



CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 10

Lights are essential when riding after dark

Riding at night can be just as enjoyable as riding during daylight, it just requires a few adjustments.

Visibility is the key word and the more a rider can do to be clearly seen the better.

Wearing light-coloured clothing is a good idea. Better still are garments that have reflective panels. Bike shops sell lightweight reflection vests that can be easily slipped over your ordinary clothing.

You must have lights fitted to a bike being ridden after dark, even if you are only using paths. It sounds obvious, but too many cyclists ignore this fact.

By law you must have an unbroken white light at the front and an unbroken or flashing red light at the rear, both of which must be visible for at least 200 metres. A flashing white light can be used as an addition on the front, but the main light must be unbroken. All lights must be fitted so their centre is at least 330 millimetres above ground level.

There is a choice of two power sources for bicycle lights:

Friction dynamos, which run on either the tyre sidewall or tread, are a long-lasting alternative, but they make the bike harder to pedal and only work when the wheels are in motion.

If the bicycle is stationary there is no power and hence no lights, which can be a problem at poorly lit intersections. Some cheaper dynamos have no voltage regulator and speedy cyclists can burn out the bulbs.

Battery-powered light sets are cheaper to buy initially and provide a constant flow to the lights, even when the bike is at a standstill. The disadvantage is that batteries need to be replaced or recharged regularly.

If you intend riding on the road at night, it is recommended that you fit two separate lights at the front. One light can be used to illuminate the ground ahead and the other aimed at the eye level of car drivers to maximise your chances of being seen.

A red rear reflector at least 38 mm in diameter is mandatory in Western Australia, even if the bike is only ever ridden during daylight hours. By law, a bicycle used between sunset and sunrise must also have two orange reflectors fitted to each wheel and each pedal.

Attaching reflective tape or stickers to clothing, helmet, backpacks and cargo will increase your visibility even more.

Riding at night means riding defensively. Keep a close eye out for joggers, walkers, other cyclists and vehicles. A good tip is to watch your shadow when being approached from behind by a car. If your shadow does not start to move to the left as the car approaches, quickly move your bike to the left.



This fact sheet is one of a series dealing with the use of bicycles for recreation and transport in Western Australia. The series looks at a range of cycling-related topics including ride routes, touring tips, maintenance, safety, road rules, insurance and product reviews. You can find more cycling fact sheets online at www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling

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