

# HALIFAX CYCLING HANDBOOK

**“Cycling isn’t just transportation,  
it’s transformation.”** - Adam Stones

First edition, 2020



# Cycling is for Everyone!

**Cycling is the happiest mode of travel in cities. Get your bike out and enjoy the benefits to your happiness, health, and budget.**

This handbook will teach you about your bike, safe cycling practices, and local traffic laws. Read on to find out how to get around by bike in Halifax.

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# Reasons to Ride a Bike

## **Health**

Travelling by bike regularly will help you stay fit, improve your mental health, and help you manage stress.

## **Mobility**

Bikes can take us from points A to E, where 'E' stands for education, employment, and essential services. Thanks to the affordability of the bike, people at most ages, incomes and abilities can perform their necessary daily trips by riding a bike.

## **Community**

Cycling regularly in public spaces builds a strong relationship with those places - and also with the people with whom we're sharing the space. Cycling builds inclusive and safe spaces in our cities, and more engaged citizens.

## **Environment**

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has some simple advice: we all need to cycle more. Cycling connects us to our environment and makes us sensitive to the changes we can affect – such as reducing emissions.

## **Economy**

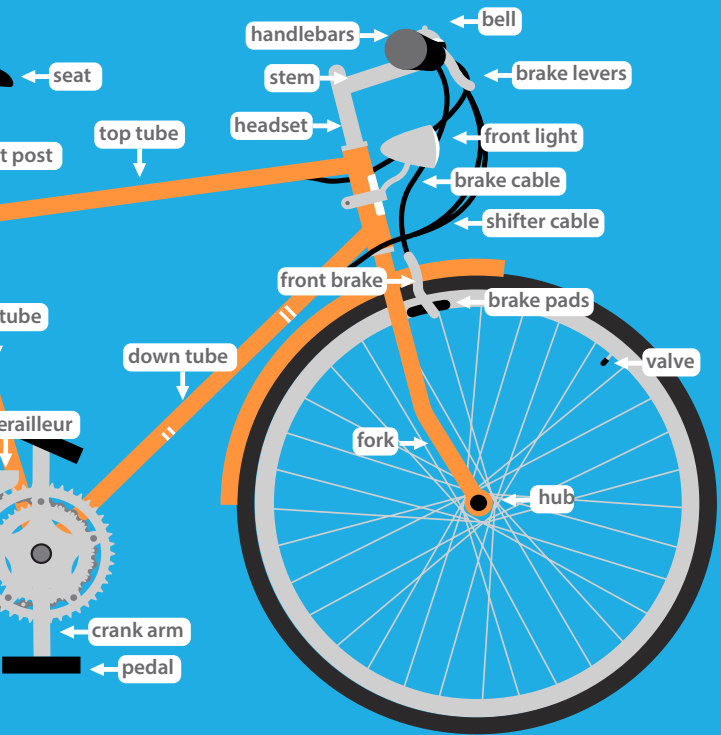
Cycling is good for local businesses. Organizations that encourage their employees to cycle to work perform better. At a larger scale, cities that embrace cycling are economically stronger. One study in the UK showed that non-motorists spend 40% more in neighbourhood shops each month than motorists.

# Getting to Know Your Bike

Bikes are pretty simple machines, but if you're not sure what all the parts are called it can feel intimidating to take your bike to a bike shop or learn how to fix things yourself. This diagram shows the names for each part of your bike.



You can learn to fix your own bike, buy a used bike, and bike parts at Bike Again, a do-it-yourself bike co-op. Learn more: <https://www.facebook.com/BikeAgain/>



# Ride Preparation

## **Bike Fit**

A well-fitted bike is more comfortable, safe, and efficient.

## **Frame Size**

You should be able to straddle your bike frame, feet flat on the ground, and have 2 inches of space between the bike frame and your body on most styles of bikes.

## **Seat Adjustment**

Your leg should have a slight bend with one of the pedals at its lowest point and your foot on that pedal while sitting on the seat. Proper seat high will enable more efficient turning and power while you ride.

