

# Lance



believes  
in a  
bicycle-friendly  
America.

That's why he's a member of the League of American Bicyclists.

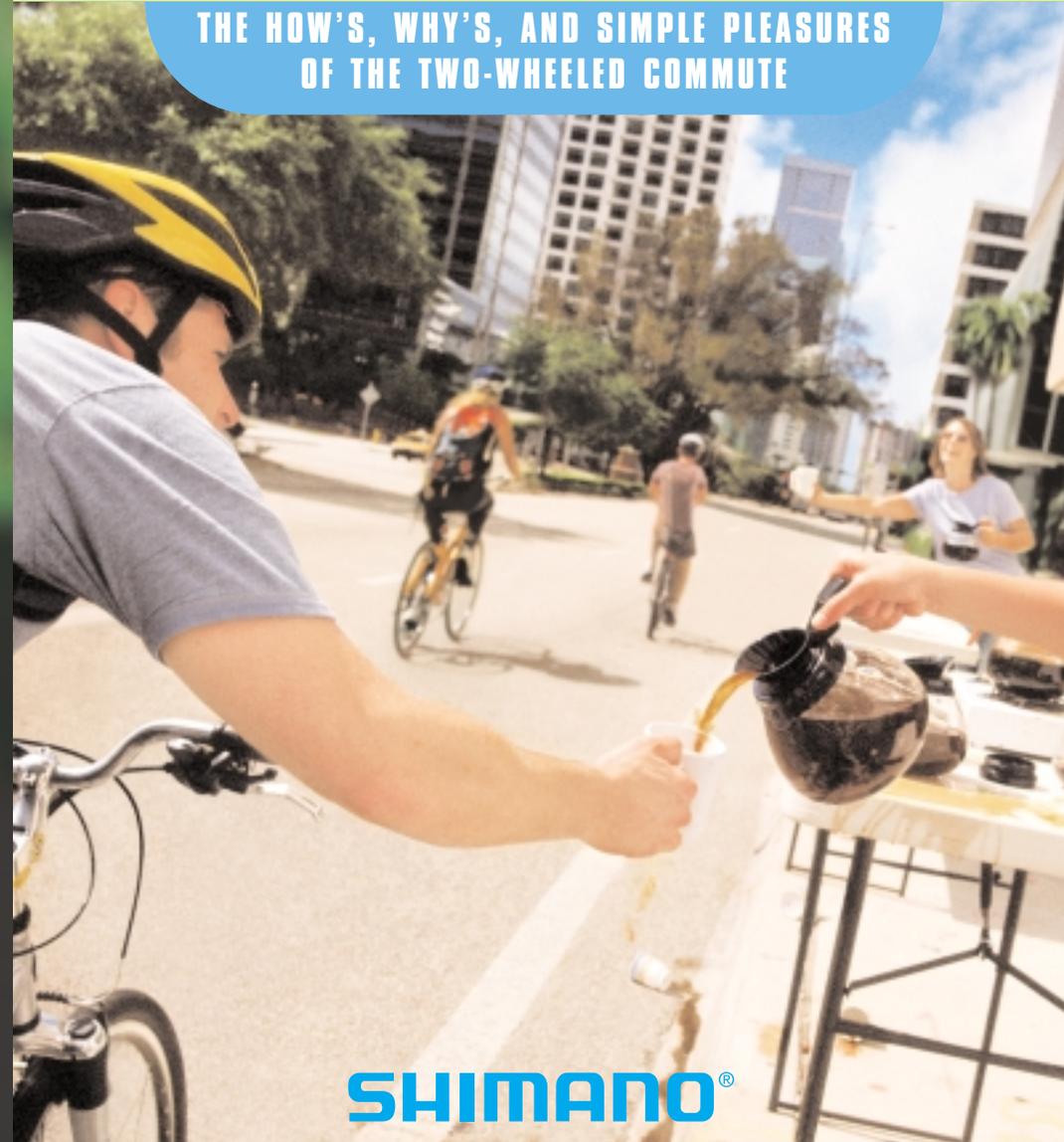


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# BIKE TO WORK

THE HOW'S, WHY'S, AND SIMPLE PLEASURES  
OF THE TWO-WHEELED COMMUTE



**SHIMANO**<sup>®</sup>

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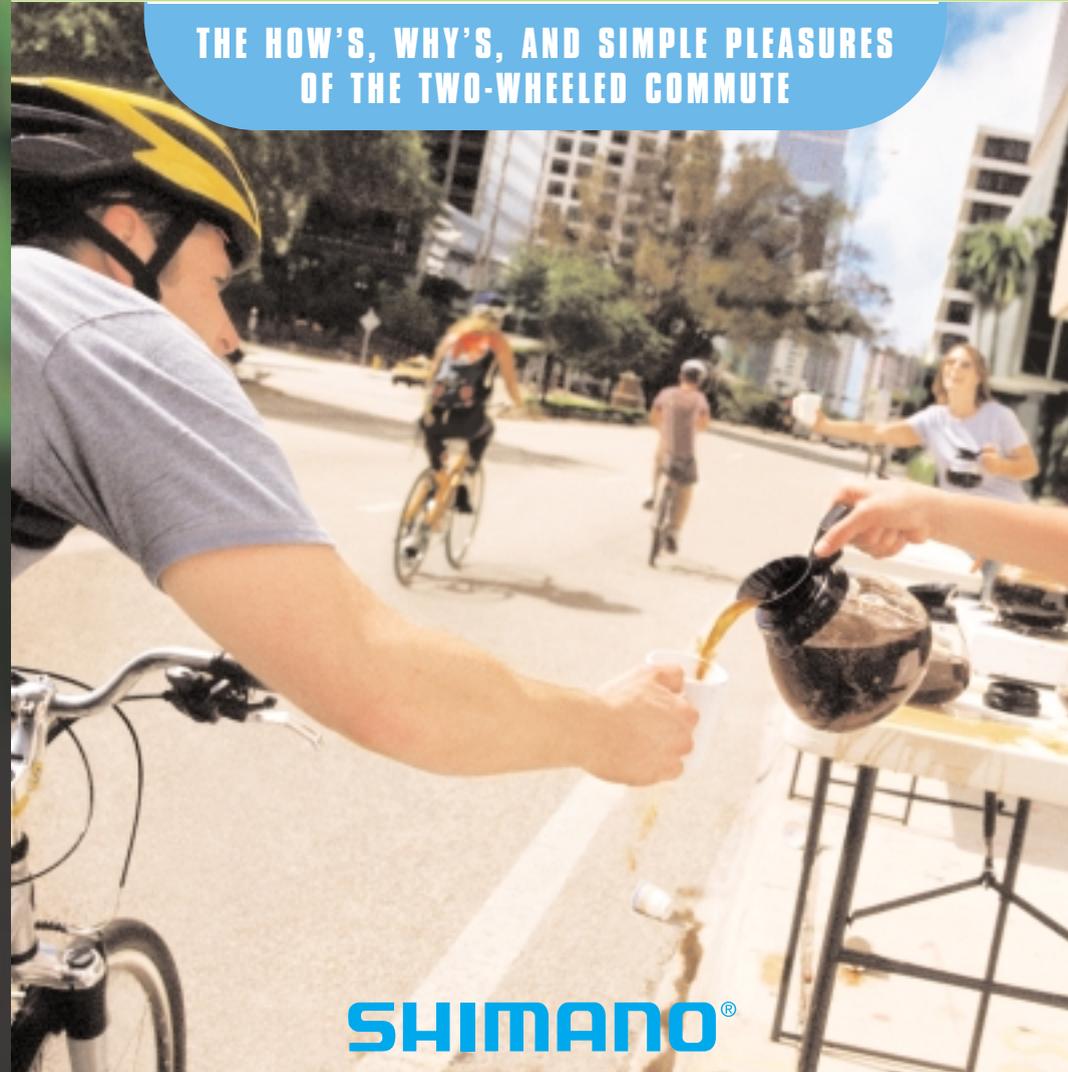


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# BIKE TO WORK

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## WHY BIKE TO WORK?



Photo Credit: Mark McLane Photography

When is the last time you smelled the honeysuckle in springtime during your morning commute? Or pulled into the parking lot with a big smile plastered across your face, pumped with endorphins and ideas? Or lost weight just by going back and forth to work every day?

