

These proposed revisions have been developed by the Bicycle Advocacy Committee of the Green Mountain Bike Club. In developing them we have focused on Vermont's motor vehicle/bicycle laws, drawn on manuals from other states and municipalities - most notably Maine and Portland, Oregon, the writings of experts in the field of bicycle safety such as John Forester, author of Effective Cycling, and on our own experience.

Reproduced below are only those portions of the Vermont Driver's Manual that we believe need to be changed. The language of the manual appears in regular black print. Proposed additions and changes are underlined and, for those with a color screen or printer, are in red. Otherwise they will appear as underlined but in slightly lighter print than the original text.

Proposed revisions to Vermont Driver's Manual

Part I

The act of licensing makes driving a privilege, and holding a license requires that you drive within the limits of the law and also treat all other users of the highway, bicyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians with courtesy and consideration.

Your influence on the lives of others is greatly expanded as is your responsibility when you get into the driver's seat of an automobile.

The license examination tests your knowledge and skills. It is your responsibility to drive safely and responsibly.

Why Does the State Require Driving Tests?

The tests are used to evaluate the following:

1. Can you read and understand the road signs and lights used on the road?
2. Do you know the laws about driving cars in this state?
3. Can you see well enough to drive safely?
4. Do you have the proper driving skills to enable you to be a safe and courteous driver?
5. Do you have any disabilities which may affect your ability to operate your

vehicle safely?

6. Will you properly maintain your vehicle so that it will be safe to drive?

7. Are you willing to be and have the knowledge necessary to be a safe and courteous driver?

8. Are you committed to respecting the rights of bicyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians as well as other drivers?

PART III

Left Turns

One-sixth of all accidents take place when one car is turning left. Most of these would not happen if the driver made the turn properly.

1. Upon approaching an intersection at which you wish to make a left turn, you must give the proper signal in sufficient time to warn the driver of any car or any bicyclist behind you. Then as you gradually slow down, watch the mirror to see that the driver of the car behind you has understood your signal. If the road is wide enough for you to do so without crossing the center line, leave room for following cars or bicyclists to pass on your right. Be sure that no ~~car~~ bicyclist or motor vehicle behind you is trying to pass on your left, and above all, never pull suddenly to your left from the right-hand lane. If you can't work your way to the center early enough, go on to the next intersection.

2. When you reach the intersection, wait until the way is clear. The motor vehicle or bicyclist you are meeting and any the bicyclist or motor vehicle approaching on your right both have the right-of-way and both of them expect you to have common sense enough to wait.

3. When the road is clear, make your turn at the proper speed and keep to the right of the center. After turning into a four-lane road, keep driving in the center lane

until you can change to the right lane without getting in the way of other cars bicyclists or motorcyclists.

4. Yield right-of-way to pedestrians in the street.

Right Turns

At the approach to a right turn the vehicle should be positioned approximately three feet from the right side of the road. Many drivers have a dangerous habit of swinging to the left before turning right. This is likely to make the driver of the car following you assume you are going to turn left. Always remain alert for the presence of bicyclists or pedestrians on the right side of the highway as you make your turn. As the driver of the right turning motor vehicle you must yield to any pedestrian or bicyclist proceeding straight. Do not attempt to speed up and execute your turn in front of the pedestrian or bicyclist, they have the right of way.

Entering a Traffic Lane From a Parked Position.

1. After starting the engine and releasing the parking brake, maneuver the vehicle to a position from which re-entry into the traffic lane can be made in one motion.

2. Look to the rear for any motor vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians (check the rearview and side view mirror and look over your left shoulder to cover the blind spots), signal, and drive out carefully.

3. Enter the driving lane which is closest to the parking space.

Leaving A Parking Space

When waiting to enter into traffic from a parking place, look to the rear to

see if anyone is coming. If the way is clear, give the proper turn signal, look once again to the rear and drive out carefully. Driving quickly out of a parking place without looking carefully for **cars and bicyclists** both ways may cause an accident. Look in the rearview mirror and look over your shoulder to be sure that the road is clear of other cars **and bicyclists** and it is safe to leave your parking space.

Be careful about backing. Always look in back of you and back the vehicle slowly. Never back across an intersection. A person backing must look for vehicles in all directions.

