

First time on the road - Transcript

There are some key things you can do to ensure you follow a safe and responsible approach to cycling on the road.

When starting your journey on the road:

Check the road ahead and behind before placing your cycle on the road or cycle path

Position your cycle where you can 'see and be seen' by other road users

Make a final check before setting off when the road is clear

If you need to come to a stop, it's important that other road users know what you are about to do.

Identify a safe place to stop

Check the road behind is clear and if necessary, signal your intention to stop

Check over your left shoulder before moving to the left and/or use your mirrors if you have them

Stop your cycle at the side of the road

Only cycle on pavements if they are clearly marked as cycle routes or shared paths. Look out for the signs or markings that indicate a shared space. When cycling on a shared path, give way to people walking, take extra care and give plenty of room to older people, children and disabled people. And remember some disabilities may not be visible, or immediately obvious so always be considerate when using a shared space. Cycleways are a network of safe and accessible routes across London. Use the TfL Go app to explore the best cycle routes for you. Ensure you stop in a safe place to check routes when cycling. There's a link to this at the end of the module.

When cycling on the road it is important to understand where to position yourself. This can depend on the situation and the type of cycle you ride.

You should ride in the middle of the lane when:

There is not enough space to be overtaken

Moving through junctions

Waiting in traffic

Riding around a blind corner

Using a wider type of cycle or pulling a trailer

This is known as the primary position. The secondary position is to the left of the centre of the lane and invites road users behind you to overtake when there is enough time and space to do so. This position, which should be approximately half a metre from the kerb or a standard two-wheeled cycle, also helps you to avoid potholes, drain covers and uneven surfaces, particularly as these can be slippery in wet weather. Likewise, if you're riding a wider type of cycle, to avoid being affected by the way the road slopes towards the kerb - the camber of the road, you should ride in the centre of your lane or towards the centre line when it is safe to do so.

You should maintain your selected riding position consistently and change your position deliberately only after checking the road ahead and behind is clear.

To change position, plan your move well in advance:

Check behind you to ensure it is clear

Move into the central, primary position for as long as you need to be there

You should take particular care around large vehicles, such as buses and HGVs, and avoid cycling or waiting in drivers' blind spots. There are blind spots at the front of vehicles as well as the sides and rear. This advice applies to all cyclists, but remember, if you are using a cycle with a lower riding position, for example on a handcycle, recumbent cycle or pulling a trailer, it may be even harder for a driver to see you or your trailer. The drivers of these vehicles may not be able to see you clearly, so stay well back behind them. When a large vehicle passes by or pulls up next to you whilst cycling, use your brakes to drop behind the vehicle.

Some of the riskiest positions to be in on the road are cycling up the right hand side of a vehicle indicating right or left hand side of any large vehicle, particularly one stopped at a junction. Try and avoid these situations in general by either hanging back where needed or proceeding with caution to avoid these situations. Try to make eye contact with drivers so you're sure that they have seen you either directly or through their mirrors. Do not assume you have been seen and proceed with caution.

Remember, when passing parked cars, keep a door's width away in case a door opens suddenly. Before moving from a secondary to primary position to pass a parked car, remember to signal and check it is safe to do so. Once you have passed the parked car and before you return to the secondary position nearer the kerb, check over your left shoulder and/or use your mirrors to ensure there are no road users on your inside.

When riding a cycle with a wider wheelbase, you should ride in the centre of your lane or towards the centre line when it is safe to do so. This improves visibility and helps avoid a steep camber towards the edge of the road.

You will need to change position to avoid hazards you may encounter such as:

Parked cars

Pedestrians who may step into the road

Lane or pavement widening or other roadworks

Any other features that affect the flow of traffic

You should give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross the road at a junction. Pedestrians also have priority when on a zebra crossing, on a parallel crossing or at traffic light-controlled crossings when they have a green signal.

Take care when using an e-cycle, as they can gather speed quickly. When cycling downhill, apply the brakes gently to maintain a safe speed and distance from other vehicles.

Help us continually improve your cycling experience in London by reporting any problems on a street using the Street Care tool. You can find a link to this at the end of the module.

You can cycle safely and share the road responsibly by:

Making good and frequent observations

If necessary, communicating your intentions clearly to others

Choosing and maintaining the most suitable riding positions

Understanding priorities on the road, particularly at junctions

Considering cycling mirrors to help you check what is happening behind you if turning your head is tricky

Considering cycle indicators to help you communicate with other road users if lifting your arm to indicate is difficult

Ensuring you have white front lights and red back lights on your cycle, as this is a legal requirement when cycling after dark