

# BICYCLE SAFETY: A PARENT'S GUIDE

*Thank you for partnering with the Newport Beach Police Department to help make your child a safer bicyclist.*

## BE A "ROLL MODEL"

**LEARN.** As a parent, it is important that you review this bicycle safety information so that you can guide your child(ren) to be safe on the road. Learn about helmet fit, bicycle fit, safety checks, rules of the road, and other important topics for bicycle safety. There are many misconceptions about bicycle safety and children's bicycling; use this document to make sure that you are aware of the best information possible.

**SHARE.** Discuss bicycle safety with your child(ren). Talk about safe and unsafe behavior, explain safety checks, and assess their ability to grasp these concepts.

**LEAD.** It's not enough to talk to your child(ren), especially if your own bicycling behavior does not reinforce the safety message.

- Always wear your helmet when you are on your bicycle. Ensure that it fits and that you wear it correctly.
- Follow the rules of the road, whether you are driving, bicycling, or walking.
- Be courteous and respectful to others drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
- Avoid honking at bicyclists. Honking does not show courtesy and can be dangerous, startling a bicyclist and causing a crash or injury.



## DECIDING WHO RIDES WITH YOUR CHILD

As general guidelines:



- Children under age 10 should not ride bicycles alone, or without the close supervision of a parent or older companion. Generally, children at this age lack the experience and capacity to negotiate traffic without guidance and supervision.
- Children 10 or older should prove that they have the skills to ride their bicycle safely and follow the rules of the road before they are allowed to ride alone. Children must also be comfortable and confident riding in traffic before venturing out without the close supervision of a parent or an older companion.

Children are always safer when they are supervised while bicycling. Anyone riding with your child(ren) should understand bicycle safety and be able to make safe decisions for both themselves and for your child(ren).

Every bicyclist should ride with one person per seat. It is not safe to have someone ride on the handlebars or on wheel pegs.

## DECIDING WHERE YOUR CHILD CAN RIDE

Riding in traffic is challenging, regardless of age.

- For younger children especially, consider limiting routes to areas away from traffic, like parks or trails.
- If you choose to allow your child to ride with traffic, consider restricting them to neighborhood streets or roads with low speed limits, slow-moving traffic, and/or dedicated bicycle lanes. For more information, see [www.nhtsa.gov/DOT/NHTSA/NTI/SRTS/7505-10-ChooseSafeRoutes.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.gov/DOT/NHTSA/NTI/SRTS/7505-10-ChooseSafeRoutes.pdf).



Although it may seem safer to ride on the sidewalk, **bicycles belong in the street.**

- Sidewalks are for pedestrians, not bicyclists.
- Drivers do not expect faster-moving traffic on sidewalks. Drivers can pull into or out of a driveway without looking for a bicyclist on the sidewalk.
- Drivers do not expect bicyclists to cross intersections in the crosswalk. Drivers can turn at an intersection without seeing a bicyclist preparing to cross in a crosswalk.
- Sidewalks with many driveways are not a safe riding path for any bicyclists, regardless of age.

## DISTRACTIONS CAN BE DEADLY



Whether you are driving, bicycling, or walking, distractions can lead to accidents, injuries, and even death.

- **Focus on the task at hand.** Keep your hands on the wheel or handlebars. Whether you are driving, bicycling, or walking, your mind, eyes, and ears should be focused on your surroundings.
- **Handle one thing at a time.** Pull over if you need to address a situation in your car or in your bicycling group, need to use an electronic device, or need to handle anything else that would distract you from driving or riding safely.
- **Just turn it off.** Power down your cell phone, turn off alerts, or take other steps to ensure that you are not tempted to direct your attention to an electronic device. In California, it is illegal to wear earbuds or headphones on both of your ears while driving a motor vehicle or a bicycle.
- **X the text.** Never text, surf the web, or check your email while driving, bicycling, or walking; it's dangerous. Stop and leave the roadway to use distracting devices.
- **Secure your pets.** Unsecured pets in cars can distract drivers; unsecured pets near roadways can distract passing traffic. Secure pets in your car before you begin driving. Keep pets on a 6-foot leash for walks and in a secure area at home (like a fenced yard or inside your residence).