Likely never, if you slide behind the wheel of a metal box and fight the freeway each morning. But what if one day you left the car in the driveway and rode a bike instead?

You'd actually look forward to going to work, says Jerry Edelbrock, a vice president of a nonprofit company in San Francisco. "I look forward to going to work as much as coming home, and I feel good about whatever I have to face," he says. Though he's been making the 16-mile trip in and out of San Francisco's financial district for 13 years, it still makes him giddy to pedal over the Golden Gate Bridge, especially during full moons in the wintertime. "The moonlight over the water is emblazoned in my memory. It's unbelievable."

**"Commuting by bike connects you to your environment. I love seeing the flowers in spring; how people decorate for Christmas, and being able to smile and say hi to people along the way. By the time I get to work, I feel wonderful."**

**—Phyllis Laufer  
4-H agent**

## A WORLD OF BENEFITS

Just as your first bike was a vehicle for freedom from parental hand-holding, your first bike commute will be a giant leap toward freedom from the rat race. As you kiss your dependence on cars, gasoline, and traffic reports goodbye, you will improve your health, your household, and maybe even the world at large.

According to the latest census figures, we Americans spend almost an hour a day on our daily commute. Tack onto that the 30 hours a year we spend stuck in snarled traffic (a figure highway experts warn could quadruple in coming decades); then figure in our daily errand-driving miles—that have more than doubled since 1969—and we practically live in our bucket seats.

If you spent even some of that daily drive time pedaling instead, the rewards would be:

- **A BETTER BODY** Most weeks, seven out of 10 of us fail to get the minimum recommended 30 minutes of activity per day—partly because many of us have to fight traffic to get to the gym. The result: More than 60% of Americans are overweight or obese, and rates of obesity-related diseases such as diabetes are soaring. Ride your bike to work, and you no longer need to make time to exercise. Rack up just 3 hours of riding time a week, and you can slash your risk of heart disease and stroke in half. Plus, you'll lose the gut and lovehandles—no diet required. Consult your doctor whenever starting any new physical activity.
- **MORE MONEY** The average annual price of keeping an automobile running: at least \$3,000. The cost of running a bike for a year: less than \$300. The joy of saving more than two grand this year: priceless.
- **CLEAN AIR** The number of communities that will fall out of compliance with the Clean Air Act is expected to triple within a decade. Motorized vehicles are responsible for 70% of the carbon monoxide, 45% of the nitrogen dioxide, and 34% of the hydrocarbons people produce. Riding a bike is a simple way to improve the environment.

Photo Credit: Trek Bicycle Corp.

## JOIN THE MOVEMENT

If the benefits of bike commuting appeal to you, now is the perfect time to start. As the government frets over an increasingly sedentary population and more Americans awaken to the rewards of riding their bike to work and for daily errands, communities and industries are responding.

Through the efforts of groups like The League of American Bicyclists, their Bicycle Friendly Communities Campaign and their work on the Safe Routes to School initiative, towns and cities across the U.S. are striving to be more bike and pedestrian friendly by instituting bike lanes, wider shoulders, and Share the Road signage.

Bike companies are responding by manufacturing bikes designed especially for commuters. These new rides are comfortable, easy to pedal, require minimum maintenance, and can be purchased for less than the average car payment.

There's even an officially designated Bike to Work week. Generally scheduled for the third week of May (this year's dates: May 17 – 21). The week features community pit stops offering free refreshments for bike commuters and other incentives that celebrate and promote this healthy lifestyle decision.



**"Biking to work has given me a sense of independence. While other people worry over their cars, traffic, and parking, I feel relaxed and in control. My truck was broken down for a week. I barely noticed."**

**—Dave Bachman  
PennDOT  
program manager**

As you'll soon see, bike commuting is for everybody. If you're an experienced cyclist, bike commuting is a way to sneak in hundreds, if not thousands, of training miles. But if you haven't ridden a bike since you got a set of car keys, bike commuting can be a wonderful way to get reacquainted with your youthful, exuberant self. By following some basic traffic-safety tips and riding advice, you can get to work safely, quickly, and best of all, happily. Read on and get started today.



