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# Ride Guide:

## A description of National Standard cycling

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Active  
Travel  
England

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# 1. Introduction

The environments in which we cycle are constantly changing, which means we are constantly responding, adjusting and adding to our learning. In fact, as cycle riders, we never stop experiencing new situations, and so we become more comfortable and confident as riders. We are able to enjoy cycling in different types of environments – from winding country lanes to busy urban centres and all other places where cycling is permitted.

Learning requires us to reflect regularly. By doing so, we recognise our strengths as riders, but also identify areas where we can develop. This is true for riders of all levels of experience, and is especially important for you as a cycling instructor. The people you teach – and the wider public – will look to you as a role model and follow your example.

## About the Ride Guide

The Ride Guide supports the Cycle Training Delivery Guide and the Activity Templates. Both guides have been created by The Bikeability Trust to support cycle training instructors to plan, deliver and review cycle training sessions.

The Cycle Training Delivery Guide, this **Ride Guide** and the **Activity Templates** are designed to mentor and develop cycle training instructors who deliver in line with the National Standard for Cycle Training.

These guides provide guidance on good practice and support quality assurance programmes. They also form the reference materials used by instructors during their qualification, the Level 2 Award in Instructing Cycle Training.

This Ride Guide gives you a detailed description of how to cycle, both on and off road. It sets out a range of activities, which get increasingly complex. It explains safe and responsible cycling practice to help you teach and be a good role model. It also goes into more detail around some areas of decision making. It does not cover all scenarios but tries to be as comprehensive as possible.

This guidance is not law and does not provide legal advice, which can be found in the Highway Code.

The Ride Guide starts by setting out the main skills you'll need to cycle to the National Standard:

- Preparing to cycle
- Controlling your cycle
- The four key skills:
  - Being aware of surroundings and the actions of others
  - Choosing and maintaining the most appropriate place to ride
  - Being able to communicate intentions clearly
  - Following priority rules in line with the Highway Code
- Practising routines when cycling (combining the four key skills above)

The Ride Guide goes into detail on each of these areas, and then shows you how to apply them in various scenarios.



- i** This Ride Guide uses the term ‘cycle’, which is a broad term that can include any type of cycle such as standard bicycles, tandems, tricycles, recumbents or other adapted cycles. Riding strategies apply to instructors of all physical abilities.



## Use of language

This guide and associated resources (including the Cycle Training Delivery Guide and Activity Templates) are based on the National Standard, but they deliberately do not use the same language. We have adapted the language to make the documents more accessible and inclusive by using plain English.

Plain English is a style of writing that allows the reader to understand the message the first time they read it. It uses short, clear sentences and everyday words while avoiding the use of unnecessary jargon where possible.

This approach will also help you to teach and coach using appropriate language, especially when working with children, and to avoid jargon or language normally found in policy documents.

However, there will always be some specific words or language that you will need to use when teaching people how to cycle, for example ‘the Highway Code’, ‘gear’ or ‘pedal ready’. Make sure you explain these terms clearly.



## 2. Preparing to cycle

Being prepared for any journey by cycle is an essential part of riding to the National Standard. This includes checking you are ready to cycle and that your cycle works and fits you. It also includes planning your route and preparing anything you need to take along with you for the ride.

### 2.1. Getting ready to ride

Before getting on your cycle, think about whether you can ride independently or if you need any help. Make sure you have had enough to eat and drink, and that you only cycle if you feel well enough to do so. Think about whether you feel tired, and what state of mind you're in, as this could affect how you ride and interact with others. Think about whether there is anything you should do about this before riding.

You can cycle in your everyday clothing; there's no need for specialist clothes for most short journeys. But do wear something that you'll feel comfortable wearing on the cycle you choose to ride.



You should also think about the following:

**Weather:** What is appropriate for the conditions? You wear gloves on cold days and have protection from the sun on hot days. You may be wearing a peaked cap to shade your eyes, or you wear sunglasses. (Wear clear sunglasses when instructing so your riders can see your eyes, unless you have to use reactive glasses or sunglasses for medical reasons.)

**Vision:** Is anything limiting or blocking your view? Move your hood, your hair or anything else that may stop you from seeing clearly.

**Visibility:** You could choose to wear bright or reflective clothing to help you stand out from your surroundings, especially if riding at night.

**Footwear and clothing:** Your shoe connects securely to your foot and won't slip. Your shoelaces are tied and, if long, are tucked away. If wearing baggy trousers, they are rolled up, tucked into your socks, or are tucked away by cycle clips. Long scarves are also tucked away.

**Helmet:** If you are wearing a helmet, make sure it fits snugly around your head and that the straps are not loose under your chin. It should sit roughly two centimetres above your eyebrows so that your forehead is not exposed. The helmet's 'Y-straps' should be just below your earlobes.

**Snacks:** Carry something to eat and drink in your pannier, backpack or water bottle holder if needed.

## 2.2. Checking your cycle

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You only ride using a cycle that is in good working condition and you check it regularly. Check that your tyres are firm and inflated to the recommended pressure on the sidewall. Riding on firm tyres improves cycle control, increases your speed and minimises chances of a puncture. If it is wet or slippery, slightly lower air pressures should give you better grip.

When checking your cycle, check your brakes to make sure they work well. Roll the cycle forward and squeeze the front brake (right-hand brake on most UK cycles). Then roll the cycle backwards and pull the back brake. The cycle should stop sharply both times. There should be room to put two fingers between the brake lever and the handlebars. While doing this, check that the wheel is securely attached, by the 'quick release' system or the wheel nuts.

Check that your chain is clean and lightly oiled and that it spins freely when you turn the pedals or cranks. It should be oiled and not rusty. The chain should engage with all 'teeth' on the front and rear sprockets or chainrings. If not, it may be worn and need replacing.

Check your steering. For a standard cycle, you check your handlebars are secure by holding the front wheel between your knees and trying to turn the handlebars. If all is secure, the handlebars should not turn.

Before longer journeys, check for other issues. For example, you may check your saddle is secure. You may lift your wheels off the ground one at a time and spin them to check they run without wobbling. If your wheels rub against your brake pads, you can check the positioning of the brake caliper, and if necessary, adjust the brake cable tension. You may be able to also 'balance' your brakes if the brake pads rub on one side. If you have gears, check they are working and index them, if necessary, using the barrel adjuster on the gear shifter or down at the derailleur. Ensure that your handlebars have bar-end plugs.

Adapted or specialist cycles may require slightly different checks. A quadricycle may require you to check the steering column and hand brake. For recumbents that are closer to the ground, you may wish to install flags or bright lights. For E-cycles, check that the batteries are charged.

If you don't feel comfortable making these checks or adjustments on any cycle, ask a suitably qualified person to help.

## 2.3. Make sure your cycle fits you



When you stand over a standard cycle with your feet flat on the ground, your groin should not be in contact with the crossbar, if there is one. Sit on the saddle and put your heel on the pedal. Your leg should be straight when the pedal is at a 6 o'clock position. You may be able to reach the ground with the ball of your foot, or you may have to come off the saddle to comfortably place a foot on the floor. You should not feel cramped nor too stretched out when holding the handlebars. Your fingers should be able to rest comfortably on the brake levers. Your wrists should be reasonably straight as this will be more comfortable and can give you better control.

Riders on balance bikes will need the saddle setting lower so they can place their whole foot on the ground to propel the cycle. Some beginners and some people with disabilities may also prefer a slightly lower saddle. This will give them confidence that they can stop steadily, and also help them lift themselves onto the saddle more easily.

If you're using a non-standard cycle, such as a trike, you may need to adjust other components to ensure that they fit you. With a handcycle, for example, you will need to adjust the bars and grips to suit your comfort and strength. This will also help you to use your arm muscles instead of your shoulder joints. It's best to make any adjustments when you're buying or hiring the cycle.

## 2.4. Planning your journey

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When you're planning a route to a new or unfamiliar place, consider the time it will take to make the journey and the type of environment you want to ride in. Then choose a suitable route to get to your destination.

Your choice of route may depend on how you are feeling that day and how quickly you wish to arrive at your destination. It might also depend on the volume and speed of traffic you wish to encounter, how hilly the route is and the type of cycle you are riding.

If you have a cycle that is wider than others, and plan to use segregated cycle paths, make sure the paths are wide enough and free of access barriers. Consider the surface and slope of the paths and watch out for thorny hedges in rural areas, which can cause punctures.

Your route may also depend on the weather conditions. On cold and icy days, you may choose to ride on busier roads instead of untreated paths and smaller roads which may be slippery. If you're planning to ride alone, consider letting someone know where you are going, as well as your rough timings for the trip.

You might use maps and technology if this helps you to plan and follow your route. Make sure any GPS devices and mobile phones are fully charged.

If you're riding a long way, either take some food and water with you or plan to stop to buy something to eat and drink.

Bring a lock and plan where to park or store your cycle when you reach your destination. Consider packing a pump, spare inner tube, tyre levers and tools based on how long you'll be riding and who you're riding with. You may also want to take a first aid kit. If riding at night or in low-light conditions, you must have lights. Ensure that all batteries are charged and will last for your whole journey.





## 3. Controlling your cycle

To ride confidently in a range of diverse or more complex environments, or on different types of cycle, you need to have good cycle control skills. This will help you to focus on what's happening around you without worrying if you're in the correct gear or whether you can look back and signal without wobbling. It's worth practising these skills in a traffic-free environment until they become instinctive.

### 3.1. Getting on and off your cycle

When standing next to a standard cycle, keep a brake on to keep the cycle still. The side you get on and off from depends on where you are riding, or your physical abilities. So, it can be helpful to practise this from both sides.

In the UK, there are advantages to getting on from the left when preparing to ride on the road. Remember to pull your brakes before getting on the cycle. If it's a two-wheeler, lean the cycle towards you to lower the saddle. This makes it easier to swing your leg over it (or step through the frame) and to sit on the saddle if you can. Use this same technique but in reverse when getting off and remember to put your standing leg away from the cycle. This gives you a stable base when dismounting. Keep your brakes on whenever your cycle is stationary.

Some specialist or adapted cycles require a different technique. For recumbents, it may not be possible to use a brake when getting on or off, so you may need to start on level ground rather than a slope. If your cycle has a parking brake, use this when getting on.

### 3.2. Balancing

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Balancing is where you continually keep a two-wheel cycle upright under you as you move.

Beginner riders need to learn how to balance before they can make the cycle go where they want it to. That's why their cycles will keep changing direction as they practise how to do it.

Some specialist or adapted cycles use balancing aids to help the rider stay upright. These include stabilisers or a three-wheeled cycle, which some riders with disabilities will need.

For cycles with three or four wheels, be aware that tight turns can move the centre of gravity outside of the wheels and cause the cycle to tip. Adverse camber (where the surface slopes up on the turn) can do the same thing.

Pedalling propels the cycle forward, helping you to straighten up the steering for two-wheeled cycles. Gliding enables you to save on energy and helps with slowing down and cornering. Complete beginners should first learn how to glide and brake before they try to pedal.

To help with balance, keep your head up and look (pointing your nose) in the direction you want to go. Keep your fingers covering the brake levers so you are ready, at all times, to slow down or stop. Keeping your hands relaxed will also make it easier and more comfortable to cycle by loosening up your arm and neck muscles. Try wiggling your fingers to check if your hands, forearms, shoulders and upper body are relaxed.



### 3.3. Starting

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With your brakes on, set your pedal. Many people start with their right foot on the pedal and the left foot on the ground. However, some prefer to start with their left foot on the pedal if this is stronger.

Hook your foot under the pedal to get it to the start position ('pedal ready'). For many cycles, this means the pedal starts in line with the frame. Next, place your foot in a comfortable position on the pedal. If you're an experienced rider using a cycle that fits you well, you will normally place the ball of your foot on the pedal.

Look ahead and, at the last moment, check behind before setting off, ensuring you have time and space to move off. Start riding by releasing the brakes and pushing down smoothly in one strong motion with your starting foot. As the other pedal comes around, lift your other foot onto that pedal and start pedalling.



### 3.4. Stopping

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Decide on an appropriate place to stop and look back to assess what is happening behind you. Signal if there is anyone behind you who needs to know you intend to stop.

Cover your brakes with two fingers. This is important when you know you need to stop or respond to other road users. It means you can easily control your speed to slow and stop, using both brakes. You only put a foot down after the cycle has completely stopped.

Try stopping with your starting foot on the pedal in the starting position. This way you are ready to go again quickly without having to reset your pedal. This can take some practice. It is particularly helpful if you are riding a fixed-gear cycle or a cycle with back pedal brakes (on these cycles it is harder to set the pedal while stationary).