## **Handlebar Adjustment**

Your handlebars should be at about the same height as your seat. Handlebar height and the position of

the brake and shifter levers can vary between the style of bike and what the rider finds comfortable.

## **ABC Checklist**

The ABC checklist is an easy way to remember what parts of your bike to check before you go for a ride.

### **Air**

- tires have enough air (check the side of the tire for recommended pressure)

### **Brakes and Bars**

- brakes are working
- handlebars are stable
- wheels spin freely

### **Chain and Crank**




- chain is tight and lubricated
- pedals spin freely

## Helmet Fit

A well-fitted helmet can protect your head if you fall. Nova Scotia law requires people of all ages to wear a helmet while riding a bike. The chin strap must be securely fastened. Children carried as passengers on bike seats and bike trailers must also wear helmets.



### Follow the 2-V-1 Rule

-  2 fingers between your eyebrow and your helmet
-  the straps should form a "V" around your ears
-  1 finger between the strap and your chin

## Bike Lights

Nova Scotia law requires that bikes be equipped with a white light at the front of your bike and a red reflector or red light at the rear. Although the law only requires a reflector in the back, a rear light is highly recommended while you are riding in low visibility conditions.



## Bike Bells

It is also required by law that your bike have a bell or horn to warn other road users that you are approaching.

# Rules of the Road

## **Traffic Safety/Motor Vehicle Act**

The *Motor Vehicle Act (MVA)*, currently being updated and re-named the *Traffic Safety Act (TSA)*, governs road user behaviour. You must follow all regular traffic laws, as well as laws that are specific to people riding bikes.

## **Bikes are Considered Vehicles**

The *MVA/TSA* considers bikes to be vehicles and people riding bikes have the same rights and responsibilities as other road users. While riding a bike you must follow traffic rules, obey signs, and use hand signals. Someone riding a bike who breaks a traffic law is subject to penalties.

While bikes are considered to be vehicles, the roads have generally been designed for cars and trucks. Therefore, people riding bikes must

make judgments about their position on the road depending on skill level, condition and width of the lane, weather conditions, and visibility. While cycling, ride with traffic on the right hand side of the road. You have the right to take the lane.

## **Sidewalks are for Walking**

It can be dangerous for people walking if you choose to ride your bike on the sidewalk or in a crosswalk. It is dangerous for you too. Every driveway is an intersection and a car can pull out without seeing you. Although you may feel safer on the sidewalk than on the street, you become the hazard if you are biking around people who are walking. Children aged 16 and under are permitted to ride on the sidewalk but anyone older than 16 can be ticketed.



## Offences for People Riding Bikes

failing to properly hand signal	\$180
riding bicycle on sidewalk	\$151.25
operating bicycle without required front and rear lighting	\$180
failing to stop at stop sign	\$180
operating a bicycle without helmet or with improperly secured helmet	\$151.25
failing to ride bicycle in available bicycle lane	\$151.25
failing to ride bicycle in same direction as the flow of traffic	\$151.25
riding on handlebar or frame of bicycle	\$151.25
driving while impaired	\$600-\$2000
bicycle not equipped with bell or horn in good working order	\$151.25
failing to ride bicycle in single file	\$151.25
riding bicycle on bridge other than on bike lane of Macdonald Bridge	\$151.25

## Offences for People Driving Cars

parking in bicycle lane	\$61.60
operating vehicle in bicycle lane	\$697.50
vehicle passing bicycle when there is less than 1m between them	\$295
failing to immediately stop at scene of accident	6 points
improper passing	4 points

