

The California Vehicle Code (CVC) contains the state laws that specify where and how bikes must operate. The following is not meant to be an all inclusive list nor exact quotes of the CVC, but a simplified language listing of sections related to the operation of bicycles. The links will take you to the statutory language.

DEFINITION OF BICYCLE [CVC 231](#)

A bicycle is a device upon which any person may ride, propelled exclusively by human power through a belt, chain, or gears, and having one or more wheels. Persons riding bicycles are subject to the provisions of this code specified in Sections 21200 and 21200.5.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES [CVC 21200](#)

Bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as motor vehicle drivers. CVC 21200

WHERE YOU CAN RIDE

Roadway [CVC 21202](#) When bicyclists are traveling **slower** than the normal speed of traffic, they must ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the road **except**:

- a. When overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle going in the same direction;
- b. When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway
- c. When necessary to avoid hazards such as objects, vehicles, surface hazards, or substandard width lanes that make it unsafe to continue along the right-hand curb or edge
- d. When approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.
- e. When the road carries traffic in one direction and has two or more marked traffic lanes, the bicyclists may ride as near to the left-hand curb or edge of the roadway as practicable.

Bicyclists traveling at the speed of traffic may ride within the travel lane.

Bicycle Lanes [CVC 21208](#): On a road with a bike lane, a bicyclist traveling less than the normal speed of traffic must use the bike **except**:

- a. When overtaking and passing another bicycle, vehicle, or pedestrian in the bike lane or about to enter the lane;
- b. When preparing for a left turn;
- c. When reasonably necessary to avoid debris or other hazardous conditions;
- d. When approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.

Bicyclists shall not leave a bicycle lane until it can be done safely and after using the appropriate signal.

Direction of Travel [CVC 21650](#): Bicyclists must ride on the right side of the road in the direction of traffic **except**:

- a. When overtaking and passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction;
- b. When making a left turn;
- c. When the right side of the roadway is closed to traffic, under construction, or repair;
- d. When the roadway is for one-way traffic;
- e. When the roadway is too narrow;

This does not prevent a bicyclist from riding on any shoulder of a highway where it is not prohibited.

Motorized Bicycles [CVC 21207.5](#): Motorized bicycles may not be used on bicycle paths, trails, or lanes unless allowed by the local authority.

Bike Path Obstruction [CVC21211](#): No one may stop or park a bicycle, vehicle, or other object on a bikeway or bicycle path or trail with the exception of utility or public utility vehicles, etc.

Sidewalks [CVC 21206](#): Local cities and counties regulate whether bicyclists may ride on sidewalks.

Freeways [CVC 21960](#) : Bicycles, including motorized bicycles, may not be ridden on freeways and expressways where prohibited by the California Department of Transportation.

Toll Bridges [CVC 23330](#): Bicycles may not cross a toll bridge unless permitted to do so by the California Department of Transportation.

EQUIPING YOUR BIKE

Brakes [CVC 21201\(a\)](#): Bicycles operating on the roadway must be equipped with a brake that allows the operator to perform a one-braked wheel skid on dry, level, and clean pavement.

Handlebars [CVC 21201\(b\)](#): : Bicycle handlebars must not be higher than the rider's shoulders.

Bicycle Size [CVC 21201\(c\)](#): A bicycle ridden on the roadway must be small enough for the rider to stop, support it with one foot on the ground, and start safely.

Lights [CVC 21201\(d\) and \(e\)](#) At night, a bicycle must be equipped with a white light that is visible from 300 feet from the front and sides of the bicycle. A light may be attached to the operator and visible from 300 feet may be used instead of the bicycle light.

Reflectors [CVC 21201\(d\) and \(e\)](#): At night bicycles must be equipped with all of the following reflectors:

1. A red reflector on the rear visible from 500 feet to the rear
2. A white or yellow reflector on each pedal, shoe, or ankle visible from the front and rear of the bicycle from a distance of 200 feet

3. A white or yellow reflector on each side forward of the center of the bicycle and a white or red reflector on each side to the rear of the center of the bicycle. These reflectors are not required if the bicycle has reflectorized front and back tires.

Seats [CVC 21204](#) : Bicyclists riding on roadways must have a permanent and regular seat. Bicycle passengers four years of age or younger and weighing 40 pounds or less must have a seat which retains them in place and protects them from the moving parts of the bicycle.

OPERATING YOUR BICYCLE

Helmets [CVC 21212](#) : Bicyclists and bicycle passengers under age 18 must wear an approved helmet when riding on a bicycle.

Head phones [CVC 27400](#): Bicyclists may not wear earplugs in both ears or a headset covering both ears. Hearing aids are allowed.

Alcohol and drugs [CVC 21200.5](#): Bicyclists may not ride while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Hitching rides [CVC 21203](#): Bicyclists may not hitch rides on vehicles

Carrying articles [CVC 21205](#) : Bicyclists may not carry items which keep them from keeping at least one hand on the handlebars.

Pedestrians [CVC 21950, 21963](#): Bicyclists must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians within marked crosswalks or within unmarked crosswalks at intersections. Bicyclists must also yield the right-of-way to totally or partially blind pedestrians carrying a predominantly white cane or using a guide dog.

Parking [CVC 21210](#): Bicyclists may not leave bicycles on their side on the sidewalk or park bicycles in a manner which obstructs pedestrians.