### 3.5. Cornering



If you need to slow down, do it well before you get to the corner so that you avoid braking sharply. When using adapted cycles, such as trikes and quadricycles, you may need to slow right down to stop them from toppling over.

For many cycles, except for handcycles and fixed-wheel cycles, it's usually best for you to glide around corners. This helps manage your speed and gives more control.

Keeping your chin up and turning your head to the exit of the corner helps you balance and shift your body weight accordingly. For a two-wheeled cycle, you should raise the inside pedal when turning. For example, if you are turning right, you raise the right pedal. This will make sure that the inside pedal doesn't clip the ground. It is good practice to get used to doing this – especially when cornering at speed or where the surface slopes up when you are turning (this is called adverse camber).

Pushing down into the outside pedal (which should be when the pedal is at its lowest point) and leaning into the corner will also help with control.



### 3.6. Looking behind

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Being aware of your surroundings and what is going on all around you is perhaps the most important skill when cycling. Look behind whenever you plan to turn or change your cycling position. This needs to become instinctive. Get into the habit of regularly looking behind to gather information. Practise the technique in a traffic-free environment first. Try to look behind over both shoulders for a couple of seconds while riding in a straight line and without wobbling.

There are different ways to look behind.

For quick looks behind, such as for regular checks to see what's behind you, or before making small changes to your position, turn your head so your chin nearly touches your shoulder. Your hands, arms and torso will remain in the same position.

Longer looks behind are often needed to give you a more complete picture of what is happening behind you. This could be before doing certain turns or manoeuvres on the road, or when you want to make eye contact with someone behind. For this technique, you turn your head but also twist your hips (pointing your belly button to the side) and shoulders, while keeping your hands still. This opens up your body so you can see more clearly behind and also make clear eye contact with others.

It might be hard for you to turn your body or head to look behind. In that case, you can use aids like cycle mirrors to help you see what's behind you and stay aware of your surroundings.

When riding, you can choose whether to cover your brakes or not. If you want to be ready to respond to hazards or other road users, you should cover your brakes. This will make it easier for you to slow down and stop, whether you're riding on or off road. Although covering your brakes is a choice, it's important – and necessary – when you need to control your speed.

### 3.7. Riding very slowly

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One way to improve balance and co-ordination when riding is to practise riding very slowly. Do this by gently and repeatedly pushing on and lifting the front pedal. Or you can very slowly complete a whole rotation with your feet while ‘softly’ and continuously using the brakes.

Practise this technique in the park and use it when you need to ride slowly and share space with pedestrians. Learning how to ride very slowly will be helpful when you come to ride on the road and need to approach junctions slowly.



### 3.8. Stopping quickly



Riders need to know how to slow down and stop quickly.

Normally, when riding on a cycle you would plan and perform a gentle stop. To do this, use both brakes at the same time, with your thumbs underneath the handlebars. This will slow you down gradually and help you come to a controlled stop.

Sometimes this must happen much faster. To be prepared for this, you should cover your brakes when you anticipate the need to stop or slow down, such as when riding towards a junction or on a shared path. This will help you respond more quickly.

Different cycles stop quicker or slower than others. Cycles with thinner tyres, or heavier adapted cycles, may take longer to stop. Cycles with slick tyres are more likely to slip on gravel. Those with drop handlebars can have a different riding position so you have to move your hands to cover the brakes. Not all cycles have two levers, for example cycles with Dutch-style back pedal braking.

If you're riding a specialist or adapted cycle, try to stop smoothly to avoid skidding, and move your weight back if possible.

When you pull the front brake on a standard cycle very suddenly, the front wheel may lock and the back wheel can lift off the ground, sending you over your handlebars. Equally, if you only use the back brake very suddenly, your cycle may not slow or stop quickly and your back wheel may skid. To avoid this, try to shift your weight over the back of the cycle as much as possible. This helps to prevent skidding and stops your back wheel coming off the ground. Do this by bracing your arms which pushes you backwards. Stay seated on the saddle, or if necessary, slide your bottom even further back if possible. You should also be able to push backwards with your feet if your pedals are level with each other.

Looking straight ahead and lowering your centre of gravity will also help you to balance when slowing down or stopping quickly. Instead of snatching the brakes, try to apply them smoothly and with increasing firmness. This will help you to slow down and stop with control. If your back wheel starts to skid, try 'pumping' the brake by quickly releasing it then pulling it again to stop skidding.

Once you have stopped, set the pedal, check behind and start again when clear. You may wobble a bit since you may have had to stop in a high gear.

### 3.9. Using gears

Many cycles have gears. This can be helpful for keeping our limbs comfortable when pedalling, for saving our energy, for riding up hills and for accelerating more quickly.

Effective gear use helps you maintain a steady cadence (pedal turns per minute) whether you are moving quickly or slowly. If your legs are going round too fast, change to a harder (higher) gear to make them go slower. If your legs are struggling to turn the pedals, change to an easier (lower) gear.

It's normally better to feel the gears in your legs and change accordingly, rather than worry about the number shown on a gear shifter (this will also enable you to better observe what is around you). It is usually best to change one gear at a time to avoid putting too much pressure on the chain.

There are a variety of gear shifts, and you may need to experiment to work out how to change gears on your cycle. Some cycles only have one gear so this will affect your ability to accelerate, ride at higher or lower speeds, or ride up hills. When changing gear with a derailleur system, do this when you are pedalling steadily. It is essential that you do not change gear when stationary.

A great advantage of effective gear use is it ensures you are in a low enough gear when riding slowly or starting, which enables speedy acceleration. If your cycle has derailleur gears, change down while pedalling whenever you slow down or plan to stop. If your cycle has hub gears, you will be able to change gear while stationary.

### 3.10. Riding up and down hills

Shift your body weight when riding up or down hills. When riding uphill, use your gears and shift your weight forwards to help you balance. For longer climbs, pace your effort. If you don't have a low enough gear, or you need to accelerate, consider standing up. Take care when doing this in wet weather in case you slip on your pedals.

When riding downhill, you usually don't need to pedal (if you do, you'll need a high enough gear). Instead, aim to keep your pedals level, keep your chin up and eyes ahead of you, relax, and shift your body weight backwards and cover your brakes. Remember to cover your brakes and to stay low and push your weight further back than normal if you need to suddenly slow down or stop.



On steep uphill or downhill sections, you may feel safer to walk and push your cycle, especially in wet or icy weather. If you are unable to dismount and push your cycle, you may need to plan routes to avoid steep sections, especially in bad weather conditions. E-assist cycles can help make steep slopes easier to manage.

### 3.11. Managing hazards



Observing your surroundings, including scanning ahead and behind, can help you anticipate and avoid hazards. This is because you can change position well in advance and avoid sudden changes in direction.

Unexpected hazards are best avoided by swerving around them. While swerving, you should move to the left or right of the hazard, then back into your original line. Keeping the arc of a swerve tight will prevent you from making contact with any other hazards, obstacles, people or road users.

Swerving may not be possible for you, especially if using a specialist or adapted cycle, which could tip at high speed. Make sure you are constantly looking around and are ready to change position well in advance to avoid sudden changes in direction. Having your fingers covering your brakes is helpful when you need to respond to situations around you.

Larger or deeper obstructions like potholes may damage the front wheel or even flip your cycle over. If you have to ride over a pothole, it is usually possible to pull up on the handlebars to lift the front wheel over it. Lifting your weight off the saddle can help with this, as can bending your knees. This can lessen the impact of the rear wheel following through over the pothole. Use a similar technique when riding over speed humps: come off the saddle slightly and bend your arms and knees to cushion the impact.

You might need to go over long obstructions such as tram rails, kerbs and pipes stretching across your path. Approach them at more of a right angle to avoid slipping along or getting stuck in them.

### 3.12. Riding with one hand and signalling



Riding with one hand is necessary to carry out a signal and communicate to others that you want to turn.

It can also be helpful when drinking from a bottle, or if you want to wave to a friend in the park.

If practising for the first time, start by raising a hand slightly from the handlebars, before trying to touch your knee or head, then waving. Then attempt a signal with your arm 90 degrees from your body and your palm facing forward. To help with balance, look ahead, sit up straight, relax your grip on the handlebars, and take your hand off slowly.

If you're planning to change direction or your position, you should let others know what you are going to do.

- Always check behind before a signal to see if anyone is there.
- Alert them that you are about to do something. If possible, look at their face to help you understand whether they have seen you.
- Look over the shoulder that best lets you see what is behind in your intended direction of travel, before raising your arm to signal.
- Before turning, remember to look back again (on the side that you are turning).
- Turn when it is clear.

Practise holding a signal for a few seconds. You can then progress this by looking back at the same time as holding a signal (this is useful for situations where you need to observe and communicate quickly).





## 4. The four key skills (core functions)

The National Standard sets out four ‘core functions’ (or key skills) that every rider should have:

- **Observation:** Being aware of surroundings and the actions of others
- **Position:** Choosing and maintaining the most appropriate place to ride
- **Communication:** Being able to communicate intentions clearly
- **Priorities:** Following priority rules in line with the Highway Code

### 4.1. Being aware of surroundings and the actions of others

Whether you’re riding in the park, on a segregated cycle lane or on the road, you are sharing space with others. This means being aware of your surroundings and co-operating with those around you. Staying aware and alert enables you to identify and respond to hazards and the actions of others. It lets you anticipate potential problems before they even take place. While riding you should therefore avoid distractions. Pull over and stop to answer your mobile or to check a map. When cycling in traffic, avoid riding while holding anything in your hands as this reduces your braking reaction. If you’re wearing glasses and they become wet from the rain, pull in if necessary and dry them off.

Observation in diverse environments:

- Scan the ground and surface ahead for potholes, wet drain covers, black ice, debris and other hazards.
- Watch where you're going and what's around you by looking ahead, alongside you and behind (this allows you to see and anticipate any potential hazards or movements by others).
- Carry out checks behind, whenever you are about to turn or change your position.
- See what others are doing – are other road users or parked cars about to move?
- If possible, make eye contact with others such as drivers, cyclists and pedestrians (who you should take particular care around). Looking at them can also help you understand if they have seen you.
- Look out for signals, signs and markings.
- Check around corners and, when on the road, look down roads you are passing.
- Check between high-sided vehicles or things that block your view when you pass them.

In general, it is much easier for people on cycles to see what is going on around them than people in cars and other vehicles who often rely on mirrors for checking back. People in vehicles have spaces where they are unable to see (blind spots). Remember, if you can't see a driver's eyes, they normally can't see you.

Looking properly helps you to see what's there so you can make an informed decision. You never want to be surprised by someone passing, so make sure you're aware of what's behind you. You should also check your surroundings before turning left or right to ensure there are no other road users on that side. If you are not able to turn your head or body easily, consider attaching a mirror to your cycle.

Do not just rely on hearing for knowing what is behind you; you may not hear other cyclists, electric cars, e-scooter riders or pedestrians. As a rider you may also have limited or no hearing.

## 4.2. Choosing and maintaining the most appropriate place to ride

When cycling in traffic-free environments like the park, be sure to give pedestrians and other cyclists plenty of space. It is your responsibility to protect those more vulnerable than yourself. If you overtake pedestrians or other riders, pass them wide and slow. In the UK, when cycling in shared, unmarked traffic-free spaces (such as along wide paths in the park), it is common practice to cycle on the left-hand side. However, this is not a strict rule.

When cycling on the road, your riding position is a dynamic choice. This means that you change it according to the circumstances. Your riding position should be flexible and based on a range of factors. These include the space available and the physical nature of the on-road environment, the width of the lane and the width of your cycle. They also include the speed that you are cycling and the size and speed of other road users around you.



You should always think about whether you can see clearly and if other road users can see you. Choosing an appropriate riding position requires you to continually observe what is around you so you can review and adjust your road position accordingly.

At the same time, you should also ride in a way that is predictable for others and do your best to avoid making sudden changes in direction and speed.

Good road positioning also requires you to consider the distance between you and road users in front. Other road users may slow down or stop very quickly so avoid riding too close.

