

## **Five Dangerous Situations to Avoid While Bicycling**

If you are a cyclist, you are a member of a growing number of people across the country who enjoy using a healthy, fun, and environmentally friendly way to get around. Unfortunately, cycling can be dangerous when riding alongside cars. Even the most cautious cyclist can get hit by a careless motorist. The key to avoiding a crash is to always be alert and never assuming that drivers will notice you. Here are five dangerous situations you should do your best avoid when riding alongside motorists:

### **Don't Get Floored by a Door**

[Getting doored](#) is one of the most common accident scenarios. It happens when a driver opens his door without checking to see if a cyclist is approaching. If you get doored, you could find yourself seriously injured.

It's usually easy to determine where you are more likely to be doored. It'll most commonly happen in the areas where cars park along the sides of the street. Additionally, if a car has its hazards on and is pulled to the side, it's likely someone could get out of the car unexpectedly. To avoid the possibility of being knocked out by a door, stay far enough to the left of the lane so the door won't reach you if it is opened. The "door zone" is significantly bigger than you'd expect, so be sure to give a wide berth: 4 feet should be enough (the average car door is 5 feet wide), but the more space the better.

If all else fails: Scream! You should never veer into oncoming traffic, but a shout might be enough to startle the motorist to stop opening the door.

### **Don't Let Them Turn Right into You**

When at intersections with stop signs or red lights, you should be extra cautious. If there is a cycling lane, never pull all the way up in it so you will be to the right-hand side of a car turning right. You would be stopped in the driver's blind spot. If they are making a right turn, they could easily turn right into you or right over you. Always stop behind the car (often in the actual vehicle lane instead of the bicycle lane) when possible to do so.

### **Avoid Intersection Disasters**

Most crashes occur at intersections. When you arrive at an intersection, you should never zip on through, even if you have the right-of-way. It's not feasible to slow down at every intersection, but you should ride defensively: Keep your hand on the brake, and try to make eye contact with motorists to determine if they see you.

Pedestrians will often start crossing in front of you, assuming that you're either much slower than a car, or they might not even see you in the first place. Your bike likely has a bell, and I can assure you that it's completely useless. Your voice will come in handy.

### **Don't Get Rear-Ended**

This is the biggest fear among cyclists, but it doesn't actually happen too often. When it does happen, these crashes are usually deadly. Regardless of what time of the day or evening you are riding, you need to make sure you are visible so the drivers will see you. Try to wear bright and noticeable colors when you're cycling (and reflective, [not fluorescent](#), during the night), or at the very least, don't wear all black. Bicycles are required to have a red rear reflector in nearly every state, but you can also opt to have a flashing red light on your backpack as you ride as well.

### **Don't Let Motorists Pass Too Closely**

Motorists can sideswipe cyclists or force them off the road by passing too closely. This is because a motorist cannot accurately judge how far a bicycle is from his or her car. The best way to prevent this from happening is riding loud and proud in your lane. It's tempting to ride as far to the right as possible, but avoid this, as this will make motorists (often incorrectly) believe there's plenty of room to pass you!

Many crashes are preventable and avoidable. By riding defensively and staying alert, you may never experience an incident with a motorist! And finally, it may be common sense, but you should always [wear a helmet](#). A helmet will go a long way in protecting your head if you do happen to be involved in a crash with a motorist.

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