# Cycling Safety

## See

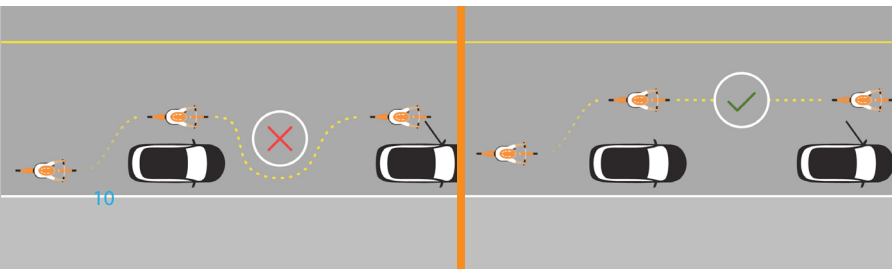
It is important to be aware of your surroundings while riding a bike and anticipate changes in traffic: things like cars ahead of you turning right or cars making lane changes. Plan to position yourself to avoid conflicts.

## Be Seen

Being visible means positioning yourself appropriately on the road. If there is a bike lane, stay in the bike lane, as long as it is safe to do so. If you are making a left turn, position yourself in the centre of whichever lane allows for left turns.

## Be Predictable

Ride confidently and predictably in a straight line so that other road users will be able to recognize your behaviour and give you space to ride safely. When you are riding by parked cars or construction, ride in a straight line rather than weaving in and out. This makes your movement predictable for people driving around you. Always ride at least 1 meter away from parked cars to avoid a car door that may unexpectedly be opened into your path. Always check over your shoulder before changing lanes.



## Hand Signals

While riding a bike, you must use hand signals to indicate to other road users that you are turning or slowing down. Signal where you are heading before you make a turn by using the hand signals below.

Left Turn



Stop



Right Turn



Right Turn

## Sharing the Road

Unfortunately not all streets have bike lanes on them. You may have to

share the road with cars, buses, and transport trucks on some routes. It is your right to take up as much space as you need. Do not pass vehicles in an intersection. Do not pass vehicles on the right if they are turning right.

## Collisions

Being part of a collision is rare but you should be prepared. Remain calm and call the emergency line (911) or HRM police (902-490-5020). Remind the driver that they must remain at the scene of the collision until the police arrive if it is safe to do so.

## At the Scene of a Collision

Take pictures of:

- The vehicle and license plate
- Your bike and any damage
- Your injuries, if any
- Road where the collision occurred

## At Home After a Collision

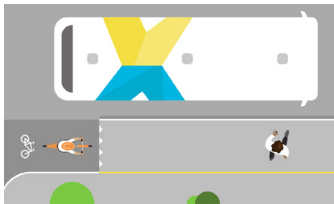
- Get a medical report right away
- If police weren't present, file a police report within 24 hours
- Contact your insurance company

# Intersection Safety

Urban intersections are the sites of most collisions between people riding bikes and people driving cars.

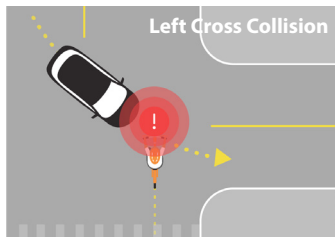
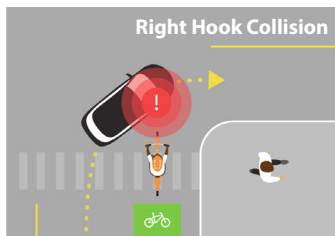
## Raised Bus Stops

Raised bus stops are where the pavement of a bike lane rises to meet the sidewalk at a bus stop, allowing passengers to get on and off the bus from the bike lane. People riding bikes must yield to people entering the bus when a bus is stopped. Until a bus is stopped, people waiting for the bus must wait on the sidewalk, not in the bike lane.



## Common Car-Bike Collisions

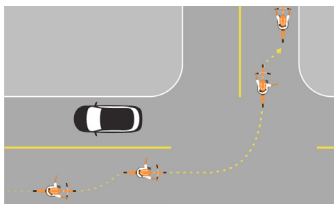
There are two common types of car-bike collisions that happen in intersections.



