

# INFORMED BICYCLING IN FLORIDA: A POCKET GUIDE

This guide is your quick reference for legal bicycling in Florida.  
Keep a copy in your pocket or bike bag for easy access.

Fall 2023



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## YOUR RIGHTS: ALL THE TIME, EVERYWHERE



Riding a bicycle is your right. In Florida, **a bicycle is defined as a vehicle propelled by human power having two tandem wheels, or two front or back wheels.** (F.S., Section 316.003). When bicycling, you have rights equal to other people in the public realm, with appropriate requirements for yielding, speed moderation, and space usage, as well as the expectation you'll just generally be a good person. Whether you're cool or not (and we hope you are), knowing the law and advocating for yourself also are your rights.



## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES: ALL THE TIME, EVERYWHERE



### Lights at Night and Brakes that Work

Equip your bicycle with a **white front light** (visible at least 500 feet) and a **red rear light** (visible at least 600 feet), plus a rear reflector, for riding between sunset and sunrise. (F.S., Section 316.2065,7). Your lights can flash.

Your brakes must work well enough to stop you within 25 feet when riding at 10 mph (F.S., Section 316.2065,7,13).

### Helmets for Ages 15 and Younger

If you're not yet 16, you must wear a helmet when cycling (F.S., Section 316.2065,3d). This applies to bicycle passengers, too, such as children in bike trailers. **Helmets work only when they fit level on your head**, aren't tipped or tilted back, and are snugly secured with the straps under your chin. If you're in a crash, replace your helmet, as its structural design may be compromised even if you can't see the damage.

## GOOD IDEAS: ALL THE TIME, EVERYWHERE



- » **Protect your noggin**<sup>1</sup>. Wear a helmet, regardless of age or skill; after all, things can happen to you that you can't control.
- » Carry a multi-tool, repair kit, and a fully charged phone.
- » Daytime lights can enhance visibility.
- » Keep emergency numbers and mile markers handy.



# ON A ROADWAY



## Responsibilities: Your Bike is a “Vehicle”

- » On the road, you’re legally treated as any other vehicle operator. **Follow traffic laws and signals** (F.S., Section 316.083, 316.2065, 316.151).
- » If there’s a bike lane, you must use it. If there isn’t a bike lane, you must ride “as close as practicable” to the right curb or edge. There are important exceptions (see below). A bike lane is defined as a portion of the roadway that is designated by pavement markings and signs for preferential or exclusive use by bicycles. (F.S., Section 316.003)

## Rights

- » You don’t have to use the bike lane or stay right if you’re traveling at the normal speed of other traffic at that time. (F.S., Section 316.2065,5).

- » You can leave a bike lane or the right edge to pass another cyclist; prepare to turn left; go around obstacles; and avoid potential conflicts.
- » You don’t have to use bike lanes or stay right in places where the marked lanes are too narrow for both you and another vehicle to travel safely side by side. (F.S., Section 316.2065,5a3).
- » On a one-way street with multiple lanes, you can ride on the left edge of the left lane. (F.S., Section 316.2065,5b).
- » **A car or truck isn’t legally permitted to overtake a person bicycling** in a vehicle lane or in a bike lane unless there’s enough space to the side and to the front of the bicycle to do it safely. If it’s not safe, the motorist must wait. (F.S., Section 316.083). The law says a safe distance to the side is at least three feet, but allows that even three feet may not be enough.

## » Riding with others

- Is side-by-side okay? This section of law is slightly ambiguous, making it difficult to provide precise guidance on its interpretation. Here is exactly what the relevant section of law says:

*"Persons riding bicycles upon a roadway or in a bicycle lane may not ride more than two abreast except on a bicycle path. Persons riding two abreast may not impede traffic when traveling at less than the normal speed of traffic at the time and place and under the conditions then existing and must ride within a single lane. (...) On roads that contain a substandard-width lane as defined in subparagraph (5)(a)3, persons riding bicycles may temporarily ride two abreast only to avoid hazards in the roadway or to overtake another person riding a bicycle." (F.S., Section 316.2065, 6a). Subparagraph (5)(a)3 says, "a 'substandard-width lane' is a lane that is too narrow for a bicycle and another vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane."*

- You can ride two-abreast in a bike lane if you both fit. If not, you must ride single file.
- » At stop signs, after coming to a stop, a group of bicyclists can move through the intersection in groups of ten at a time. (F.S., Section 316.2065,6b).

