

# TOP 10 URBAN RIDING TIPS

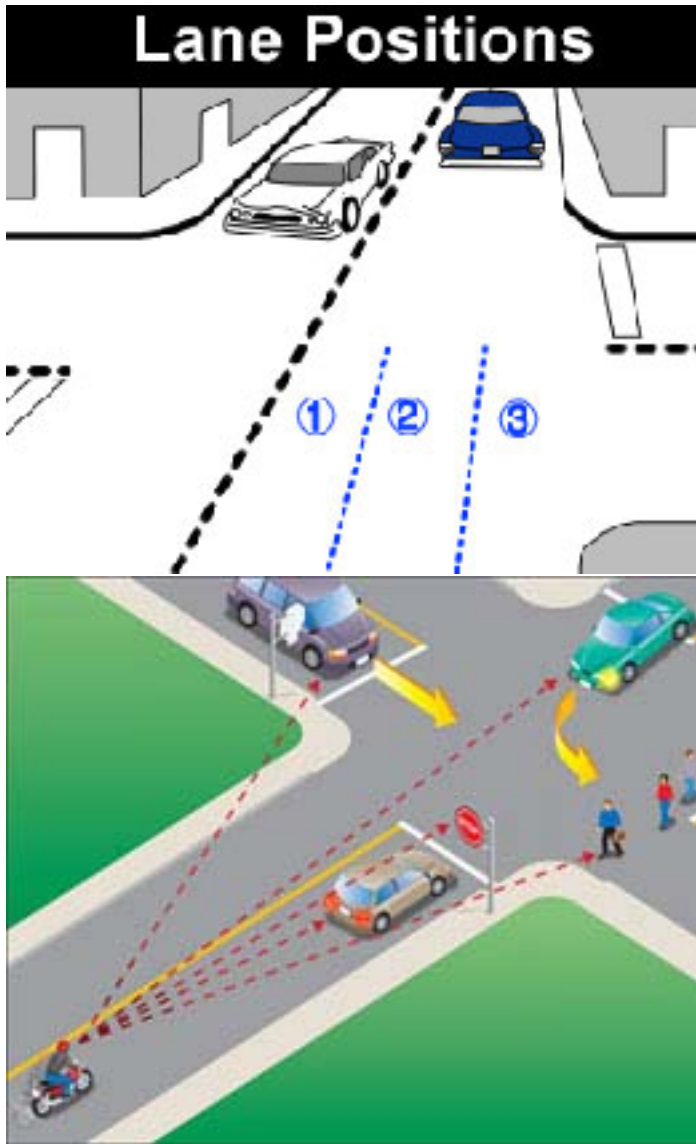
Top 10 Habits for Taming the Mean Streets: While the higher speeds of freeway riding may appear to be more dangerous, in fact, there are far fewer variables to contend with than when you are riding on surface streets. Vehicles are traveling in multiple directions; pedestrians and cyclists are all added to the mix, while street signs and signals can create confusion as well. Here are ten riding tips for when you are navigating surface streets that may help you to survive the chaos.

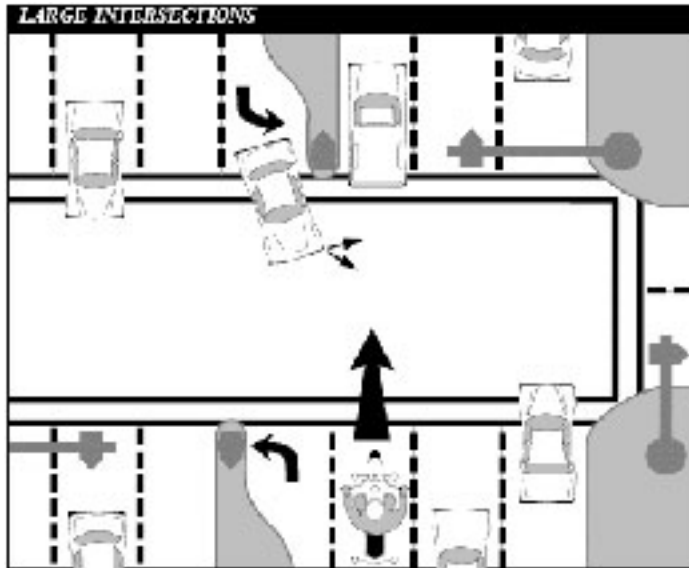


Tip One: Choose a side. When you are riding down the road there is almost no reason to ride straight down the middle. This is especially true when riding in town and exceptions can be made on the open highway, but as a general rule: Pick a side based on the road conditions you are riding in. On two lane roads the Inside of your lane gives you more area to work with if you need to make an evasive maneuver, as opposed to when you are riding on the fog line. Be advised, riding to the inside does expose you to oncoming traffic but again, you have the room to make a move to safety and if you are wearing your high-visibility riding gear you are going to be more conspicuous here. By contrast, if you are hugging the fog line you are protecting yourself from that oncoming traffic while increasing the chances that a pedestrian or car might enter the road from your right (We will go into this again on Tip 2 below). The thing is, you decrease your chance of being seen if you ride close to the parked traffic on the right because you will tend to blend in. You are the one in control and the most important thing is to pick a side that helps you see and be seen.

