



Active commuting: cycling to work

Cycling to work can be fast and convenient, and it's a fantastic aerobic workout that's good for your heart, lungs, legs and core muscles. It is also an environmentally friendly option for commuting to work that can reduce your transportation costs.

Whatever your reasons, it takes only a bit of planning to take the first steps towards regularly biking to and from work.

Is your bike road and trail ready?

If you already own a bike, make sure it's road and trail ready by ensuring that all parts and mechanisms are in good working order. Investing in a bike tune-up at a local bike shop is always a good idea, especially if you don't have the tools or inclination to maintain your bike yourself.

If you are buying a new bike, seek out expert advice from reputable outlets; in most cases, an experienced and qualified sales associate can help you choose a comfortable, durable bike that fits you properly and will hold up to daily biking demands and on leisurely outings.

Wear the headgear

A bike helmet is your best protection from injury. Your helmet should be well-fitted and approved by the Canadian Standards Association. Whatever level of cyclist you are, there are always dangers associated with biking; it's important to take precautions to stay safe, as well as set an example for children and youth. Be wise and wear headgear each time you ride.

Preparing to commute to work

As you gear up for regular bicycle commuting, remember to take things easy at first. Go for practice rides on the weekend or in the evenings so you can get used to navigating as a cyclist, learn to operate your bike safely and ease your body into doing this type of activity. Try taking short trips around the neighbourhood or along bike trails, slowly increasing the distance you ride each time.

Preparing your route

Take a test ride or two on a weekend day or an evening to test your chosen route and alternatives. Gauge the distance and amount of time it takes to get to work, and think about how your body feels after riding for that amount of time. If you find the distance is too physically demanding, make time for more practice rides at longer distances.

A practice ride will help you get to know some of the enjoyable features and problem areas on your route such as barriers, road closures, uphill sections or rough terrain. Doing practice rides during periods of lower traffic volume will help you learn the route safely and prepare you for the real thing on a busy workday. You'll also have time to check out street bike lanes, side street routes and multi-use trails.

Make sure to note the locations of busy roads, intersections and crossings. Plan your route to avoid hazardous locations and keep to the safest trails as much as possible.

Making the commute work for you

Part of your plan should address all the little things that will help simplify and organize your commuting experience, and make your daily rides more enjoyable. Consider the following suggestions:

- Always carry water with you to stay hydrated.
- Carry a mobile phone in case you need to call for assistance, and make backup plans with friends or family so you can contact someone for a ride, if needed.
- Carry an air pump, spare tire tube and some basic bike tools and replacement parts, and consider taking a basic bike repair course to learn how to make minor repairs.
- Be prepared for the weather; carry rain gear and keep an extra set of clothes at your workplace.
- Consider how you are going to carry your work clothes, work materials and personal items. There are various options for functional, compact accessories such as baskets, saddlebags or small knapsacks that don't affect your balance when biking or turning.
- Get a top-quality bike lock, so you know your bike is locked safely. If your workplace doesn't have an outdoor or indoor bike rack or lockup area, choose a safe, visible location to lock your bike to minimize risks of theft. Check out the possibilities at your workplace ahead of time.
- You may be able to combine your cycling commute with public transit. You may be able to ride half-way to work, park your bike at a transit terminal and take a bus or train the rest of the way. Or you may choose to bring your bike onto the train (in designated cars and at designated times) or place your bike on bike racks attached to some transit buses.

- Find out if your employer offers a guaranteed ride home program or make backup plans with a co-worker who can drive you somewhere, in the event of a personal issue or emergency. Be sure to have cash or a credit card on hand at all times so you can make use of alternate transportation without delay if needed.

Follow the rules of the road

A bicycle is recognized as a vehicle under the provincial laws that govern roadways. This means that cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as other vehicle operators. Be a wise rider—always ride your bike in a careful, courteous manner and follow the rules of the road.

- Ride in single file at all times, except when passing another vehicle (whether a bicycle, car or other vehicle).
- Ride in the correct lane, change lanes properly and signal your intentions (e.g. left- and right-turn signals) for basic turns and at intersections.
- Yield to pedestrians, whether on roadways or pathways.
- Only use sidewalks that are designated for bicycles or shared use.
- Bicycles must be equipped with an audible bell or horn that's in working condition.
- Use your audible device when approaching pedestrians or slower-moving traffic; sound your device at a distance as an advance warning to avoid startling people.

Keep in mind that local bylaws also apply, such as municipal bylaws that govern trail usage. For instance, you may be fined for riding your bike on a trail designated only for pedestrians.

It's a good idea to take a few minutes to read your local bylaws about riding on sidewalks and multi-use trails. Check with local government offices or enforcement agencies; in some cases, the relevant bylaws will be online or a hard copy may be available.

Roadway safety tips

- If the road is rough, go slower so you can keep in your lane and ride in a straighter line as a courtesy to drivers behind you.
- Do not swerve suddenly into another lane to avoid potholes or obstructions.
- When riding on the road beside parked cars, aim to avoid being “doored” by a driver who opens their car door in front of your path. Ride at a safe speed and keep a constant lookout for people who may be ready to open their door.
- Aim to use designated bike lanes and paths as much as possible or choose commuting routes with fewer potholes or less traffic.
- Make yourself visible. By law, cyclists riding after dark must have a front headlight, a red taillight and a red rear reflector. Consider using LED lights and reflective vests, armbands or leg bands to help make you more visible to other vehicles at dusk or in darkness.

The road ahead

While it may not be practical to ride every day—perhaps because of off-site work meetings, health or family issues or bad weather—there's no doubt that the more often you ride, the better you'll feel physically and mentally. Good luck and enjoy your cycling!

Learn more

[Bikes on ETS](#)

Information from the City of Edmonton about bringing bikes on trains and buses and about bike parking.

[A beginner's guide to biking to work](#)

Tips on preparing to bike to work, bike-commuting essentials, what to wear and why you should try it.

[Bike to work](#)

Tips for your first biking commute.

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