

COACH'S GUIDE

BIKE
EXPERIENCE
.BRUSSELS

be biker
be coach
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BRUSSELS MOBILITY
BRUSSELS REGIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE

Pro Velo

Lots of
reading
and happy
cycling!



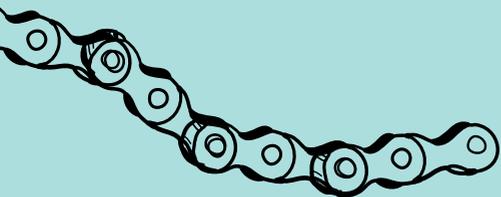
You have registered to be a Bike Experience Coach. Congratulations! You will guide a starting cyclist during his or her first few days as a Biker in the Brussels traffic.

As a Coach, you need to make sure that the Biker you will accompany can cycle in the best conditions for a successful Bike Experience. You will plan at least six rides with your Biker. Our team will help you prepare for this challenge!

We hope our training armed you with the necessary knowledge and skills to safely and pleasantly help a Biker on his or her way.

This Coach's Guide contains an overview of the various stages of Bike Experience, a series of coaching and general cycling tips, and useful information.

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Your role as a Coach

You will soon take a beginning Biker under your wing. He or she will take on the challenge of travelling by bike for two weeks. Every Biker will be accompanied on a fixed route for (preferably the first) three days.

The idea is that your Biker will have acquired enough experience after six rides to be able to bike in traffic independently. As such, you need to help him or her overcome any potential fears, learn good habits (by example!) and master the most important manoeuvres. Your method of coaching is decisive for how much the Biker will enjoy his or her experience, and whether or not he or she will continue cycling. Your role is a critical one!

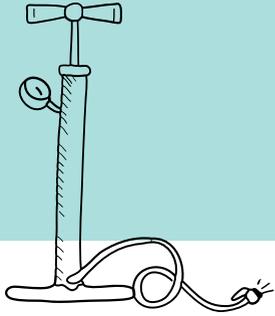


The Coach's conduct

Later on in this guide, we provide answers to a couple of practical questions, but first we would like to draw your attention to the way in which a Coach should conduct him or herself during the Bike Experience.

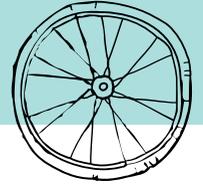
You are simultaneously:

- **A GOOD EXAMPLE:** with irreproachable conduct. You respect the highway code (stop for red lights, do not cycle on footpaths, do not ride the wrong way down a street, give priority to pedestrians, etc.), carry out manoeuvres correctly, and are courteous in traffic.
- **AN ADVISOR:** You use your valuable experience as an experienced cyclist to advise your apprentice, so that he or she will become more assertive and self-confident in traffic.
- **A GUIDE FOR YOUR CYCLIST:** As your coaching progresses, and if you consider the Biker to be ready, allow him or her to cycle in traffic without you (see also 'Position of the Coach').
- **METHODICAL:** You prepare the route and test it by yourself during rush hour, to assess how long it takes.
- **POSITIVE:** You point out mistakes your cyclist has made, but handle these in a constructive manner. You remain positive with regards to cycling in general and avoid words with negative connotations, such as 'danger' or 'unsafe' (you use words such as 'risk' and 'obstacle' instead).
- **EMPATHETIC:** You put yourself in the beginning Biker's shoes and never forget that cycling in the city is a new experience for him or her. Always bear in mind that you need to give him or her confidence and motivation to continue with the Bike Experience, and cycling in general.
- **COURTEOUS FOR OTHER ROAD USERS:** You are friendly in traffic, advocate mutual respect and never hostile towards motorists. This way you do not scare off your Biker, who has only just started transitioning from car to bike! You refer to the Fietsersbond/GRACQ for everything related to the defence and representation of cyclists in Brussels.



Coaching for

Bike Experience



NOTE: THE COACH IS NOT AT THE BIKER'S SERVICE

A Coach's role is not to fulfil all the Biker's wishes. Just do what is expected of you during the Bike Experience, nothing more, nothing less.



The Bike Experience roadmap

Meeting with your cyclist

Perhaps your Biker already rides a bike, but maybe he or she can't (yet) carry out all necessary manoeuvres smoothly and independently. Our training for beginning cyclists is specifically designed to teach people how to cycle safely in the city.