Starting On A Hill

When you take your driving test, you will have to stop and start on a hill. You will be instructed by the Examiner to drive to the right side of the road, stop, and then set your parking brake and shift to neutral. The parking brake must hold the car from rolling back.

When starting on the hill, look over your left shoulder to be sure that traffic is clear, put the car in gear, signal, release the parking brake, look over your left shoulder once again to check for traffic **motor vehicles and bicyclists** and drive out carefully. You should be able to drive up the hill without rolling back.

Passing

When you are being passed by another vehicle, you should slow a little and keep right. This will allow the other driver to pass more safely.

When approaching another vehicle from the rear and you want to pass, be sure you have sufficient distance to pass safely. Give a left turn signal to let the driver behind you know that you will be pulling out, look to the rear to see if your vehicle is being passed (look in the rearview mirror and over your left shoulder to cover the blind spot), and then proceed to change lanes and pass on the left. At

night it might be necessary to blink your headlights from low to high to low beam to warn the driver in front of you that you intend to pass.

Pass cars and bicycles only on the left. Leave at least three feet of clearance between your car or truck and vehicle or bicycle you are passing. You should go far enough beyond the motor vehicle or bicycle you are passing that you are able to see the left headlight of ~~that~~ the motor vehicle or the entire bicyclist in your inside rearview mirror. It will then be safe to return to the right side of the road.

These rules apply no matter what you are passing - bicyclists as well as cars, trucks or motorcycles.

A driver may pass on the right of another vehicle only as follows:

- When the motor vehicle or bicycle ahead is making or about to make a left turn.
- Upon a street or highway that is wide enough for two or more lanes of traffic with no obstructions and not occupied by parked vehicles.
- On a one-way street or roadway wide enough for two or more lanes of traffic and free of obstructions or parked vehicles. Under no conditions can a motor vehicle be passed by driving off the pavement or main traveled part of the road. Passing on a hill, curve, railroad crossing, or intersection is against the law, is dangerous, and may be the last mistake you make.
- Under state law bicyclists often have the right to use the traveled portion of the highway. See the Share the Road section at page _____ for more information on bicyclists' rights and responsibilities when using the highway.

Slow Moving Vehicles

On all roads, except the Interstate, trucks and other vehicles which travel slowly should stay as close as possible to the right side of the road. When driving slowly and causing traffic delays, you should pull over to the side of the road and allow others to go by.

The slowpoke driver is a person who drives his/her car much slower than the posted speed limits. The driver may not have an accident but can create a danger. Driving too slow may create situations where accidents can happen.

On the Interstate, a vehicle may not drive slower than 40 miles per hour, or at such a slow speed as to get in the way of other drivers, unless necessary. If you cannot maintain a speed of 40 miles per hour, use the 4-way flashers.

The law states that a motor vehicle shall be driven at all times so that it is under control. It must be driven at a speed that is reasonable considering the dangers that may exist on the road. At intersections, on curves, in heavy traffic, during bad weather, and when pedestrians or bicyclists are present, you must slow down to whatever speed is reasonable under the circumstances. Many accidents are caused by driving too fast for conditions. Sometimes even 10 miles an hour may be an unsafe speed.

5 Safety Keys To Accident Free Driving.

1. Aim high in steering - don't look down your fender or hood but ahead at the middle of your driving lane.

2. Get the overall picture - look ahead a full block in towns and half a mile ahead outside of town. You want to see everything in the space you are moving into, along with the cars and bicyclists you see ahead of you.

3. Keep your eyes moving - don't look at one thing. Look ahead, look at the sides, and look in your rearview mirror.

4. Leave yourself an out - things may happen that you don't plan on. Keep plenty

of space between you and the ~~next car~~ motor vehicle or bicyclist ahead of you.

5. Make sure they know you are there - don't take for granted that others see your car. Tap, your horn or flick your headlights up and down if you need to. Don't blast your horn, especially at bicyclists or horse back riders. You could startle them and cause a crash.

Approaching Headlights

To avoid being temporarily blinded by approaching headlights, you should look at the right edge of the highway until the bright lights have gone by and your vision has returned to normal. This practice will also help you detect bicyclists or pedestrians who may be ~~walking~~ close to the edge of the road.