Tip Two: Avoid riding in the right side of the right lane where you are passing parked vehicles. Doors can be opened in a hurry, pedestrians can dart out from between cars or worse case scenario, a vehicle can pull out of driveways or away from the curb without seeing you. There are a myriad of bad things waiting to

happen when choosing to ride alongside the curb. Keep away from it whenever possible..

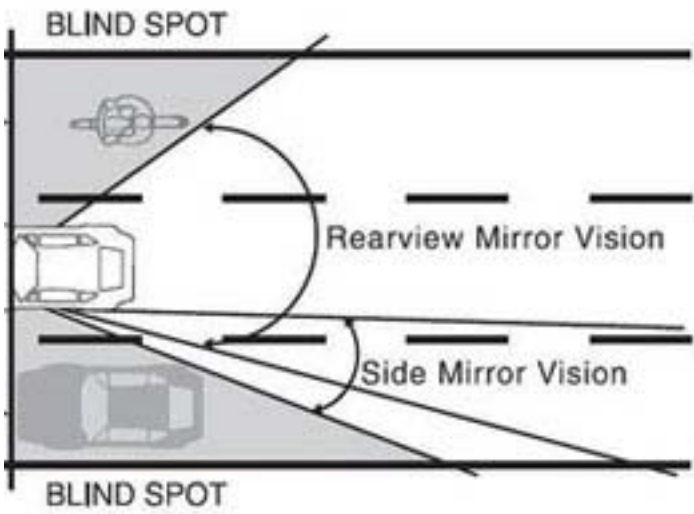
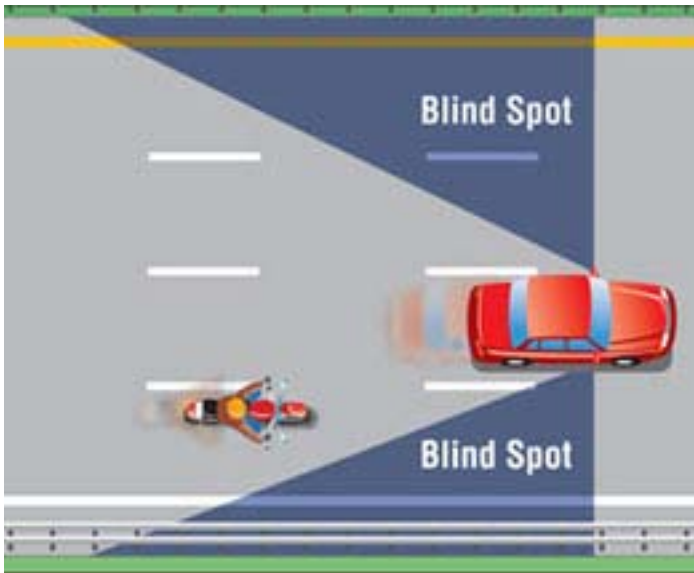




Tip Three: When stopping behind another vehicle, be sure to leave room between your bike and the vehicle in front of you. This is one of the most important moves you can make to keep yourself safe at a stop light or intersection. It is never a good idea to ride up onto the rear bumper of the car in front of you because you will have no escape route in the case that an inattentive driver comes up behind you and rear-ends you. If you are off to the side, with room to spare between you and the car in front (And you are paying attention to approaching traffic from behind (that's what [motorcycle mirrors](#) are for) then you may have a chance to pull out of harm's way at the last moment. If you are stopping on a hill, this is extra important as cars with standard transmissions will typically roll back a bit before the clutch engages. If you are too close, the vehicle may roll back and hit you.

Tip Four: Use other cars as “blockers” just like a running back in football. Imagine that you are stuck in a slow lane and wish to pass on the left, but notice a vehicle approaching from behind in that lane. Rather than pulling out in front of it, wait until just after it passes and pull out behind it. The driver just ahead of you may be thinking of passing the slowpoke in your lane too. It is unlikely that they would do so seeing the oncoming vehicle, so use it as your blocker to increase your safety. Just to be certain, once you have merged, move to the far left side of the lane to create distance between other drivers who may also wish to leave the slow lane as well and avoid riding in their blind spot.