Although the idea to train beginning cyclists is an enticing one, it goes hand in hand with a certain responsibility. Stay relaxed and bear in mind that:

- the Bike Experience needs to take place as safely as possible.
- Biker and Coach both need to have a positive experience.
- the Bike Experience needs to help Bikers on their day-to-day ways.

Preparation

As an experienced cyclist, you know that everything starts with good preparation. For the best chance of success, we expect that you carefully read through this guide a few days before the start of the Bike Experience.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you still have any questions afterward.

Prepare the route:

- **Choose a comfortable route.** A detour might be preferable if it avoids difficult areas, especially on day one (tram rails, complex crossroads, etc.). Routes can easily be calculated and plotted with Google Maps (choose the running option), but a little exploration or a cycle map often yield even better results.
- **Choose a calm route.** To the extent possible, choose calmer roads at the start of the route. This way you can ride in a relaxed way and clearly communicate with your Biker. This also allows you to assess his or her cycling abilities. Don't forget that the Biker needs to get used to cycling in traffic and especially the noise, which can be stressful.
- **Try out the route with your own bike first**, and at least once during rush hour, to find out how long the drive takes and to be aware of any difficult areas. Note that the ride will take at least a little while longer with your Biker in tow.



Coaching for

Bike Experience



Take note of any possible problem areas so that you can inform your Biker beforehand. Think of easy ways to get past these areas and the position you will take with regards to your Biker (see 'Position of the Coach').

- **Look for places where you can come to a stop** – especially at problem areas – so you can calmly observe and analyse the situation.
- **Make use of the tricks that experienced cyclists use** (the lift at the Palais de Justice, the bike stairway near BOZAR to avoid the Mont des Arts, etc.).



Coaching – day 1

Agree on the route and time in advance. On the first coaching day, you should meet 15 to 20 minutes early. Plan in a possible stop along the way to assess whether everything is going smoothly.

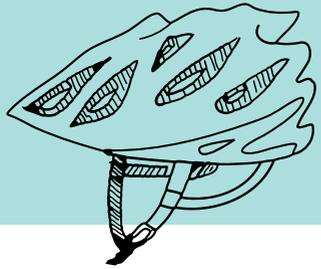
WHAT SHOULD YOU DISCUSS ON THE FIRST DAY BEFORE SETTING OFF?

- **Go over the purpose of the Bike Experience together:** cycling in the best possible conditions and making sure your rides together are a fun experience for the both of you!
- **Reiterate what is a Coach's role:** to teach a Biker how to cycle safely and get him or her acquainted with the most important manoeuvres.
- **Ask him or her how they feel:** find out if they are still nervous. Put your Biker at ease and ask how you can help.
- **Encourage your Biker to participate as much as possible during the coaching.** You can adjust your style of coaching to this feedback (position, attitude, etc.).
- **Explain that you first want to assess their cycling skills** so that you can coach accordingly, and that this is the reason why you have chosen calmer roads in the beginning.

IN PRACTICE

Briefly reiterate **the most important rules** to cycle comfortably and safely in the city (see page 13).

- Check **your Biker's equipment** (bike and clothing, see chapter 'Practical info').
- Remind your Biker **not to ride too fast in the beginning**. The key is to find an ideal pace, in which your Biker does not get out of breath. Nevertheless the Biker should set the pace. If it gets too difficult, stop for a while or traverse a part of the route on foot.
- Ask your Biker to not only look straight ahead, **but to keep an eye on the traffic situation in its entirety**. If the Biker is riding in front, give the route instructions in good time, so that he or she can timely prepare for any manoeuvres.
- **Go over any difficult areas on the route** and explain how to handle these ahead of time, so the Biker will be prepared.



Coaching for

Bike Experience



- **Check out the difficult routes of your itinerary** and explain how to surpass them.
- Agree that you will **only shout 'STOP' if there might arise a dangerous situation**. You and your cyclist then need to stop as quickly as possible and exit the traffic (head over to the sidewalk).
- **Upon arrival**, ask your Biker how he or she thought the route went and give feedback, preferably in the form of practical tips and recommendations. A (sincere) compliment can work wonders!

