



Virginia Business Lawyers

Some Biking Rules and Tips for the Road in Virginia

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Many bicyclists worry that riding on surface roads is confusing or dangerous. It doesn't have to be either. Here are some do's, don't's, rules, and tips.

1. Make sure your bike is in good operating condition and safe for use. See video url here:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=PV5_DDZSNyE
2. Although there is some controversy about their effectiveness, most would agree that wearing a properly fitted **bike helmet** can protect your head from some injuries in an accident. In **Virginia**, local ordinances may require you to wear a helmet. **Virginia Code § 46.2-906.1**. Most organized bike rides and races require participants to wear a helmet. Wearing a helmet is no substitute for safe riding.
3. Generally, ride as close as safely practicable to the right curb or edge of the roadway. It's ok to pass another vehicle on the left, to get into the left turn-lane to turn left, to move to avoid hazards, to move to avoid a lane or signal that requires you to turn right if you don't want to turn right. **Virginia Code § 46.2-905**.
4. On a one-way road, you can also ride as close as safely practicable to the left side of the road. Virginia Code § 46.2-905.
5. A tip: don't ride on the shoulder of the road, on the right side of the solid white line. There's often glass and gravel there that'll give you a flat tire. Plus, cars and trucks think you're safely out of the way and may not give you the wide berth necessary to avoid clipping you with extended mirrors. Ride, instead, about 12-18 inches from the white line, in the **travel lane**.
6. Carry a spare tube, a tire pump, and tools to fix a flat tire.
7. Carry some water.
8. On a long ride, consider wearing gloves to ease stress on your palms. Small things that annoy you a little on a short ride can hurt on a long ride.

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9. About padded **bike shorts**. For most peoples' commutes and for running errands, the simultaneously form fitting and lumpy lycra bike short is overkill. For a long ride, though, it can be helpful. If you don't like the way they look, they can be worn under street clothes.
10. You can't have too many lights on your bike between sunset and sunrise. Virginia Code § 46.2-1015. Have a front, white light visible from 500 feet and rear red reflector visible from 600 feet. On a road with a speed limit of 35 mph or more, have a red tail light visible from 500 feet.
11. When you're on the road on a bike, subject to certain limited exceptions, your bicycle is a vehicle subject to the same laws as cars. **Virginia Code § 46.2-100, § 46.2-800.**
12. Stop at **stop signs** and red lights. But note that under certain, limited circumstances, a bike rider can go through a red light if she (i) comes to a full and complete stop at the intersection for two complete cycles of the **traffic light** or for two minutes, whichever is shorter, (ii) exercises due care, (iii) otherwise treats the red light as a stop sign, (iv) determines that it is safe to proceed, and (v) yields the right of way to the driver of any vehicle approaching on such other highway from either direction. Virginia Code § 46.2-833.
13. Obey speed limits.
14. RIDE WITH TRAFFIC!!
15. Do not ride more than two-abreast with another bike rider. If riding two-abreast, do not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic. If cars are behind you, move into a single file formation so you can be passed by faster vehicles. On a laned road, ride in a single lane. Virginia Code § 46.2-905.
16. Generally, don't ride your bike on sidewalks. Although state law permits doing so, localities can prohibit this sort of riding, Virginia Code § 46.2-904, and it's dangerous for riders and pedestrians. In some areas, bicyclists are prohibited from sidewalks by posted signs.
17. Any driver of any vehicle passing a bike may pass the bike at a reasonable speed and at least two feet to the left of the overtaken bicycle. **Virginia Code § 46.2-839.**
18. By contrast, a bike rider may pass another vehicle to the left or right, staying in the same lane as the overtaken vehicle or changing to a different lane, so long as the rider does so safely. Virginia Code § 46.2-907. If you're passing someone who can hear you, call out "on your left" or "on your right" so they know where you are.
19. If you're carrying anything on your bike, it must not prevent you from having at least one hand on the handlebars. Virginia Code § 46.2-906. This is a silly rule – you should always be able to have both hands on the handle bars.
20. Unless signs prohibit left turns by a bike, bikes can turn left where cars can. Riders should stay as close to the right curb or edge of the roadway as practicable to safely make the left turn. **Virginia Code § 46.2-847.**
21. You can register the serial number of your bike with your local law enforcement agency. Virginia Code § 46.2-908. There are also some **nationwide bike registries** to help you recover a lost or stolen bike.

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22. Signal you are turning, or pulling off, to the left by extending your left arm to the left. Signal when you are turning, or pulling off, to the right by either extending your left arm and turn your arm up at the elbow or extending your right arm to the right. Signal slowing or stopping by extending your arm downward. Give these signals in time for others to see and react to them, but you don't have to hold the signal during the whole maneuver – feel free to actually turn with both hands on the handlebars. **Virginia Code § 46.2-849.**

23. Don't ride with earphones. You should really want to hear what is going on around you. You're on a bike. On a road. With cars. Pay attention. It's not a good idea, but Virginia law permits you to ride with an earphone provided you use it in only one ear. **Virginia Code § 46.2-1078.**

24. Generally, the roads of the Commonwealth are as available to bike riders as they are to cars and trucks. But not always. Some roads are barred to bikes. These will be marked by conspicuous posting. **Virginia Code § 46.2-808.** Stay of I-95 and I-64 and I-295.

25. The Virginia law that prohibits motor vehicles following each other too closely doesn't apply to bicycles. Still, don't follow cars or trucks too closely.

26. If you're drafting in a pace line, know what you're doing to avoid messy and painful pile ups. When you're in a pace line, or riding in a group, call out "Car Up" or "Car Back" to alert other riders to oncoming traffic or "Hole" to alert others to, uh, a hole. "Slowing" will help others know not to ride over your rear wheel.

27. Is a "track-stand" a "complete stop" for purposes of complying with a stop sign or red light? Probably not. (A track stand is that cool trick where a bike rider keeps a bike balanced without moving forward at all just by wobbling the front tire and manipulating the breaks and cranks.) Complete stop means, well, complete stop. Rolling through a stop sign real slow is illegal for cars, so too for bikes. Plus, riders in a track stand are confusing to drivers of cars – they don't know what the rider is getting ready to do. **Putting your foot down** actually brings you to a stop and signals to the rest of the world that you mean it.

28. On a bike, keep the rubber side down.

What tips and techniques are you sharing with other cyclists to help them be safe and enjoy the ride?

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