


20. Using traffic lights and passing queuing traffic

National Standard reference: 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2

Instructing points

- On seeing traffic lights up ahead, check behind.
- Move into the primary position when it's clear for you to do so.
- When approaching any junction, you should be prepared to brake and have your fingers covering your brakes. Choose the most appropriate gear (if present) and speed as you approach the junction.
- If the light is red and there is queuing traffic, decide if you should filter right, left or in between lanes. Think about the sequence and timing of the lights.
- You understand that you should not filter unless there is time and space to do so.
- If riding in the 'door-zone' when filtering, ride slowly.
- When passing high-sided vehicles (such as buses) while filtering, ride slowly, looking out for pedestrians crossing the road in front.
- Move back into the traffic flow if the queue begins moving. Check left and communicate with the road user you wish to move in front of. Signal (if necessary) while looking left and move back into the traffic flow when there is time and space.
- Use the Advanced Stop Line or cycle box (if present) if there is time and space for you to reach it.
- Check behind, making eye contact with the person behind you, before the traffic lights change to green.
- Ride through the junction in the primary position to ensure no one overtakes you.
- Once through the junction, look behind to see what's behind you.
- Use a suitable riding position to continue your journey.

Additional resources

 **Video – Pass queuing traffic**

Activity ideas

Many riders will already know how traffic lights work. But some people may not know what 'amber' stands for. So, it's a good idea to start the activity by asking riders about the traffic light system and finding out what they know.

Consider the needs and abilities of your riders before deciding whether or not to combine the topic of traffic lights with filtering. It will be better for some riders to start with the topic of traffic lights separately. If riders have no previous experience of filtering, it may be best to start this activity at a site where there is an Advanced Stop Line or cycle box.

Activity ideas (continued)

If you choose to combine both the topics, first ask the riders to identify what hazards they can see at the site. Then ask them to observe as you demonstrate riding through the junction, noting if and how you filter to the front of the queue. Ask them to observe how other road users use traffic lights. Discuss the advantages of waiting in the queue, filtering right, left or in between lanes. It is important that you discuss the potential pros and cons of filtering.

Asking your riders to practise filtering when they ride with you may greatly increase the chance of you losing sight of them. Therefore, think carefully about the group size for this activity. It may be better to deliver the combined activity with you observing the riders from the pavement as they perform a point-to-point journey. If the riders are attempting the exercise independently but with a partner and there is a higher chance of them splitting up and you losing sight of one of them, consider asking them to cycle individually.

If you do deliver this activity as part of a longer journey or circuit-based activity, consider riding through a road network with many traffic lights and support your riders to either filter, or wait in the traffic flow. You should typically position yourself behind the riders to keep them in sight (and make sure they are supervised at junctions), while dynamically riding up alongside them when necessary.

Sample questions to check understanding

- Q. What do the traffic light colours mean?
- Q. What would you do if there is a queue of drivers waiting at a red light as you approach?
- Q. What is the Advanced Stop Line for?
- Q. Should you filter on the same side as road users who are about to turn that way?
- Q. What things can help you decide whether or not to filter and which side to filter on?

Differentiation

Inclusion

Riders using specialist cycles will need to carefully consider if there is time and space for them to filter. There may not be enough space for wider cycles, while riders on longer cycles such as tandems will need larger gaps between vehicles when moving back into the traffic flow. It may be best not to filter and to remain in the traffic stream.

People who are colour blind may need to check if a single light is at the top (red), middle (amber) or bottom (green) of the traffic light.

Differentiation (continued)

Extension

Simplify

Ask riders if they would like to ride with you or a partner for their first attempt.

Challenge

Consider supporting more experienced riders on longer journeys where they cycle through a more complex road network with several traffic light junctions. Change position when necessary to give all riders the opportunity to lead at the front.

Allow riders to practise advanced filtering techniques where they move into 'stations' between queuing cars if there is a driver approaching in the oncoming lane.

Risk benefit assessment

Risk

- Two riders move through the lights as they change, leaving you waiting at the red light.
- A larger group of riders becomes split when filtering and you lose sight of some of the riders.

Mitigation

- Prepare riders for the possibility of the group becoming split. Ask them to check back after going through lights to see if you are with them and to find a suitable place to wait if you do get split up. Ensure that you (or a co-instructor) are the last rider to pass the Stop Line.
- Only filter if the whole group can manage it. This will avoid the group splitting up. You could carry out filtering exercises through independent riding activities instead, where you observe from the roadside.

Benefits

Riders receive the supervision and support that they need while learning to follow the rules of the Highway Code. This gives them a realistic experience of riding on the road, helping them to become more competent and confident.