Coaching – day 2

The second day progresses in much the same way as the first. If your Biker wants to, and is ready, you can let them ride ahead as much as possible. Make sure that he or she can always hear you, though.

Suggest taking another, faster or busier, road. Test new routes preferably in the morning, as your Biker may possibly be less focused in the evening.

Note that new routes should best be tested by the Coach in advance. Take your time: new manoeuvres require a lot of concentration on the part of the Biker - don't ride too fast.

Keep giving each other feedback so that you can better meet the needs and wishes of your Biker. Depending on this feedback, specific difficult manoeuvres can be singled out.

You can repeat certain parts of the route and gradually give the Biker more freedom so he or she will ultimately be able to ride on the road alone!

Coaching – day 3

This is your last coaching day! At the end of this day, your Biker must be able to reach their destination by him or herself.

Is your Biker ready? Have you found the best route?

Which areas still need to be worked on?

You probably noticed that your Biker gained a lot of confidence after just two coaching days. Does he or she worry that you will not be there tomorrow?

If that is the case, try to identify the reasons why – and find solutions on this final coaching day.

Coaching – conclusion

After day 3, decide which road the Biker will take on day 4, and focus on it. Reflect on the difficult areas and give advice. Then all that remains is for you to encourage your Biker to believe that they can do it – and should stick to it!

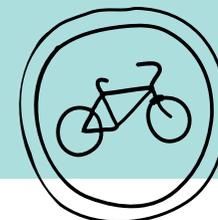
After this final encouragement your mission is complete! We hope you enjoyed your Bike Experience as a Coach and that your Biker now also cycles the city. Of course you can always stay in contact to see how his or her Bike Experience progresses!

Share your experiences with your friends on social media. You are our best ambassador!





Cycling in traffic



Below you will find an overview of the basic rules for cycling comfortably and safely, and some practical info.

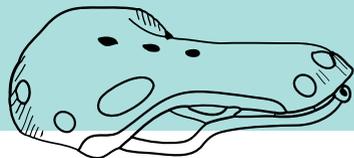


The Coach's attitude

Your position and place in traffic determine, to a large extent, your comfort and safety.

- **Check your equipment:** Choose comfortable clothing which is suited to the weather. Have your bike in working order, check the tyre pressures, brakes, and saddle height.
- **Respect the traffic code:** Everyone on the road has rights and obligations. If you want to be respected yourself, set a good example. Never run a red light, unless traffic signs B22 or B23 allow you to do so. Leave the sidewalks for pedestrians, and never ride on the wrong side of the road, unless permitted.
- **Make sure you are highly visible:** People need to be able to see you. Avoid a vehicle's blind spot, occupy the right amount of space on the road, use the cycle lanes at traffic lights, possibly wear reflective clothing, and switch on your lights (front and rear) as soon as the sun starts to set.
- **Think ahead.** Indicate timely and clearly where you are going (with an outstretched arm), and ride in a straight line as much as possible.
- **Occupy the right amount of space on the road:** Ride approximately one metre from the side of the road or parked cars. Watch out for motorists mindlessly opening their doors!
- **Make sure to not get blocked in:** Be careful when overtaking or manoeuvring to not get stuck in the traffic. When approaching a crossroads where you might need to come to a stop, do not hesitate to drive in the middle of your lane. Remain visible and think ahead!
- **Having priority is not the same as driving safely:** Assume on principle that cyclists are not easily visible and that motorists might be surprised by their presence.
- **Communicate.** Try to make eye contact with other drivers. Make sure you are clearly visible before driving onto crossroads!
- **Be courteous:** Respect the public space that you share with others! Be polite and thank car drivers and other road users who give priority. Don't forget that pedestrians have priority on zebra crossings!

Cycling in traffic



Position of the Coach

There is no fixed method of guiding a cyclist in traffic. As a Coach, you need to take account of the capabilities of your Biker and his or her traffic awareness. Of course, you also need to bear in mind the environment (traffic intensity, the manoeuvres which need to be carried out, the width of the road, etc.) and adjust your position during the coaching.

OBSERVATION



The rear wheel of the cyclist should be at the level of the front wheel of the Coach.

