



9: RIDING AT NIGHT & IN BAD WEATHER

HOW TO BE SEEN AT NIGHT

Light up! Here's how:

Reflective safety vest:

good for cycling in dark clothes or if your rear light goes out. Don't wear dark clothes with no other light-colored material.

Rear light:

Effectively supplements your legally-required reflector to help approaching traffic see you. Many cyclists use flashing red lights.

Rear reflectors:

Biggest are best; get one at least three inches wide, make sure it's pointed straight back and not up or down. Only red is legal but amber ones can be several times brighter. Reflectors work only if they're clean, so remember to wipe them off!

Pedal reflectors:
built into front and back.

Reflective tape:
Use white or yellow in front, yellow or red in back.

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Strobe light

Jacket: Bright color, reflective piping in back.

Flashlight:
In a pinch, tie on with rubber bands or a bungee cord.

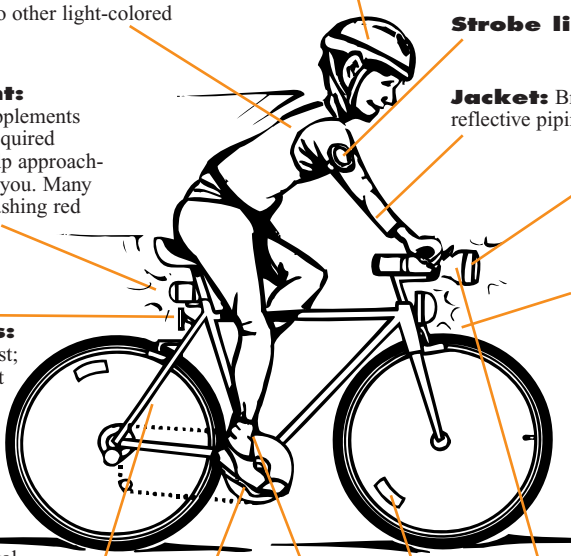
Headlight:
battery-powered LED or halogen. Get the most powerful one you can afford. (Use white or amber, not red.) The newer LED lights don't cost lots and have long battery lives.

Generator lights can be bright, and you don't have to worry about batteries.

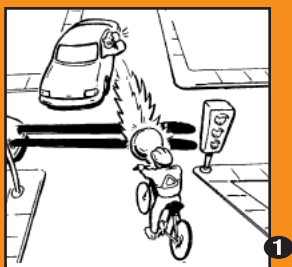
Rechargeable batteries:
If you ride at night a lot, you'll save money and throw away fewer toxic batteries.

Spoke reflectors:
not a substitute for a headlight or rear reflector.

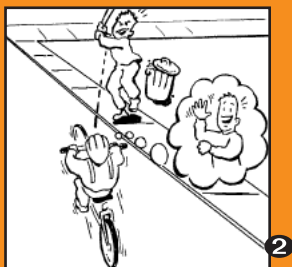
Reflective ankle strap



Only three percent of bike rides happen at night—but over half of all cyclists killed get hit while riding at night without lights. At night, California law requires a white front light, and a red back reflector or light. That's not much; you can see a car's headlights from 3,000 feet—and that's what most motorists look for. (Under bright street lights you need bike lights to be seen, not to see, so direct your headlights at drivers' range of vision.) And because your upper body's at eye level, it's important to wear bright stuff at night.



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RIDING AT NIGHT

Defensive Riding: At night, it's hard to see road hazards, and to anticipate the moves of others: You can't see where they're looking, and some may be drunk. **Slow down** from your daylight speed. To make sure drivers see you when you're stopped, **flash your lights** by twitching your handlebars back and forth. ❶ And **watch cars closely**; be ready to get out of their way.

Know Your Route: If you're new at night riding, **take streets where you know the potholes and traffic** so you can focus on riding in the dark. Also, if you're not sure about nighttime crime in a neighborhood, ask someone who knows the area—or don't ride alone.

Night Blindness: ❷ Don't bike at night if your visual acuity's worse than 20/40 with glasses or contacts, or you can read a far-away sign or address okay in daylight but not at night. See a doctor to be sure.

RIDING IN RAIN

Wet Streets: Wet streets can be hazardous. Watch out for:

- ▶ **Metal, paint, and leaves.** Metal-grate bridges, ❸ BART vents, sewer and manhole covers, painted pavement, and leaves get slippery when wet. Don't brake or turn suddenly on them. And don't ride across grated vents if you have thin or smooth tires.
- ▶ **Puddles.** Don't ride through a puddle if you can't see the bottom. It could be a deep pothole that could make you crash or dent your wheel.
- ▶ **Start of rain.** Don't race to beat the rain when it starts; it's when streets are slickest, because oil or anti-freeze on the road spreads before it washes away. Turn slower and with less lean.

