Rules of The Road

Obey Traffic Signs and Signals
In order to stay safe and predictable to other users of the road, bicyclists must obey traffic laws and be courteous. Every time bicyclists run through a red light, impede traffic, ride the wrong way, or ride on a sidewalk in a business district, they enforce the notion that all bicyclists are scofflaws that don’t belong on the road. Always ride in the same direction as traffic, never against it. Follow the rules of the road.

On-Street Markings

Using Bike Lanes
Bike lanes give bicyclists and motorists their own, assigned and separate spaces on the road. A bike lane is a portion of the roadway that has been designated by striping and pavement markings for use by bicyclists. Bike lane markings include a solid line and a stencil of a person on a bike with an arrow above to indicate the proper direction for travel. Bicyclists should always ride in the same direction as traffic.

Obey Hand Signals
Hand signals tell motorists what you intend to do on the road. Signaling is required at least 100 feet before a turn or stop unless you need both hands to control the bicycle. If you have an available hand, let drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists know where you’re going. Signal as a matter of law, courtesy and self-protection.

Ride Consistently
Ride as close to the right side of the lane as is SAFE. Exceptions to this rule include: when the street is too narrow to share safely with other traffic, when traveling at the normal speed of traffic, when avoiding hazardous conditions, when preparing to make a left turn, or when using a one-way street. Leave at least 3 feet between your bike and the curb to allow reaction time for road debris or other hazards.

Use a Hand Light and Taillight at Night
Watch out for sewer grates, oily pavement, slippery manhole covers, broken glass, gravel and ice. Cross railroad tracks at right angles to avoid getting your tire caught in the groove next to the tracks, possibly causing a crash. Make an effort to slow down in tricky areas to decrease your stopping/braking distance which gives you more time to react to the unexpected.

Safety Tips for Bicyclists

Avoid Road Hazards
Watch out for sewer grates, oily pavement, slippery manhole covers, broken glass, gravel and ice. Cross railroad tracks at right angles to avoid getting your tire caught in the groove next to the tracks, possibly causing a crash. Make an effort to slow down in tricky areas to decrease your stopping/braking distance which gives you more time to react to the unexpected.

Turning Left
Plan ahead to change lanes. Execute a left turn in the following manner:

1. Like a motorist: Look back over your left shoulder, signal, move into left lane and turn.
2. Like a pedestrian: Scan and signal. Dismount on the right side of the road and then WALK your bike across the controlled intersection.

Ride Single File
Be safe and ride single file. Bicyclists can ride side-by-side when they don’t impede the normal movement of traffic.

Wear a hard-shell helmet whenever you ride. Wear light-colored or reflective clothing at night for better visibility. Layering clothing can be key to staying comfortable in wet or cold weather. Leg bands are a useful tool to help keep your pants from getting caught in the chain, which could cause a crash. Keep shoe laces tied and tucked into your shoes.

Ride Subsidies
Look back over your right shoulder, signal, move into right lane before turning.

Slow On Sidewalks and Multi-Use Paths
Pedestrians have the right-of-way on walkways. You must give an audible signal when you pass, using either a bell or your voice. Cross driveways and intersections at a walker’s pace and look carefully for traffic. Bicyclists are not allowed to ride on sidewalks within the boundaries of a business district in the State of Missouri - this includes Columbia (City Ord. 14-507).

Get the Green Light
Bicyclists must be in the right spot to signal a traffic light. If you come to a red light and see this symbol on the street, position your bike directly over the center line of the symbol. If there isn’t a bike symbol present, look for three parallel cut lines in the pavement near the stop bar. Place your bike over the center line near the front – the most sensitive spot – to trigger the signal. If a car is already present at the signal, it will activate it for you. Call (573) 882-1910 to report a problem.

Sharrows
A “sharrow” is a pavement marking that includes a bike stencil with two chevrons above it. These markings are painted on streets that are good for bike traffic, but are too narrow for separate bike lanes. Sharrow markings indicate to motorists and bicyclists that they must use the same space on the street as they travel. Sharrows are also used in locations where a bike lane ends and bicyclists must merge with other traffic. Just remember that: Bicyclists may always use the full lane.

MU Campus & Downtown

MU Student Resources
1. Environmental Student Office
   2000 MU Student Center 882-8207
2. Sustainability Office
   Virginia Avenue Garage - SW 884-9319
3. MU Police Department Bike Registration
   901 Virginia Avenue 882-7201
4. Bike Resource Center (free repairs)
   environmentalleadership.missouri.edu