### **There are two main positions for cycling on road:**

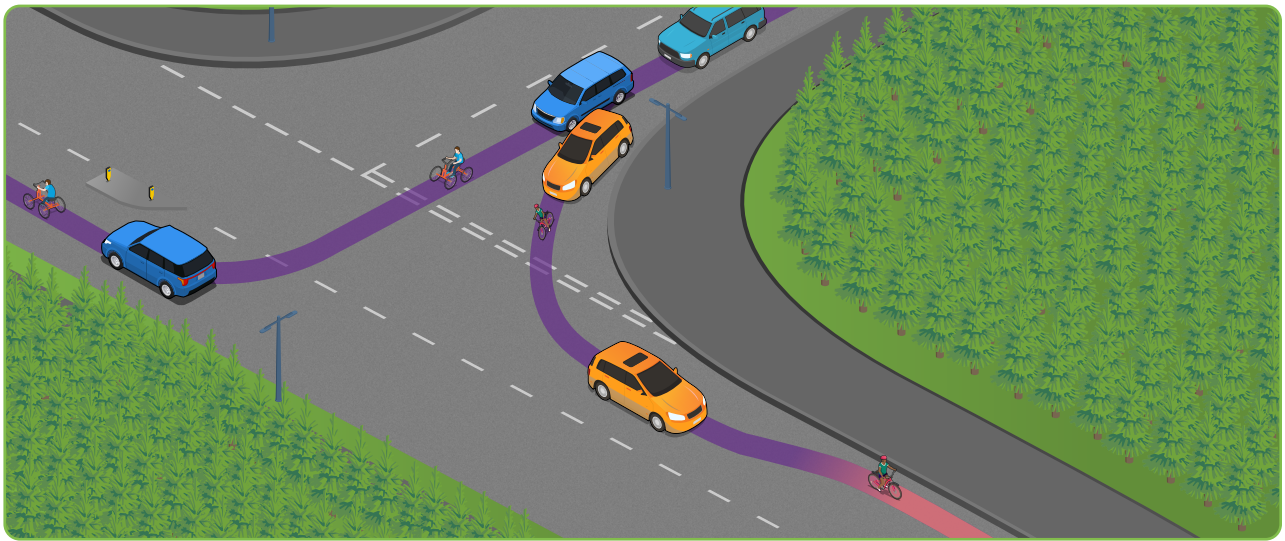
#### **1. The primary position**

This can be described as the ‘middle of the traffic flow’ for the direction in which you are riding. It is often referred to as the ‘middle of a lane’ though this is often not the case. Traffic flows do not always stick to lanes (for example, when cycling or driving down narrow roads with parked cars, or when turning out of very wide side roads).

You can think of the primary position as follows:

- It's a position that you use to discourage road users from overtaking.
- It gives you a better view of the road environment around you and gives other road users better sight of you. When riding in primary position, you will be right in front of other road users.
- It's always relative to the traffic flow (rather than lane markings). Think of it as being in the same position as where a driver's number plate would be positioned in the traffic flow. This is important for wider roads and wide-mouthed junctions.

You could describe the primary position to your riders as ‘Follow me’, because this is what your road position tells other road users. Take a look at the following image:



This shows a wide, 'bell mouth' junction. On the approach, both riders are in primary position, in the middle of the traffic flow for the direction they are turning. When they are on the major road, the rider turning left chooses to move to secondary position because they decide there is adequate space for a vehicle to overtake. The rider turning right chooses to stay in primary position, because the lane narrows due to a pedestrian refuge, meaning there is no space for other road users to overtake.

Examples of when you would usually ride in primary position:

- When drivers cannot overtake you with the minimum passing distance (a minimum of 1.5m when overtaking on roads with speed limits up to 30mph, and more space at higher speeds).
- When you're using a wider cycle (three or more wheels), which does not allow enough space for road users behind to overtake.
- When passing a parked car (a driver or passenger could open the door without checking) and there's not enough space for drivers to overtake you.
- When approaching and moving through a junction.
- When waiting in a traffic queue and choosing not to filter.
- When travelling at the same speed of other road users.
- When the road narrows.
- When there is oncoming traffic, which does not allow enough space for road users behind to overtake.
- When moving through a blind corner or over the brow of a hill.
- When riding in a bus lane where there is not enough space to be overtaken.

Riding in primary position requires confidence, particularly when it causes other road users to wait behind you. You are not blocking traffic; rather, you are traffic. Often, you'll be doing other road users a favour by removing their decision on whether to squeeze past you or not. You're helping drivers to follow the rules of the road and not overtake at junctions and road narrowings. They pass you only when they can give you space of 1.5m.



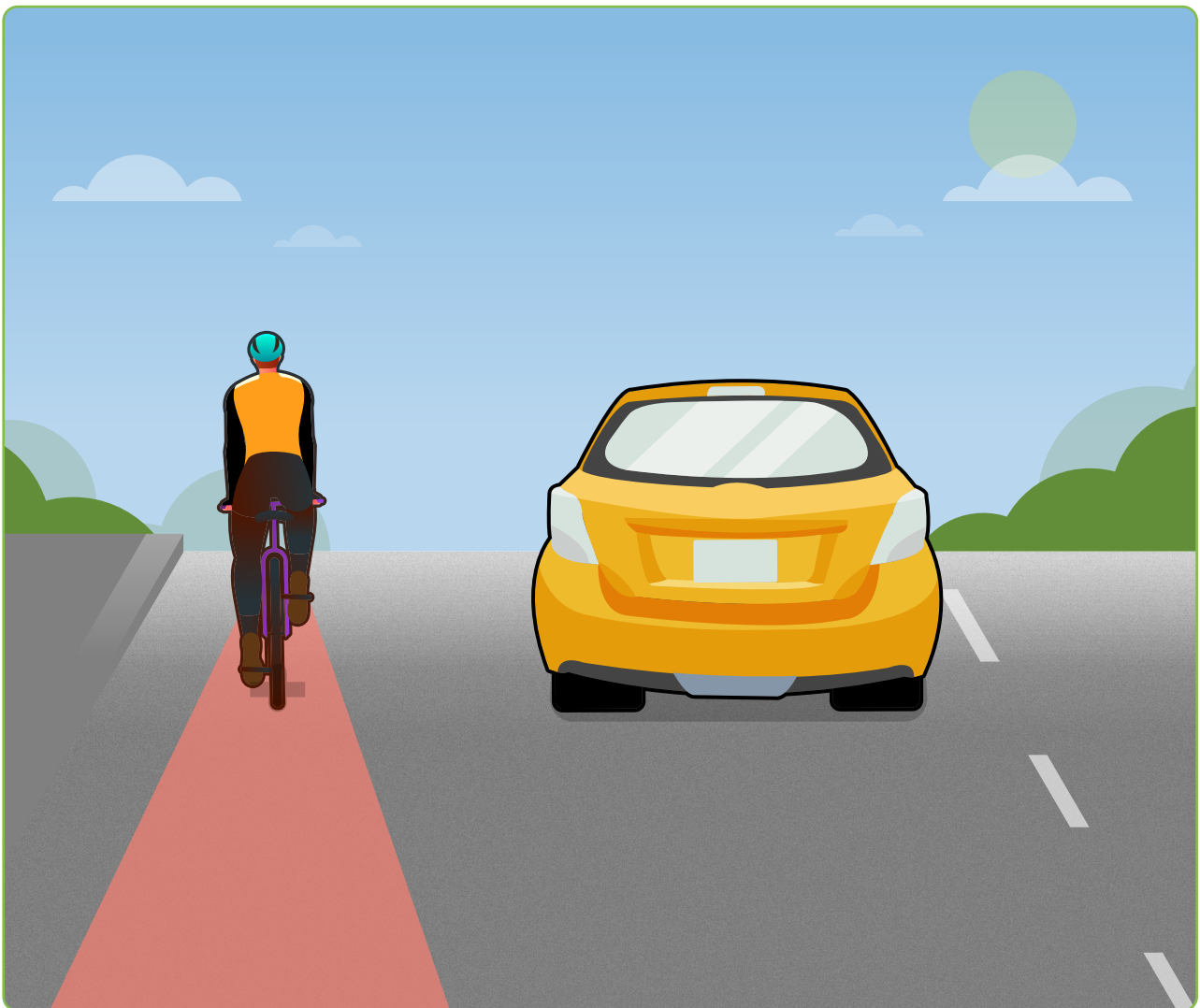
## 2. The secondary position

This can be described as a position 'on or to the left of the traffic flow' for the direction in which you are riding.

You can think of the secondary position as follows:

- It's a position that allows road users behind to overtake
- It's a position that is not normally closer than an arm's length from the edge of the road and is never 'in the gutter'. This avoids rubbish and drains and allows the rider some space in case of a close pass.

You could describe this to your riders as 'Pass me', because this is what your road position tells other road users.



The secondary riding position avoids riding in the ‘gutter’, which can have obstacles like drains, puddles, potholes, broken glass and rubbish. It means you will not strike your pedal on the kerb. It also means that if someone overtakes you too closely, you have enough space to move back to the left.

Secondary position is never closer than 0.5m from the kerb, and allows other road users to pass you with a gap of 1.5m when the road is wide enough.

Whatever road position you ride in, good communication with other road users can help reduce potential conflict. Look behind you regularly while riding to see what’s there – and to check whether other road users have noticed you.

### 4.3. Being able to communicate intentions clearly



Whether you’re riding in the park or out on the road, it’s important to tell others what you are doing. Communicating with others usually leads to a response from them and will allow you to perform certain manoeuvres.



## Different ways to communicate when cycling:



### Hand signals

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When you want to turn, or sometimes before changing position, a clear hand signal can be the best way to communicate your intentions. You should only use hand signals if there are others to communicate to, and if you are able to control your cycle when doing so.

If you are using a cycle that is lower to the ground, such as a recumbent, you may be less visible to others so you may need to signal for longer.

You should signal clearly, so it is obvious to others. Signal well in advance of a junction and long enough for others to see.



### Road positioning

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When cycling on the road, your choice of road position tells others whether you would like to be overtaken or not.



### Body language

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When you look over your shoulder, you are communicating that you need information to make your next decision. Looking over a particular shoulder can show that you want to move in that direction. Clearly looking in a particular direction can get people's attention.



### Eye contact

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This is difficult to do: you may only be able to look at people, rather than directly into their eyes. But by trying to make eye contact, you can assess whether the other person has seen you or not. You may find this more useful when riding slowly off road on paths that you share with pedestrians.



### Talking

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This is helpful when sharing space with pedestrians. Do not rely on talking when out on the road because others are unlikely to hear you.



### Ringling a bell

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Provided you use a bell politely, it can be a useful way to let others know that you are there – for example, to alert pedestrians on paths.

## **A signalling routine:**

How to use a routine when communicating intentions:

- Look behind for following vehicles.
- Communicate intentions to other road users ahead or behind if necessary.
- Check they have responded to your signal.
- Perform the manoeuvre.

Looking back before signalling means you can check to see if there's anyone there who needs to know your intentions (it also helps draw attention to what you're about to do). If nobody's around, or they are too far away to be affected by your decision, then there's no need to signal. You may want to look behind you more than once to be sure.

Remember to only signal when it's necessary and appropriate to do so. You have more control of your steering, brakes and gears with both hands on the handlebars.

If someone does need to know your intention, signal well before your manoeuvre, and carry out a last check before changing your position or direction. Have both hands on the handlebars when turning. There is no need to signal while turning because everyone can already see what you are doing.

Remember that signalling is a request which some road users may ignore. Always carry out a last look behind to check that the road user has responded.

You should always think about the timing and duration of the hand signal. Signalling too early may lead other road users to think you will be turning earlier than you plan to. Signalling too late might not give road users enough time to react.

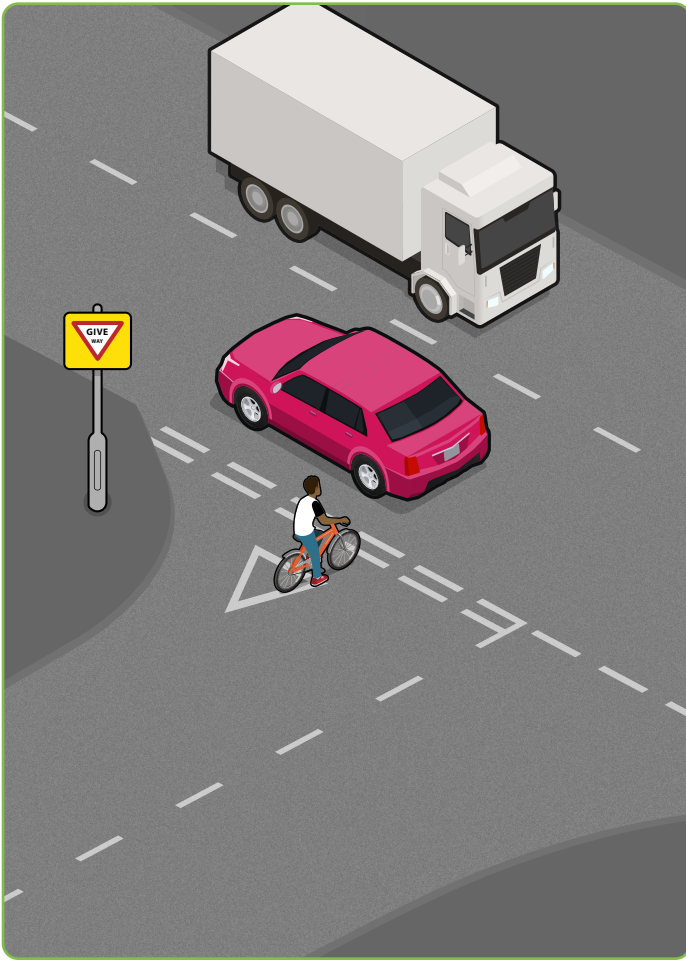
If new road users have appeared in the environment, you may need to signal more than once.