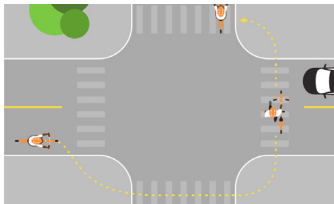
## Making a Left Turn by Bike

At most intersections, there are two different ways to make a left turn on your bike. HRM has recently added a new type of infrastructure to some intersections to help facilitate left turns by bike, 2-stage turn boxes.

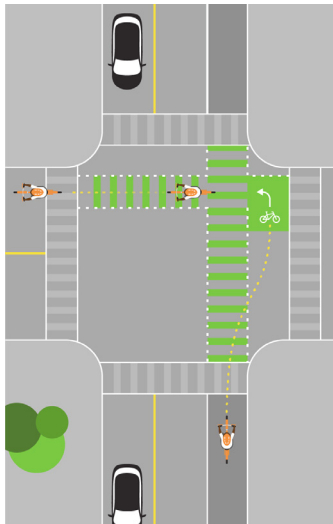
### Vehicular Left Turn



### Pedestrian Left Turn



## 2-Stage Left Turn Boxes



To learn more about cycling and intersection safety take the Making Tracks or Urban Cycling 101 courses. Visit us online at: [cyclehalifax.ca/urban-cycling-course](http://cyclehalifax.ca/urban-cycling-course) or [ecologyaction.ca/making-tracks](http://ecologyaction.ca/making-tracks)

# Getting from A to E

(education,  
employment,  
essential services)

## Getting Around

More and more Haligonians are choosing to get around the city by bike because it's a fast and affordable way to travel. There is an incredible sense of freedom when traveling by bike on your own steam.

## Ride With a Friend

If you're new to urban cycling, partner with a friend, family member, or colleague who has more experience cycling. Your bike buddy can help you learn to ride in traffic and the best routes to your local destinations.

## Commute to Work by Bike

When you bike to work you arrive alert and ready to start your day! Biking to work or school is also a great way to build exercise into your day without thinking about it.

## Choosing Your Route

The Halifax Bike Map can help you plan your routes. It shows you where you can find protected bike lanes, painted bike lanes, multi-use pathways, and local street bikeways. The maps are printed by the Halifax Regional Municipality and distributed for free at libraries and on their website.

## Bike Infrastructure

The Halifax Regional Municipality has committed to implementing a minimum grid of all-ages and abilities (AAA) bike infrastructure by the year 2022. With a minimum grid you will be able to get where you need to go in the Regional Centre on protected bike lanes, multi-use trails, and local street bikeways.

### **Multi-Modal Trips**

Sometimes our trips are multi-modal, meaning we use more than one mode of transportation. It is easy to integrate cycling with other modes of travel.

### **Traveling by Ferry**

You are permitted to take your bike on the ferries and there are bike racks on all of the ferries between Halifax and Dartmouth. There are also bike racks outside the ferry terminals to lock up your bike if you want to take the ferry without your bike.

### **Traveling by Bus**

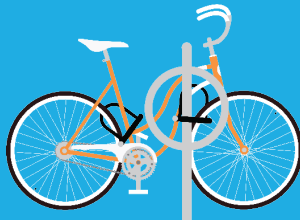
Some Halifax Transit buses are equipped with bike racks that hold a maximum of 2 bikes. You are responsible for loading and unloading your bike. The racks are located at the front of the bus, they fold down, and there is an adjustable arm that holds the front wheel where it meets the fork on your bike. You are not permitted to take your bike inside the bus.

### **Traveling by Car**

If you own a car, you can get a variety of styles of bike racks to carry your bike by car. Visit a local bike shop to learn more about the options. If you don't own a car, CarShare Atlantic is a carsharing company that allows you to sign up and access cars around the Halifax Peninsula and Downtown Dartmouth. You pay by the hour and per km. You can attach your own bike rack to the vehicle. Integrating carshare and cycling can allow you to live comfortably without a car.

### **Locking Your Bike**

Wherever you end your trip by bike, make sure to lock your bike well to prevent theft. Always lock your frame. A u-lock fixed to a ring and post works best. Use a second lock around both wheels for extra security.