Right-of-way At Intersection

When nearing an intersection marked with a "yield right-of-way" sign, you are required to slow to a safe speed and enter when the way is clear.

1. When two vehicles approach an intersection at approximately the same time, coming from different directions, the driver on the left should yield the right-of-way to the driver on the right. At intersections, be careful, polite, use common sense, and do not insist on your right-of-way. If another driver tries to take your turn, let him/her do so. It may keep you from having a collision.

2. If you are turning left, the vehicle coming toward you whether it is a motor vehicle or a bicyclist has the right of way. If you have begun to turn and signaled left before the other vehicle gets there, that driver should wait for you to turn.

3. The driver on any road must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians.

4. A driver who is approaching the road from a driveway must yield the

right-of-way to all motor vehicles or bicyclists ~~cars~~ on the road.

5. On the approach of a vehicle displaying a flashing red signal light and sounding a siren, you must pull over to the right side of the road and stop. You must remain stopped until the ambulance, fire truck or other emergency vehicle has gone by.

6. On the approach of a vehicle displaying a flashing blue or blue and white signal light and sounding a siren, you must pull over to the right side of the road and stop. You must remain stopped until the police or other law enforcement vehicle has gone by.

In the sketches in Part III at pages 15 and 16 of the Manual, instead of only referring to “car” please add bicyclist and if possible include bicyclists in some of the sketches.

Traffic Lights

Traffic lights allow vehicles to proceed safely through busy intersections. They give right-of-way to drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians one street at a time. When a driver fails to stop at a red light, others who have a green light should not insist on the right-of-way. They should be alert and prepared to stop to avoid an accident.

When a police officer directs you through a red light, you should follow the officer's directions.

A Red Light: Stop before reaching the crosswalk and wait until the light is green (unless another light such as a green arrow directs you otherwise).

Right Turn on Red: Except when a sign is placed prohibiting a right turn on red, vehicles may turn right on a steady red light after the driver has stopped and yielded the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles.

A Green Light: You may proceed, but each driver must use caution to avoid hitting another vehicle, [a bicyclist](#) or pedestrian.

A Yellow Light: It tells a driver that a red light is next. Slow down and proceed with caution if a stop cannot be made safely.

A Flashing Yellow Light: Slow down and proceed with caution.

A Flashing Red Light: When nearing a flashing red traffic light, you must stop and yield right-of-way to all [cars and bicyclists](#) on your right and left.

Roundabouts

A roundabout is a circular intersection designed to slow traffic while lowering delays and handling higher traffic volumes. Roundabouts have proved to more safely accommodate [motor](#) vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists than stop signs or traffic signals. U-turns are also permitted in roundabouts.

Shapes of Road Signs

Yield right-of-way signs are the shape of a triangle and mean you should drive carefully and yield right-of-way to all cars, [bicyclists](#) and persons walking, or coming from right or left.

The following section appears in the current Manual. We are hopeful that pending legislation will eliminate the need for the final sentence as it now appears. If not, we believe that it should be changed as indicated. However, we believe that the same information should be presented as a part of a larger, expanded provision entitled "Share the Road," similar to the one for motorcyclists in the current Driver's Manual. Our recommendation appears at the end of this document.]

Bicycle Riders

Bicycle riders are given the same rights and have to obey the same laws as

drivers of automobiles, except when the laws do not pertain to bicycles. Bicycle riders shall ride as close to the right side of the road as they can do safely. No more than 2 bicycles may ride side by side. When there is a safe bicycle path near the road, bicycle riders are required to use the path and cannot ride on the road.

However, if a municipality chooses it may allow bicyclists to use the road even though a safe bicycle path is available.

REVIEW

Help yourself review the section you just read. Answer the following questions to test your knowledge.

1. What is the distance a car travels before the driver takes his/her foot off the gas pedal and steps on the brake called?
2. How can a driver keep the car from going into a skid?
3. When do people crossing the street have the right-of-way?
4. What is the last and most important thing a driver must do before pulling away from the curb into traffic?
5. Name four places you should never pass another car.
6. What is the maximum speed limit for all roads, except the interstate, in Vermont?
7. What are the five keys to accident free driving?
8. What lights on the car should you turn on during the day when you are driving in snow, rain, or fog?
9. When do you use the low beam headlights at night?
10. What should you do when you see a police car coming and the blue lights are flashing and the siren is sounding?
11. What does a flashing red light at an intersection mean?