**Signal left** when you plan to turn left or move to the left. Also, if you are slowing and pulling over to the left to stop.

**Signal right** when you plan to turn or move to the right. You can also signal right when you plan to remain on a path or road going right and people behind you want to overtake you and turn off to the left (such as on a roundabout). You can also use a right-hand signal to stop road users passing you when you plan to move to the primary position (for example, when you're riding through a pinch point and there is not time and space to be overtaken).



#### 4.4. Following priority rules in line with the Highway Code



Wherever you're riding, you need to know the 'rules of the road'.

You should approach any junction with the question: Who do I need to give way to? And who should give way to me?

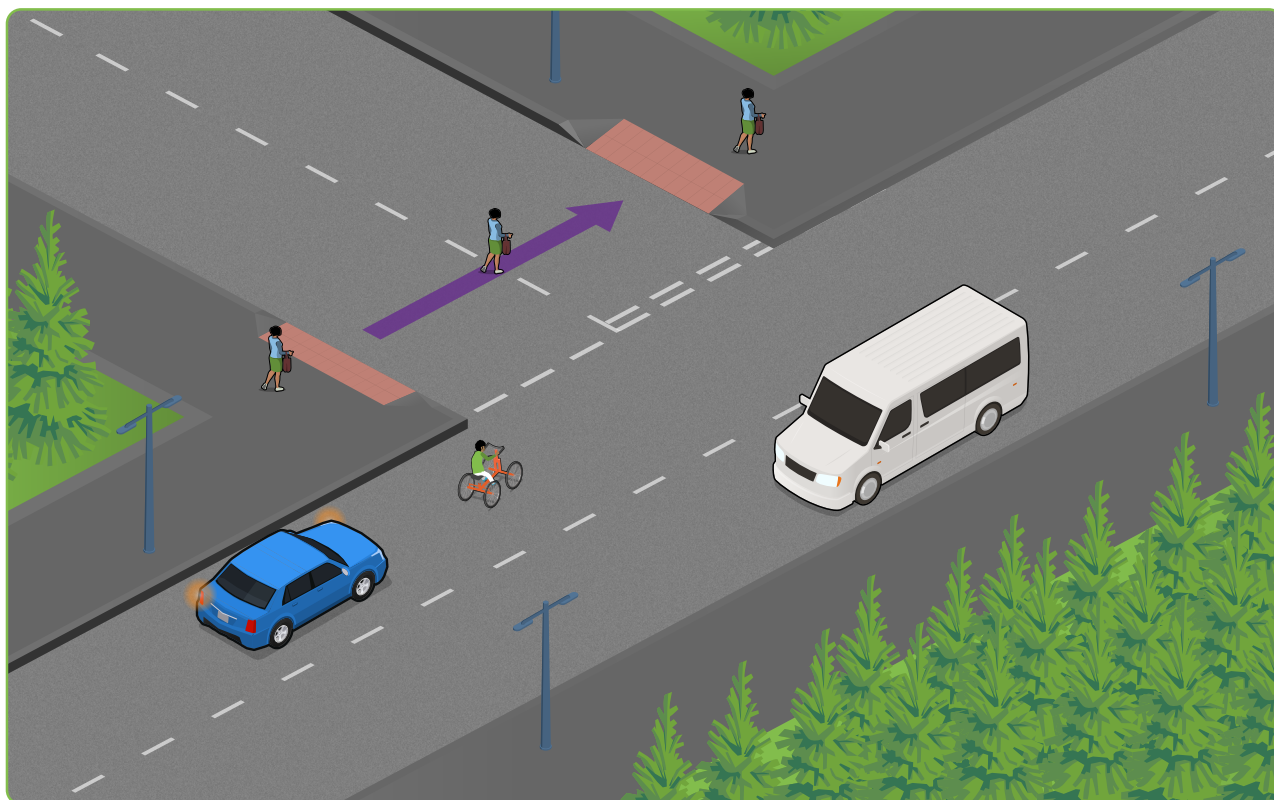
When cycling in traffic-free environments, pedestrians have priority. It is your responsibility to protect those more vulnerable than yourself. You should slow down or stop for them and give them plenty of space whenever necessary. Certain traffic-free environments (such as some parks, paths or pavements) do not permit cycling.

You must follow the priority rules when riding on the road and recognise that this is particularly important at junctions. You understand that rules and information regarding the environment in which you are riding are often shown through signals of different shapes, signs and road markings.

In most cases, road users who are continuing straight ahead have priority over those who need to slow or stop. So, road users on a minor road wanting to turn onto a major road will give way to road users on the major road. Give Way Lines and Give Way triangle signs and road markings indicate this. Unless there is a Stop Line (a solid white line), road users do not always need to stop behind Give Way Lines. You also understand and follow all traffic light signals.

If you are cycling on the road in front of another road user, you understand that you have priority over them unless they are in an emergency vehicle (with its emergency signals on). You understand that giving up your priority on the road can be risky because this may cause confusion. You also understand the latest Highway Code rules regarding the need to give way to pedestrians who are waiting to cross side roads at junctions.

### **Rule H2 of the Highway Code – Rule for drivers, motorcyclists, horse drawn vehicles, horse riders and cyclists**



At a junction you should give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross a road into which or from which you are turning.





## 5. Practising routines when cycling

Routine-based cycling is where you use short sequences of actions that are easy to remember. This can be helpful to create habits, making sure you cover all necessary checks. It is important to remember, however, that independent decision making still applies, and each step of the routine is not automatic, but a conscious choice.

A routine allows you to apply the National Standard's **core functions (or key skills)** in any situation.

- Observation: Being aware of surroundings and the actions of others
- Position: Choosing and maintaining the most appropriate place to ride
- Communication: Being able to communicate intentions clearly
- Priorities: Following priority rules in line with the Highway Code

A routine will always start with observation, and you must always be thinking about what comes next in your journey. Using routines does not mean doing the same thing every time. It requires you to be flexible in how you carry out specific manoeuvres.

Below are some examples of short routines as listed in the National Standard for Cycle Training. These are very simplified versions of what you will do and must be combined with independent decision making. Remember that no junction or set of circumstances on road is ever the same. You will always need to adapt to your surroundings – for example, the number of road users or the speed at which they are moving.

How to change position using a routine:

- Look behind for following vehicles.
- Communicate intentions to other road users ahead or behind if necessary.
- Change position when there is time and space to do so.

How to approach junctions using a routine:

- Look behind for following vehicles.
- Communicate intentions to other road users ahead or behind if necessary.
- Choose a suitable riding position.
- Prioritise who goes first at the junction.

How to use a routine when communicating intentions:

- Look behind for following vehicles.
- Communicate intentions to other road users ahead or behind if necessary.
- Check they have responded to your signal.
- Perform the manoeuvre.





## 6. Riding in traffic-free environments

Now that you have explored the key skills of National Standard cycling, you can look at how to apply them to different situations and environments.

Road environments vary greatly, from rural lanes to busy urban centres. While you can apply the four key skills and routines to all situations, you must be aware of different hazards and levels of visibility. Consider factors like road surface, speed, size and volume of other road users, and plan accordingly.

You are allowed to cycle in many parks, on river and canal towpaths, and on some pavements. You are also allowed to cycle in other places where you can expect to share space with pedestrians, small children and dogs. People on foot always have priority according to the [Highway Code hierarchy](#).

Riding in traffic-free environments requires you to practise the four key skills of observation, communication, positioning and priorities.

When sharing space with pedestrians, ride slowly – not much faster than their walking pace – and pass people wide. Some people like hearing the ring of a bell from a rider wishing to pass, but others will prefer that you politely ask to pass instead.

Where there are lots of people walking, consider getting off your cycle and pushing, if you can. If you are unable to do so, continue cycling at walking speed. Remember you have a responsibility to protect those more vulnerable than yourself and be aware that not everyone will be able to see or hear you.







## 7. Riding on the road

### 7.1. Starting an on-road journey

In the UK, you ride on the left.

Start every journey by checking for other road users. Check it's clear in front and behind, before wheeling your cycle onto the road.

If you have a clear view of the road ahead and behind, start cycling near the kerb or road edge, where there are no parked cars. Starting at a raised kerb will make it easier to get onto your cycle with one foot on the pavement.

If you do need to start where there are parked cars, start near to the outside edge of them. Starting directly in front of a parked car will give a degree of protection from road users behind and will let you both see and be seen.

With both starting positions, you're positioning yourself where you can see and be seen – but make sure you do not block traffic. People who are already moving on the road have priority.

Where possible, avoid starting too near to junctions, at busy driveways (it's fine to start at quieter ones) or on bends of the road where you will be less visible. Once it's clear, keep your brakes on, mount your cycle, set your pedal and check behind. Move off if there is no one coming – or if traffic is far enough away that you can move off without causing anyone to slow down. When you start riding, choose which road position you should move into.

## 7.2. Finishing an on-road journey



When you finish a journey, you should ideally stop away from a junction. If you're riding in traffic, it's best to stop at a wider section of road, or between parked vehicles. This means road users behind you will usually not have to stop. You should be aware of what is behind through regular checks over your shoulder as you ride along.

You can usually use this routine for stopping:

- Check over your right shoulder (to see if anyone is behind you and to communicate with them).
- Signal left if needed.
- Look over your left shoulder to check if it's clear to pull in (it also communicates your intention to move left).
- As you slow down, change down to a lower gear (this will make it easier when you next start).
- Pull over next to the kerb or road edge, ideally placing your left foot on it.
- Look back again and, once it's clear, get off your cycle straight onto the pavement.

You can use this routine at other points in your journey too. For example, you might want to stop ahead of a junction that you're not confident using. Or you might wish to avoid a junction that is not suitable for a non-standard cycle (you may not be able to accelerate quickly enough to move through it safely).



### 7.3. Passing parked vehicles



If you're riding in the secondary position and encounter a parked vehicle, you should pass it by avoiding the 'door-zone'. This is the space that an opened door would take up in the road. It's really important to ride outside of this space as many drivers or passengers will not check for riders when opening car doors. A recent addition to the Highway Code is the 'Dutch Reach' which asks people to open the door with the hand furthest from it.

Riding out of the door-zone may put you in the primary position – but not always. If you need to move further out to be in the primary position (to stop drivers overtaking you when it's dangerous to do so), move out until you reach the middle of the moving traffic flow.

Plan ahead before you move out by looking back early to assess if it's clear. If there is a road user behind and you have room to move without affecting them, then move out. If you see a road user close to you, consider waiting until they have passed before moving out. If there is a steady stream of traffic, you may need to negotiate your way into the traffic flow. You can do this by looking back, making eye contact (if you can) and possibly signalling. This can help persuade a road user to let you out. The earlier you begin this negotiation, the higher the chance of them letting you out. You may choose to, or be forced to, cycle in the door-zone when passing parked vehicles. If so, ride slowly and check for signs of drivers or passengers about to get out or vehicles pulling out. Also look out for pedestrians who may be about to step out between parked vehicles. Riding slowly and covering your brakes will give you a chance to react.

After passing a parked vehicle check, over your left shoulder (looking for riders or other road users such as a motorbike attempting to pass on your left, or vehicles about to pull out). Then move back to the left if appropriate. Give yourself a bit of time before moving back to the left, otherwise you'll quickly disappear from the sight of road users behind.