# Cycling as a Family

## Transportation, Fun and Freedom

Many families find a lot of joy cycling together. Getting around by bike gives children an opportunity to explore their city and their independence as they get older. Here are some tips for riding as a family.

## Biking While Pregnant

Many people cycle while pregnant. Cycling is a good way to incorporate low-impact activity into your day. In later pregnancy when it is harder to walk, biking can help you get around easily. If you decide to ride through your pregnancy, upright step-through bikes are easy to mount and spacious for pregnant bellies. Consider lowering your seat so you can put your feet down on the ground comfortably. Do what feels right for you and your body.

## Biking with Babies and Toddlers

Biking with your little ones is a great way to get around. You should always consult with your child's pediatrician first. "Car" seats will support your baby's head and neck and can be placed in a trailer behind you or in front of you in a cargo bike bay.

When your child's neck strength has developed, you can transition to:

- **Front child seat:** mounts near the handlebars and offers your kiddo great views
- **Rear frame seat:** mounts to the frame in the rear
- **Rear rack seat:** mounts onto a rear rack and runs bigger, making it suitable for older toddlers
- **Long-tail bike:** fits two rear child seats and one front child seat



### Front Child Seat



### Rear Frame/ Rear Rack Seat



### Long-Tail Bike



### Learning to Ride

Between ages 3 and 7 your child will grow out of their seat on your bike and be ready to start riding on their own. The first thing they will need to learn is balance. A great way to learn is a balance bike. Balance bikes have two wheels, no pedals, and your child can push with their feet to move around.

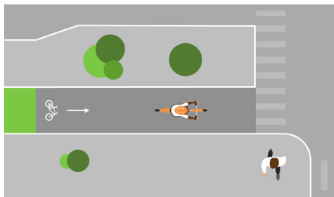
Once your little one has some experience with a balance bike, they can start practicing pedaling on a two-wheeled bike. Make sure their feet can touch the ground when sitting on the seat. Remember that your child can ride on the sidewalk but you should be riding on the road beside them.

Biking as a family will allow your child(ren) to enjoy the sights and sounds around them, learn how to navigate their neighbourhood, and experience their city. As they get older, cycling allows teens to move independently throughout the city.

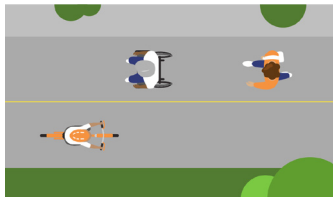
# Types of Bikeways

People riding bikes in Nova Scotia are allowed to ride on any type of roadway, except limited access highways. The Halifax Regional Municipality is building more infrastructure specifically for people biking.

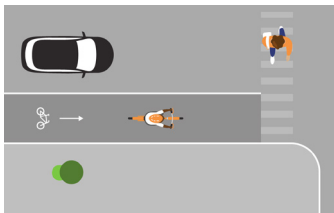
## Protected Bike Lane



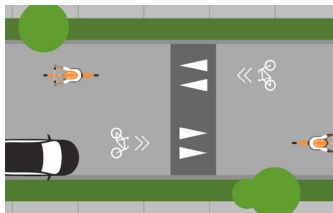
## Multi-Use Trail



## Painted Bike Lane



## Local Street Bikeway



# Cycling in all Weather

## Weather-Proofing Your Ride

Once you establish a routine riding your bike, you won't want to miss a day even in poor weather. Here are some items that can make your ride more enjoyable:

- fenders with mud flaps to keep rain and road water off you
- studded or knobby tires for grip in the winter
- pogies (big mittens that fit over your handlebars)

## Weather-Proofing Your Clothing

Urban cycling doesn't require a lot of special clothing, but some items can make your ride more comfortable:

- rain pants and rain jacket
- hat, scarf, and really warm waterproof mittens for winter
- waterproof boots with wool socks
- rain cover for your backpack/bag

## Bike Maintenance

If you choose to ride your bike all year round and in all conditions, it will wear out faster than if you only ride in the summer. Make sure to clean and lube your bike chain once a week with cleaner and bike chain lube. This will make your ride smoother and extend the life of your bike chain. In the winter when salt gets onto your bike, wipe down the frame and all components at least once a week.

