

Driver FAQs: Sharing the Road

The law says bicyclists should ride all the way to the right. Why are they in the center of the lane?

California law states: "Bicyclists traveling slower than the flow of traffic must ride as close as practicable to the right curb or edge of the roadway." However, that sentence is followed by a host of exceptions including: when preparing to make a left turn, when avoiding a hazard, and when *the lane is too narrow for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel side-by-side within the lane*.



There are two bicyclists in this photo.
Which one is easier to see?

On residential streets, the lane is often too narrow to share, and there are usually cars parked on these streets which pose an additional hazard for people on bikes. **Bicyclists are safest when they are visible and predictable.** The safest place for a bicyclist to ride on a residential street is in a straight predictable line outside the dangerous "door zone," that is, about 5 feet to the left of parked cars or 12-16 feet from the curb.

Isn't it safer to ride on the sidewalk?

Sidewalk riding may feel like a safer choice, but what may feel safe is not always the safest option. In reality, bicyclists face just as many dangers on the sidewalk as on the road. Bicyclists on the sidewalk are much less visible to drivers, causing increased chances of the most common type of driver-caused collisions -- turning (left or right) in front of bicyclists. There is also an increased risk of being hit by drivers backing out of driveways.

Don't bicycle riders have to ride single file?

In most states, including California, there is no requirement that bicyclists ride single file. Bicyclists should be courteous and not block the travel lane when a safe bike lane is available. However, if the center of the travel lane is the safest place to ride, whether there is one bicyclist or two makes little difference to the amount of space they are using.

How do I safely share the road with a bicyclist?

Now that you know that it is both safe and legal for bicyclists to ride in the center of the travel lane, what is the best way to share the road?

- Remember that the bicyclist is someone's family member and may very well be your neighbor. They are not just an obstacle to pass.
- While PAUSD students receive robust [K-12 bike safety education](#), keep in mind that children make mistakes and sometimes exhibit risky behavior. Moderate your speed and give them space.
- Scan the road for all road users, not just other cars, especially before you turn right or left.
- Pass bicyclists when it is safe to do so -- when there is no oncoming traffic (cars or bikes) and when you can allow at least three feet between your vehicle and the bicyclist.
- Maintain a safe speed when passing; do not speed up to pass a bicyclist.
- Do not honk at people on bikes. You are likely to scare them and could cause a crash.



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