Tip Five: This Blocker principle works well at stop signs too. Often there is some degree of confusion as to whose turn it is to cross, especially at four way stops with multi-lane roads from all directions. If you are able to pull alongside a vehicle traveling in the same direction in the parallel lane, wait until it crosses and cross with it as your blocker. A second best compromise is to wait until a vehicle traveling in the opposite direction crosses. After you make sure that the driver does not intend to turn left across your lane, proceed across the intersection attentively. Either way, the concept is to cross when you can use another vehicle to shield you from traffic moving perpendicular to your path.





Tip Six: Avoid riding in the blind spot. It is not uncommon to find yourself cruising along with the flow of traffic and end up in the blind spot of the vehicle you are overtaking in the normal course of riding on a multi-lane road. If you notice you are riding next to the rear wheel of the car beside you, it might be a good idea to speed up a wee-bit until you are parallel with the driver (You have to hope that they are then more likely to be aware of your presence). If you are stuck in the blind spot, be attentive, try to watch for the driver's movement in their side mirror or through their own window. Often times they will make a quick glance over the shoulder before making a move into your lane and that extra second or two might be the time you need to avoid being hit.

Tip Seven: Beware of cars making left hand turns. When approaching an intersection where an oncoming vehicle is preparing to turn left, you are about to enter the most common circumstance for a motorcycle accident. Drivers frequently take absurd risks attempting to cut across traffic in order to make their left hand turn and motorcycles often pay the price for their bad decision. Compounding matters, it is very difficult for a driver to gauge the speed of an oncoming motorcycle due to its narrow profile and capacity for acceleration beyond what they may be accustomed to seeing.



When approaching an intersection where an oncoming vehicle is preparing to turn left, first make eye contact with the driver. This will provide you with information as to their intentions. Secondly, determine whether you expect them to pull in front of you or wait until you pass. Confusion and/or miscommunication over this issue is what causes these all too common accidents. Bear in mind that you have the right of way and assuming the vehicle is not showing signs of pulling out, it will likely allow you to pass through the intersection. As you pass them, move to the middle, or right side of your lane, away from the left turner. Don't do this too soon or you will tempt them to begin pulling out.

Conversely, if you see that the driver is going to try and pull out in front of you, slow down to a speed that will easily allow them to do so. But whatever you chose to do: Be decisive. It is confusion over another's intentions that leads to these types of accidents.

Tip Eight: A common occurrence, especially for newer riders, is the no-speed drop. While injury is rare in this instance, it is both an embarrassing and potentially costly faux pas. The no-speed drop can be caused by several mistakes, often occurring while you are slowing to a stop. Choosing to only use one leg to hold up your bike increases the chance of losing your balance. At these intersections you have a good chance of stepping in oil or another slippery substance that has accumulated on the road surface. Also, using too much front brake to stop the bike with the [handlebars](#) turned (jack-knifes the bike) can cause you to lose balance and tip-over too. A truly laughable tip-over occurs when you attempt to park the bike on an incline and leaning it downhill (believe it or not, people do it) so be observant when you are choosing a parking spot.



Tip Nine: Greasy Intersections: Like we mentioned above, intersections are a common place for slipper substances and other debris to accumulate. It is most common for oil and water residue to build up in the very center of the lane, right down the middle of a car, truck or other four-wheeled conveyance. Like we mentioned earlier, choose a side of the lane that is most appropriate for the traffic conditions and make your stop to the side. Never ride up in the center, or you are destined to be sitting in the puddle of oil or grease build up which even if it doesn't get you at that moment, can contaminate your motorcycle tires and nip you in the butt in the near future. Remember oil and tires don't mix. Also, trucks and construction vehicles tend to drop debris and loose materials upon acceleration from a stop. So, over time the cars will 'clean' the two sides and the debris often migrates to the center of the lane. Make sure to look ahead and scan for obstacles but you can reduce the chances of running over screws, nails, busted parts but riding on one side of your lane.

Tip Ten: Pay attention. We just offered up a bunch of common sense solutions to riding safe. But it is up to the rider to be aware of their surroundings and adjust their riding plan accordingly. Make sure to scan way ahead in traffic, paying attention to brake lights and road lights and how they are affecting the cars around you. Watch your mirrors. Avoiding a collision from the back is just as important as avoiding one from the front. Make yourself visible. This includes wearing high visibility riding gear, avoiding blind spots and basically riding offensively. Put your bike where you want it to be and it should increase your odds of surviving the daily commute.

Experienced riders talk about having a sort of sixth sense when it comes to avoiding traffic accidents. Hopefully, you'll develop that too, but in the meantime; consciously applying these principles should help to keep you out of trouble.