## Riding Style

In slippery winter weather, it is important to adjust your riding style for the conditions. You should ride slowly, pedal smoothly, and relax your upper body. Make graceful turns and give yourself lots of distance to stop. If you follow these tips you can ride safely all year long.

# Types of Bikes

There are many different styles of bikes to meet your unique needs. Here are some common types of bikes and their uses to help you select one that will work best for you and/or your family.

## Road Bike

Best for going fast on pavement.



## Dutch-Style City Bike

Best for riding in a city.



## Mountain Bike

Best for gravel/wooded trails.



## Recumbent Bike

Best for low-impact on joints and for people with low-back pain.



### Hybrid Bike

Mix of road bike and mountain bike.  
Good for commuting in a city.



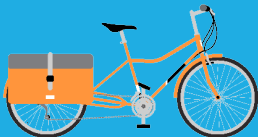
### Electric-Assist Bike (e-bike)

Best for routes with lots of hills and/or  
traveling long distances.



### Long-Tail Cargo Bike

Best for carrying lots of items and/or  
older toddlers on back of bike.



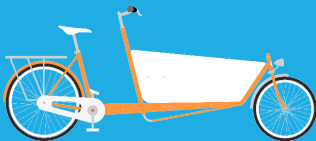
### Tricycle/Trike (for adults)

Best for people who have challenges  
with balance.



### Front-Bucket Cargo Bike

Best for carrying lots of items and/or  
older toddlers on front of bike.



### Touring Bike

Best for bike camping trips, carrying  
gear, & covering a lot of distance.



# Cycling Resources

## Do-it-Yourself Bike Co-Ops

Bike Again!.....	902-429-2202
Dal Bike Centre.....	902-494-8345

## Bike Policy, Planning & Advocacy

Bicycle Nova Scotia.....	902-425-5454 ext 228
DalTRAC.....	902-494-3209
Ecology Action Centre.....	902-429-2202
Halifax Cycling Coalition.....	902-802-8004
Halifax Regional Municipality.....	311
Welcoming Wheels.....	902-429-2202
NS Dept. of Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal.....	902-424-2297

## Bike Shops

Bike & Bean.....	902-820-3400
The Bike Pedaler.....	902-406-7773
C. Robertson Electric Bikes.....	902-423-9386
Cyclesmith.....	902-425-1756
Giant Bicycles.....	902-407-2462
Halifax Cycles.....	902-407-4222
Long Alley Bicycles.....	902-404-9849
Mountain Equipment Co-op.....	902-421-2667
Velofix Nova Scotia.....	1-855-835-6349



# The bike is a powerful tool, enabling mobility for people of all ages and abilities.



The Halifax Cycling Coalition is a membership-based non-profit organization that works to make Halifax more bike friendly. Our mission is to improve conditions for cycling for all people in our city by providing events, education, and advocacy support. Our work is actively intersectional (a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw) and anti-racist. Our vision is that Halifax will be the safest city in North America to ride a bicycle.

Become a member of the Halifax Cycling Coalition today to support our work. Our members give us political leverage when we are talking to city staff and councillors about equitable access to mobility options for residents. With your help we can be even more effective. Sign up today at [cyclehalifax.ca/register](https://cyclehalifax.ca/register)

# Get on your bike and enjoy health, happiness and freedom.

## Supporters:



**The Halifax Cycling Handbook, First Edition. August 2020.**

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**Sources:** Can-Bike, The Toronto Cyclists Handbook, The Toronto Cycling Handbook: Family Edition, Quebec Safe Cycling Guide, Nova Scotia Bicycle Safety booklet, BYCS, Nova Scotia Summary Offence Ticket Booklet, and Freepik.