

BIKE GEAR & MAINTENANCE

Underinflate your tires. Keep the tire pressure a bit lower than you would in warmer weather. This will give you a slightly wider surface area in contact with the ground, and therefore more control.

Wide, knobby tires will give you better traction through the snow than skinnier road bike tires.

Studded tires will provide a better grip on icy surfaces. If buying studded tires is too expensive, you can make them yourself. To do so, fix short sheet metal screws through the tread, with the screw heads on the inside. Then cover the heads with duct tape or a tire liner so as to not pop your tube. Don't let your studded tires make you overconfident however – you're still not immune to falls.

Get fenders. This is the best way to keep gritty street slush off your clothes.

Light up. It gets dark much earlier and stays dark much later in the winter. Always make sure you have at minimum a front light, and reflectors visible from all sides. The brighter your light, the safer you will be. Also be sure to use lights if it is snowing, foggy, or otherwise low visibility conditions. (Come get free bike lights at the ASUM Transportation office in UC 105, or downtown at City Hall.)

Continued on back...

Keep your chain clean and lubricated. Winter is harsh on an exposed drivetrain, so maintenance of this sort should be done on a weekly or more frequent basis. Sand, salt, and debris can gunk up your gears. Free Cycles has chain oil and grease you can use for free, so take advantage!

Wipe down your brakes after snowy or dirty rides and make sure contact surfaces with the wheels are clean.

Avoid suspension bikes if possible. Sand, salt, and grit can destroy suspension and gears. Many cyclists choose to ride single-speed bikes in the winter, or bikes that have coaster ("back-pedal") brakes, so that less hardware is exposed to the elements.

Keep your winter bike in an unheated space. Continuously warming and refreezing your bike will cause condensation to form on the frame and in the cable housings, which makes your bike vulnerable to rust and frozen cables. A garage or other covered area is best.



To request that the City clear the bike lanes of snow, please call 406-552-6360

Griz Guide to Winter Biking



Brought to you by ASUM
Transportation



CLOTHES

Dress in layers. Your body produces heat quickly as you pedal, so don't overdress. You should start out your ride with just enough clothes that you're still slightly chilly. Wearing too much will produce a lot of sweat, and when stopped the breeze can take away your body warmth – leaving you cold and shivering, and could potentially cause hypothermia. Add or remove layers as you go to stay comfortable on your commute. A waterproof wind-breaker is a great outer layer to keep you warm and dry.

Cover your skin. Even at moderate speeds, the wind chill on exposed skin increases significantly, and the cold shock can be a distraction. A face mask (balaclava) is useful in very cold temperatures. If you use a scarf, make sure it is short enough that it can't get caught in your wheels.

Keep your fingers warm. The best gloves are waterproof and will have grippy palms and fingers to help you hold on to slippery handlebars. Cold hands are a safety issue, as numb fingers can impair your ability to brake.

Remove pedal clips or straps, and wear boots. Have your feet free in case you need to bail off of your bicycle quickly. Make sure that your boots are waterproof, and big enough to accommodate thick socks. You want enough room around your toes for a warm air pocket.

Keep your eyes covered. Eyes water as temperatures fall. Sunglasses (non-metal) can protect you from both wind and sun glare. Ski goggles are also a great for colder weather. If you have trouble with your glasses fogging, treat the lenses with a small amount of gel toothpaste as an alternative to lens spray, which can be pricey. Be sure the toothpaste does not have baking soda, as that can scratch the lenses.

Wear a helmet. Falls are much more common in the winter, and you may need the head protection. Be sure your helmet is large enough to wear a wool cap or balaclava underneath.

RIDING TACTICS

Slow down. Expect to take longer to reach your destination, and plan that time into your commute. The roads will be slippery, so pedal deliberately and use lower gears.

Don't hesitate to dismount. If you're worried about falling, or think an area is too dangerous to ride over - walk. You can keep one hand on the brake lever and use your bike for stability until you navigate to safer ground.

Be aware of your surroundings and the road or sidewalk conditions. Look out for black ice. The sun can melt snow during the day that refreezes as it cools down in the evening.

Take turns wider and stay upright around corners. If you lean too hard, your wheels may slip out from underneath you.

Ride on clear pavement when available. Don't be afraid to take the lane if there is snow in the bike lanes or on the sidewalks.

Anticipate stops way ahead of time. If the road is slick or your brakes are wet, it will take longer to stop. Don't put yourself in a dangerous situation.

Ride defensively. Although cars generally try to give bicycles a wider berth in the winter, motorists also aren't as used to seeing bicycles out in this season. Make eye contact with drivers, limit sudden movements, and always signal your intent.

Drink water. The air is usually drier in the winter, and the sweat you produce while you ride can cause dehydration. It's just as important to stay hydrated in the winter as in the summer.

Roll with the fall. If you must take an unanticipated fall, don't fight it. Try to roll with the fall. Don't put all your weight on one arm; this is a good way to hurt your wrist.