



8: OFF-STREET BICYCLING

THE BASICS OF USING TRAILS

Where in Chicago can you bicycle away from the streets? On the trails of the city's parks and lake-front. Despite the pleasant setting, *bicycle collisions happen almost three times as often on trails as on streets*. Here are some tips about safe trail riding.

Be Courteous: People on trails don't always know which side to travel on and when to yield. So the most important rule for everyone is: act courteously. ① When in doubt, give the other person a break.

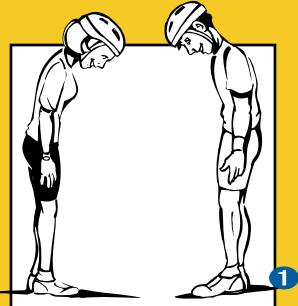
Ride Predictably: Ride straight and at a steady speed so people can stay out of your way. Always look back before passing or turning. And use hand signals (see page 13) and make noise by shouting or using a bell, horn, or whistle.

Where to Pass? Slower trail traffic should stay right, except to pass—just like traffic rules for the street. And you usually should pass others on the left. Always signal so people behind you know which side you'll pass on.

Calling Out to Others: Yell “on your left” or “on your right” before you pass another cyclist, a skater, or a runner. ② When you yell at people walking, some will freak out and jump in front of you. So if they’re walking in a straight, predictable line, you can pass them without saying anything—but pass them with as much distance as you can. And you shouldn’t wear headphones so you can hear others passing you.

When to Yield: Here’s when to yield on a trail: ③

- When you enter a trail, or you’re on a trail that crosses a street or another trail, always be ready to slow down and yield to cross traffic.
- If cross traffic has a stop or yield sign, they should yield to you.
- If there are no signs, you should yield to the person who reaches the intersection first.
- Yield to anyone who looks like they won’t slow down for you. And if there’s no room to pass, yield to people in front of you who are moving slower than you.



1



2



3



Obey “Slow” Marks: Slow down wherever you see a series of thick white lines across a trail. ④

Don’t Block the Trail: Don’t stop on a trail. Instead, move off of the trail to stop.

Using Lights: If you ride trails at night, you should always have lights in front and back. See page 29 for more info.

Don’t Do Damage: Don’t ride in the grass or dirt, or lock your bike to small trees. You’ll compact the soil, killing grass and trees and causing erosion.



④

RIDING THE LAKEFRONT TRAIL ⑤

Not a Highway: Many, many people use the Lakefront Trail. They walk, run, skate, dance, and just stand and talk. This means that you—a cyclist sharing the Trail with others—often have to slow down or stop. If you use the Trail to work on your racing skills or you’re trying to get downtown in a hurry, going slow might really annoy you. If it does:

► **Find a better route.** For commuting, city streets might be faster and safer. For racing, try higher-speed roads outside the city. And if you usually ride on the North Side, try the Trail south of McCormick Place to 67th Street; it has less traffic.

► **Use the Trail at off-peak times.** In warm weather, the times to avoid are Saturdays and Sundays after 8 a.m., and weekdays after 3 p.m. That’s when the Lakefront Trail gets the most crowded. Also stay away during special lakefront events such as football games.

Problem Areas: Many parts of the Lakefront Trail are tricky for cyclists. Here’s a list of things to watch out for.

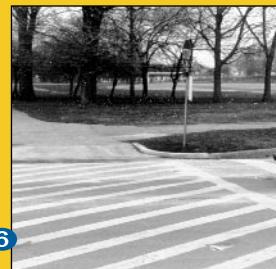
► **Drivers don’t yield.** The Trail crosses roads that lead to lakefront parks and parking lots. Motorists should yield to Trail users, but they often don’t—so be ready to stop. ⑥

► **Narrow pavement.** In some places the Trail is as narrow as a sidewalk. You should slow down and share the space.

► **Crowds.** Where it runs along beaches and other gathering places, the Trail’s often filled with pedestrians. In crowds, go slow and make noise. Special signs ⑦ warn you of really crowded places.



⑤



⑥



⑦



1



2



3



4

- **Sharp turns.** The Trail has turns where you can't see what's coming. ① You are too smart to ride fast around these turns, but others aren't. Slow down so you're ready for speeders and pedestrians.
 - **Where's the Trail?** Some stretches of pavement look like they're part of the Trail, but they're really access roads and ramps that lead off the Trail. ② Know your route, and watch for the Trail's yellow center stripe. (See the inside back cover to learn how to get a Lakefront Trail map.)
 - **Sand, ice, and snow.** When the Trail gets covered with sand, ice, or snow, slow down and avoid sharp turns. ③
 - **Getting mugged.** Less crime occurs on the Trail than in past years, thanks in part to stepped-up police patrols. But muggings still happen. If you feel unsafe, ride with a friend.
 - **After 11:00 p.m.** Chicago parks close at 11:00 p.m. If you find yourself traveling on the Lakefront Trail after that time, police might ask you to leave the trail. If they do, don't argue; take a different route. (Don't forget that you can take your bike on a CTA bus or train.) The city's policy about bicycling on the Lakefront Trail after 11:00 might change over time, however; for the latest information call the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation at 312/427-3325.
- Where to Get Help:** Here's where to go if you need help on the Trail.
- **Park buildings and pay phones.** Get help from a Park District building or use a pay phone if there's one nearby.
 - **Wait for police.** In daylight hours from May through October, Chicago Police patrol the Trail on bikes and in cars. ④ If you can wait, a police officer will come by.
 - **Bike shops.** Several bike shops are located near the Trail. If your bike breaks down, get off the Trail to find a store or gas station where you can look in the Yellow Pages for the nearest shop.
 - **Hotline.** To report a pavement hazard on the Trail, call the Lakefront hotline at 773/256-0949.