Cold Weather Cycling Tips

Commuting by bike can be an efficient way to get around – and cold weather doesn’t have to mean an end to getting around on two wheels! In fact, cycling can boost your mood on those dreary winter days. This guide provides useful tips for navigating the colder months on your bike.

MINDSET

Choosing whether to ride your bike to campus when the temperature drops or weather turns wintry is a personal decision. Everyone has different comfort and skill levels with riding in freezing temperatures or snowy or icy streets. Check the local weather before heading out.

MANTENANCE AND STORAGE

Your bicycle will need regular cleaning and maintenance in the winter months due to the dirt and salt picked up from wet or snowy roads.
* Consider installing fenders if you don’t have them already.
* Reduce air pressure in your tires for better traction. If your bike will accommodate them, consider using bigger tires for winter riding.
* Keep a towel or brush handy to wipe or brush off snow and slush from the frame and chain.
* Pack a seat cover (or plastic bag) to cover the seat.
* Clean and lubricate the chain regularly.
* Store your commuter bike outside - like in the garage - when not in use. Cold bikes do not accumulate snow and ice (and thus dirt and salt) the way that warm ones do.

WEATHER AND ROAD CONDITIONS

Employees and students are encouraged to sign up for UK Alert, the University’s emergency notification system, for information about closures and delays at www.uky.edu/EM/UKAlert.

Allow extra time for your commute on snowy and icy days, as you may need to proceed more slowly than normal or take alternate routes. Remember, you can always leave your bike on campus and return home via an alternative method if the weather or road conditions worsen during the day.

ROUTE SELECTION

When the weather turns snowy or icy, route selection becomes extra important. Carefully evaluate your alternatives based on local snow removal and salting patterns.

SEE AND BE SEEN

Visibility is more important than usual on inclement weather days, as drivers typically do not expect to encounter cyclists when road conditions are poor.
* Be predictable and make eye contact with motorists; be sure you are seen.
* In addition to front and rear lights, wear bright or reflective outer layers.
* Be prepared! Even if you don’t think your commute will occur during dusk or dark hours, plan for those conditions just in case.

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*Be aware of your surroundings. Drivers may have lower levels of visibility due to precipitation or glare caused by frost, ice or snow. Even if they see you, road conditions may lead to delayed stopping or skidding.

CLOTHING

Bundle up! Your extremities are the most susceptible to cold. However, over-dressing can be as much a problem as under dressing, so choose your layers wisely. A weatherproof outer shell, as opposed to long underwear, can be easily removed once you reach your destination. It’s a good idea to take a plastic bag along for storing the wet outer layer.

HANDS: Keeping your hands warm is the key to riding comfortably, so choose layers that are both water- and wind-proof. A combination of wind-proof over-mittens and lightweight gloves provide warmth and allow you to operate your lock.

HEAD: Many options are available for keeping your ears warm while still being able to wear a helmet. Some helmets even have integrated ear muffs. You may also consider wearing a balaclava to keep your neck, ears and mouth warm.

FEET: Wool socks or thick synthetics designed for wicking moisture and water-resistant shoes or boots will keep your feet warm and dry.

LEGS: Your legs are going to be doing most of the work, so they are the last area you want to layer up. On the coldest days, thin synthetic or silk long underwear under your pants and/or weatherproof over pants will do the trick.

TORSO: A windproof shell coupled with synthetic layers is a solid bet. Remember, the colder it is, the more layers you’ll need.

ALTERNATIVES

Not every day will be a cycling day for everyone. That’s okay; any trip made by bike instead of in an automobile has benefits for all of us, so even one day a week helps. For those days when biking isn’t the best fit for you, here are some transportation alternatives.

Ride Local and Campus Buses
- Campus buses: www.uky.edu/pts
- Lextran: www.lextran.com

Drive to Campus
- Information on scratch-off single use permits available at: www.uky.edu/pts