

## Bicycle Laws

When riding your bike, it's important to follow the law for three reasons:

- You'll be safer
- You'll avoid a ticket
- You'll help gain the respect of motorists

Key points to bicycle law:

1. You have the same rights and responsibilities to follow the law as do motorists. With few exceptions, you must obey the same laws.
2. You should be as far to the right "as practicable," but there are several key exceptions that mean for the most part, you needn't be as far to the right as *possible*. Exceptions include:
  - a. When there is debris or unsafe road surface to the right that makes riding to the right side of the lane unsafe.
  - b. When the lane is too narrow to share. However, the law doesn't define what is too narrow for a bike and another vehicle to travel in the same lane. The only guidance we have is from the Florida Dept. of Transportation that states in its road design manual that anything less than 14 feet wide is too narrow. Why? A bike needs 4 feet of operating space; cars must pass at least 3 feet from a cyclist; and a typical car is 7 feet wide. However, there is no case law that confirms this. Width of a lane is measure from the lane lines, not to the gutter. Most travel lanes in St. Pete are 10-12 feet wide, meaning they are too narrow to share. But a judge may have a different opinion, and his or hers count.
3. When on a road with a bike lane, you are required to be in it, unless it is unsafe to do so. But the law again says you needn't be in a bike lane if road conditions make it unsafe. Also, it's important to note that the bike lane must be marked as such with a stencil on the road surface. Many roads in Pinellas County have shoulders marked by a lane line. You are NOT required to ride in the shoulder.
4. When there is a bike trail or segregated bike lane, you are not required to be in it. You may ride in the travel lane next to a segregated bike trail.
5. You must travel in the direction of traffic—no exceptions.
6. You must have front and rear lights at night.
7. You may not ride more than two abreast in travel lanes, and if you do, you must not "impede" traffic. But no case law has ever defined what "impede" means. You may travel more than two abreast on bike trails.
8. You must have working brakes that can stop a bike within 25 feet when going 10 mph.

9. A bicyclist under the age of 16 must wear a helmet.
10. Just like cars, you must stop at stop signs. Most police officers want to see, foremost, that cyclists yield the right of way, meaning if a car is at an intersection before you, you should yield the right of way. They also want to see that you slow sufficiently to see other vehicles approaching the intersection. However, if you don't come to a full stop, you may be ticketed.

Never litigate with a police officer. If you are stopped and issued a ticket, even if you think the officer is wrong, don't argue. If you like, take it to court.

The Florida statute regulating bicycle riding is here:

[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=0300-0399/0316/Sections/0316.2065.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0300-0399/0316/Sections/0316.2065.html).