

Riding Fast & Safe at Last

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It's always nice to go outside every once in a while as they say. And it's often quite fun and nice out there. There's almost an endless amount of things to do outside, like playing catch with your friends, taking a relaxing walk, or maybe even taking a long bike ride. Try picturing something like this: the late morning passes, you're lost in thought on how to brighten up your day, but as you walk outside, a package with a new bike you ordered stands before your eyes. You're filled with glee, just waiting to speed through the town like you've always dreamed it would happen. Just as you finish assembling the bike, you get a message from the newspapers about an incident. You soon feel your dreams crushed to the atom upon learning that the cyclist who died was speeding as fast as he was able to until he eventually ran through a crosswalk and got hit by a car. As you put down the newspaper, the thought of reading the owner's manual for your bike crossed your mind in a flash. You scour through the box your bike came in and manage to find the manual, reading it as soon as you get it out. The first few pages didn't seem important as they describe the bike assembly process word for word. The pages after that are filled with a bunch of warnings. You begin to read and consider the warnings carefully. If you've managed to create a mental movie of all this in your head, you may already know that when riding a bike just about anywhere, a number of safety precautions must be taken to ensure nothing goes wrong. If you already know the precautions, great! If not, it's time to begin considering what you must do to prevent disaster on the road.

The first, and maybe the most important thing of them all, is to wear a helmet while riding. Sure you don't necessarily NEED to wear a helmet on bike rides. And while it may be correct, it's still recommended to wear a helmet if you already know you'll be riding at unpredictable speeds. The use of a helmet may help with reducing the strength of any head-on impacts that would normally result in a cracked skull or a concussion in most cases, often followed by death if it's bad enough. You should also consider the helmet type, size, and durability when finding the perfect fit. Helmets that aren't up to your preferences might not be as protective as you'd expect. Still, **ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET.**

The next thing is to check if your brakes work as expected. For cruiser bikes, move the pedals backwards to use the brakes. For mountain bikes, there are separate levers on both handles that work different brakes, one working the front, the other working the back. Nevertheless, always make sure they work as expected. If you suspect issues, troubleshoot it when possible and always make sure to check after troubleshooting. If the problem persists, try sending it to a repair shop and see if they can do anything. On a mountain bike, if your back brake needs troubleshooting and your front brake works as expected, **TROUBLESHOOT IT.** The back brake on mountain bikes is almost more essential than the front brake.

The third thing is to check tire pressure. Inflate your bike tires when needed. Enough tire pressure inflated can balance the tires' lifespan. If you don't know how much a bike tire needs to be inflated, check the tire itself as the number in PSI is usually there. You should also make sure to connect a pressure checker to the tire's inflation valve. Do this every now and then to ensure your tires are in working condition.

The fourth thing to do is to place a headlight on the front handle. This factor is most essential if you plan on riding during the nighttime hours, which is not recommended. When finding headlights, it's best if you find rechargeable headlights for convenience between rides. No matter your choice, make sure your headlight battery is charged enough to power the headlight on and ensure the headlight brightness isn't too dim. Your headlight will also guide you in the early morning hours should you find yourself riding during that period of time.

The last thing to do is have a water bottle ready while riding. Studies have shown that excessive exercise combined with dehydration can result in serious drawbacks, so make sure your bike has a cupholder installed. This factor is essential if you plan on riding for prolonged periods as you may end up feeling slight fatigue during rides.

With all these factors combined, you'll be finding yourself having the best and safest bike ride imaginable. Working brakes, tires inflated enough, water for long rides, a headlight for riding during nighttime hours or riding in not-so-well-lit areas, wearing a helmet at all times, you name it. But the most important thing of all is to beware of your surroundings, no matter the situation.