Photo Credit: Shimano

## THE BEST BIKE FOR THE JOB

Just as there are tractor trailers to haul big loads and compact convertibles to shuttle back and forth from the beach, there are different styles of bikes to perform different jobs. Though any functioning bike will get you to work and back, the right ride will make the trip more pleasant. The following are the basic bicycle styles.

### ROAD BIKE



• **ROAD BIKE** Built for speed, road bikes have skinny, smooth, high-pressure tires; low drop handlebars; and a narrow seat—all designed for fast, aerodynamic performance. The upside: They're super efficient and generally have 16 to 21 "speeds," meaning you have a variety of gears to help you pedal easily on hills and flat terrain. The downside: Non-racing riders often find the hunched-over position uncomfortable. To make them more commuter friendly, raise the handlebars to achieve a more upright position.

### MOUNTAIN BIKE



• **MOUNTAIN BIKE** Designed for off-road riding, mountain bikes have fat, low-pressure, knobby tires that grip roots, rocks, and mud; flat, upright handlebars that are easy to maneuver on tricky terrain; and many easy gears for climbing steep, gravelly hills. Most also have "suspension" or shock absorbers. The upside: They're very stable and comfortable. The downside: Those big tires make them slow and inefficient on the pavement. To make them more commuter friendly, try adding narrower, smoother tires.

### LIFESTYLE



• **LIFESTYLE** With comfort in mind, lifestyle bikes have upright handlebars, wide tires, plenty of gears, suspension seat posts, and wide saddles to help give you the most comfortable ride possible. The upside: The ride is comfortable wherever your adventures take you. The downside: They're heavy and not as fast as a road bike. A lifestyle bike is a popular choice for those who seek comfort over speed.

*"I just got a new commuter bike, a Breezer Villager, and I love it. It has built-in lights and wide tires, and I sit nice and upright, so I feel safe, stable, and can see far down the road easily."*

~Joleen Pavelka, nurse

### COMMUTER



• **COMMUTER** This emerging category is the one to watch for bike commuters. Aptly named, commuter bikes are the workhorses of the bike world. They've been wildly popular in Europe and Asia for years, and are finally making their way across the pond to U.S. shores. The rider position is upright, stable, and comfortable. The upside: They can be equipped with fenders to keep you clean and dry on wet roads; cargo racks (or at least rack mounts) to carry your bags; and allow room for chain guards to keep your pants grease and fray free. With all bikes, other useful options like kickstands, lights, reflectors, and bells can be added. **(FOR A LIST OF OUR FAVORITE COMMUTERS, CHECK OUT BIKE-TO-WORK.COM.)**

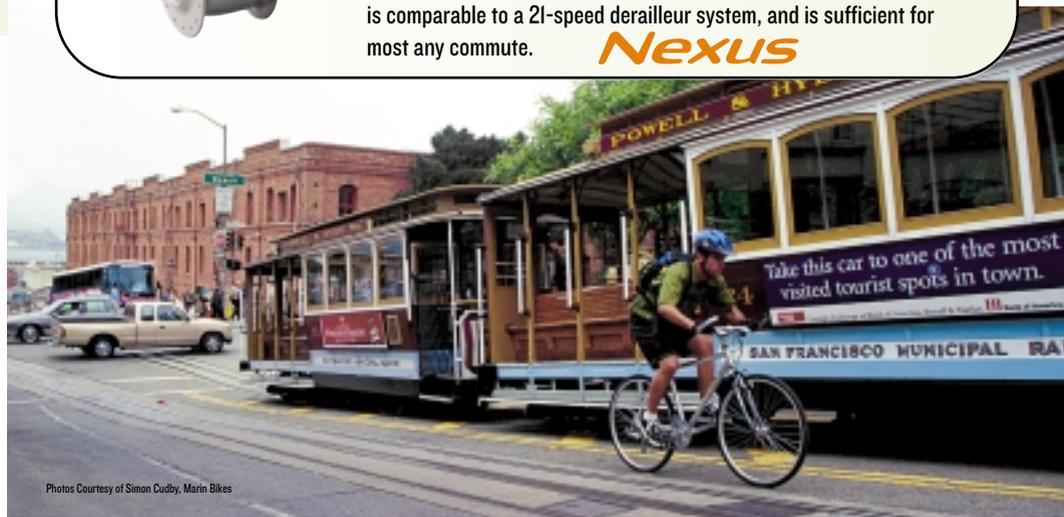
## COVER YOUR GEARS



One of the best features on the new commuter bicycles is a component known as an "internally geared hub." Standard bikes come equipped with visible gears and a derailleur that moves the chain up and down the cog stack, but internal hubs, like the commonly used Shimano NEXUS pictured here, hide the gears and shifting mechanism in the rear hub.

