

How to share the road: A guide for cyclists and drivers

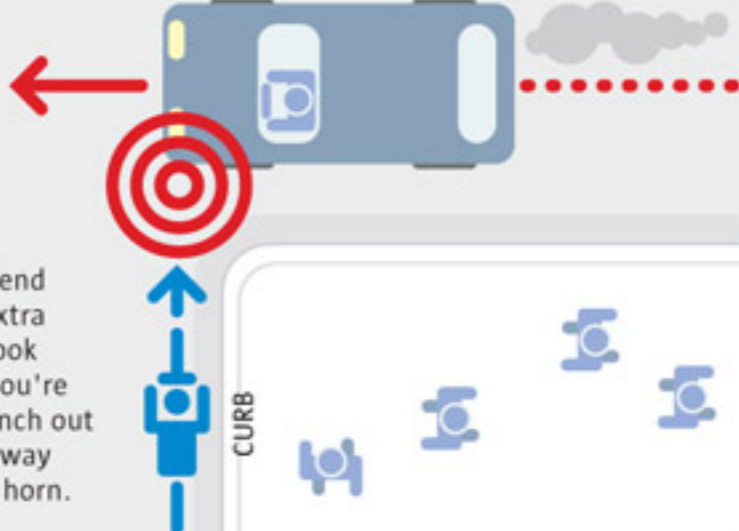
Riding a bike is a great way to exercise, save money and help the environment. A few basics can make the ride a little safer for everyone.

Street-smart tips

SEE AND BE SEEN

Situation

A car pulls out of a driveway or side street, into a bike's path.



What to do

Bike: Use a flashing headlight, wear bright clothes and keep a wary eye out for inattentive drivers at intersections. And don't hug the curb; riding away from it will make you more noticeable.

Car: Bikes blend in. Take an extra moment to look for them. If you're backing up, inch out into the roadway and tap your horn.

DON'T GET DOORED

Situation

A driver parks and swings open the car door into the street, hitting a cyclist or forcing him to swerve.



What to do

Bike: Ride far enough to the left of a row of parked cars that a door can't hit you. Look for lights or someone moving inside as clues that they might be about to open the door.

Car: Look in your side and rear-view mirrors before slowly opening the door.

SHUN SIDEWALKS

Situation

Cyclist riding on a sidewalk is hit while crossing the street.



What to do

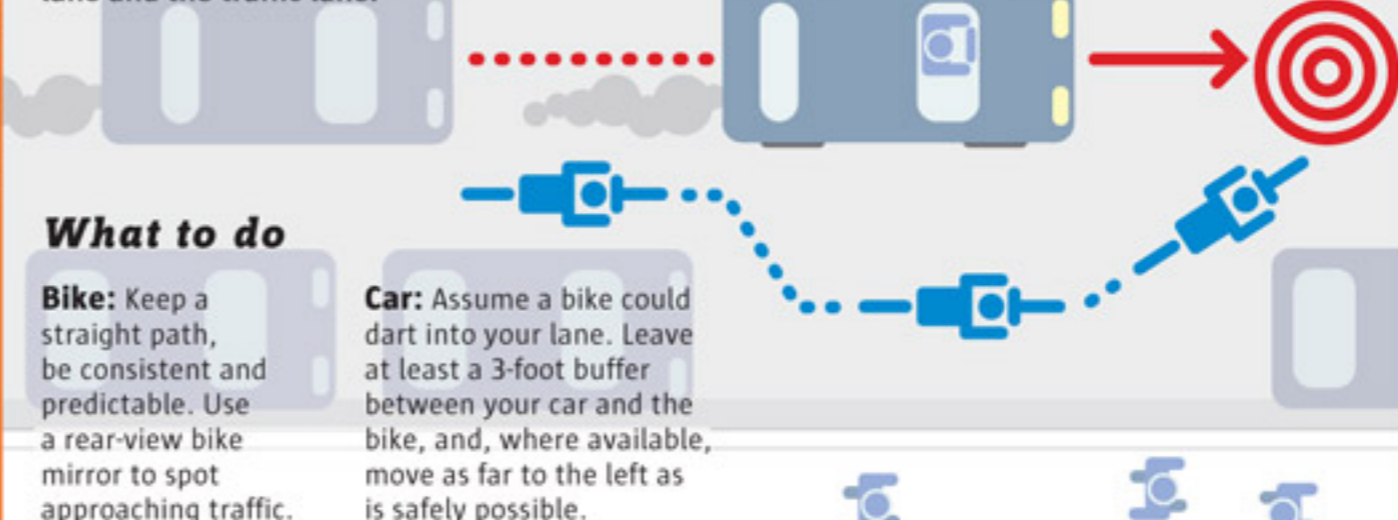
Bike: Yes, it's usually legal to ride on the sidewalk, but it can be hazardous. It's best to get off your bike at intersections and walk across. Or seek quieter routes where you can safely ride on the street.

Car: It's generally legal for bikes to ride on the sidewalk, so be aware they may ride out into the crosswalk.