## ON A SIDEWALK OR IN A CROSSWALK



### Rights

- » Can you ride a bike on sidewalks in Florida? Generally, yes, but some cities prohibit it. Check local ordinances for sidewalk rules; they can vary from street to street, literally.
- » **Cyclists legally on sidewalks have the same rights and responsibilities as pedestrians** (F.S., Section 316.2065, 9), with a few exceptions explained below.
- » All sides of an intersection are legally crosswalks, whether they are marked as such with pavement markings or not. (F.S., Section 316.003, 17a, 17b).

### Responsibilities

- » You must **yield to pedestrians and alert them with a sound before you pass** them from behind, or "overtake" them. (F.S., Section 316.2065,10).
- » The helmet and light requirements still apply.

## Good Ideas

- » Be a good human: **cycle at a safe speed, respecting other sidewalk users.**
- » Use audible signals when turning corners.
- » Ride in the same direction as motor-vehicle traffic. If you ride against traffic on a sidewalk, you are more likely to get hit by a motorist because drivers leaving or entering cross-streets and driveways don't expect you to be coming from that direction, won't be looking for you, and will have a harder time seeing you.
- » Generally, be cautious near cross-streets and driveways.



## ON SHARED-USE PATHS

These paths are separated from traffic by an open space or physical barrier such as landscaping, curbing or bollards, and are used by people walking, biking and rolling. **Cars and trucks aren't allowed** (F.S., Section 316.1995). On some shared-use paths, e-bikes also aren't allowed. Look for a sign at the trailhead or check with the agency or municipality that "owns" the path to find out if there is a speed limit, and if e-bikes are allowed.

### Rights

- » Cyclists generally can ride side-by-side. But please, be mindful of others.

### Responsibilities

- » Follow helmet and light laws.
- » Don't obstruct the path or park your bike in it.



- » Follow any shared-use path speed limit that is set by the agency that manages it. Look for a sign at the trailhead or check with the agency or municipality that “owns” the path.

## Good Ideas

- » Remember that you’re sharing space with other people, many of whom are traveling much slower than you.
- » Ride at a safe speed and stay to the right.
- » Before you overtake others, announce it loudly.



## ON AN E-BIKE



Understand the “class” of your e-bike based on its capabilities (F.S. 316.003, 23). Classes include pedal-assist, throttle, and speed pedelecs; top assisted speeds range from 20 mph to 28 mph. Modified e-bikes that continue motorized propulsion past 28 mph aren’t legal in Florida.

- » **Class 1 (pedal-assist):** you pedal and the bike provides electric assistance up to 20 mph
- » **Class 2 (throttle):** you don’t have to pedal and the bike provides electric assistance up to 20 mph
- » **Class 3 (speed pedelec):** you pedal and the bike provides electric assistance up to 28 mph

## Rights

- » Riders of legal e-bikes have the same rights as non-motorized cyclists. No license or registration is needed for a legal e-bike. (F.S., Section 316.20655).

## Responsibilities

- » E-bikes must display correct classification labels. (F.S., Section 316.20655).

## Good Ideas

- » Know the local rules. E-bikes aren't allowed everywhere. Look for signs or check with the agency or municipality that "owns" the space where you want to ride.
- » Know your e-bike. Understand its capabilities, weight, and features. E-bikes are heavy and can be harder to maneuver and stop. Be aware of your e-bikes' speed settings, battery life, and operating modes. Don't bite off more than you can chew with an e-bike; it's different from a non-e-bike.



## LOCAL VS. STATE LAWS

**Local laws may have additional regulations beyond state law.** For example, in some areas, bicycling isn't allowed on sidewalks. Also, speed limits apply on some shared-use paths. Look for signs or check with the agency or municipality that "owns" the space before you use it.

**By being aware of your rights and following these guidelines, you can better enjoy bicycling in Florida.**

**INFORMED CYCLISTS ARE SAFER CYCLISTS.**

Want to learn more?

Take the Florida Bicycle Quiz at [FLBikeSafetyQuiz.com](http://FLBikeSafetyQuiz.com).



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