Since the derailleur is the bike component that requires the most maintenance and is most susceptible to going out of alignment due to water, dirt, and grime, an internal hub is a perfect choice for bike commuters. These hubs are long-lasting, no-hassle, low-maintenance, and super easy to use. NEXUS comes in 3, 7, and 8 speeds. The shifting intervals have been carefully computed, so an 8-speed hub is comparable to a 21-speed derailleur system, and is sufficient for most any commute.

**Nexus**



Photos Courtesy of Simon Cudby, Marin Bikes

THE AVERAGE COST OF A NEW CAR IN THE U.S.: \$13,532.

THE AVERAGE COST OF A NEW BICYCLE IN THE U.S.: \$385.

## DROP BY THE SHOP

Whatever bike you choose, whether it's a shiny new commuter or a cleaned up old friend from the basement, we recommend you visit your local bike shop for a tune up, tools, and tips. A specialty bike shop specifically for cyclists is the way to go for all your biking needs. Employees at an independent bike shop will make sure your bike fits well, works properly, and that you have the knowledge and accessories you need to ride regularly. It is a place you can return to for supplies, tune-ups, and good conversation. To find a shop near you, check the yellow pages, or better yet, ask a cyclist for a recommendation.

Once you have a bike that's ready to roll, you'll just need a few essential accessories. These items will cost a little extra, but they'll keep you commuting safely and comfortably for years.

- **HELMET** Sure you never wore one as a kid, but you're smarter now; so protect those brains. Chances are you'll never need it, but you'll be eternally grateful you had it on if you do. Today's helmets are light, airy, and comfortable. Most important, they reduce risk of head injury by 85%. **Investment: \$30-\$160**
- **BIKE CLOTHES** Shorts with a built-in padded chamois liner keep your butt from getting sore and prevent chafing. Today's shorts come in baggy and women-specific "skort" styles, so you don't have to pedal in tight-fitting Lycra if you don't want to. Moisture wicking jerseys keep you warm and dry without bunching or flapping. **Investment: \$30-\$100**  
(See page 11 for more on cycling attire.)
- **PUMP** Tires need air, so get two—a floor pump for home, and a frame pump for on-the-road flats. **Investment: \$20-\$60**
- **TOOL KIT** A patch kit **(\$5)**, a spare inner tube **(\$5)**, and a mini multiuse tool **(\$30)**, are handy to have. Put them in a seatbag **(\$15)**, or your jersey pockets.



Photo Credit: Bell Sports/Gareth Walters

**"I commuted on a 10-speed Schwinn clunker for years. You don't have to spend a lot of money to enjoy riding to work."**

**—Phyllis Laufer**  
4-H agent

- **BOTTLES AND CAGES** Staying hydrated is important. Grab two bottles and bottle cages (the shop can install). **Investment: \$15**
- **GLOVES** Palm padding cushions your hands and protects your skin should you fall. **Investment: \$10-\$40**

Depending on your commute, you may also wish to invest in a bike lock, lights, and panniers (special bags that attach to your bike). If you're not sure how to use any accessories or tools, ask the shop mechanic for a quick demo. Also be sure to learn basic on-the-road bike repair, such as fixing a flat, repairing a chain, and tightening loose bolts.

## HIT THE ROAD

Once you're geared up, it's time to get ready to hit the road. If you're a new commuter, you'll likely have a few logistics, such as choosing routes and carrying bags, to sort out before actually making the trip. Here are some tips for making your maiden voyage smooth sailing.