KEEP YOUR LANE

Situation

Bike weaves between the parking lane and the traffic lane.

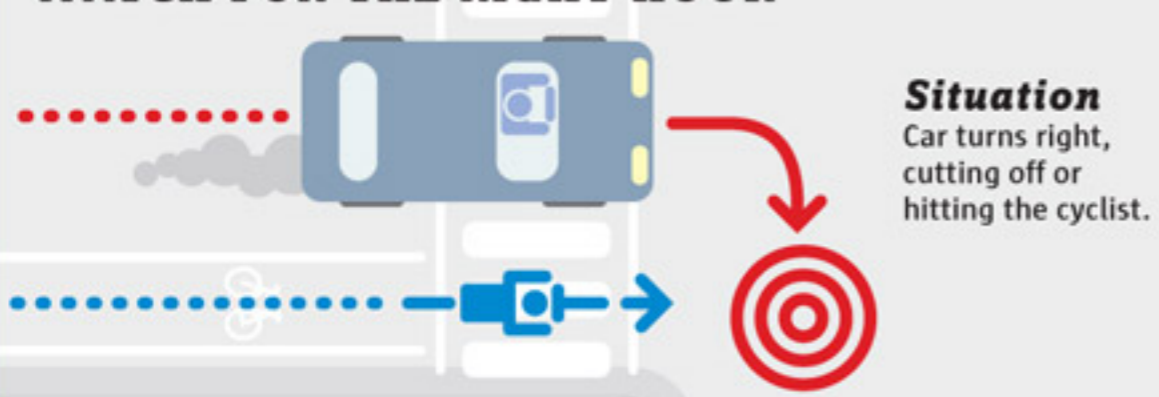


What to do

Bike: Keep a straight path, be consistent and predictable. Use a rear-view bike mirror to spot approaching traffic.

Car: Assume a bike could dart into your lane. Leave at least a 3-foot buffer between your car and the bike, and, where available, move as far to the left as is safely possible.

WATCH FOR THE RIGHT HOOK



Situation

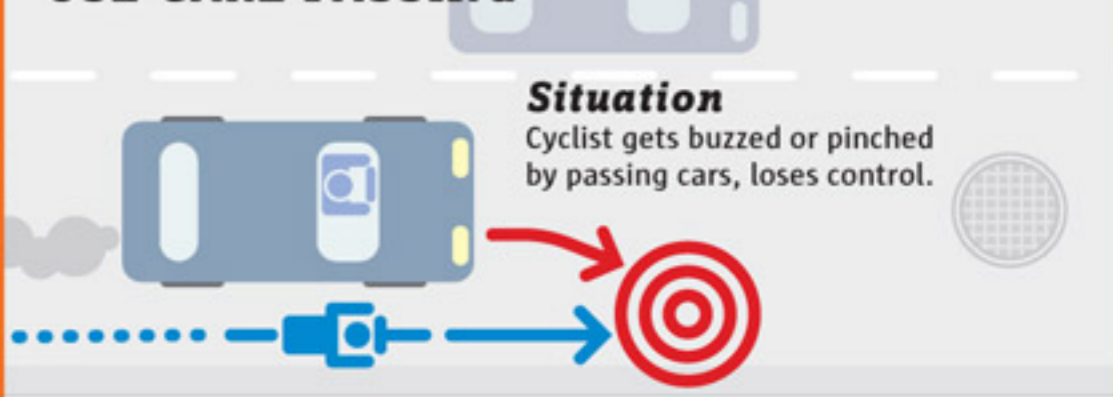
Car turns right, cutting off or hitting the cyclist.

What to do

Bike: Make eye contact with the driver next to you at intersections. Or consider stopping behind cars in line, rather than using the bike lane. Don't overtake slow-moving vehicles on the right.

Car: Check your blind spot and passenger-side mirror, and always use turn signals. Be especially aware when turning right across a bike lane.

USE CARE PASSING



Situation

Cyclist gets buzzed or pinched by passing cars, loses control.

What to do

Bike: When there's not enough room to ride safely on the side of the road, move into the traffic lane to take a safer position and assert your right to be there. Or seek calmer streets.

Car: When passing, give bikes at least 3 feet of space. Also, consider slowing down.

Traffic tips



STATE LAW says that in most situations, cyclists have the same rights — and the same responsibilities — as drivers. That means cyclists must stop at traffic lights and stop signs; it also means they can "take the lane" when it's safer to ride there.

