



**Curtis Henry, Pro Cycling Mechanic**  
**[www.cannoncyclery.bike](http://www.cannoncyclery.bike)**

## **Beginner Cycling Basics**

- Pre-ride check- Skewers, tire inflation, brakes, shifting, tools and flat kit, helmet:
  - If you remove your wheel(s) to travel with your bike, be sure to check be sure your wheel skewer(s) are properly tightened and aligned correctly.
  - Tire pressure should be checked before every ride and is specific to your bike type, tire manufacturer, and weight.
  - Make sure you have your brake's quick release mechanisms are properly closed and locked in place.
  - Take a quick look at your cables to make sure they are properly inserted in the stops and no frayed areas.
  - Always carry your emergency kit: multi-tool, flat kit, inflation system, spare tube, etc..
  - Always ride with an approved and well fitting helmet.
- Clipping in- pedal position, engagement, and starts:
  - Right or Left dominant starting?
  - Begin with your dominant foot clipped in at bottom of the pedal stroke, step forward with the other foot and lift your clipped foot to forward and up position.
  - Step down with your clipped foot to drive forward while lifting your other foot to the pedal to clip in while moving.
  - Once moving, settle into your riding position and lift each foot to ensure your secure
- Clipping out- before complete stop, smooth disengage towards top of pedal stroke:
  - Get prepared to stop by standing with your dominant foot at the bottom of the pedal stroke and unclipping you other foot to the outside while braking to a stop.
  - Once stopped, step down and leave your dominant foot clipped; Ready to transition to starting again.
- Braking- Panic stops, body position, controlled application of brakes, front vs rear:
  - Panic stopping requires quick thinking and controlled braking.
  - Maintain body balance and anticipate where to stop
  - Apply even braking pressure with both brakes and avoid skidding
  - The front brake applies the greatest amount of force
- Riding positions- hoods, drops, top of bars, ascending and descending.
  - Hoods and tops are primarily for upright riding for good all around visibility
  - Drops lower your body position for lower center of gravity for high-speed descending

- Experiment with riding positions to see what is safe and work well for you
  
- Cornering- Inside pedal up, clip apex of turn, do not brake in turns
  - When navigating tight and sweeping turns, place your body weight on your outside foot and lift your inside foot.
  - Carve turns cleanly without braking if possible, following through the apex of the turn
- Shifting- chain lines, smooth shifting without looking at gears, big ring to small ring:
  - Avoid the extremes of gearing – avoid running the chain between the big ring and the largest cog and between the small ring and smallest cog.
  - Never force a shift, allow the chain to derail cleanly.
  - When shifting, do not apply pressure on the pedals – instead keep the pedals spinning with light pressure until the chain is fully engaged in a gear.
- Sighting- Looking over left shoulder without turning into traffic:
  - Focus on maintaining forward motion without drifting in the direction you are looking.
  - Practice looking over your left shoulder to view the traffic behind you when riding solo to avoid group accidents.
- Avoiding road obstacles- rolling over debris without turning into traffic:
  - Know where other riders are and where you can move, so you have a place to go left or right if needed.
  - Turn your head when looking around and not your body.
  - Sighting ahead and watching what is coming up on the road.
- Riding with others- wheel overlap, safe distance, communication, single file, drafting:
  - These are more advanced skills and should be focused on once the basics are mastered.
  - Drafting – Is the process of hiding closely behind a rider in front of you to escape the wind and conserve energy.
    - Must be done carefully and requires attention at all times, but can be very efficient.
    - Single file riding with small groups (2-6), and peloton style with large groups.
    - Maintain a safe distance with the rider in front of you - generally one to two feet depending on comfort level.
  - Wheel overlap – refers to the overlapping of your front wheel to the rear wheel of the rider in front of you either to the left or right.
    - If you cross wheels, the rider in the rear is at fault, and most likely will crash.
    - Follow your line and maintain position.
  - Communication with other riders about what is going on, on the road:
    - Point to road hazards, either with a wave at it or a simple point.
    - Call Car locations when appropriate
    - Signal stops when leading the group or pace line
    - Call intersections when no stop light is present
- Water bottle- Safely drink with one hand while maintaining control of bike:
  - Learn to drink ambidextrously while maintaining control of the bike.
  - Continue to pedal while reaching with knee pushed out

Notes:

