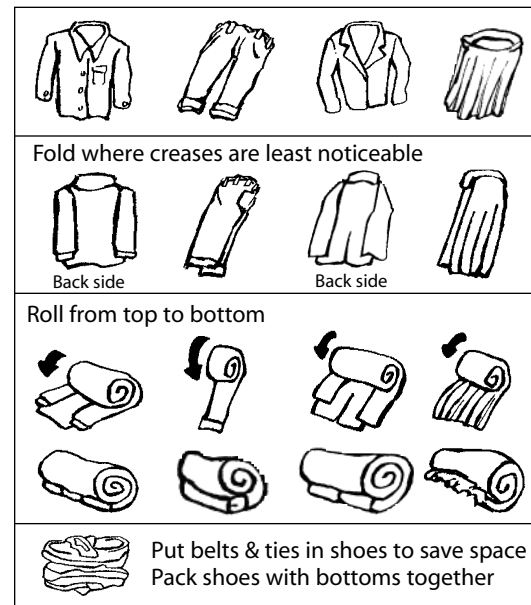
**Underwear**  
Nylon or other synthetics absorb sweat less than cotton.

**Cuff tucked in socks**  
Keeps pants cuff from getting in chain or front gears.

**Shoes**  
Soles have tread to grip pedals.

## How to pack wrinkle-free

### ROLLING



**Smart Idea**  
If you take your clothes to work each day, keep spare clothes (especially socks, underwear, and shoes) at work—in case, one day, you forget to bring them.

### CLOTHES AT WORK

- On the weekend or start of the week, take five days' worth of clothes to work.
- At week's end, take your clothes to the cleaners.
- Pick up your cleaning from work and leave it at work.

## Dressing for the ride

**In warm weather:** Wear loose t-shirts, tank-tops, and shorts for good ventilation. If sweat gets in your eyes or face, wear a headband.

**In cold weather,** wear loose cycling clothes, your work clothes, and windbreaker in layers that you can remove in layers as you heat up.

**Showering** In a coast-to-coast survey conducted for this book, over 85 percent of people who bike to work or school said they don't shower at their destinations. Do they just smell bad? No. Most erase bad odor by simply toweling off and changing into fresh clothes. If they want to feel even cleaner, they sponge off and apply talcum powder. As for clothes themselves: When weather's mild, they bike in the clothes they wear at work. On days when they'll sweat, they change clothes when they get to work.

## Bags for carrying clothes

### SIMPLE BACKPACK

- WHY & WHY NOT**
- 👍 Low cost
  - 👍 Can bungee to your bike's rear rack
  - 👎 Makes your back sweat
  - 👎 Can't pack lots of extra stuff

### HANDY PANNIERS

- WHY & WHY NOT**
- 👍 Can fit lots of stuff
  - 👍 Attaches easily to your bike's rear rack



### DELUXE BIKE GARMENT BAG

- WHY & WHY NOT**
- 👍 Don't have to fold stuff
  - 👎 High cost for limited use



## Riding to work

To cut down on sweat, leave earlier and cycle more slowly.



If your route involves hills, find the roads with the most gradual inclines.

If you commute into the sun at dawn or sunset, wear a red or deep orange top. Don't wear white, because sun-blinded motorists behind won't see you.



## Cleaning up at work

- 1** Change clothes and clean up in a wash-room. For privacy, use a toilet stall.
  - Use wheelchair-accessible stalls for the most room.
- 2** Remove your work clothes from your bag and hang them up.
  - If stalls don't have wall hooks, buy adhesive ones and put them in the stalls yourself.
- 3** Take off your cycling clothes and put them in your bag.
  - If you've nowhere to let cycling clothes dry, put them inside a plastic bag.
  - If you store your bike in a secure, private area, lay your cycling clothes on the top tube and handlebars to dry.
- 4** Use a towel to dry off sweat.
- 5** If you feel smelly:
  - Carry a package of disposable, moist towelettes and use them to sponge off. Or use a washcloth.
  - Apply talcum powder.
- 6** Towel off hair, wet it if necessary, and brush, comb, and/or blow-dry.
- 7** Put on jewelry away from toilets and sinks so you don't drop it in.

## Skirts and dresses

### A GOOD CYCLING SKIRT:

- Isn't too tight to let you open your legs enough to pedal.
- Comes down no farther than the knees.
- Won't get caught in the back brakes.
- If it's shorter or wider than modesty allows, wear cycling shorts underneath.
- Try a "skort": a pair of shorts that look like a skirt.



It's hard to find a work skirt I can cycle in. Women's skirts often aren't flared enough. So I've bought skirts made for teenagers, which work fine.

### LONG DRESSES OR SKIRTS

- 1** Wear a belt.
- 2** Pull one or two feet of material up until the dress hangs at knee height.
- 3** Tuck the material into the belt.
- 4** If you have no belt, tuck the dress into the waistband of your underwear.

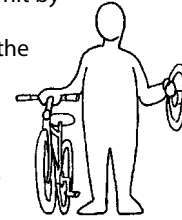


# Getting Comfortable with TRAFFIC

## Surprise Facts

### 1 NOT AS DANGEROUS AS IT LOOKS

Bicycling in traffic isn't as scary as it looks from the sidewalk. Bicyclists don't usually get hit by motorists from behind—one of the most common fears. Cyclists do get into trouble when they don't act like the other vehicles around them—namely, cars.

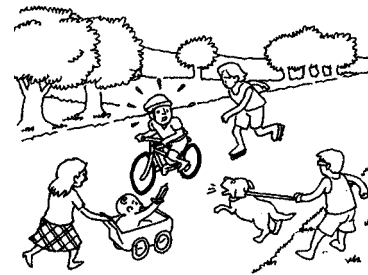


### 2 YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW

Because you probably know how to drive a car, you already know how to get through traffic. You just have to apply this knowledge to bicycling.

### 3 YOU'VE ALREADY TAKEN BIGGER RISKS

More bike crashes happen on off-street paths than in traffic. Why? On paths, people bike next to walkers, runners, skaters, skate-boarders, dogs, and small children.



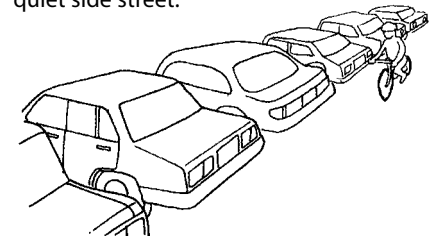
If you don't already ride in traffic, this page has a few tips to help make you more comfortable.



## How to learn

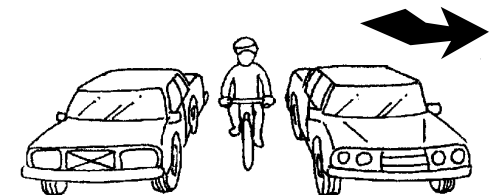
### 1 PRACTICE

At first, biking next to two-ton hunks of metal (cars) scares most people. How do you get over it? Walk or drive your bike to a quiet parking lot and ride around. Ride down rows of cars, getting closer and closer. When you get within four feet of a line of cars, practice looking inside the cars. Look for people who might open doors or pull out in front of you. Then practice following cars through the lot. When you're ready, repeat these steps on a quiet side street.



### 2 GET TO KNOW YOUR BIKE

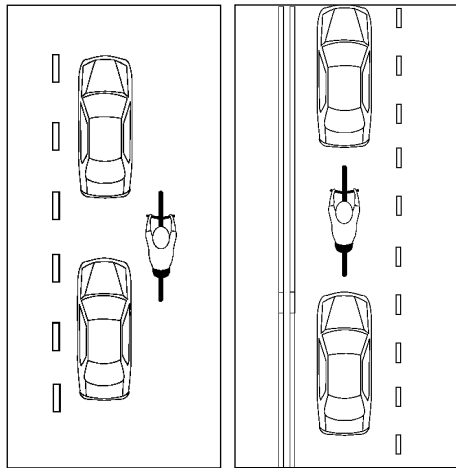
You might not ever need these skills, but knowing how your bike performs will build your confidence. Learn how small a space your bike will fit through by riding between objects, such as parked cars or sign poles. Do this until you can judge spaces on sight.



# TRAFFIC

## 3 TAKE IT EASY

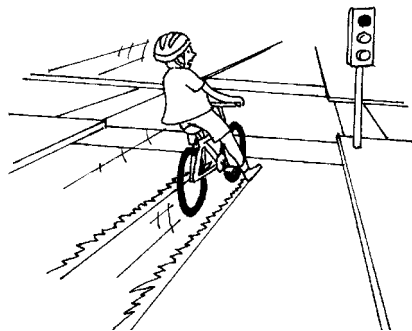
Remember that on a street, you either **share the lane** (cars pass next to you) or **take the lane** (you ride in the middle, and cars stay behind you or pass in another lane). If a street's not wide enough for you to share safely, and taking the lane scares you, stay off that street—at least until you feel more comfortable. Riding behind an experienced partner can help.



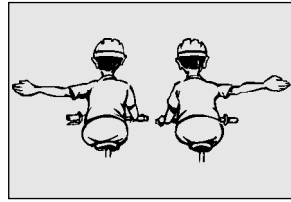
Sharing the lane

Taking the lane

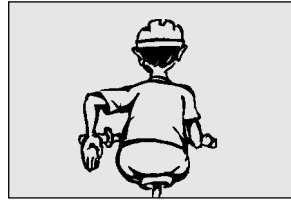
Learn how well your brakes work: go fast, then try to stop within 10 feet. Then try to stop within six feet, then three feet, then one. Also see how quickly you can speed up from a stop. For more info on stopping.



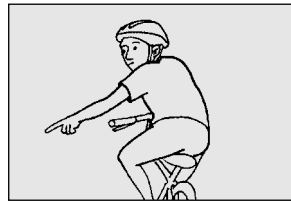
## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR HANDS AND HEAD



I'm turning (for observers in front & behind)



I'm slowing (for observers behind)



I'm going there



Wait



Go ahead

# FINDING YOUR WAY

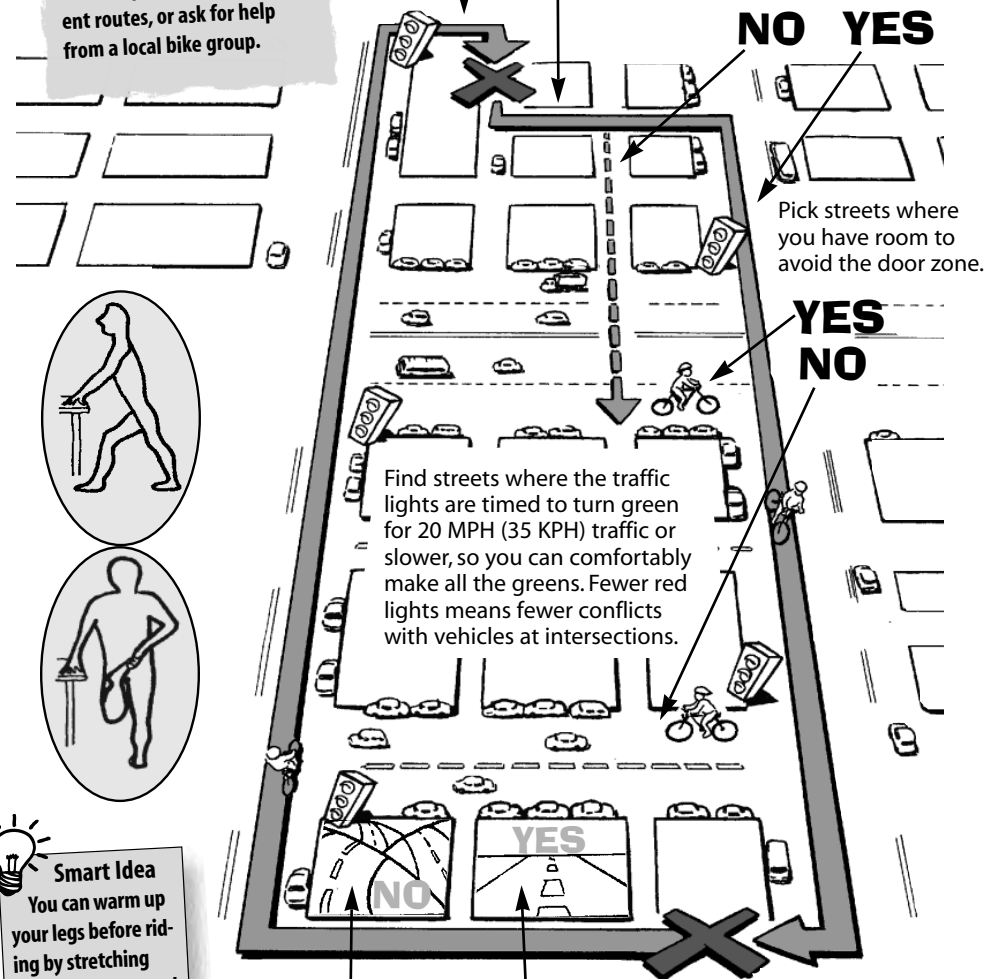
## Choosing your route

**B**efore you ride off to your destination, think about the roads you'll take: How can you make your trip easier, cutting your conflicts with automobiles? Experiment with different routes, or ask for help from a local bike group.



Choose a route that lets you make as few left turns as possible. This might mean using one route to a destination, and a different route from the destination.

Cross major roads at traffic signals instead of on side streets.



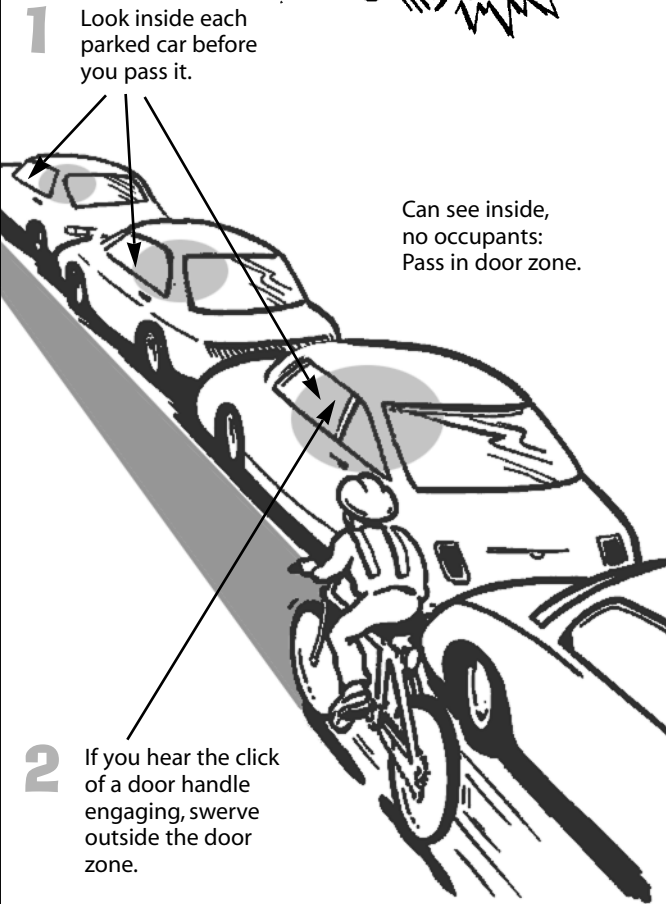
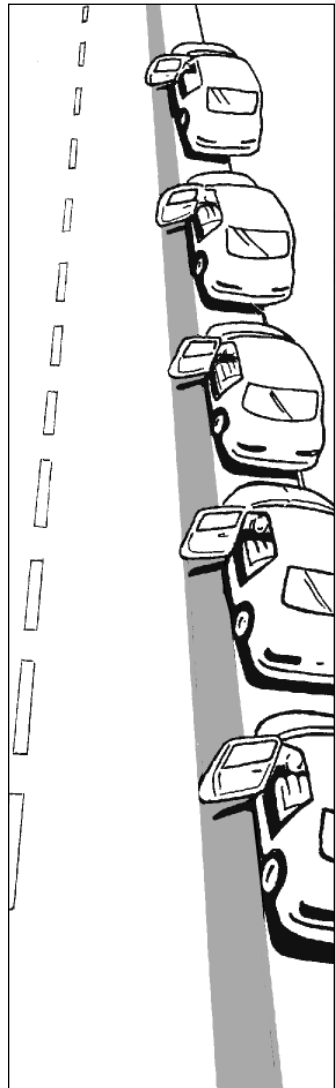
**Smart Idea**  
You can warm up your legs before riding by stretching your quadriceps and (if you use pedal clips) your calves.

# Riding in the DOOR ZONE

## How to avoid getting doored

### THE DOOR ZONE:

The three or four feet next to parked cars in which you could get hit by an opening door.



**1** Look inside each parked car before you pass it.

Can see inside, no occupants: Pass in door zone.

**2** If you hear the click of a door handle engaging, swerve outside the door zone.

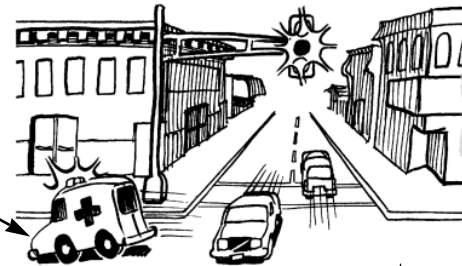
Can't see inside or someone is inside: Move outside door zone or slow down and pass carefully.



# LOOKING Techniques

## The up-and-down scan

Don't focus on stuff that doesn't affect you.



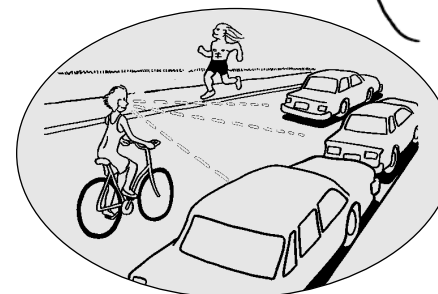
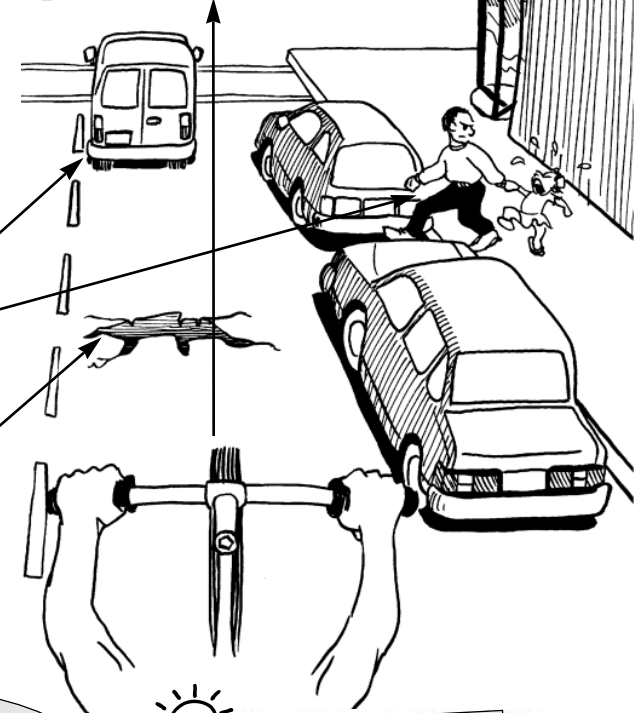
As you ride, you have to avoid two kinds of things: hazards on the ground right in front of you, and cars and pedestrians up ahead and on either side. You should always know how both the ground and the traffic around you looks.

**STOP HERE AND READ**

**1** Look at the ground 20 to 30 feet in front of you.

**2** Look up at traffic in front and to the sides.

**3** Look back down at the ground.



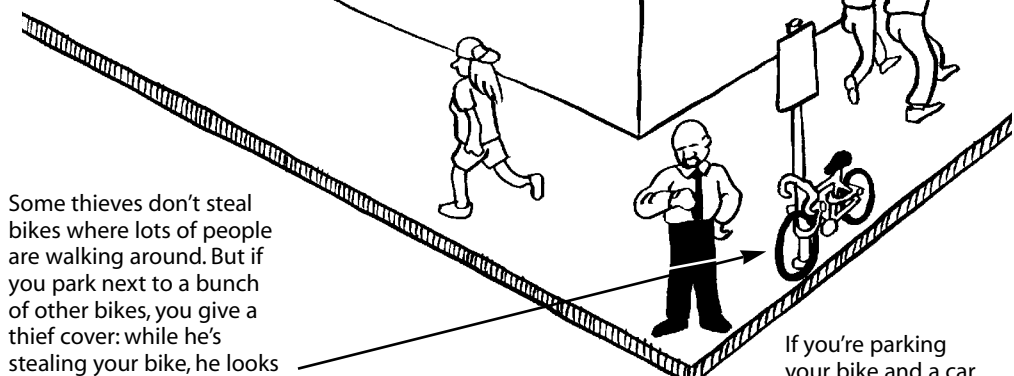
**Smart Idea**  
If you want to check out something interesting on the sidewalk, first do a quick look at potential dangers ahead and to the sides. This gives you a few seconds to stare.

# WHERE TO PARK YOUR BIKE

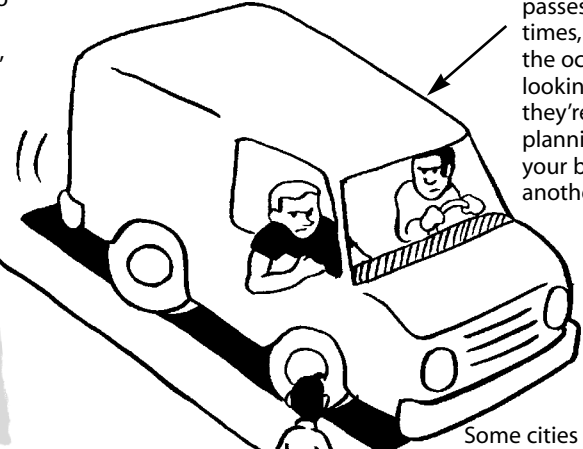
Some thieves don't steal bikes where lots of people are walking around. But if you park next to a bunch of other bikes, you give a thief cover: while he's stealing your bike, he looks like just another cyclist. So park away from other bikes but out in the open, where people pass very close to the bike.

**STOP HERE AND READ**

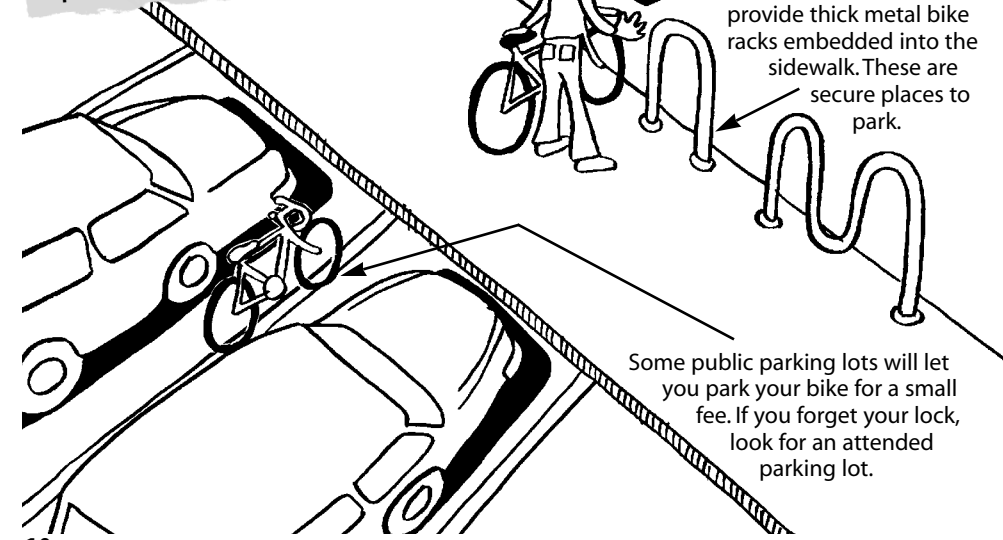
When you arrive at your destination, or even at home, where do you park your bike? How you choose a parking place can cut your chances of rip-off.



If you're parking your bike and a car passes you several times, watch out. If the occupants keep looking at you, they're probably planning to steal your bike. Move to another spot.

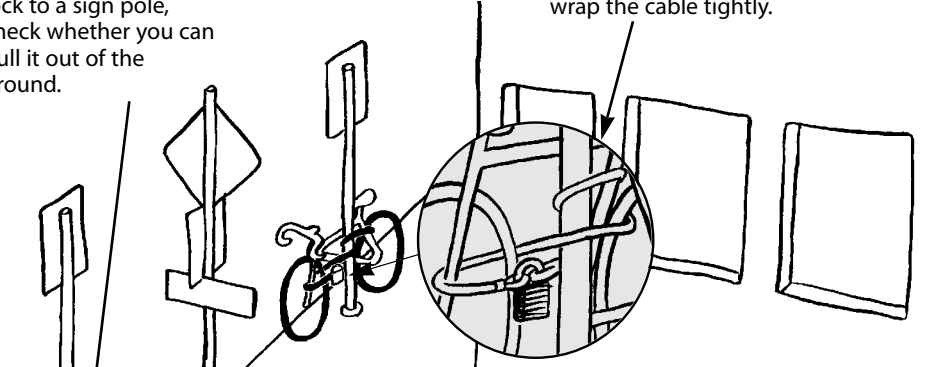


Some cities and businesses provide thick metal bike racks embedded into the sidewalk. These are secure places to park.



Some public parking lots will let you park your bike for a small fee. If you forget your lock, look for an attended parking lot.

Before you lock you lock to a sign pole, check whether you can pull it out of the ground.



If you lock with a cable, don't make theft easy; wrap the cable tightly.

If you lock your bike to a sign pole, a thief can remove the sign and slide your bike over the top of the pole—no matter how you have it locked. That's why poles with several signs are better.

If you hobble your bike (i.e., lock the wheel to the frame) instead of locking it to something secure, don't park it next to a subway entrance. A thief could grab it and disappear quickly.

Whatever your destination, look for chances to park your bike indoors. Some proprietors will, if you ask, let you bring your bike into their buildings while you do business.

**Smart Idea**

Some buildings having little or no bike parking are used often by bike messengers. Help the messengers by parking down the block. This lets the messengers come and go quickly.

Lock your bike to a parking meter if you're using a U lock. Never lock to a meter with only a chain or cable—a thief will slide your bike over the top.

# GETTING HELP

## Finding a bike shop

One of the best ways to get good, regular maintenance is to find a good bike shop. How? Here are some tips.

- 1** Ask around. Find people who ride like you do, and are happy with the work done on their bikes. Get the name of their bike shop.
- 2** Go to a recommended shop and talk with the owner or manager. (If you can, do this when they're not busy: during cold or rainy seasons, or mid-morning on a business day.) Tell them you want to find a shop where you can regularly have your bike fixed.
- 3** Ask about the mechanics. Are they experienced urban bikers? Also ask if you can use the same mechanic every time (just as you'd always have the same person cut your hair). Some shops hire certain mechanics just for the summer, so you don't know if they'll be around next year.
- 4** How does the dealer react to your questions? If they seem willing to spend time with you, you might have found a winner.

## Do it yourself

Maybe you'd like to know enough about repairs to keep you bike going in emergencies. Or maybe you can't pay a bike shop every time you need repairs. If so, learn to fix stuff yourself—it's easier than you might think! Several ways to learn:

- Take a class. Many bike dealers, community colleges, and bike clubs offer bike-repair classes.
- Get a book. Some books on fixing bikes are easy to follow. Find one you like at a bookstore or bike shop.
- Get an advisor. Find a friend or bike dealer who's willing to advise you when you can't figure stuff out. In exchange for a bike dealer's help with your bike, you can:

- 1** Buy the tools and parts you need at their shop.
- 2** Refer your friends to them.
- 3** Put off big repairs until cold or rainy months, when they need business.

## Information Resources