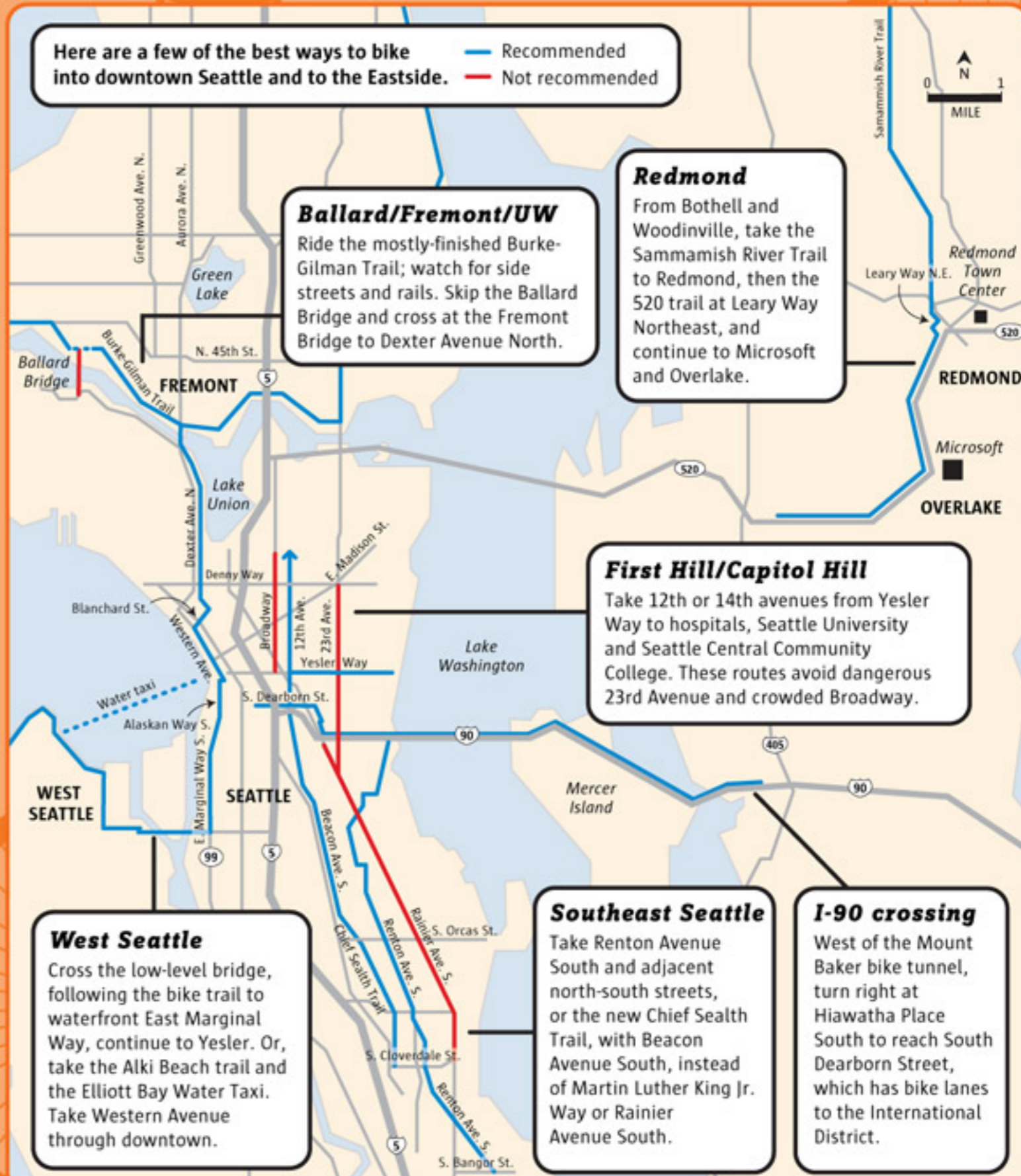
If you drive a car

- ◆ Use your turn signals, and make eye contact with cyclists at intersections.
- ◆ Know when to yield. Drivers must stop at intersections to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to cross.
- ◆ Give cyclists plenty of room when passing. They may need extra space to avoid debris, potholes, slippery surfaces, grates or rails.
- ◆ Know that bikes have a right to pick the safest path. For example, a cyclist may join the traffic lane, or choose to use the left-turn lane to safely cross at an intersection.
- ◆ Be compassionate. Remember, you're driving a big, heavy car, and most cyclists are doing their best. Don't let the ones with an attitude turn you against the others.

If you ride a bike

- ◆ Be visible. Use a headlight and at least one red rear light after dark. Lights also make you much more visible in the morning and late afternoon, and on overcast days. For extra visibility, wear bright clothes, reflective bands or a reflective triangle. Always wear a helmet. On children's and recumbent bicycles, add an orange flag.
- ◆ Yield to pedestrians at intersections, and ring a bell or give a verbal warning when passing on sidewalks and paths.
- ◆ Communicate with drivers. Make eye contact at intersections, and use hand signals when turning, changing lanes or stopping.
- ◆ Pick the safest path. Cyclists may ride on a trail, bike lane, shoulder or travel lane, whichever is safest. For example, if you're going the same speed as traffic, you may be safer moving into the car lane.
- ◆ Have fun. You're the one getting exercise, saving money and being kind to the planet. Don't let a few honks spoil your day.

Commuter bike routes to try



Get a bike map, links to routes and more information on bicycle commuting at seattletimes.com