### SELECT YOUR ROUTE

Depending on your current commute, you may follow the same roads on your bike that you drive, or you may need to choose a more bike-friendly route that avoids highways or otherwise unsafe roads. Your local bike shop can assist you in choosing the best routes toward your destination. They also may have bike maps that show bike-friendly routes in your region, so you can try several different routes.

Another option is to visit [MapQuest.com](http://MapQuest.com) where you can choose directions right from your street address to work. Once the directions come up, click on the "Avoid Highways" tab. This should give you the shortest direction to work using roads.

As a rule of thumb, commuting to work will take about twice as long as driving, though a study by New York City's Transportation Alternatives shows that trips less than 3 miles are often faster by bike, and those 5 to 7 miles long take about the same time. Even if you spend an extra 20 minutes or a half hour riding, that's time that you don't have to spend in a stuffy gym. If you're a cyclist, it's an easy way to fit in daily training.

Can't commit to a long commute? Cut it in half. The first day, drive to work with your bike, then ride home that night. Ride to work the next morning, then drive home, and so on. Or drive halfway to a mall or other safe place, park your car, and ride the rest of the way. Many bus and rail lines allow bicyclists to bring their bikes on board (some require a permit, so check in advance), so you can ride your bike to a Park & Ride lot and catch a ride the rest of the way. Call your local transit station for ride-share options in your area.

**"Even if you're an urban commuter, you can avoid traffic if you try. I ride from Hoboken, New Jersey into Manhattan every day and I don't touch a regular street until I'm almost at the office door. It's bike paths all the way."**

**—Jerome Gill**  
administrative  
assistant

## CHOOSE YOUR CARRY-ON

There are a number of ways you can carry the items you'd normally bring to work in your attaché or briefcase. One of the most popular is a simple backpack, such as the Dakine Wonder Pack Backpack (\$30; dakine.com). Its 1,000 cubic inches is spacious enough to hold the essentials without bogging you down. You also can buy specific bike messenger bags, such as the rugged, funky totes made by Timbuk2 (\$60; timbuk2.com). If you have a rear rack, you can bungee strap a bag on the back of your bike. Some commuters prefer to use panniers, bags that attach to your frame. A bike shop can show you your options.

Along with your basic necessities, such as tools, change of clothes, and personal-hygiene items, you might consider carrying a cell phone and some spare cash in the case of emergency. If you have too much to carry, simply drive to work once or twice a week, carrying a few days' worth of clothes and essentials, so you carry less when you ride.

## DO AN ABC QUICK CHECK

If you keep your bike well-maintained, mechanical problems, barring the occasional flat, shouldn't be a problem. But it's a good idea to get in the habit of performing this ABC Quick check recommended by the League of American Bicyclists (bikeleague.org). Before each ride check:

- **AIR** Tires should be inflated to the rated pressure noted on the sidewall (pounds per square inch, or psi).
- **BRAKES** Check brake pads for wear (ask your bike shop employee about brake maintenance) and brake cables for fraying. Check pad adjustments; make sure pads do not rub the tire. Make sure you can activate your brakes; unless there is at least 1 inch between the handlebar and the brake lever when you apply it, your brakes are too loose.

- **CRANKSET** Your cranks are the arms that attach the pedals to your bike. Take both cranks in your hand and try to move them sideways. If either moves, tighten the bolt holding it on. If both move, take it to a shop to have your bottom bracket inspected.
- **QUICK RELEASES** Quick releases are the levers that hold your wheels (and sometimes your seatpost) on your bike. Be sure they are all firmly closed.

## PARK IT

Once at work, you'll need to store your bike in a secure place. Look around the office for an unused, lockable room or closet that you can ask permission to use. If no storage space is available, park your bike near the front entrance, where it is visible to pedestrian traffic. To theft-proof your ride, secure it with a quality lock. Kryptonite.com offers more than a dozen trustworthy options.

## THE RULES OF THE ROAD

Bicyclists are required to follow the same road rules as cars. This is important for your personal safety. A major concern many bike commuters have is the potential dangers of riding in traffic. Fact is, 85% of all serious bicycle crashes don't even involve a moving car. Among the remaining accidents, the vast majority are avoidable. Cyclists who learn and obey the rules of the road have 80% fewer collisions than those who do not. Here are essential safety tips.