Where there are gaps between parked vehicles, it is often better to maintain your line in the road rather than weaving in and out of gaps. Moving into a gap may encourage road users to pass, leaving you stuck behind a parked vehicle. Remember that, as the road user in front, you have priority over road users behind. You can use the techniques described above to minimise conflict with road users behind you.

## 7.4. Doing a U-turn

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You can only do a U-turn when the road is clear in both directions. This is because all other road users have priority.

Make sure you perform a U-turn where you can see clearly ahead and behind. Start by checking in both directions. If you see anyone coming, let them pass even if you need to pull over to the left and wait. If you're slowing right down or waiting to let road users past, do this in a position where you can see and be seen. When it is clear, do a final check over your right shoulder just before turning.

Use as much space as you need when performing a U-turn but also try to stay in sight of other road users who may be further away. Slow right down and use your gears to carry out U-turns with control.



## 7.5. Passing side roads



People in minor roads joining major roads should give way to those travelling on the major road.

To give way, a road user on the minor road will need to see what is coming on the major road. There may be lots of parked cars on the road or an obstacle or bend in the road that's blocking their view. If so, they may need to creep out of the side road to see. If a driver creeps out, their bonnet may stick out in front.

You should normally cycle past a side road away from the junction, in primary position. This will ensure you can see and be seen early by road users in the side road, and keep clear of any bonnets.

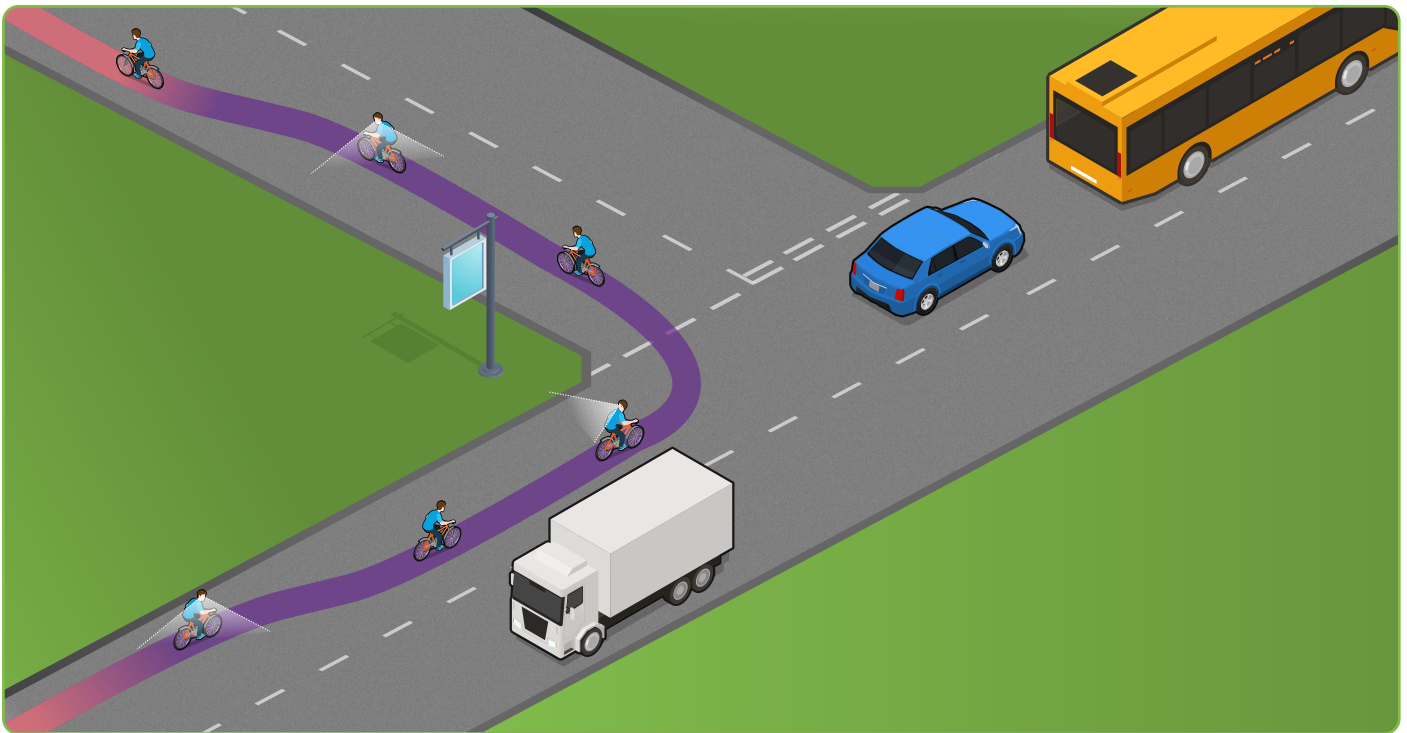
When you approach a side road, check over your right shoulder to see what is behind you. Either maintain your position in the middle of the moving traffic flow (you may already be in primary position due to parked cars) or be prepared to move to the right.

As well as making you more visible to road users in the side road, a primary position will prevent road users behind from overtaking you at the junction (where it is illegal to do so). As you ride past, look into the side road by turning your head and making eye contact (if you can) with any road users there. Keep pedalling (usually maintaining your speed) to communicate that you have priority and are continuing straight ahead. Look ahead for oncoming drivers who may wish to turn right into the side road. If cycling on a major road through a crossroads, be sure to check into both side roads. Do not suddenly slow down when riding past side roads as this could make other road users think you are about to turn. But do remember to cover your brakes in case someone hasn't seen you and pulls out.

You will always need to ride safely and adapt to what is happening around you. Sometimes, it will not be possible or even necessary to move into primary position when riding past side roads. You may be approaching a side road in a cycle lane with road users behind overtaking you at a much higher speed, making it much harder to move out. In such cases, signalling right may lead road users behind to slow down and let you out if you need to move road position.



## 7.6. Turning left into a minor road



To turn left from a major road into a minor road, check behind and decide whether to signal left or not. Is there anyone to signal to – including pedestrians? If so, signal well in advance of the junction.

As with most turns, you should normally move to primary position before turning. This will prevent drivers passing and turning across your path.

Before turning, carry out a final check over your left shoulder in case there are undertaking cyclists or motorcyclists. Turn by making a smooth turn from primary position on the major road into primary on the minor road. Only turn when you can clearly see down the side road. This also prevents road users behind you overtaking on the turn. If you are using a wider cycle, and are turning into a narrow side road, you will likely need to slow right down before the turn to first check there is enough space for you to turn into.

When approaching any junction, you should be prepared to brake, with your fingers covering your brakes. Choose the most appropriate gear (if applicable) and speed as you approach.

As is the case when passing minor roads, where road users behind you may be travelling faster, it may not be possible or appropriate to move to the primary position before turning left. Signalling earlier may lead road users behind to slow down and give you space. Always look out for signals by others when turning at junctions and be aware of where they are going.

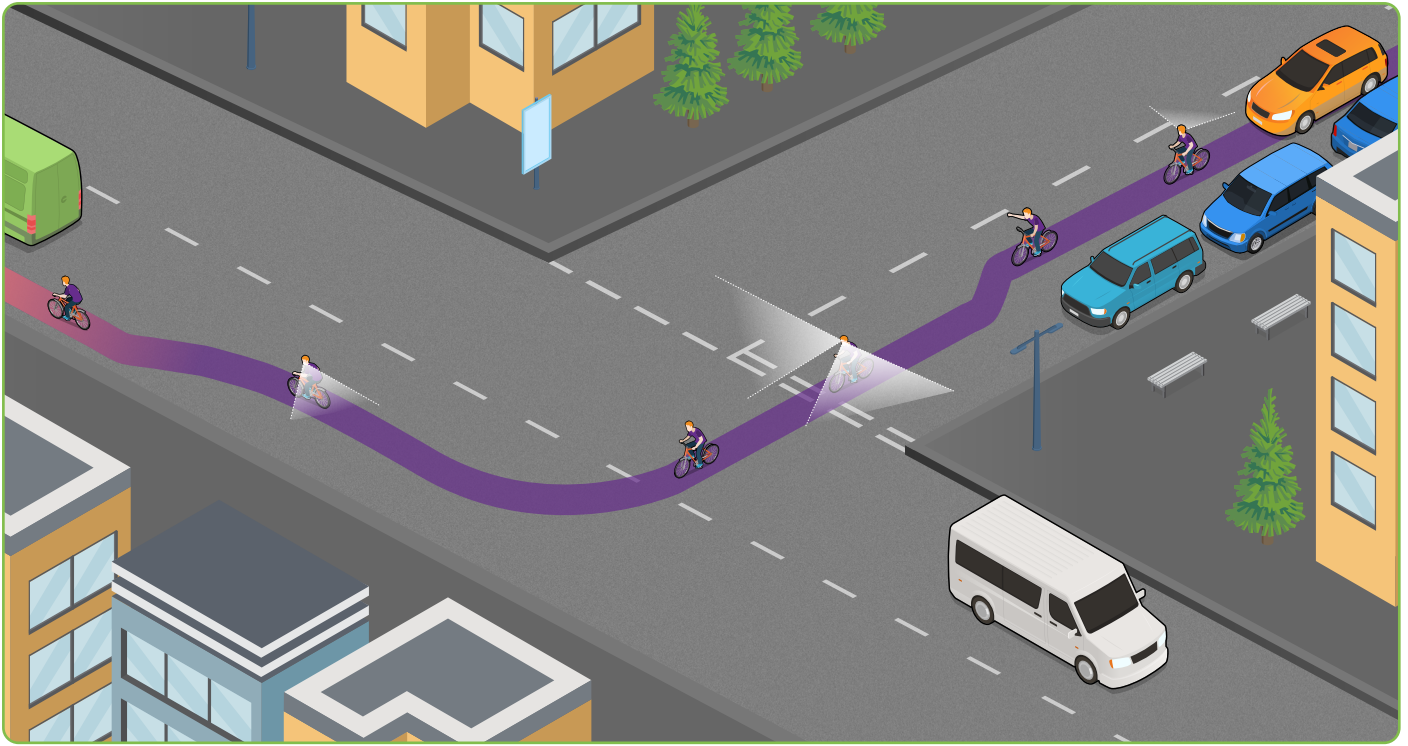
You must give priority to people crossing or waiting to cross at the top of the junction. Wait in primary position until they are out of your way. Manage the relationship with anyone behind you with frequent observation, and early manoeuvres. Being in primary position is important to prevent anyone overtaking here.

## 7.7. Turning right into a major road

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When approaching any junction, you should be preparing to brake, with your fingers covering your brakes. Choose the most appropriate gear and speed as you approach.

You can also choose to walk instead. Pull in and get off your cycle (where possible) and cross the road by foot. If you're using an adapted cycle which you cannot walk with, proceed carefully on the pavement and use crossings at walking speed.

As usual, planning early for any manoeuvre makes it easier to manage. Thinking about the manoeuvre as a routine can make it easier to remember what you need to do at each step.

Routine for turning right into a major road:

- Look behind for following vehicles.
- Communicate intentions to other road users ahead or behind if necessary.
- Choose a suitable riding position.
- Prioritise who goes first at the junction.

Start with a check behind in good time and choose the most appropriate road position. Signal if appropriate and ensure that you reach the junction in the middle of the traffic flow. Remember to change to an easier gear; it will enable you to quickly move off when you make the turn. Always position yourself in the middle of the traffic flow to ensure that you have full control of the junction. Road users behind should wait.

If there is a road user already at the junction, wait behind them for your turn.



Avoid moving to the right of the traffic flow as this can lead road users behind to undertake. Another good reason for positioning yourself in the middle of the traffic flow is that road users turning right into the minor road from the major road will often cut the corner, passing directly over the corner of your lane at the junction.

You may not be able to see what is coming on the major road from behind the Give Way Line. Therefore, gradually move to a position where you can see up and down the major road before deciding when to turn. If there is nothing coming, there is no need to stop so keep your momentum and make the turn. Give way to pedestrians who have priority if they are waiting to cross the minor road at the junction or have already started crossing the road. If you do need to give way to a vehicle on the major road, stop where you can see the traffic, but make sure you're not blocking it.

