

Riding on trails—especially now!

Many bike riders prefer trails and segregated bike lanes (those protected by a barrier from car traffic). And in these pandemic days, many more riders are taking to the trails.

Trails serve many users—walkers, cyclists, skateboarders, electric scooters, parents with strollers, etc. The hierarchy is simple: The faster you can go, the lower you are on the totem pole. The little ones are at the top. Scooter users and skateboarders yield to pedestrians. Slow cyclists yield to them all. Faster cyclists, yield to everyone. But that doesn't mean the slowest trail users don't have responsibilities, too.

Here are some tips, with special emphasis on today's environment where St. Pete's trails are experiencing much greater traffic.

1. Be aware. Yes, in some ways, you need eyes in the back of your head. Listen for traffic coming up behind you. Recognize that a ringing bell or a "on your left" is a warning that potential conflict is forthcoming. Look for crossing cars and oncoming trail users. Conversing with your riding partner is fine. Taking your eyes off the trail is not.
2. Whether riding, walking or scooting, don't use headphones if they preclude you from hearing traffic around you. And don't use your phone while riding a bike.
3. While it is legal to ride two or more abreast on trails, it is not always the smart thing to do, especially now. Single up on stretches of the trail that are busy, and don't wander across the trail. Keep a straight line. When someone comes behind you, single up and be aware of oncoming traffic that may create a conflict.
4. As cyclists, scooters and skateboarders approach someone from behind, remember those in front of you have the right of way. If you warn them that you're approaching, they aren't required to jump out of your way. Wait until it's safe to pass.
5. All trail users should stay to the right, giving approaching riders, whether ahead or behind, room to pass.
6. Pass slower riders and walkers with respect and announce passing on your left far enough in advance that you don't startle them. Use a pleasant, not demanding, voice. You may need to slow down considerably.
7. Obey stop signs.
8. If you need to stop, pull off the trail completely. Don't block traffic.
9. When descending a bridge, mind your speed and distance with the bike ahead and hold your line.
10. Be predictable. Signal your turns, stops and u-turns.

11. Control your dogs. They shouldn't wander from side to side on the trail.
12. Ride defensively. Assume that dog will bolt. Assume that walker will wander. Being right and in the hospital is not the optimum outcome.
13. Social distancing requires six feet clearance when passing. That's tough to do on a trail that may only be 10 feet wide. Slow down and try.
14. Cyclists, wear a helmet. And lights, even in the daylight, help oncoming traffic and cars crossing the path see you.
15. Be kind, responsible and generous.

Most of these rules also apply to riding on sidewalks. Currently in St. Pete, it is legal, but everyone using the sidewalk must act like a pedestrian. As sidewalks are usually narrower, faster moving vehicles must slow down considerably.

And pedestrians, cross with the pedestrian signal. Florida law requires that once the countdown on a pedestrian crossing signal has begun, you cannot start your crossing. And don't cross against the light.

## NOTES

If you're going to write about the trails, then I think you'd have to address the safety issue - never riding alone. Of course this would probably tick off some officials, so it might be better to a lid.

What about an article on equipment safety, proper helmet fit and why helmets, though optional, are really critical for rider safety?

the situation. Be prepared when approaching peeps. Be vocal.

I've noticed that "savvy" riders clip out when they approach a family - walking or cycling - with small kids. 1) If you're the approaching cyclist, unclip a foot in anticipation of an unexpected "burst" from a small child. 2) If you're part of the family, be aware of approaching activity and gather your young ones into a close, safe group as faster riders pass. 3) To all cyclists: Smile, offer a "good morning" or a wave. Let's be kind and encouraging to these newly-emerged Trail Users. A good thing for our communities! 😊

ABC Action News just reported that there's been a significant increase of use on the Pinellas Trail specifically of cyclists during these unfortunate days. Please explain the importance of riding single file so others may pass with as much social distancing as possible. Additionally, as you pass others, please announce that you are passing on them on the left, allow them time to move as far to the right as possible, and then pass with as much space between them and you as possible. Or perhaps consider staying off the crowded trails during these unfortunate days.