- Ride on the right. Riding against traffic is a major cause of bicycle accidents.
- Be predictable. Avoid sudden swerves and stops.
- Be visible. Wear bright, reflective clothing. Use lights and reflectors in low-light conditions.
- Follow and obey signs, signals, and pavement markings.
- Signal when you are turning or stopping. Look over your left shoulder for traffic before you make a move. This also signals motorists.
- Yield to pedestrians.
- Watch for road hazards such as broken glass, gravel, and potholes.
- Position yourself appropriately. On wide roads, ride 3-4 feet to the right of cars in the traffic lane; on narrow roads, stay just inside the traffic lane so vehicles must partly cross the middle line to pass. (This removes the temptation to squeeze by you.) For turns, work your way into the proper lane 150 feet early; if you can't get in by 40 to 50 feet before the turn, go straight and double back. Stay at least a foot away from the curbs, where debris accumulates. Always allow enough room for a car door to open when passing parked vehicles, and never weave in and out of traffic between parked cars.
- Ride defensively and respectfully. Watch for people who may not be looking for you, and be courteous to other users of the road.



Photo Credit: Trek Bicycle Corp.

**"People are more open and talk to you more easily when you pull up on a bike than when you're in a car. I need to talk to a lot of strangers for my job, and bike commuting definitely makes it easier."**

**—Dave Bachman  
PennDOT  
Program manager**

## LIGHT THE WAY

During short-daylight months, you will need lights to ride safely. Most states require a headlight and a rear reflector or taillight on bicycles ridden at night. For quick commutes, try clip-on lights like the Cateye EL200 headlight (\$25) and LD260 Taillight (\$15). They're compact, weatherproof, and throw a bright beam for 50 to 100 hours on AA or lithium camera batteries (cateye.com). Long night rides require a more serious lighting system, like the Niterider Digital Pro I2-LCD (\$390) and Taillight (\$60) (niterider.com).

## BODY CARE

New bike commuters often pour time and attention into choosing and maintaining their bicycles, only to forget about an equally important "component"—themselves. As the "engine" that powers your bike, you need to be properly tuned, fueled, and protected from the elements to feel good and perform well. And, speaking of performance, you need to be ready to do your job once you arrive at your destination. The following advice will help.

### FIRE UP YOUR FITNESS

Worried you won't have the stamina to make it to the office? Here's a fitness rule of thumb: If you can walk a mile, you can easily pedal 5. And most people, even if they're not in top shape, can walk 3. So pedaling anywhere between 5 to 15 miles to work generally shouldn't pose a problem. Remember, it's not a race. You just need to pedal comfortably. Even if you're out of shape right now, bike commuting will get you in shape relatively quickly. The following tips will help you feel fit and fast, no matter your present physical condition:

- **SPIN SMOOTHLY** Most novice commuters pedal too slowly in too hard a gear, which makes their legs tire quickly and strains the knees. Ideally, you should pedal at a smooth, brisk cadence of about 75 to 95 revolutions per minute (rpm) in an easier gear. (Count the number of times your right knee comes up within 15 seconds and multiply by four for your rpms.)
- **SHIFT OFTEN** Changing gears helps your pedaling effort match the demands of the terrain, so shift liberally. To maintain a constant effort and smooth pedal stroke, shift before you need to, like at the start of a hill.

"I drove around before I rode in to select the route. I picked one that was a little longer, but flatter...it made commuting more enjoyable."

—Peter Oxford  
technician

Photo Credit: Trek Bicycle Corp.



- **PACE YOURSELF** You may feel great and have tons of energy when you begin, but resist the urge to start off like a rocket, especially if you have a lengthy commute. You want to feel as good at the end of your trip as you did at the beginning. And remember, you'll be riding home, too.
- **FUEL WISELY** Just as you wouldn't pull out of the driveway with no gas in your car, you shouldn't hop on your bike with no food in your belly, unless you have a very short commute. Since your body diverts blood from your stomach and into your legs during exercise, it's important to keep your early meal light and easily digestible. Carbohydrate-centered breakfasts like toast or cereal with juice and coffee are ideal preride fuel. If your commute is long, you may want to stash a few light snacks in your office desk, as well. Postride is a good time for some protein, such as nuts and dried fruit or a protein bar.

