

Guide

2022 Changes to the Highway Code You Need to Know

Summary

Rules for all types of road users have been updated in The Highway Code to improve the safety of people walking, cycling and riding horses.

1. New hierarchy of road users

Drivers of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm in the event of a collision bear the greatest responsibility to take care and reduce the danger to others. This principle applies most strongly to drivers of HGVs, LGVs, cars/taxis and motorcycles. Cyclists and horse riders likewise have a responsibility to reduce danger to pedestrians.

2. Pedestrians have priority at junctions

Updated rules for pedestrians:

- When people are crossing or waiting to cross at a junction, other traffic should give way
- If people have started crossing and traffic wants to turn into the road, the people crossing have priority and the traffic should give way
- People driving, riding a motorcycle or cycling must give way to people on a zebra crossing and people walking and cycling on a parallel crossing

3. Updated rules for motorists sharing spaces with cyclists

You should not cut across cyclists, horse riders or horse drawn vehicles going ahead when you are turning into or out of a junction or changing direction or lane. This applies whether

they are using a cycle lane, a cycle track, or riding ahead on the road and you should give way to them. Do not turn at a junction if to do so would cause the cyclist, horse rider or horse drawn vehicle going straight ahead to stop or swerve. You should stop and wait for a safe gap in the flow of cyclists if necessary.

People cycling, riding a horse or driving a horse-drawn vehicle should respect the safety of people walking in these spaces, but people walking should also take care not to obstruct or endanger them.

4. People cycling, riding a horse and driving horse-drawn vehicles on roundabouts

The code has been updated to clarify that people driving or riding a motorcycle should give priority to people cycling on roundabouts. The new guidance will say people driving and or riding a motorcycle should:

- Not attempt to overtake people cycling within that person's lane
- Allow people cycling to move across their path as they travel around the roundabout

5. What the changes mean for cyclists

People cycling are asked to:

- Ride no less than half a metre from the verge or kerb, 'further where it is safer'.
- Not pass people walking, riding a horse or driving a horse-drawn vehicle closely or at high speed, particularly from behind
- Slow down when necessary and let people walking know they are there (for example, by ringing their bell)
- Remember that people walking may be deaf, blind or partially sighted
- Not pass a horse on the horse's left
- Cyclists can ride 2 abreast - and it can be safer to do so, particularly in larger groups or when accompanying children or less experienced riders

The code recommends that people cycling should proceed as if they were driving a vehicle where there are no separate cyclist facilities. This includes positioning themselves in the centre of their chosen lane, where they feel able to do this safely. This is to:

- Make them as visible as possible
- Avoid being overtaken where this would be dangerous

The code now includes advice for people cycling using junctions where signs and markings tell them to turn right in 2 stages. These are:

- **stage 1** - when the traffic lights turn green, go straight ahead to the location marked by a cycle symbol and turn arrow on the road, and then stop and wait
- **stage 2** - when the traffic lights on the far side of the junction (now facing the people cycling) turn green, complete the manoeuvre

People cycling have priority when going straight ahead at junctions.

The code clarifies that when people cycling are going straight ahead at a junction, they have priority over traffic waiting to turn into or out of a side road, unless road signs or markings indicate otherwise.

People cycling are asked to watch out for people driving intending to turn across their path, as people driving ahead may not be able to see them.

6. Overtaking

Motorists may cross a double-white line if necessary (provided the road is clear) to overtake someone cycling or riding a horse if they are travelling at 10 mph or less.

There is updated guidance on safe passing distances and speeds for people driving or riding a motorcycle when overtaking vulnerable road users, including:

- leaving at least 1.5 metres (5 feet) when overtaking people cycling at speeds of up to 30mph, and giving them more space when overtaking at higher speeds
- passing people riding horses or driving horse-drawn vehicles at speeds under 10 mph and allowing at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) of space
- allowing at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) of space and keeping to a low speed when passing people walking in the road (for example, where there's no pavement)

Wait behind them and do not overtake if it's unsafe or not possible to meet these clearances.

7. Promoting the 'Dutch Reach'

In an attempt to cut the number of cyclists hit by car doors swinging open unexpectedly, the Dutch Reach is advocated. This involves the hand furthest from the door to open it. This prompts a passenger or driver to swivel their bodies and in turn, heads to look over their shoulder and be more mindful of passing cyclists.

8. Stricter rules on phones

Drivers are prohibited from using handheld devices in any way, including taking a photo, playing games, or scrolling through playlists, with hefty fines applicable to those caught.

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