This position helps the Coach assess the cyclist's level at the start of the coaching, protect him or her, and to be able to communicate easily.

LEARNING POSITION



The Coach rides in front of the cyclist.

The Biker observes and imitates your actions. That way, he or she learns to occupy the right space in traffic, but doesn't need to make any difficult manoeuvres yet, or know where to go.



AUTONOMY



The Coach rides behind the Biker.

This position can be used when the Biker can carry out manoeuvres him or herself, knows how to occupy the right space, and knows where to go. Gradually increase the distance between you and your Biker.



The rules of the road: a refresher

Bike infrastructure

BIKE LANES

Cycle lanes are a part of the road intended for cyclists. Two solid white strips or a blue traffic sign make it obligatory to use them. However, bear in mind that cycle lanes are not exclusively intended for cyclists. Class A mopeds must also use them, as must pedestrians when indicated.

If the cycle lane is not useable, then traffic law specifies that cyclists can ride on the road.

Cyclists may therefore leave cycle lanes to turn off, overtake, or avoid obstacles.

If the cycle lane terminates and merges into the road, the cyclist has priority. Note that priority does not mean safety.

BIKE INDICATION LANE

This is a lane in a different colour to the road on which other road users are alerted to the fact that cyclists may be on the road. They are usually found on roads which are not wide enough for a proper cycle lane.

This lane indicates where cyclists can ride, but their use is not obligatory. These bike indication lanes are increasingly replaced with chevrons.



DID YOU KNOW?

Cyclists walking with their bikes by hand are considered pedestrians, and have to use the sidewalk. Cycling on the sidewalk is always forbidden, except for children under the age of nine (using bikes with a wheel diameter smaller than 50 cm).



Cycling in traffic



CHEVRONS

These white or green markings indicate where cyclists can ride in places where no cycle lanes are provided. Just like bike indication lanes, these markings alert motorists that cyclists may be on the road.

LIMITED ONE-WAY TRAFFIC

Cyclists may ride the wrong way down a street on condition that an 'except cyclists' signpost is present.

In that case, cyclists need to stay as much to the right as possible when passing oncoming traffic, and be very cautious at crossroads. Motorists often do not expect vehicles to be riding in the opposite direction. As such, adapt your speed and watch out for pedestrians, who may also be taken by surprise. Don't hesitate to warn them in advance.

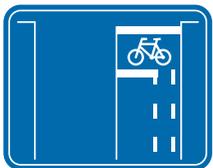
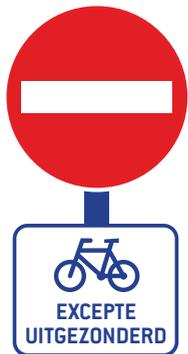
When riding out of a street with limited one-way traffic, try to make eye contact with drivers before riding out (even if you have priority). Courtesy and politeness are very important in one-way traffic.

BIKE AREA

At some crossroads with traffic lights, bike areas are demarcated.

Make use of these to be more visible and be the first to ride away when the lights turn green.

See also 'Passing a traffic jam' in 'Important manoeuvres'



B22 AND B23

Some traffic signs give permission to ignore traffic lights. The signs B22 and B23 allow cyclists to turn right or continue driving ahead if the lights are on red or orange. Note that this does not give you priority over other road users. Both signs are used in situations where the cyclist does not get in the way of the flow of traffic.

CYCLE STREETS

Important cycle lanes that still need to support motorised traffic can become cycle streets.

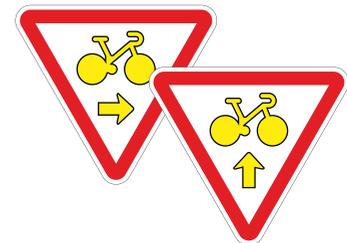
Motorised traffic is permitted on these roads under certain conditions. Cyclists cannot be overtaken and the maximum speed is 30 km/h.

BUS/TAXI/CYCLE LANE

Some bus lanes are also accessible for cyclists, on condition that a cycle image is applied to the road surface or on a signpost. In these areas, it is prohibited to ride two abreast, and cyclists need to stay as far to the right as possible. In these lanes, traffic lights apply to both buses and cyclists.