Slow Down: Remember that motorists and cyclists can't see as well in rain or fog. And it takes longer to stop—so to be safe, go slower than normal.

Braking: When brake pads are wet they take up to ten times longer to work. Dry them by applying your brakes far ahead of where you want to slow down, causing your pads to wipe the rims. To dry them faster, "pump" the brakes by applying them, then letting go, over and over.





DRESSING FOR COLD & WET WEATHER

People who bicycle in the cold and rain aren't nuts; they're just dressed right. But how?

Protection & Venting in Wet Weather: If your clothes keep out rain they might also seal your sweat in. Wear a jacket or poncho that lets air in from the bottom, back, or sides. Use fenders to keep road grit and water from spraying up onto your feet, legs, and back.

Layers for Cold: ④ You don't need a whole new set of clothes to bike in the cold. Wear a sweatshirt or jacket and t-shirts, light sweaters, and tights or long johns in layers as weather gets colder. By wearing light layers you can also remove outer clothes if you warm up while cycling. (Overheating can make you sick.) And if you sweat a lot, the layer closest to your skin should be a non-absorbing material (synthetic instead of cotton) that lets sweat evaporate as you ride.

On the rare occasions when it gets very cold, many cyclists don't need much insulation on their torsos and legs where heat builds up. But they do need extra insulation on their ears, hands, and feet, where blood circulates less.

If you wear lots of layers in cold weather, you might feel uncomfortably warm after riding for five to ten minutes. What if you don't want to stop and take off some of your clothing layers? Consider a different way to dress: Learn the minimum amount of clothes you need to feel comfortable after you've warmed up. Then, the next time you bicycle, start out wearing only those clothes. You'll feel cold when you start, but later, when you warm up, you won't have to stop to shed layers.

Try different clothing to find what makes you comfortable at different temperatures and in the rain.

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EQUIPPING YOU AND YOUR BIKE FOR RAIN

Wear bright colors: yellow, orange, or fluorescent pink.

Legs: When it's cold but dry, wear loose-fitting, average-weight pants like jeans. When it's colder use long underwear or two pairs of tights. In wet weather wear synthetic underwear with one or two pairs of tights.

Feet: Wear heavy wool socks or two pairs of socks. (Wool dries more quickly than cotton.) Knee socks protect shins from cold from below. With socks for warmth and fenders for dryness, wear shoes simply to take road dirt. When it's really cold and wet, wear rubber boots.

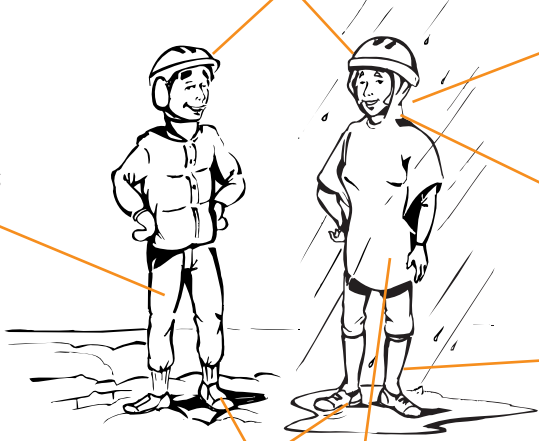
Head: Cover it unless you have thick hair. A tight-fitting hood covers your ears and fits under your helmet.

Hoods: Don't use loose-fitting hoods that block peripheral vision.

Neck: High collar or hood keeps water from going down your neck.

Leg gaiters: often made of nylon; keep your pants legs dry.

Rain gear: Wear a waterproof jacket. If sweat's a problem, wear a **loose or vented jacket**, a **waterproof poncho** that lets in air from below, or a **cyclist's rain cape** that hooks to handlebars to keep it out of your tires.



Rims: When wet, brake pads grip aluminum rims better than they do steel.

Tires: Fat tires have better traction. Tires less than 1 1/4" wide work better on wet streets when under-inflated. Use tires with a deep tread pattern.

Brakes: Grime builds up on brake pads, making them squeak or scratch your rims. Run a rag between each pad and the rim, like shining a shoe. Occasionally remove the wheel and check pads for wear.

Bearing damage: After biking in wet weather put your bike indoors so bearings can dry.

Fenders: They beat almost anything to keep you dry on wet pavement. The newest plastic ones are inexpensive and light, but can break if installed wrong.



SAFE BICYCLING IN