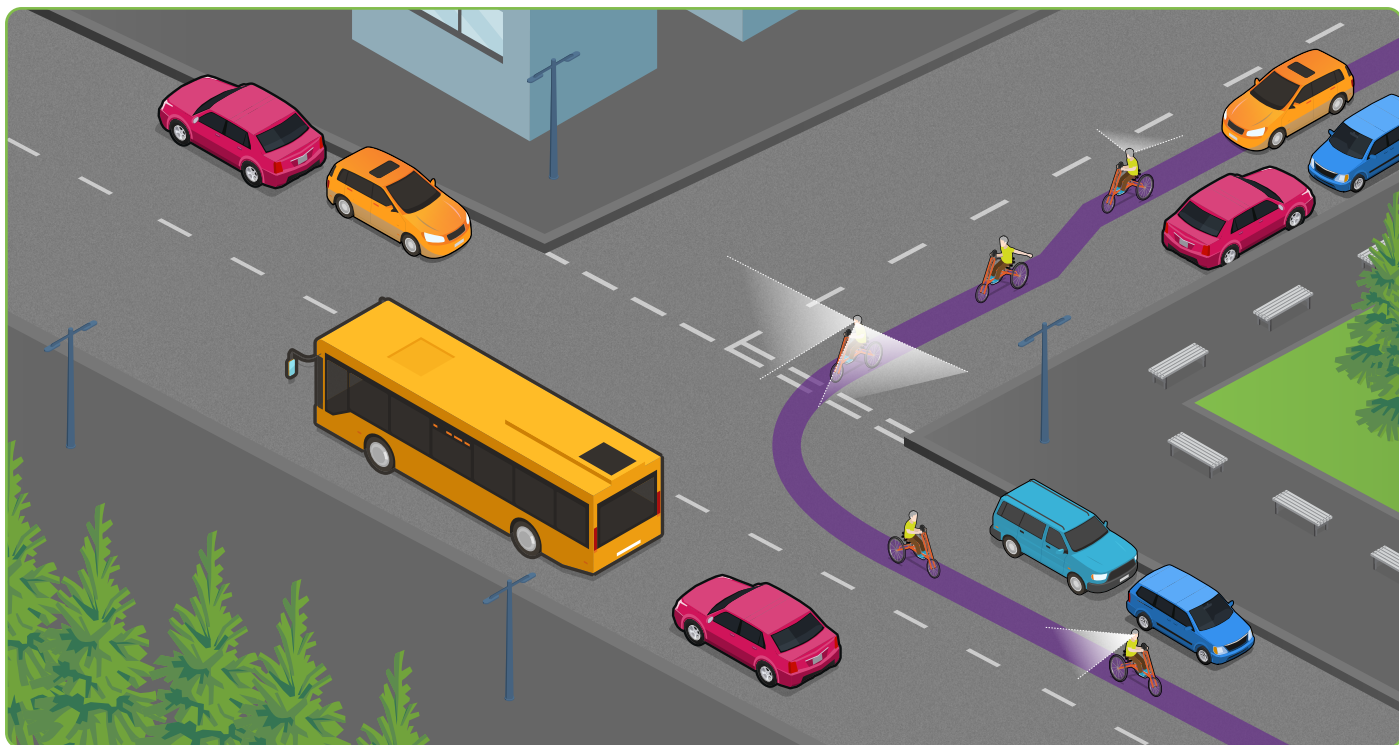
Do not cut corners when you turn. This may tempt a road user behind to try to squeeze past you and you'll end up in the oncoming lane for too long. Instead, as with all turns, turn from primary into primary, spending the shortest amount of time on the 'wrong' side of the road. Once you are on the major road, check back again to refresh your knowledge of what is behind you.

## 7.8. Turning left into a major road

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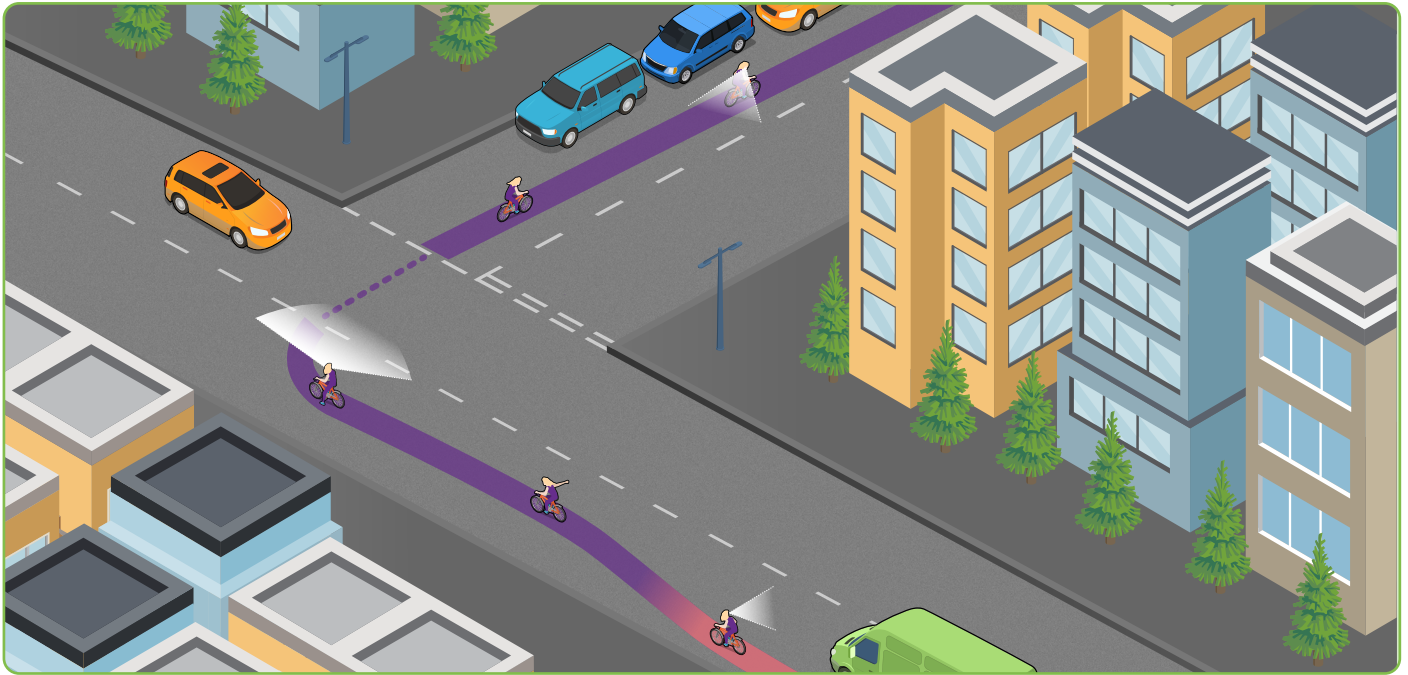
You will by now be familiar with the simplified routine for negotiating junctions: observe, communicate if necessary, choose a suitable road position, check for priorities.

To turn left from a minor road onto a major road, use primary position at the junction to avoid being overtaken. Turn only when it's clear, after having looked and communicated as needed. Choose your positioning on the major road before the turn and move into that position.

## 7.9. Turning right into a minor road



When approaching any junction, you should be prepared to brake, with your fingers covering your brakes. Choose the most appropriate gear and speed as you approach.



Turning right from a major road into a minor road is often the most complex manoeuvre because you will cross a lane of moving traffic. The best way to handle this is to give yourself time by looking back and, if necessary, signalling early.

You can also choose to walk instead. Pull in and get off your cycle (where possible) and cross the road by foot. If you're using an adapted cycle which you cannot walk with, proceed carefully on the pavement and use crossings at walking speed.

You might be riding in primary position on the major road and the road is too narrow to be passed on your left (leaving a minimum clearance of 1.5m). If so, slow down and stay in a position that prevents road users from overtaking on your left; this should be the primary position (the middle of the traffic flow). Other road users should not pass at junctions. Look into the minor road to understand who is coming out of it and which direction they are turning. Your turn takes priority.

When there is a gap of oncoming traffic on the major road, have a good look again over your right shoulder in case there are overtaking road users. When it's clear, turn into the minor road in the primary position.

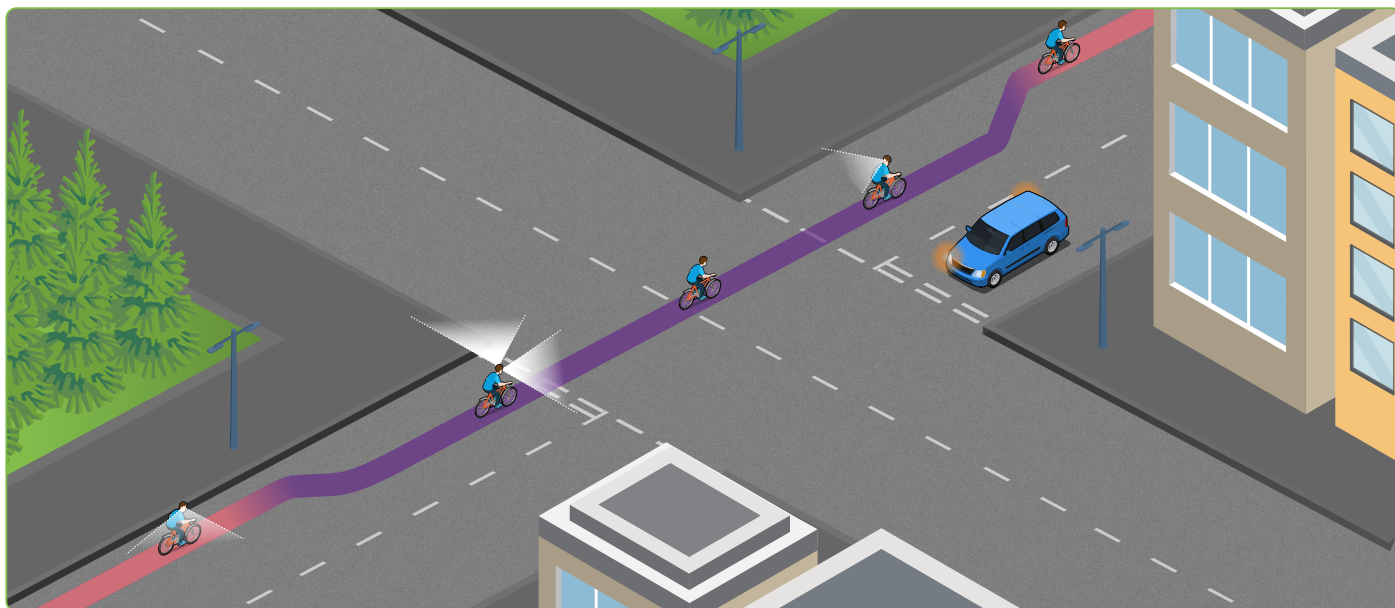
When turning right on busier or faster roads, you may choose to signal twice before turning right. The first signal can be used to communicate your intention to move out from the secondary riding position. The second signal closer to the junction can be used to communicate the intention to turn right into the side road. The advantage of this approach is that the first phase of communication is helpful for moving out into the traffic flow. It also helps ensure the road user behind does not overtake before the right turn.

Another option when turning right is a two-stage right turn. Pull into the kerb, or the edge of the road or in line with a row of parked cars, if present. Wait for traffic to clear, perform a last check behind and then turn into the minor road when it's clear.

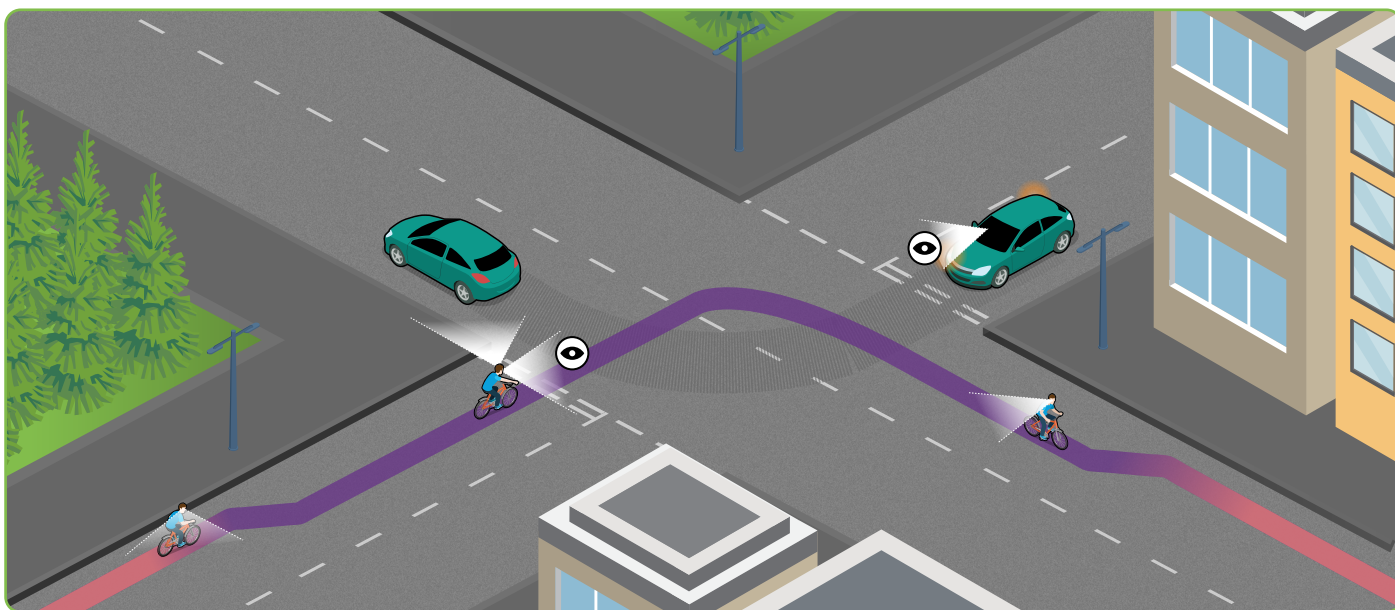


## 7.10. Using crossroads

When going straight ahead (minor-to-minor) at crossroads, move to the primary position in the minor road you are using. There is no hand signal for going straight ahead. When there is a gap in both directions on the major road, cross into the primary position on the new minor road.



