

GEAR UP

MS 9

DISCUSSION

HELMETS

These are your #1 piece of safety equipment. Please refer to the section on helmets for more information.

REFLECTORS

Lights and reflectors make you more visible. They can make a critical difference in the time a driver has to see and avoid you. You want a white reflector in the front and a red reflector in the back. This is good communication with drivers. It can tell a driver if you are moving in the same or opposite direction that they are moving. Cars are color coded the same way, with white headlights in front and red taillights in the back. If you are riding at night, you also need a headlight, just like a car. That not only makes it easier for drivers to see you but it also makes it easier for you to see. The headlight can be mounted on your handlebars or attached to your helmet. It is just a matter of personal comfort and choice. Having proper reflective gear is also the law. **CAVC 21201** says that you need reflectors if you are going to ride at night. You can also add reflective tape to your bicycle, a helmet or jacket to make it more visible.

BELLS

Bells are another useful form of communication. However these are used primarily for communicating with other cyclists or pedestrians. Car drivers cannot hear your bell well. If you are on a bike path and want to pass someone the bell is a signal. You can do the same thing by calling out "Passing" or "On your left!" when there is someone in front of you. Just like in a car you want to try to pass

people on the left. The right lane is the slow lane. If someone wants to pass you on a path or in the bike lane, move as far to the right as is safe and let them go by.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

By now most students have heard that it is best to wear light and bright colors. Even in the daytime, white is easier to see than black. Yellows, oranges and other bright and light colors also make you easier to see. However there are other things you need to do to be safe when you ride. Pant legs can get mixed up with your chain or in your pedals and cause you to fall. There are several things you can do to secure your pant legs. You can get leg bands that secure pant legs around your ankles. You can also tuck your pants into your socks when you ride. You can also roll your pant legs up. Any of these solutions will work to keep your pant legs out of your chain.

Another chain hazard is shoelaces. Tuck your shoe laces in so they will not trip you up. Finally, a word about headphones. There is no safe way to wear headphones when you are riding. Even if you only have them in one ear it still makes it difficult to hear and can impair your reaction time. People coming up behind you don't know that you cannot hear. Being able to hear is critical when you are on your bike. There might be a siren or a crash behind you. Someone might need you to move out of the way. In an emergency, seconds can make a difference and when you are on your bike the difference might be your safety.

BACKPACKS, RACKS AND PANNIERS

All of these things can help you transport things on your bicycle. Carrying something in your hands is dangerous. It can throw

you off balance or delay your reaction time. Find a method of transporting your books, binders and gear that works for you.

SPECIALTY CLOTHES

There are many specialty clothes out there for cyclists. Most of these are not necessary for the bike commuter who is traveling to and from school or work. You can get light weight padded shorts that are more comfortable if you are going for longer rides. Similarly, you can get light weight breathable tops that have back pockets for keys, phones or an extra water bottle. Padded gloves can be helpful if you are doing more off-road riding, as they help absorb shock from bumps. They also protect your palms if you happen to fall.

LOCKS

Make sure you have a good quality lock with you when you ride. Good locks can be pretty heavy so have a way to carry it other than your back. Hold it on a rack or attach it securely to your handlebars.

WATER BOTTLE AND CAGE

It is important to stay hydrated when you ride. This keeps your muscles working smoothly; getting dehydrated can cause headaches. Most bikes have a cage in the frame to hold a water bottle. This provides easy access while you are riding. Practice in an empty parking lot getting your bottle in and out of the cage without swerving.