PEDESTRIAN ZONES

These zones are only accessible for cyclists if a bike is indicated on the signpost. If there is no more additional information present, cyclists may use these zones on condition that they ride at a walking pace. If there are many pedestrians, cyclists need to dismount.



Cycling in traffic



Important manoeuvres

PRIORITY FROM THE RIGHT

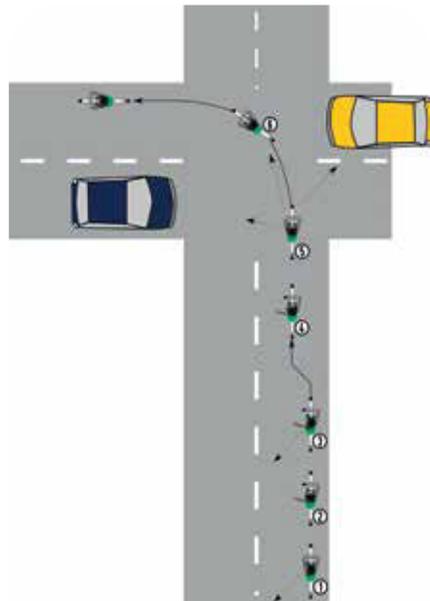
At crossroads where the traffic is not managed by an authorised person, traffic lights, or traffic signals, the priority from the right rule applies. Never forget that vehicles that stop still have priority.

Even if you have priority, always assume that you are not necessarily safe.

TURNING RIGHT

When turning right, clearly show your intention and don't take your corners too wide (keep a distance of one metre to be safe). Watch out for any pedestrians on zebra crossings.

TURNING LEFT



Never forget that whoever wants to change direction loses his or her priority:

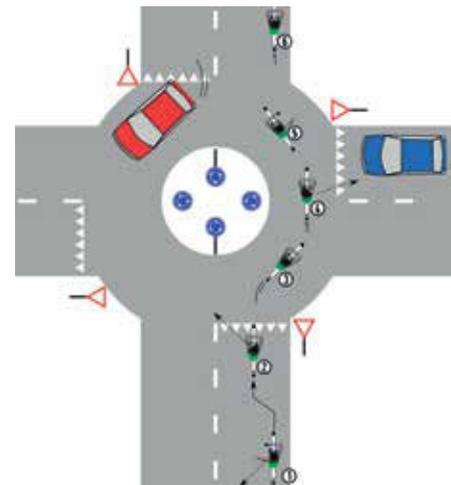
1. When approaching a crossroads, look behind you to assess the situation.
2. Indicate that you want to turn left by sticking out your left arm.
3. With your arm outstretched, look behind you again to make sure the road is free, and/or that possible persons behind you have slowed down to allow you to carry out your manoeuvre.
4. Ride to the middle of the lane.
5. Place both hands on the handlebars and take a good look ahead and to the right when riding onto the crossroads. All vehicles coming from those directions have priority. Never forget to also briefly look left (priority does not necessarily mean safety).
6. Take a wide turn to the left.
7. Return to riding about 1 metre from the edge of the road.

ROUNDBABOUTS

Although roundabouts do not often cause accidents, a good position as a cyclist is nonetheless important to avoid being cut off by vehicles.

A few rules of thumb:

1. Before riding onto the roundabout, look behind you and move to the middle of the lane, to avoid being trapped by a vehicle coming from behind.
2. When approaching a roundabout, slow down and look left. Give priority to vehicles which are already on the roundabout.
3. Cycle in the middle of the lane on the roundabout so that you remain visible.
4. Always try to make eye contact with motorists approaching the roundabout, even if you have priority.
5. Before leaving the roundabout, clearly indicate your intention by sticking out your right arm.
6. Go back to riding about 1 metre from the edge of the road.



Remarks:

- If the driver behind you is impatient, stick out your left arm to indicate that you intend to keep riding on the roundabout.
- If there is a cycle lane on the roundabout, this must obligatorily be used. This infrastructure is gradually being phased out.



Cycling in traffic



PASSING A TRAFFIC JAM

If the vehicles are stationary, you can pass the traffic jam via the right or the left.
If the vehicles are moving or are about to move, you may only pass the traffic jam via the left.
This is 'overtaking'.

