



CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 46

Ring your bell to make others aware

Pedestrians have right-of-way on the State's shared path system and the onus is on cyclists to provide a clear warning of their presence, particularly when approaching another path user from behind.

For that reason, a person riding a bicycle in WA must have a bell or similar warning device that is in good working order.

When overtaking another path user, even slower-moving cyclists, a polite single ring will let that person know you about to pass. This should be done even if the other user is keeping well to the left.

A common question from cyclists is at what point should they ring their bell when approaching someone from behind. Too far away and the sound may not be heard, especially if it is a windy day or a noisy environment. Too close, and other path users may not have enough time to react or could be startled.

The cycling unit has conducted some trials and found that ringing the bell at a distance of about 30 metres is a good guide.

For a cyclist travelling at average speed, this gives a gap of about four seconds from the time the bell is rung to when the rider draws level.

However, cyclists shouldn't rely entirely on their bell for providing a warning, because other path users may be hearing impaired, so it is also important to slow down and allow plenty of room when passing.

Extra care is required if small children or dogs are in the vicinity, because their sudden movements can be unpredictable and cyclists may need to adjust their riding line quickly.



Because children under the age of 12 are permitted to ride on footpaths, it is important that they be taught to use the bell when they are first learning to ride.

There are now bells on the market in all shapes, sizes and colours, from the traditional chrome models to mini versions that are more discrete and corrosion resistant. Some even come with a handy compass built into the top.

Air horns are much louder and can be a useful accessory for those who regularly cycle in traffic or enjoy mountain bike riding, but many pedestrians may not recognise the horn as a bicycle sound, so a bell should also be fitted.

By showing a bit of courtesy and letting other path users know that you are there, you can help keep the shared path system safe.

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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