

HAZARDS

MS 8

DISCUSSION

BRAKING

By middle school most students will have bikes with hand brakes. The right hand brake lever is always the back wheel brake. A good way to remember this is **Right=Rear** (both start with Rs). There are multiple reasons why this convention was developed:

- The left hand is used for signaling therefore the right hand is used for braking. If you only have one hand on your handlebars you still need to be able to stop.
- Most people are right handed, their right hand is stronger and they have better dexterity on the right side.

Braking hard on the front wheel will transfer most of the rider's weight to the front of the bike and you may flip over the handlebars of your bike. If you need to stop fast use both brakes together. The front brake gives you power while the back provides stability.

THE DOOR ZONE

The door zone is the part of the street into which car doors open. When you are riding too far to the right next to parked cars, a driver or passenger might not see you and open a driver's side door, creating a dangerous hazard. You can protect yourself in the door zone by looking for people in cars, listening for engines and watching for tail lights. It is always a good idea to pay extra attention near parked cars. When you are riding near parked cars the best

strategy is to move over further to the left. There should be a space of two bicycles in between you and the parked cars.

CONDITIONS

There are many conditions that can make riding hazardous. A good cyclist rides defensively, always on the lookout for what might be ahead:

- Leaves
- Grates
- Curbs
- Speed bumps
- Grass
- Glass
- Pot holes
- Railroad tracks
- Rocks
- Obstructed view

All of these can get in the way when you ride. Curbs, speed bumps, rocks, and potholes can break a wheel or impair your steering. Cyclists should try to avoid them or take them slowly. Leaves and grass can be slick to ride on causing your wheel to slip or they can hide other hazards.

Wheels can get stuck in grates or railroad tracks. This can pitch the rider over the handlebars or break a wheel, maybe both. They also can be slick or slippery and are often at a different level than the pavement. Ride over grates or railroad tracks at a right angle to minimize risk. Glass, nails, and other road debris can puncture a tire, causing a flat. If there is glass or debris on the far right of the road, it is OK to move to the left to find a safe place to ride. Bushes, fences, walls or parked cars can make it hard to see what is

coming. Always look over your left shoulder to check for oncoming traffic and signal left before moving over.

WEATHER

We cannot always bike on bright sunny days. Making sure you are prepared for different kinds of weather is good defensive riding. Be prepared for rain, fog, darkness and wind. Rain can make it harder for you to see and harder for cars to see you. It can also make the roads slippery and more difficult to ride on safely. Hand brakes do not work nearly as well in the rain. Allow yourself more time to stop than on dry pavement. Ride more slowly than usual. Fog and darkness limit visibility. This is time when it is necessary to have a headlight. Wind can be fun to ride in when it is at your back and difficult when it is in your face. It takes more power to ride into the wind. If it is strong enough, it can knock you over or move you into traffic. With all hazards, good riding is defensive riding. Paying attention to what is ahead of you so you have plenty of time to avoid obstacles is the best choice.

DOGS

It is always scary when a dog is chasing you. If you can, out-pedal the dog. Otherwise, give the dog a firm "NO" and squirt it in the face with your water bottle. You can also stop and get off of your bike while placing your bike between you and the dog. That way, your bike is protecting you from the dog.