Passing on the left is often safer because cyclists are more visible to drivers.
If it is not possible to pass via the left or the right, remain in the traffic jam.
It is important that you do not get closed in, or end up in a vehicle's blind spot!

BIKE AREA

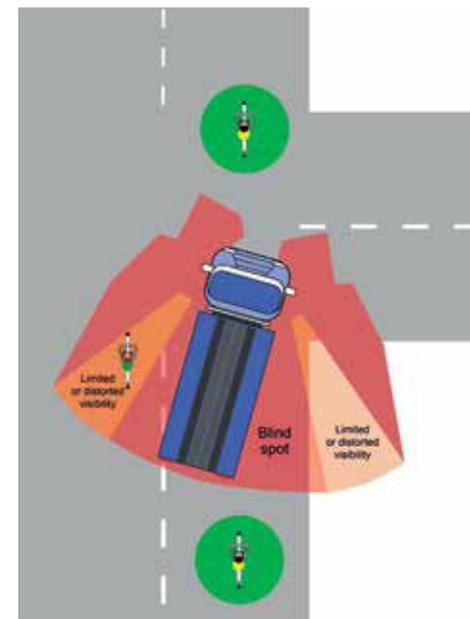
This facility allows you to draw up to a crossroads with traffic lights in front of all other road users, and in the spot which is most suitable for the direction you wish to take (left, straight on, or right).

BLIND SPOT

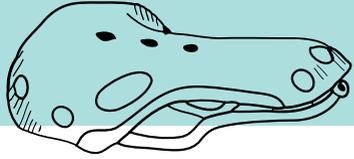
A vehicle's blind spot is the area which falls outside the field of vision of a driver. It varies from vehicle to vehicle. As a cyclist, you need to be cautious when overtaking, or if a vehicle passes you or turns off (see illustration).

A few tips to be less vulnerable:

- Occupy the right amount of space on the road, be visible.
- Always remain behind a truck to avoid ending up in its blind spot.
- Respect the safety distances.
- Only overtake when you are sure that there is sufficient time and space to do so, and especially when you are sure the driver has seen you. Keep in mind that you might need to swerve out of the way.
- If you are overtaken by a truck that wants to turn right, slow down and keep a safe distance behind it. Stop if necessary!



Cycling in traffic



TRAM TRACKS

A tram has priority over all other road users, including cyclists. Always ride as perpendicular as possible on the tram or train tracks to avoid your wheels getting stuck in the tracks. If you are following tram tracks, it is sometimes best to ride on the inside of them, if there is not enough space to the right (to keep your one metre distance from parked cars).

LEAVING THE CYCLE LANE

If you cycle on the cycle lane, you have priority (except over trams). Cyclists may therefore leave cycle lanes to turn off, overtake, avoid an obstacle, or when the cycle lane is impossible to ride on.

When a cycle lane terminates and you need to continue forward on the road you have priority over cars, as this is not considered a manoeuvre. Always remain cautious, nevertheless!

If you are leaving the cycle lane to turn off, you do not have priority.

At a crossing point for cyclists, you also do not have priority, unlike pedestrians on a zebra crossing.

NARROW ROADS

On narrow roads and in one-way streets, it is best to occupy the right amount of space on the road if overtaking vehicles could put you in danger. Always remain courteous and don't take any risks.

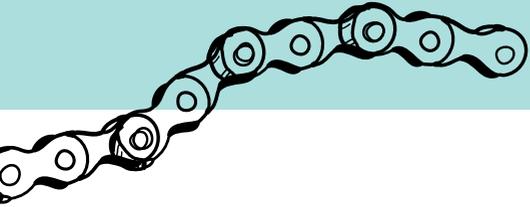
Cycling two abreast

You can always ride two abreast **in a cycle lane**, unless another bike wants to overtake or a two-way cycle lane is too narrow to pass each other.

Riding two abreast is also possible **on the road**, on condition that other road users are able to pass. Outside the city, cyclists always need to ride in single file whenever a vehicle approaches from behind.



Cycling in traffic



Legislation regarding the cycling allowance

People who use their bike for home-to-work travel can ask their employer for a cycling allowance of € 0.22/km. Your employer, however, is not obliged to enter in this scheme set up by the Belgian federal government. This allowance does not depend on your Joint Committee or professional sector either.

