

## **Your Bike**

If your rides are in clear but cold conditions being mindful of your attire is important.(see clothing)  
If you ride in snowy or icy conditions, more care has to be taken. As always, it is important your bike is in safe working order. Winter is no exception. If your bike has the clearance for a wider tire, the more rubber will give you better traction. Studded tires will give you safer results only on ice and snow, but are not recommended for clear pavement.

As the roads are wet and salty in the winter, fenders are a must! Full coverage fenders offer the best protection for both your bike and your clothes.

As for brakes, disc brakes are ideal for wet or snowy conditions as they don't clog up with ice and snow. rim brakes still work but may require more distance. Don't forget that using your front brake on ice can cause you to wash out! If it's icy, best to only use your rear brake!

Many riders who enjoy the benefits of bike shoes and clipless-pedals(shoe clips to pedal) will go with a winter boot and regular platform pedals for the winter.

Another useful tip is to lower your seat a little bit, this lowers your center of gravity and can give your feet better footing if your bike slips on ice.

## **Visibility**

In the winter months the amount of daylight is greatly reduced. Add some falling snow and messy roads, you become very hard to see! Most cities require bicycles to have a white light in front and a red light in back. Halifax is no exception. If you have bike lights that blink, use the blinky mode. This is more noticed by drivers and makes your batteries last longer than steady light. However, if you are on a dark trail and are using the light to see the terrain, leave your headlight on steady. It's much safer.

Flashers are best mounted on your bike where they can be aimed precisely, rather than on clothes or packs, where they shift around. Lights mounted on your helmet are a good idea too.

Reflectors are a great backup and are available as ankle/arm straps, tape/stickers, vests and plastic pieces that mount to bicycles.

Remember, drivers are often distracted. Being seen sooner could save your life!

## **Riding Technique**

When riding in the winter give yourself extra time to allow for slower trips and longer dressing/undressing before and after your rides. Try to pedal smoothly and relax your upper body, especially on ice and soft snow.

Make graceful turns rather than oversteering. Give yourself lots of distance to stop as your brakes may not work as well. Road ice can provide lots of traction or very little. Try not to brake hard on the slippery sort, or if you must, use only your rear brake.

Black ice can be hard to spot and very dangerous. Remember to slow down before a sharp turn, not while turning.

## **Clothing**

Wind chill is your worst enemy while winter riding! Regardless of warm clothes, wind chill will affect any exposed skin and even cool covered areas. It is this reason that makes windproof clothes so important. However, cycling generates a lot of heat, so clothes that are warm and comfortable have to control the buildup of heat and moisture as well.

Multiple light layers with neck or armpit zippers let you adjust your ventilation as you ride.

Your base layer (against your skin) and mid-layers should be synthetics or wool. Cotton in these layers will feel wetter and colder than the above materials.

Covering the head, neck and face can make or break a ride. Neck gaiters work well as they are not bulky and can cover the lower half of the face. A thin toque or skull cap works well under helmets. You may need to change the sizing pads in your helmet or remove them entirely to fit your winter headgear. If the weather is really bad, try taping over the vents in your helmet.

Eye protection very helpful if you're riding in a headwind or falling snow.

Also popular are pogies, they are oversized mittens that fit over the handlebars. You can just insert your bare or lightly gloved hands inside and grab the bars. as lots of slush or meltwater can come up off your tires, using rainpants is highly recommended to keep clean but more importantly dry and warm.