Be sure to drink enough fluids. Your body loses water while you breathe and perspire, but you won't necessarily feel "sweaty," because the constant airflow quickly evaporates the moisture. Dehydration can sneak up on you, sapping your energy and mental alertness. Take a sip from your bottle every 10 to 15 minutes, and use stop signs and lights as a chance to hydrate. If you are uncomfortable reaching for a bottle while riding, you can get a hydration backpack, like a CamelBak (camelbak.com), which allows you to sip on the fly, while keeping your hands on the bars.



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BIKE TO WORK

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Photo Credit: Burley Design

“So many people resist bike commuting because of the fear of cars. But I don’t buy it. I’ve been commuting my whole life in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and now in Maine, and I have not experienced any road problems. If you ride like a vehicle, cars treat you like one.”

—Ken O’Brien  
electrical engineer

### DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Staying warm and dry is easy in nice weather. It’s when the temperature plummets or the skies open that proper clothing choices are key. As a general rule, you should start your commute feeling “comfortably cool” so you don’t overheat once you warm up. Dress in layers for maximum comfort. First should be a base layer like DeFeet Un-D-Shurt (\$20; [defeet.com](http://defeet.com)) that keeps you warm while wicking sweat away from your body. Pull on a jersey over that. And top it off with a waterproof shell or vest for wind and rain protection. If you live in a particularly rainy region, you may wish to invest in high-quality, breathable rain gear, such as Burley Rain Jacket (\$120) and Rain Pants (\$75; [burley.com](http://burley.com)). Otherwise, a lightweight waterproof shell like Canari Cyclewear Emergency Shell (\$35; [canari.com](http://canari.com)) should do the job.

Though you don’t need special shoes to ride a bike, stiff-soled cycling shoes will make pedaling easier and reduce foot fatigue. Check with your local bike shop or go to [Shimano.com](http://Shimano.com) for a shoe and pedal combo that will best fit your needs.

### CLEAN UP

Unless you can wear a sweatsuit and ball cap on the job, you’ll want to clean up and look fresh and professional after you arrive at work. As far as carrying your clothes is concerned, most dressy-casual clothes hold up well if you roll rather than fold them. But if you work in a starched-shirt, shiny-shoe atmosphere, you may opt to drive in on Fridays to deliver fresh clothes for the upcoming week and shuttle dirty ones home for weekend laundering. Many office buildings are equipped with showers or have a gym facility nearby that you can

“Commuting is a way to get some exercise in the middle of the week, instead of being a weekend warrior.”  
—Nick Glouchevitch  
purchasing manager

use for cleaning up. If yours does not, shower and take care of personal hygiene at home before you leave, then freshen up in the lavatory at work. On-the-fly styling products such as Light Elements Reviving Mist (\$20) and Control Paste from Aveda (\$21) make it a breeze to refresh your look. Stow baby wipes and deodorant at work, too. That way you can wipe your face, feet, and underarms, and feel shower fresh in fewer than 5 minutes.

### BURN, BABY, BURN

A big bonus of bike commuting is all the calories you’ll burn. An average 150-pound person will burn about 500 calories riding a leisurely-paced 30 minutes to work and 30 minutes home. At that rate, you’ll shed those extra, stubborn 5 to 10 pounds in about two to three months.’



Photo Credit: Trek Bicycle Corp.

### SHARE THE LOVE

As any cyclist knows, two riders are more fun than one. More is even merrier. Whether you’re a newbie bike commuter or an old pro, now’s the time to spread the word and get others involved. Here are some ways you can share the love of cycling to work.

### START A BIKE POOL

There are likely other people at your workplace who love to or used to ride regularly, but have never considered cycling to work. Ask around or post a memo and gather names to form a “Bike Buddy” club. Compare routes, and plan to catch up with each other along the way. Pair veteran cyclists with new riders to further encourage interested newcomers to

“Commuting by bicycle is my favorite way to start the day! It wakes me up and clears my head before my day really begins. I’m healthy, I feel strong, and I eat what I want for lunch. Commuting by bike keeps me young and alive.”

—Tim Brady  
Machinist

