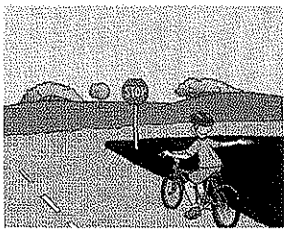
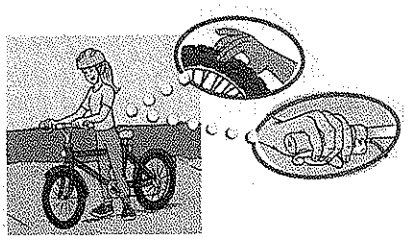
Be a Safe Bike Driver

Riding your bicycle can be great fun. But do you know how to "drive" your bike?



- Ride on the right side of the road or trail.
- Always stop at the end of a driveway — look left, right, then left again before starting.
- Obey traffic laws—signs and signals, including stoplights.
- Ride straight—no surprises.
- Look back before turning left or if you have to move left to avoid something.
- Don't ride at night until your parents say you are old enough and THEN use lots of lights.
- Ride single file if there are cars behind you.
- Use hand signals to let drivers know what you are going to do.
- Be careful of people walking — use your voice or a bell to let them know you are coming.
- Look out for cars backing up — is a driver in the car? Are the taillights on?



Check Your Bike For Safety

Have your bike checked at least once a year at a bike shop. Check it yourself before biking with the ABC Quick Check:

- AIR — pinch the tires, they should be hard.
- BRAKES — make sure they work and aren't rubbing the tire.
- CRANK/CHAIN — if there are problems with your gears or if the chain is loose, take it to a bike shop.
- QUICK — check "quick release levers" and other bolts to make sure they are tight.

Wear Your Helmet the Right Way

First, put on your helmet so it is level and snug — if it slides around, you need thicker pads.

- EYES — you should see the very edge of your helmet when you look up past your eyebrow.
- EARS — the strap should meet right under your ear lobes to form a Y.
- MOUTH — the strap should be loose enough so you can breathe and insert a finger between the buckle and your skin, but tight enough that if you drop your jaw, you can feel the helmet pull down the top of your head.

League of Illinois Bicyclists

Intended for older elementary and pre-teen children.
For more information, see "Safety Education" at bikelib.org

Thanks to the Bicycle Coalition of Maine.

Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Traffic Safety

Dear Parents,

Now is the time to teach your child safe bike *driving!* Bicycling is a great way for your family to have fun and exercise together. It's a sport to enjoy for one's entire lifetime. Bicycling can make a child more independent -- and you will feel more confident granting this independence when you know your child has learned to drive a bike safely.

- First, **set a good example** by riding on the right when on the street and by following all traffic laws -- which apply to bikes just as they do to cars. Don't forget *your* helmet!

- Make sure your child has a bike that is in good working condition and that fits properly – a bicycle is not something you should buy for the child to "grow into." Teach your child the **ABC Quick Check** – that's "**A**ir (full tires), **B**rakes (working, and not rubbing), **C**hain and **C**rank -- and (tightened) **Quick** release levers." A bike shop can help.

- Kids are not just small adults. They have a narrower field of vision, less ability to judge speed or distance, and may be impatient and impulsive. It's important to teach them the skills needed to **avoid the most common causes of crashes** -- and learning these skills takes practice.

Crash Cause	Way to Avoid
Coming out of a driveway and failing to yield to traffic	*Teach child to look LEFT, RIGHT, and LEFT again. Enter the roadway when nothing is coming.*
Failing to stop at stop sign	*Practice stopping; ride with your child and explain searching for traffic. BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL.*
Sudden left swerve -- into traffic	*Practice riding straight and "scanning" to the rear -- looking back to see if there is traffic.*
Riding on the wrong side of the street	*Ride on the RIGHT- it's safer and it's the law.*
Riding at night or in bad weather	*Children shouldn't ride at night. Anyone riding at night needs light colored clothes and lots of lights!*

Generally, younger children should start off riding on sidewalks. Teach your new cyclist to:

- Stop at **road crossings**. Look Left – Right – Left. Wait for cars. Then, take his or her turn alertly, paying attention to what the motorists are doing.
- Be aware that cars might turn into a driveway – the driver may not look for bikes on sidewalks.
- Watch for clues that a car may soon be **backing out of a driveway**: engine noise, taillights on, exhaust smoke, driver in car, garage opening, cars hidden behind bushes or other cars. Many car drivers only look back – not side-to-side – until they are at the street.
- Speak up ("Bike passing" or "Excuse me") or sound a bell or horn **before passing someone**.

Faster-moving bicyclists on sidewalks are harder for motorists to see than cyclists on the right side of the road. Studies have shown that sidewalk cyclists riding against traffic are much more likely to collide with cars than on-road riders going in the same direction as traffic. Very few bikes get hit from behind – most adult car-bike crashes occur at intersections. As cyclists get faster, biking on many streets becomes safer than sidewalk riding.

When your child is ready, **practice road riding together** to teach skills such as: bicycling defensively, scanning around for traffic, looking back (and listening) for cars behind, proper lane positioning when turning (or going straight), hand signaling, and knowing where it is safe to ride for your child's skill level.

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For more detailed information, go to www.bikelib.org, under "Safety Education"

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