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Winter Cycling Primer

Cycling is a fun, all-season activity, even in Saskatoon!

Colder temperatures, icy conditions, and snow accumulation can make travel by bike more challenging in winter, but with the right preparation you'll be surprised at how comfortable and exhilarating it can be.

Here are some things to keep in mind when planning to cycle Saskatoon in winter months:



1. Bike

- Any bike can be a winter bike
- Fat bikes are popular for snow conditions, but are expensive
- Salt and sand can be hard on bike components; some people use an older bike, or buy a used or inexpensive one for winter riding
- Studded tires offer good traction in icy conditions. They are expensive but make winter riding much safer and more enjoyable



2. Gear

- Headgear - a wool cap/toque or fleece balaclava under your regular helmet will provide good protection in cool temperatures. Below -10 or -15C, you might prefer an insulated helmet
- Goggles - excellent eye and face protection against wind in deeper cold
- Base layer - a shirt of merino wool or other wicking material is best
- Outer layer - use a soft-shell jacket in cold and dry conditions (breathable but wind-resistant) . Add extra layers as needed when temperatures drop
- Gloves, mitts, or "pogies" - use to keep hands warm, depending on temperature
- Long underwear or ski pants - keep legs warm as temperatures drop
- Thicker socks and boots - feet will stay warmer with more insulation

REMEMBER: Dress for the day. Start off dressed cooler. You will quickly warm up as you ride and will be more comfortable if you can avoid excessive sweating



3. Visibility

- Winter brings shorter daylight hours and lower visibility conditions
- Ensure your lights (white in front, red in back) are functional
- Check your lights' batteries often
- Try to wear brighter coloured clothing to increase visibility
- Position yourself on roads so motorists can easily see you



4. Skills

- Practice proper signaling, obey traffic regulations, and stay alert
- Packed and/or fresh snow is fun to ride on. Traction is usually good. Slow down a bit, make no sharp turns, and you'll find navigation quite normal
- Be very cautious around ice, or ice covered by snow. Studded tires are great, but if you don't have them you can walk around the icy patch or ride slowly and straight across it. **DO NOT** attempt to turn or brake on ice!
- Brown snow (or "brown sugar" or "snirt" - a combination of snow, salt, and sand) is soft and tricky to pedal through, especially when covering ice. Use extreme caution and be prepared to dismount quickly if you get stuck or slip
- Ruts in the snow are best avoided. Ride outside/between them whenever possible. If you find yourself in one, stop, dismount, and lift your bike out, or steer out when safe
- When using roads, position yourself where you are clearly visible to drivers and not riding through debris or on unsafe/unpredictable surfaces
- Slower traffic should be on the right, but only if it is safe; you are allowed to control a lane of traffic when required
- Use the rule of "**See, Be Seen, and Be Predictable**"



5. Route Planning

- Explore potential routes on days with good visibility and milder temperatures, and when you can take a more leisurely pace
- The Meewasin Valley and some shared-use paths are usually well maintained and will connect many neighborhoods
- Side streets will have limited snow clearing, but will often have lower traffic
- Consider using public transportation for tricky trips. Saskatoon buses have bike racks that will hold bikes with 2" wide wheels or narrower