

CYCLING TIPS

👉 You

Make sure you are physically and mentally prepared for the challenge ahead. Events like El Tour are a great place to push yourself to the next level, but you must have the training and physical condition to go the distance. If you are a new cyclist, or just getting back on the road after a long period of inactivity, consult your physician to make sure you're good to go!

👉 Your Bicycle

If you haven't ridden your bicycle in a while, take it to a bike shop for a checkup, before you start your training. The shop will help you understand how your bicycle works if you don't know. Have your bicycle checked thoroughly once a year.



👉 Have the bike shop check the fit of your bicycle.

A bicycle is a lot like clothing - it needs to fit right to be comfortable, and this is more important the further you ride. Your power and efficiency increases with a well-fitted bicyclist.

👉 **Be sure your tires are in good condition and keep them fully inflated.** Check tires and air pressure before every ride (the correct pressure is printed on the sidewall).

👉 Have a maintenance check that you perform

before every ride. Some use the "ABC Quick Check" **A** = Air in tires; proper inflation avoids flats. **B** = Brakes. **C** = Chain, crank, cassette/cogs and cables. **Quick** = Quick release or axle nuts. **Check** = everything else: water cage, handle bars, seat, etc.

(For more information, visit the League of American Bicyclists' website at: www.bikeleague.org/educenter/factsheets.htm)

👉 Your Equipment

Always wear a helmet when cycling! You never know when you may fall or crash, and your head is easily injured without a helmet. **Be sure your helmet fits well** and sits on your head level, with the chin strap snug (if you can fit more than one finger between the strap and your throat, the strap is too loose).

👉 **Know how to repair a flat tire.** Bring a pump (even if you use CO₂, still carry a pump, as you may use up all your CO₂), two spare tubes, a patch kit, and tire levers.

👉 **Know how to put your chain back on** (latex or cloth gloves can keep your hands from getting dirty).

👉 **Carry change (or a cell phone)** to call if you need help. Carry a **multi-tool** to help you tighten or adjust your handlebars, seat and other parts that might need adjustment.

👉 **Use Sunscreen.** Re-apply it as needed, especially if you sweat a lot. Choose a sunscreen that effectively blocks both UVA and UVB rays.

👉 **Use cycling gloves.** They are specially designed to cushion your hands from handlebar shock, and will protect your palms if you fall.

👉 Nutrition and Hydration

👉 **Prehydrate.** Be sure you are well hydrated before your ride. For several days before a big ride, drink more than you need to help boost cellular hydration.

👉 **Drink, drink and drink more!** It is critical that you drink a small amount every five to fifteen minutes to stay hydrated. You won't notice how much you are sweating when you bicycle, as it evaporates quickly. Drink **at least** one small bottle (16 oz. or 470 ml.) every hour you are riding (and very possibly more).

👉 **Carry more water than you think you will need.** Our dry climate and heat can be unforgiving. It is better to have extra water than not enough. If you use a back-mounted hydration system, carry empty water bottles on your bike as a backup in case your system leaks or ruptures.

👉 **Consider using nutrient/electrolyte drinks.** Many bicyclists use them all the time, but if you are not used to one, it can upset your stomach. Try different drinks on training rides, to find out which works best for you. Electrolytes can help prevent cramps.

👉 **Eat before you are hungry.** Bicycling causes your body to use from 200 to 700 or more calories per hour. Many riders like fresh fruit, and many use energy bars and/or gels to replace the extra energy used. Plan to eat from 100 to 500 calories per hour as you ride, when training. Avoid heavy, greasy snacks.

👉 Your Cycling Conduct on the Road

Always follow traffic laws. Predictability is the basis of traffic safety and is especially important for cyclists. So, when you are bicycling, do the same thing you would do if you were driving your car at the same speed; you will be legal, and a lot safer.

👉 **Be visible to others.** Think about how well others can see you. Dress in clothing that is easily seen (generally lighter and brighter colors), and position yourself and your bicycle where people will see what you are doing (i.e., turning left from the center left turn lane).

👉 **Be courteous** to everyone else on the road, especially motorists. If traffic builds up behind you, find a safe place to pull over and let them pass.

👉 **Ride on the right in the same direction that traffic moves.** This is an essential part of being predictable to other drivers. Use eye contact whenever possible to help confirm that you have been seen.

👉 **Look where you want to go.** If you get in a tight squeeze, to avoid a crash, look where you want to go, not at the obstacle you need to avoid.

👉 **When cycling after sunset, or before sunrise,** use a white light on the front, and a red rear reflector, and a red rear light. Wear light colored clothing with reflective features to make yourself even more visible.

👉 **For your safety, and the safety of others, please do not wear earbuds while riding.** You need to be aware of all vehicles on the road with you.

👉 Cycling With Others

Group cycling is fun. It also requires more skills to ride close to others. **Do not** blindly follow riders in front over cattleguards or railroad tracks. Look beyond the rider in front of you, so you can anticipate problems. Remember, while we are legally entitled to ride two abreast, single up when it will help traffic flow better.

👉 **Practice riding with others before doing so in an event.** Check with local bicycle shops for club and other group rides that will let you practice the important skills needed. Riding with others will be a lot more fun after you get used to and skilled at it.

👉 **Learn and follow group cycling etiquette. Hold your line. Do not** move to either side without checking first; **do not** brake suddenly or make other sudden changes in speed; and **do not** pass without saying "passing" (it is best to always pass on the left).

👉 **Call or point out to your fellow cyclists hazards such as potholes, glass, gravel, debris on the road, etc.** Communicate effectively and help your fellow riders stay safe.

👉 Individual Cycling Technique

Enjoy your time cycling. Most cyclists make their greatest improvements when they are having fun. A positive attitude can make a huge difference.

👉 **Try to maintain a constant level of effort** while bicycling. **Use your gears** just like you do with your car/truck, to keep your "engine" from having to go too fast or too slow. Your energy will last longer, your fitness will improve steadily, and you are less likely to strain something.

👉 **Practice emergency braking.** Your weight will shift forward when braking hard, so slide back on the saddle, and lower your upper body at the same time. Practice applying more pressure on the front brake than the rear, then easing off the front brake if the rear begins to skid, to maximize braking force. The front brake is essential to stopping quickly, as more than 70% of braking force comes from the front brake.

👉 **Remember that training rides can take you a long way from home.** Always carry identification, some money (for phone calls and/or food & drink), and if you are riding in an area you are not familiar with, a map.

👉 Seek expert advice and/or instruction.

If you don't understand these tips, or want to get up to speed sooner, seek out a qualified instructor or coach. Check with Perimeter Bicycling (745-2033) for referrals and for regular training classes, such as El Tour 101 Training Classes.

👉 Road Conditions

👉 **This event utilizes open public roads, which may or may not be maintained by local municipalities, cities, counties, and/or the State.** The event is not responsible for the condition and maintenance of the roads. Road hazards are always possible and in entering this event, and signing the **Rider Waiver**, you agree and understand that you must be alert to all road hazards, including but not limited to: pot holes, uneven pavement, road cracks, road debris, unfinished construction, and motor vehicle traffic.

👉 **Exercise caution when crossing railroad tracks and cattle guards.** Remember to cross them at a perpendicular angle; slow down before crossing tracks and guards - avoid braking while crossing; and be especially careful if the tracks or cattle guard is wet as they may be very slippery. Stay safe: when in doubt, dismount and walk across.

