

# MOSA GUIDELINE

## Cycling

### Introduction

1. Cycling is an important and generally safe activity for all children and young people with both health and environmental benefits. It is a healthy form of **exercise**, particularly in the light of increasing childhood obesity, develops **co-ordination and judgement skills** and is a **cheap form of transport** with no carbon emissions.
2. It is essential that all riders know and apply the **rules and legal requirements** relating to cyclists in **The Highway Code**, more so as these provide a framework for safe riding.

### Clothing

3. A cycle **helmet** and **clothing** appropriate for cycling should be worn. Clothing that may get tangled in a wheel or the chain or may obscure the lights should be avoided.
4. Ideally **light coloured** or **fluorescent clothing** that helps other road users to see the cyclist in daylight and poor light should be used.
5. In the dark **reflective clothing** and / or accessories – belt, arm or ankle bands – should be worn.

### Cycle helmets

6. There remains **contradictory evidence** about the **effectiveness of helmets** with regard to both the **incidence** and the **types of injuries**.
7. However, despite this, **MOSA supports the wearing of helmets by all cyclists**.
8. In the UK, while there is no legal requirement to wear a helmet, it should be noted that the **Highway Code** recommends that cyclists do so.
9. While some authorities maintain that there is considerable evidence for the effectiveness of helmets and the justification for helmet promotion policies, others cite the use of flawed scientific data in reaching those conclusions.
10. In several countries where helmet use has become significant, there has been no measurable reduction in fatal or serious injuries relating to cycling and where **helmets have been promoted** or legislation for their compulsory wearing has been passed **cycle use has fallen**, the effect being most pronounced among teenagers.

11. **Peer pressure** may influence a young person's decision whether or not to wear a helmet e.g. it might be deemed "uncool" in the peer group to wear one when others have chosen not to.
12. Some circumstantial evidence suggests that helmeted cyclists are more likely to crash, one explanation being so-called "**risk compensation**" – the tendency, conscious or otherwise, for people to take greater risks if they feel better protected.
13. Cycling is a **popular sport** and in some high profile events, e.g. the Tour de France, all the riders wear helmets, although helmet wearing is not mandatory in France where the majority of the race takes place.

### Use of a helmet

14. If a helmet is to be **used**, it should be purchased from a **reputable stockist** and should be **fitted correctly**.
15. All helmets should **fit snugly** without feeling tight and should be **worn correctly**. The buckle should be under the chin, the straps should not cover the ears, the side adjusters should be just below the ear lobes and the helmet should be low on the forehead and not tipped backwards.
16. Only a helmet that meets one of the following **standards** should be used: -
  - SNELL B.95 (American Standard)
  - BS EN 1078:1978 (European Standard)
  - BS 6863:1989 (British Standard)
17. Also, the helmet should have a "**CE**" **mark** and, ideally, a **BS kite mark**.
18. Cycle helmets are only designed and tested to withstand an impact equivalent to an average weight rider falling onto a stationary kerb-shaped object from a height of one metre at a speed of 12 mph.
19. A helmet should be **replaced after one accident** and if it is dropped from a height of greater than 1 metre. Some manufacturers will replace a helmet at a reduced price after an accident.

### Reflectors and lights

20. A cycle must be fitted with a **red rear reflector** (and amber pedal reflectors if manufactured after 1<sup>st</sup> October 1985) and at **night** must have **lit white front** and **red rear lights**.

### Cycle routes, tracks and lanes

21. The use of dedicated cycle routes, advanced stop lines, cycle boxes, Toucan crossings (light-controlled crossings allowing pedestrians and cyclists to share crossing space), cycle tracks and lanes, although not compulsory, is to be encouraged as they can all make any journey safer.

## Safer riding

22. Unfortunately, one of the barriers to taking up cycling is the perception of the **physical danger** posed by motor traffic. In reality, the **actual risk** from cycling is **small** with only one fatality per 20 million miles of cycling. Although cycle-related accidents are a significant cause of injury and death in children as well as adults, the **overall real risks** are **outweighed by the health benefits** by a factor of around 20 to 1.

## Minimising the risk of injury

23. When riding, **cyclists should:** -
- Keep both hands on the handlebars except when signalling or changing gear.
  - Keep both feet on the pedals.
  - Never ride more than two abreast.
  - Ride in single file on narrow or busy roads and when going round bends.
  - Not ride close behind another vehicle.
  - Not carry anything that will affect balance or get tangled up in the wheels or chain.
  - Be considerate of other road users and use a bell to make others aware of their presence.
24. Although not a legal requirement, the **fitting of a bell** is recommended.
25. In addition to all the above measures, the following may also help to **reduce and minimise** the risks to cyclists: -
- Undertaking cyclist training run by local road safety officers.
  - Traffic calming schemes.
  - 20 mph speed limits in residential areas.
  - Improved car driver awareness and training; cycle awareness in the national car driving test.

## Other considerations

26. It is **illegal** to: -
- Ride on a pavement intended for pedestrians.
  - Carry a passenger unless the cycle has been built or adapted to carry one.
  - Hold on to a moving vehicle or trailer.
  - Ride in a dangerous, careless or inconsiderate manner.
  - Ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs including prescribed medicines.

## Cycle care and maintenance

27. All cycles should be **checked before each use** with particular attention to brakes, tyre pressures and lubrication. It is illegal to ride a cycle with inefficient brakes.
28. All cycles should be **serviced** at regular intervals by a competent cycle mechanic.

## **References:**

- The Highway Code. 2007. Available on line: - <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/index.htm>  
Go to Cyclists > Rules for Cyclists (59-82).  
Also available in hard copy.
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Road Safety Information: Cycling Accidents. March 2009.
- “Health on Wheels”. Cavill N. Primary Health Care: December 2007. Vol. 17 No. 10.
- “Do enforced bicycle helmet laws improve public health?”. Robinson D L. BMJ. 2006: 332: 722.
- “Arguments against helmet legislation are flawed”. Hagel B *et al.* BMJ. 2006: 332: 725-726.

## **Useful websites:**

[www.cyclehelmets.org](http://www.cyclehelmets.org) (Bicycle Helmet Research Foundation). This website is particularly valuable offering well-balanced information about the use or otherwise of helmets.

[www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk) (Dept for Transport)

[www.rosipa.com](http://www.rosipa.com) (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)

[www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk) (Road safety charity)

[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) (information about the National Cycle Network)

[www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk) (The Cyclists’ Touring Club - national cyclists’ organisation)

[www.bhsi.org](http://www.bhsi.org) (Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute, a US organisation pro helmets)

[www.bhit.org](http://www.bhit.org) (The Bicycle Helmet Initiative Trust)

[www.cyclecraft.co.uk](http://www.cyclecraft.co.uk) (Website of John Franklin, cyclist and road safety expert)

[www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland](http://www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland) (Website of Cycling England, an independent, expert body encouraging “more people to cycle more often more safely”).

## **Recommended reading:**

- “*Cyclecraft*”. John Franklin. The Stationery Office. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. April 2007. ISBN 978-0-11-703740-3. £12.50.

June 2011

(due revision June 2014)