If there is a road user at the Give Way Line opposite and they wish to turn right, you (the person going straight ahead) have priority. Try to make eye contact. Hesitating may lead the other road user to go first. You should not direct other road users, but negotiation may be necessary.



If you and another road user are both turning right from opposite minor roads, and you arrived at the same time, caution and negotiation are necessary as you proceed.

If you are turning right and the road user opposite is turning left, the person turning left usually goes first. Although this is not a Highway Code rule, the reason for them having priority is that you're about to enter what is soon to be their lane.

## 7.11. Using roundabouts



You must always give priority to anyone who is already on the roundabout. On reaching the Give Way Line to enter onto a roundabout, you also give way to road users who are about to join the roundabout on your right. The only exception is if they are waiting for road users on their right; the space immediately on your right will be clear so, if you have enough time, you may go.

When you are on the roundabout, do the same as you would when passing side roads: observe road users waiting to join the roundabout and pedal as you go past. You have priority.

Approach the roundabout in primary position and maintain this position while using it – even if turning left. This will prevent road users from overtaking you on the roundabout and turning across your path. A primary position will also help you to be seen by road users wishing to join the roundabout. This is because you will be in the middle of the traffic flow which is where road users will check.

For single-lane roundabouts, you can quickly signal left just before you exit (make sure you have passed the previous exit first). However, you do not always have to do this.

For smaller mini roundabouts, you will only need to signal your intentions on the approach to the roundabout.

When turning right from larger single-lane roundabouts, a right-hand signal will show other road users that you intend to remain on the roundabout. You'll then normally look back and signal left (after you pass the exit before the one you intend to use) to communicate when you'll exit the roundabout.

Some road users cut the corner and go over the central hump at mini roundabouts. You should avoid doing this because it goes against the Highway Code and because the raised area may be slippery, especially when it's wet. In these instances, manage the relationship with road users behind you by observing, making eye contact (if possible) and choosing an appropriate road position.



As with all junctions, you should get ready to brake, with your fingers covering your brakes. Choose the most appropriate gear and speed as you approach the junction.

You can also choose to walk instead. Pull in and get off your cycle (where possible) and cross the road by foot. If you're using an adapted cycle which you cannot walk with, proceed carefully on the pavement and use crossings at walking speed.

## 7.12. Using traffic lights



You understand and follow all traffic light signals. For example, you understand that an amber light after a green light means 'Stop' unless you have already crossed the Stop Line and it would be unsafe to stop.

On approaching a red light, move into primary position and stop behind the Stop Line. If turning left or right and there is a filter lane, move into primary position for the appropriate lane.

If there is a queue at a red light, decide whether to wait your turn or to filter towards the front using the techniques set out below (see the section on Passing queuing traffic). If you think you can get through the lights after the next phase, it is often better to wait in the queue (one downside of doing this is you may be directly behind vehicles' exhausts, so stop about a cycle's length away from a vehicle in front of you).

Some traffic light junctions have an Advanced Stop Box or Advanced Stop Line (ASL) so riders can position themselves ahead of the traffic. You should usually only filter to an ASL if there is space to stop in it (some road users illegally position themselves in ASLs). You should normally position yourself in the primary position in ASLs, in front of the traffic, and remain in the middle of the traffic flow as you move off once the lights change. Only move into secondary position to let road users pass once you're through the lights – and provided there's no other reason for you to stay in primary.

## 7.13. Using cycling infrastructure



Cycling infrastructure refers to the physical facilities that are designed to support people who ride cycles, both on and off road. This can include anything from cycle lanes and paths to associated signage and parking.

The quality of cycling infrastructure varies greatly. Before using it, you should consider whether it helps your journey. For example, you do not have to stay in a cycle lane and can choose to ride in the traffic flow if you think that it is less risky or more efficient. Also, painted lanes on the road near the kerb may not be wide enough for you to use. You should always choose the most appropriate position for your journey – make sure other road users can see you and that you can communicate whether you want to be overtaken.

Some cycle lanes may not be clear of hedge cuttings, glass and debris, and some may be inaccessible for riders with disabilities and others on non-standard cycles. Some may put you in a less visible or risky position such as too close to parked cars or junctions. They may encourage other road users to overtake you even though there's not enough space to pass.

Other cycle lanes will be segregated from other traffic. These can offer more protection, but may put you closer to pedestrians or be too narrow to allow you to overtake slower riders. If the cycle lanes have not been designed to meet minimum standards, then wider cycles may not fit in them.

Segregated cycle lanes may also make you less visible at junctions and force you to cross the road where road users aren't looking. Remember that you do not have to use such cycle infrastructure and can ride on the road if you prefer. Some drivers may not understand why you are doing this and may beep at you. Try to stay calm and be flexible if needed.



If you do choose to ride in a cycle lane, it can sometimes be helpful to ride on the right-hand side of it, if it is one-way. This will give you more distance from the kerb, make you more visible, and give you more space and room to manoeuvre. When cycling past side roads, you may need to move out of the cycle lane to ensure you are seen by road users wishing to exit the side road.

You do not have to use a cycle lane to filter up on the left-hand side of standstill traffic (the right-hand side is usually better). Nor do you have to filter up to an Advanced Stop Line or cycle box if you're unsure whether you'll have time to reach the front before traffic starts moving. Just be mindful that some road users are not aware that the use of cycling infrastructure is optional.

## 7.14. Using multi-lane roads



When riding straight along a multi-lane road, you will generally use the left-hand lane, unless you are overtaking or turning right.

If there is enough space to be safely overtaken and you are not passing a side road on your left, you should ride in secondary position. If it is too narrow for others to overtake, such as when the right-hand lane is occupied, you should ride in primary position. Since road widths vary, you will need to claim the space you need by your road positioning, always considering where the traffic flow is in the road. Stay aware, be dynamic, and adjust your position accordingly.

If you want to turn right off a multi-lane road, you will need to move across one or two lanes. Do this one lane at a time and plan to give yourself enough time. On faster roads, you'll need to start the routine even earlier.

Look back and signal (possibly at the same time) to make your intentions clear to other road users. Then, move from the primary position of the left lane to the primary of the next lane, always checking beforehand. Other road users should understand your plan, and some may slow to let you into the right-hand lane. If necessary, you can then signal again to communicate your intention to turn right from the major road. If you need to wait in the right-hand lane for oncoming traffic, stay in the primary position and check over your right shoulder before turning into the new road.

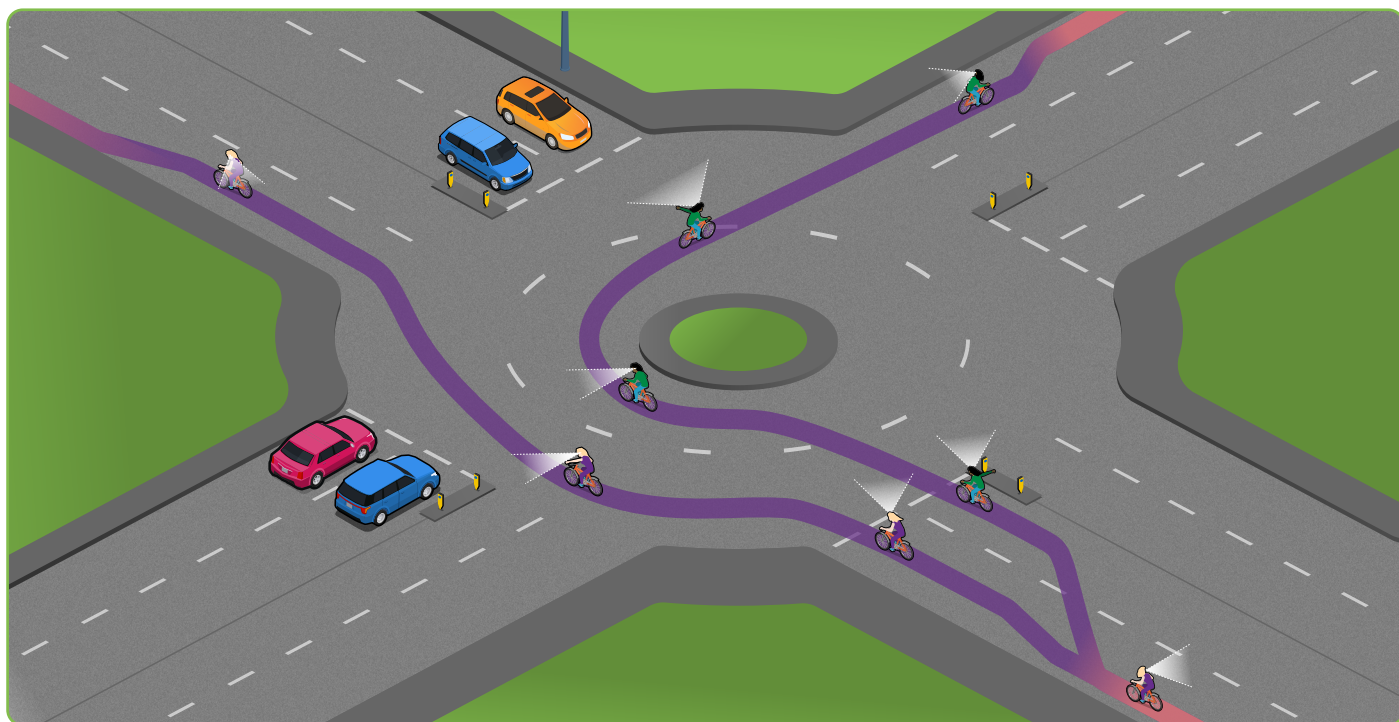
## 7.15. Using multi-lane roundabouts

The rules that apply to mini roundabouts also apply to multi-lane roundabouts. Normally, you'll have to ride in the primary position. Choose the correct lane on your approach and, if turning right off the multi-lane roundabout, move into the primary position for the right-hand lane. Then, when clear, join the innermost lane on the roundabout itself.

When you are riding around the roundabout, make every effort to look at the faces of people driving as you pass each junction to check whether they have seen you. When leaving the multi-lane roundabout, it's usually best to move from the inside lane after passing the second-to-last exit. Look over your left shoulder to check whether it is clear before moving, and signal your intentions. This allows you to move into the primary position in the outermost lane so you can exit the roundabout.

The Highway Code suggests using either lane. Whatever strategy you use, make sure your intentions and direction of travel are clear. Bear in mind that, if using the left-hand lane and turning right, you are using the roundabout differently to other road users.

You can also choose to walk instead. Pull in and get off your cycle (where possible) and cross the road by foot. If you're using an adapted cycle which you cannot walk with, proceed carefully on the pavement and use crossings at walking speed.





## 7.16. Sharing bus lanes



Riders often share bus lanes with buses, taxis and sometimes motorcycles. Drivers are sometimes permitted to use bus lanes at particular times of day.

It is usually best to ride in primary position when cycling in bus lanes. Deciding whether to ride in primary or secondary will depend on the width of the lane, the amount of space for overtaking, and how often other road users pull in. Riding in the primary position will ensure that you are more visible and that bus and taxi drivers overtake you by moving into the next lane.