A bike allowance can be accumulated with an STIB/TEC/De Lijn/SNCB subscription. You are entitled to this, even if you only come to work on the bike a few days a week. It is calculated on the basis of the number of kilometres cycled with the bike. The employee does not pay any tax on this bonus, which is paid on the basis of a sworn declaration (the bonus does not count for holiday and illness days).



Practical information

Equipment

BEFORE SETTING OFF, MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING WITH YOU:

- A cycle map of Brussels.
- A bike pump and a bicycle repair kit.

CHECK YOUR CYCLIST'S BIKE, PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE:

- Front and rear brakes.
- Tyre pressure (check what is written on the tyre).
- Saddle height.
- Reflectors, bell and lighting (possibly on the Biker him or herself).
- General condition of the bike (well-oiled chain, straight wheels, etc.).

CHECK WHETHER YOUR BIKER HAS:

- A reflective jacket with reflective strips (which is not obligatory, but recommended).
- A helmet (which is not obligatory, but recommended).
- Waterproof tops and bottoms, a hat, and gloves for protection.
- Several layers of clothing which can easily be removed during the route.

Practical information



Ran into a problem?

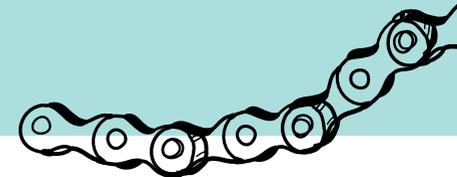
If you are involved in a collision with a motor vehicle, always ask to fill in an accident form, even if the damage is limited. Complications may arise afterwards, in which case the telephone number of the driver will not suffice.

When filling in the form, pay attention to the following points:

- Only fill in one form, to be signed by both parties. Make mention of possible witnesses.
- The sketch of the accident situation is very important: it needs to be detailed, and both parties need to agree on it.
- Give a detailed and factual description of the accident.

Remain calm and call 112 if you have the slightest doubt regarding the seriousness of the situation.

Practical information



Bike associations

PRO VELO provides services, assists public authorities, schools, and businesses in promoting cycling. This non-profit organisation develops tailored solutions for a smooth and sustainable modal shift, and in doing so contributes to a better quality of life.
www.provelo.org – Tel.: +32 (0)2 502 73 55

FIETSERSBOND (Cyclists' Association) defends the interests of cyclists. By convincing communities and governments that riding a bike is a smart choice, the Fietsersbond wants to make cycling safer for all.
www.fietsersbond.be – Tel.: +32 (0)2 502 68 51

GRACQ – LES CYCLISTES QUOTIDIENS (Daily Cyclists) helps to ensure that anyone wanting to travel by bike can do so in the optimum conditions. With support from many volunteers, GRACQ represents the interests of cyclists before the Brussels and Walloon governments. GRACQ also informs, trains, and organises numerous initiatives that help raise bike awareness.
www.gracq.org – Tel.: +32 (0)2 502 61 30

LES ATELIERS DE LA RUE VOOT: (Rue Voot Workshops) opened their first bicycle workshop in 1973, as a centre for expression and creativity. Under the guidance of experienced mechanics, workshop participants learn the necessary techniques for independently confronting the various forms of misfortune that can affect cyclists on a day-to-day basis.
www.voot.be – Tel.: +32 (0)2 762 48 93

CYCLO is a social enterprise that promotes cycling in Brussels via bike mechanics, recycling, and innovation.
www.cyclo.org – Tel.: +32 (0)2 512 68 90

Become a Coach

- Quickly go through this guide once more.
- Ride the route at least once beforehand, preferably during rush hour.
- Stick to the agreed meetup time and place, factor in a bit more time on the first day.
- Ride the six routes with your Biker.
- Adapt your riding style to that of your Biker and make sure that at the end of the course, he or she can safely cycle the city alone.

More info at Bike Experience

www.bikeexperience.brussels

Questions? Need advice?

Contact us

info@bikeexperience.brussels

02 318 84 07

More info on mobility in Brussels

www.mobilite.brussels

mobilite@sprb.brussels

0800 94 001

Bike Experience is a project coordinated by Brussels Mobility and Pro Velo, with the support of the Brussels Minister for Mobility, Pascal Smet.

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