

Sharing Kentucky's Roads: KY Laws for Drivers and Bicyclists



Millions of Americans and thousands of Kentuckians bicycle for fun and function. For healthful recreation or everyday getting about, bicyclists can be found on any KY roadway.

Everyone is entitled to passage on the roads as public right of way. Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) and Kentucky Administrative Regulations (KAR) establish rules, rights, and responsibilities for our behavior as we interact in this space.

Cooperation is the key to safe interaction. Cooperation can be thought of as your duty of care, meaning that you owe all other

persons the duty of lawful behavior. KRS 189.290 states the common duty of care – “the operator of any vehicle...shall operate in a careful manner, with regard for the safety...of pedestrians and other vehicles upon the highway.”

Cooperation and the duty of care makes sharing the road safer for everyone.

This brochure discusses general and specific language of Kentucky's laws and adds comments on what they intend in order to provide all users with a better understanding for how to safely share the road.

“Bicyclists fare best when they act, and are treated, as drivers of vehicles.” John Forester, *Effective Cycling*, 2001

KY Bicycle Laws: Statutes and Regulations

Kentucky on-road bicycle laws are contained specifically in Chapter 189 under Title XVI of KRS developed by the State legislature. Other KRS Chapters and the State Uniform Vehicle and Traffic Codes contain specific laws regulating motor vehicle travel on the State's roads.

KRS 189 is supported by KAR 601. These regulations are agency rules from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet fulfilling the mandates of KRS pertaining to the use of bicycles on the State's roads.

Bicycles are Vehicles

KRS 189 defines bicycles as vehicles and, as such, grants them the right to use KY roadways.

KRS 189.231 states that all vehicles SHALL (must) obey traffic controls applicable thereto, meaning stops lights and stop signs for example.

These statutes, in effect, grant bicyclists the right to the road but assigns them the responsibility to obey all laws and the controls found there.

Bicycle Equipment and Operation

Since bicycles are vehicles, like regulations for cars and trucks, KAR 601 sets regulations for their use.

Section 1 (S1) requires lights when riding at night (or in dark conditions). Lights must cast a beam 50 feet ahead and be visible from 500 feet ahead.

S2 requires a rear red reflector and, if riding at night, a red light visible from 500 feet.

S3, while not requiring a bell or whistle, does require the rider to sound an audible warning when passing pedestrians or other bicyclists.

A polite “beep-beep” will do.

S4 requires brakes to control and stop the bicycle.

S5 requires a seat.

S6 states that a bicyclist shall not carry more than the number of persons for which the bike is intended or equipped; tandems or child carriers for example, would be exempt here.

S7 requires at least one hand on the handlebars.

S8 prohibits grabbing or attaching to other vehicles.

S9 requires bicyclists to operate the same as motor vehicles except:

- Bicyclists may ride on the shoulder of the highway.
- Bicyclists must use bike lanes “whenever feasible.” Not, for example if they are blocked, littered, or unsafe.
- Bicyclists may ride two abreast in a single highway lane.

Helmets are not required for bicycling in KY.

However, helmets protect against injury in 8 out of 10 crashes involving head bumps.

BE SAFE - WEAR A HELMET

Bicycle Safety on the Road

These sections explain specifics of KRS 189 as related to on-road bicycling.

Roadway Positioning

KRS 189.300 requires vehicles to travel on the right side of the road such as where no lanes are striped as, for example, on neighborhood or rural roads.

Slow moving vehicles must keep as far to the right as practicable (bicyclists - read SAFE) to allow faster vehicles free passage.

But to be safe, riders need not place themselves in danger of running off the road or over deteriorated pavement and may take the lane (position near the center of the lane) when hazards, road widths, or traffic speeds dictate.

Always take the lane position that serves your destination. Do not ride in the right turn lane when your intent is to proceed straight through an intersection, for example.

Faster vehicles may only pass when there is reasonable clearance in the opposing lane. At least three feet of space is recommended when passing bicyclists and the passing vehicles should move back into the right lane only when well clear of the bicyclist.

Watch for vehicles' right turns in front of you after they pass.

Bicyclists may ride away from the right side of the lane when passing other vehicles or when making a left turn.

Turning and Right of Way at Intersections

KRS 189.330 regulates vehicle movements at intersections, such as first to arrive is first to leave and on simultaneous arrivals, the vehicle on the right has first right of way.

Bicyclists should always make eye contact with drivers before proceeding through an intersection.

Yield means allowing through traffic to pass before merging into the lane.

Vehicles must make left turns from the left of center of the lane or the left turn lane where present. Always scan to your left before making your way across

the through lane to the turn lane. Make left turns from the two-way continuous center turn lane where they are present.

If after scanning, you cannot move safely to the left for a left turn, bicyclists should move to the far side of the intersection, stop, and cross as a pedestrian.

When entering any roadway from a driveway or alley, always stop and yield the right of way to oncoming vehicles.

Look left, then right, then left again.

Signaling Your Turns

KRS 189.380 requires hand signals within about 100 feet of the bicyclist's turn.

Left arm extended straight out for left turn.

Left arm crooked up at the elbow for a right turn.

Left arm down with palm backward for slow or stop.

Bicyclists are not required to signal when doing so could endanger safe operation of their bike – riding over rough pavement or through debris, for example.

Prohibition Against Driving Under the Influence

KRS 189.520 prohibits operating any vehicle under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

Sidewalk Riding

Sidewalks are controlled by local ordinances, so check your town's laws. Typically, sidewalk riding is prohibited in downtown Business Districts because of high numbers of pedestrians and doorway entrances.

Wrong way sidewalk riding – where bicyclists are riding on the sidewalk on the side opposite the direction of traffic – is the cause of high numbers of vehicle/bicycle collisions.

For more information on riding your bike safely on roads, visit the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program website at <http://bikewalk.ky.gov> OR the Resources section of the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) website at <http://bikeleague.org>.

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