12. What color are construction signs?
13. What should you do when you are walking along a highway at night so that you will be safe?
14. If you are driving and become sleepy, what should you do?
15. What do the yellow center lines on the road tell you?
16. What does drinking alcohol do to a driver's ability to understand what is happening around him/her?
17. If you have been drinking, what should you do before driving?
18. What can happen to you if you drink and drive?
19. Are drivers of motor vehicles required to share the road with bicyclists?

SAFETY HINTS

Safety Hints (General)

Watch the car ahead of you to see if the turn signals or brake lights come on. This lets you know the car is going to turn, slow down or stop.

When approaching a farm vehicle you should be careful because it may turn or sway suddenly and it is usually going very slow.

Speed and weather conditions affect all vehicles, however, a special hazard for a driver of a vehicle towing a trailer is strong winds which can cause the trailer to sway. When towing a trailer in windy conditions, reduce your speed.

When passing while towing a trailer, always, be especially careful that you are well past the motor vehicle or bicycle you are passing before pulling back into their lane of travel.

When towing a wide load or driving a motor vehicle that is wider than usual be especially careful if you pass any other motorist or bicyclist.

When your wheels drop off the pavement onto the shoulder you should reduce speed, and turn back sharply onto the pavement at a slow speed.

Passing accidents are caused by driver mistakes. Be careful and stay back if you see it may not be safe to pass the car or bicyclist in front of you.

No person may ride inside a trailer coach while it is moving on the road. When driving downhill, you should not coast with the clutch to the floor or the gearshift in neutral.

Sharing the Road with Bicycles

The number of bicycles on streets and highways is growing daily, both for exercise and transportation use. The same traffic rules and regulations for vehicle drivers apply to bicyclists. Bicycles, however, are quieter and less visible than other vehicles, especially at night. As a motorist you should drive defensively around a bicyclist because the slightest mistake could cause serious injury or death. When you approach a bicyclist, keep on the lookout and slow down. Give them plenty of room when passing and be prepared to stop suddenly. **Do not** honk at a bicyclist unless you have good cause to warn them. The loud noise could startle the rider and cause them to lose control. It is important to remember that bicyclists have the same rights and duties as motor vehicle operators. To avoid conflict, drivers of motor vehicles need to know the rules:

- : Share the road with bicyclists; they have a legal right to ride on the road. Please be courteous and cautious even if it takes a little longer.
- : Bicyclists should ride **with** traffic as far to the right as practical or safe.
- : In some instances it is safest for a bicycle to “command the lane” by riding toward the center of the lane. There may be reasons for the bicyclist to be

riding in the travel lane, such as roadway hazards not visible to motorists.

- : Learn to recognize situations and obstacles which may be hazardous to cyclists, such as potholes, drain grates and narrow bridges or roadways. Give them adequate space to maneuver.
- : When making a left turn, the cyclist should signal and move to the left side of the lane or into the turning lane. This is the proper maneuver and the cyclist should safely complete the turn before being overtaken by motor vehicle traffic.
- : Leave at least three feet of passing space between the right side of your vehicle and a bicyclist. If the road is too narrow for cars and bikes to ride safely side by side, wait until it is safe to pass the bicyclist without forcing them off the side of the road.
- : If you come upon bicyclists riding side by side, slow down until it is safe to pass, or give them time to get into single file. Even then, do not pass the bicyclists until it is safe.
- : When turning left at an intersection, yield to oncoming bicyclists just as you would yield to oncoming motorists. Bicyclists may be travelling faster than you realize, so give them adequate space.