When riding behind a bus (or any vehicle that may be about to pull in) do not ride too close to it. Be ready to react, with your fingers covering your brakes.

You should be able to anticipate when a bus driver intends to pull in by noticing bus stops ahead (and seeing if people are waiting there), or by the driver indicating. When approaching a bus in front, you can also position yourself on the right-hand side of the lane. This will enable you to make eye contact with the driver in their mirror. Remember, you can always wait behind them if they pull in.

Also be aware that other road users may cross over bus lanes especially at junctions, you should carry out frequent observations to understand the intentions of other road users.

A bus ahead might pull in to stop, or you might need to overtake a stationary bus at a bus stop. Riding in the primary position, or a position on the right-hand side of a bus lane, makes it easier to move into the right-hand lane in these situations.

If overtaking, always check behind and communicate your intention to pull out if necessary. Pass the bus wide and look into the driver's wing mirror. Passing wide will ensure any passengers exiting the bus and crossing the road in front will see you early. By overtaking in the same position that drivers would use (primary position), you will discourage road users behind from overtaking you.

You might be riding in a bus lane (or in a right-hand lane that a bus driver wishes to pull out into) and a stationary bus indicates right to pull out. Unless you are already alongside it, you should slow and let them pull out.

You may be sharing a bus lane with other people on two wheels (cyclists, motorcyclists and e-scooter riders). Untrained cyclists will be more likely to ride in secondary position or even closer to the kerb in bus lanes. In such cases, you may need to be flexible in your road positioning to give each other enough space. If riding in primary position, be aware who is on your left by occasionally checking over your left shoulder. If you notice that a faster cyclist or motorcyclist wishes to pass you, consider moving left to let them pass, so long as this does not put you in a vulnerable position.

## 7.17. Passing queuing traffic



One of the advantages of being on a cycle is that you can move past a traffic queue. This is called filtering. You should always assess the environment and any potential hazards when deciding whether to filter.



If in doubt, you can always just stay in the traffic queue. If the traffic slows briefly and you can see that everyone will move off again in a short time, it is best to wait. You must avoid filtering on the side of any road user who is about to turn to that side. Pay particular attention to larger vehicles, which have more blind spots and can ‘swing in’ when turning.

When choosing which side to filter on, you should usually go where there is most space. It will normally be more efficient and less risky to pass traffic on the right. There will often be more room on the right, especially if the oncoming lane is empty (this is likely to be the case at junctions with traffic lights). Drivers also expect to be overtaken on their right and will generally check their right-hand wing mirror more than their left. Passengers tend not to get out of vehicles on the right-hand side and, if filtering on the right, you will have fewer issues with pedestrians stepping off the pavement.

However, as cycle lanes are generally on the left, you may choose to filter on the left. You should weigh up the risks of using either side to filter, and if in doubt, simply wait in the traffic flow in primary position. Filtering may not be possible on a non-standard cycle which is wider than a standard bicycle.

When approaching slow-moving or stationary traffic, if necessary, move to the side so you can better see past the vehicles in front and decide whether to filter.

If you decide to filter, first look back to check for anyone who might be overtaking (such as motorcyclists and faster riders). Pass the traffic queue slowly, watching out for pedestrians stepping out between vehicles and car doors opening. You can often ride a good distance away from queuing drivers, especially if the oncoming lane is empty. But if you’re passing vehicles in the ‘door-zone’, be sure to do so slowly to give yourself time to react. If, while filtering, you see a road user coming towards you in the oncoming lane, you’ll need to move back to the left. You should be able to wait at a ‘station’ between two queuing cars until the oncoming road user has passed, and then continue to filter.

If you are filtering past vehicles that start to move, the space between two queuing road users normally expands when the traffic moves off: a sort of ‘concertina’ effect. This is usually your opportunity to make eye contact (and potentially signal) with the road user behind and to drop back into the traffic flow in front of them.

If you cannot rejoin the traffic flow, because it’s not moving and there’s no gap, wait behind and to the right of a road user in the queue. Communicate with the road user behind using eye contact and, if necessary, a signal. They should then let you into the traffic flow once the traffic starts moving again.

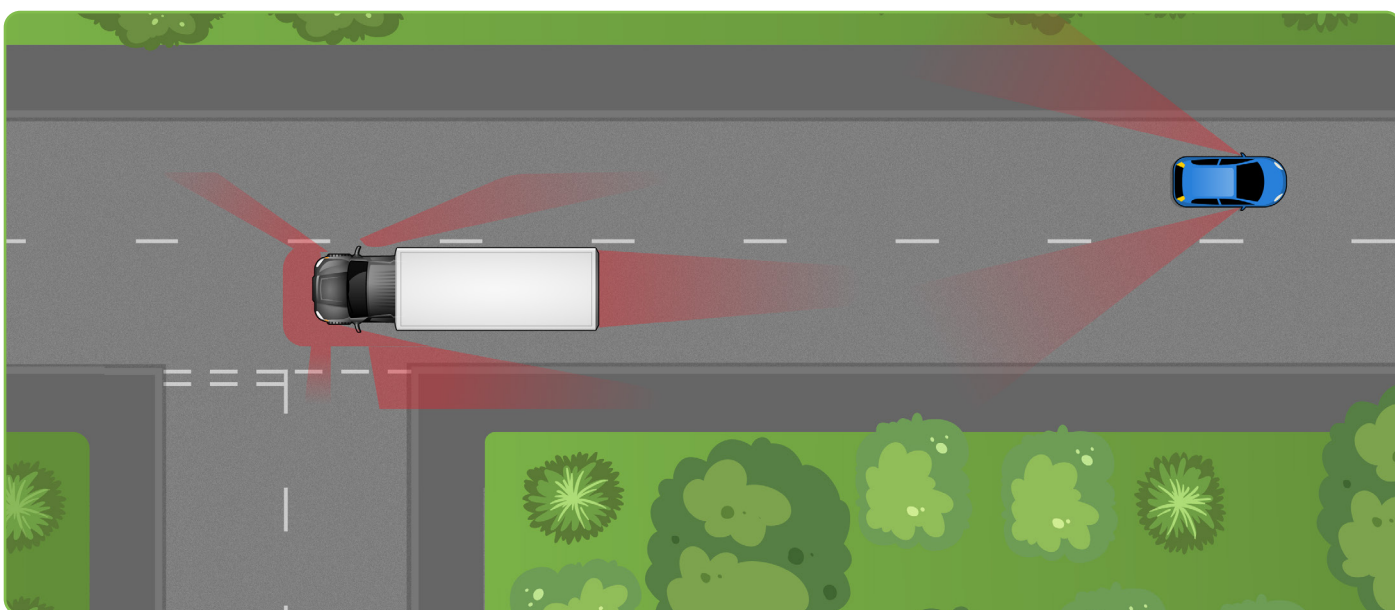
If filtering on multi-lane roads, think about where you can best be seen if you want to move up a queue. It can be best to filter between two lanes of queuing traffic. Again, think about where the space is and what the hazards are when deciding whether to filter and which side to do it on.

Filtering is an advanced skill. Only attempt it if you feel it’s a good option for your cycle, your speed and the speed of the traffic flow. If you are unsure, simply stay in primary position.



Some traffic light junctions have an Advanced Stop Box or Advanced Stop Line (ASL) so cyclists can position themselves ahead of the traffic. Some have feeder lanes to the left which send a mixed message, encouraging riders to filter left. This can be risky for reasons already discussed. Remember that the use of such cycling infrastructure is optional and you do not have to use these filter lanes. If there is an ASL or cycle box at a traffic light junction, pedestrian countdown timers can help tell you if you have time to reach the front.

## 7.18. Being aware of driver blind spots



Much is being done to improve the interaction between drivers of large vehicles (HGVs/buses/vans) and riders. This includes fitting extra mirrors, both in the vehicles and at junctions. It can also include installing proximity sensors to detect nearby riders, and driver training courses such as Safer Urban Driving. There is only so much that can be done using technology and drivers have only one pair of eyes. You should be aware of places around vehicles where drivers are unable to see (blind spots).

When sharing the road with drivers of larger vehicles and those with blind spots, you can reduce risk by following the advice outlined in the sections above:

- Ride in the primary position through junctions to ensure you can be seen.
- Pass traffic queues wide and usually on the right.
- Look into the faces of other road users and make eye contact if possible.



Never pass down the left side of any vehicle moving or turning that way. Be aware that longer vehicles need to swing right before turning left, and vice versa when they turn the other way. If you are using a recumbent cycle that is lower to the ground, be mindful that it may be even harder for other road users to see you.

Cars also have blind spots, especially when parked the opposite way on a lane you are riding down. Drivers may not see you when they reverse out of parking spaces so give them plenty of space and be prepared to react accordingly.

## 7.19. Riding on roads with speed limits above 30mph



The principles of good cycling apply to faster roads too.

When riding on roads with speed limits above 30mph, you will need to pay particular attention to the speed and distance of vehicles ahead and behind you. When changing your position or negotiating junctions, you will also need to observe, communicate and adjust your road position earlier.

Carefully consider the difference in speed between you and other road users when riding on such roads. If possible, ride a little faster (but never rush) to increase the time it takes for road users behind to catch up with you. This gives you more time to move. On some occasions, such as when negotiating junctions on faster roads, it may be better to get off your cycle and cross on foot, or use separate cycling infrastructure.

Also remember that choosing when to cover your brakes while riding will help you to react more quickly. It means you can avoid snatching at your brakes and stopping suddenly.

Winding rural roads often have poor sight lines, so how you position yourself on the road will depend more on your visibility and that of other road users. Make sure to ride in a position where you can see and be seen as much as possible around corners. This may well mean that you ride in primary position far more than you do on suburban roads. However, be prepared to move over if oncoming road users approach and it is appropriate for you to do so.

Always be aware of what is happening behind you and, if appropriate, allow any backlog of road users behind you to get past. You may even stop at a suitable place to allow road users to pass if the queue becomes long.

## 7.20. Riding with other riders



When riding behind another rider, give them (and yourself) enough space, in case they suddenly need to slow down or stop. Communicate with and support each other, while also making your own independent decisions. If riding in a mixed-ability group that wants to stick together, carefully consider where each rider is located in the line and ride at a speed that all can manage.

You are allowed to ride side by side with other riders. Deciding on and switching between riding single file or doubled-up should be a dynamic process. Rather than choosing one approach or the other for certain journeys, consider regularly switching between both approaches based on your awareness of what's around you and the needs of your group.

The Highway Code advises you not to ride more than two abreast. Riding side by side can be pleasant and sociable and, in some situations, makes you more noticeable. On wider roads, it can sometimes enable road users behind to overtake more easily (since the line of riders is shorter). Riding doubled-up will also enable you and a group of riders to pass through junctions more quickly.



If you are riding next to another rider, be sure to give each other enough room in case one of you needs to suddenly change position. If you are riding on the right-hand side, ensure your partner has enough room at junctions and when passing parked cars.

Riding one behind the other can be helpful for new or less experienced riders, as well as when an adult is riding with a child. This is often called ‘buddying’. If you are buddying a rider, it is often best to cycle alongside or behind them. If riding behind, you should be slightly to their right where you can protect and communicate with them. Be aware that you may block their view when riding in this position. You can then dynamically move up alongside them on their right if they need extra support, such as when negotiating junctions.

When sharing space with other riders, be aware that they may be untrained and might not be using the best road positions. This could be a hazard for you.

You may need to be flexible when negotiating junctions where riders around you position themselves inappropriately. Be mindful that some road users may not understand why you are in a certain riding position when other untrained riders are not.



## 8. Conclusion

The riding style described in this guide takes practice. Even experienced riders will need time and support to cycle this way.

As an instructor, it's important that you consistently ride to the National Standard for Cycle Training as a role model for your riders and the wider public.

This means practising the skills set out in this guide. You'll need to be prepared before you start any journey. You'll need to cycle with excellent control skills. You'll need to practise routines when cycling and be aware of what's around you. You'll need to communicate with and respect others. You'll need to position yourself appropriately. And you'll need to follow the priority rules of the Highway Code.

Remember that, even as an instructor, you never stop learning as a rider. You will need to regularly reflect on your practice to continue to improve. If you encounter a challenging moment on a journey, ask yourself if you could have done anything differently.

Reflecting on your practice and developing your technique will make cycling even more enjoyable. This, in turn, will help you pass on your skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to other riders, of all abilities, on any cycle.





### **Contact The Bikeability Trust**

For additional support, guidance or to make a query, please email [contactus@bikeability.org.uk](mailto:contactus@bikeability.org.uk).

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