Collisions with Bicycles

Four common errors could cause you to strike a bicyclist:

1. Turning left without noticing/yielding to an oncoming bicyclist.
2. Turning right at an intersection or driveway without checking for a bicyclist on the right who is continuing straight ahead.
3. Entering or crossing a street without checking for a bicyclist in the street or on the sidewalk.
4. Opening a vehicle door into the path of a cyclist

Riding Rules

Bicyclists are valid road users and have all the rights and responsibilities of other vehicle drivers. Although a license isn't required to drive a bicycle, bicyclists must obey all the rules of the road. If you break any traffic laws, you are subject to fines. Bicycles are allowed to ride two abreast so long as they do not impede the normal and reasonable flow of traffic. Follow the following rules for a safe and legal cycling experience:

- : **Ride with traffic.** Always ride with through traffic on the right side of the road. If you approach a right turn lane and intent to go straight, do not enter the right turn lane.
- : **Ride in a predictable manner.** Always ride straight and be predictable. If the road is too narrow for a bicycle and a car to travel side by side, the bicyclist should occupy the lane until it is safe to move back to the right. Check over your shoulder before changing your lane position and do not weave between parked cars.
- : **Signaling turns.** You must always signal your intent to turn, using the proper hand signals. Look to make sure lanes are clear of traffic before you make a lane change or turn.

(Include graphics showing the correct hand/arm signals)

- : **Left hand turns.** You may turn left by moving in to the left turn lane or the left side of the travel lane. If you do not feel comfortable making this maneuver in traffic, you can dismount the bike and walk it across the intersection at the appropriate crossing time.
- : **Avoid car doors and other hazards.** Give yourself three or four feet between parked vehicles or other roadway hazards. If practical and safe, “command the lane” and return to the right when it is safe.
- : **Night riding requires lights.** While most bicycles are equipped with reflectors,

they are not a sufficient light source and rely on the lights of other vehicles to work. Always ride with head (white) and tail (red or amber) lights visible from at least 500 feet away.

- : Wear a helmet correctly.** The majority of cycling fatalities occur from head injuries. When worn correctly, a bicycle helmet can significantly reduce your chances of injury in a collision. Only use an ANSI/Snell approved helmet designed specifically for bicycling. Once a helmet has sustained any impact it should be replaced. Worn correctly, a helmet should be set just above your eyebrows and should be snug so that it stays in place if you shake your head. If your helmet is loose or tilted back, exposing your forehead, it cannot adequately protect your head.

(Include graphic showing the proper placement of the helmet)

Common causes of cyclist-caused collisions:

1. Riding on the left side of the road. Other vehicle operators are not conditioned to expect something moving at the speed of a bicycle to be coming from the left. Often they will pull out or turn without noticing the presence of the cyclist.
2. Failing to obey stop signs or yielding the right-of-way. Running a stop sign is a sure-fire way to get into a collision and it's against the law. Come to a complete stop and survey traffic from both sides of the street before proceeding.
3. Riding without lights when riding at night. If a motorist can not see the bicyclist they cannot take the proper precautions to avoid a collision.

Suggested Driver Exam Questions

Submitted by the Bicycle Coalition of Maine

- 1) When making a left hand turn a bicyclist:

- a) Is allowed to use the left turning lane on a multi-lane road.
- b) Should always walk the bicycle through the crosswalk.
- c) Should maintain a left turn signal with the arm extended throughout the turn.
- d) Can not make left turns and must ride around the block.

2) A bicyclist must:

- a) Ride with traffic as far to the right as practical or safe.
- b) Ride on the left facing traffic.
- c) Ride on the sidewalk if one is available.
- d) Leave the road if unable to maintain the same speed as the flow of traffic.

3) A motorist making a left turn must

- a) Yield to an oncoming bicyclist entering the intersection.
- b) Expect approaching bicyclists to yield.
- c) Honk the horn to warn approaching bicyclists.
- d) Speed through the turn as quickly as possible to try to get through ahead of any approaching bicyclists.

4) When overtaking a bicyclist, a motorist should:

- a) Blow his horn to relieve him/herself of the responsibility of passing the bicyclist safely.
- b) Remain at a discreet distance until safe to pass.
- c) Remain in the travel lane and force the bicyclist off the road.
- d) Drive as close to the bicyclist as possible.

5) Frequent motorist errors which cause motorist/bicyclist collision include:

- a) Misjudging the speed the bicyclist is travelling.

- b) Failing to yield the right of way to bicyclists.
- c) Failure to slow and merge with bicycle traffic.
- d) All of the above.