

Winter Bike Riding Guide



PREPARING FOR CHILLY WEATHER RIDING; A BIKE COMMUTERS GUIDE

Just because the temperature is slowly dropping, it doesn't mean that you need to put your bike commuting on hold! Equipped with A Better City TMA's guide, you will be well-prepared for chilly weather riding from Fall through Spring. And if you thought your only clothing options were technical-wear, think again! Read below for layering suggestions that will help you maintaining the "work appropriate" look without sacrificing warmth.

Gloves, Socks, Shoes & Hats

As the temperature drops, our body works harder circulating blood to our extremities. This is why keeping your head, fingers and toes warm is paramount to personal comfort. Choose layers with wicking properties and be mindful of over-dressing; you don't want to overheat.

Keeping your head & neck warm: A well-vented helmet is great for summer riding, however, come winter you will want to minimize cold air passing over your head. For a low/ no-cost option, cover vents with clear packaging tape. Or, if your helmet came with vent plugs, reinstall these on cold days. If you don't have one already, consider investing in a [wind/ water resistant helmet cover](#). Another option is purchasing a [balaclava](#) (for head/neck) or [winter style bike hat](#). Keep in mind that when it comes to hats under your helmet, you want the thinnest barrier possible between your helmet and head as bulky layers compromise helmet fit. Also, helmets should be replaced every 3-5 years. You know it is time to replace your helmet when it gives/ bends, etc... with pressure. Keep helmets away from heat, don't allow them to fall on the ground and don't store them where they can be stepped on/ trampled, etc...

Gloves: Good, cold-weather gloves have an insulation layer, are water-resistant/proof and have wind-stopping properties. This being said, gloves come in a variety of styles ("[lobster claws](#)", "[half-finger mittens](#)", "[five finger](#)") and prices. For a low-cost solution, wear latex gloves under your gloves as a wind-proof layer. Or, purchase a [thin glove lining](#). Another option is to combine a glove lining with a water resistant/ wind-stopping shell; you now have two pairs you can wear together or separate depending on the weather. [Here](#) is more glove info for you.

Shoes & Socks: You know it is time to make foot-wear adjustments when your shoes & socks fail to keep feet/ toes warm. If you have cycling shoes, you may want to consider purchasing [shoe](#) or [toe covers](#). These come in a variety of styles (zip-up/ slip on), prices and fabrics. If you bike in regular shoes and your feet are cold you may want to consider switching to a vent-less pair that you reserve specifically for commuting. Keep a pair of work-appropriate shoes at the office or carry them in your bag.

When it comes to socks, look for materials with wicking/ insulating properties like silk & wool. Socks come in different styles ([ankle/ knee](#), etc...) and thickness. Thin ski/ snowboard/ hiking socks work great in terms of work-appropriate wear; the thin design accommodates most work shoes without sacrificing warmth. If you have thicker socks that will do the job just as well pack another pair specifically for work shoes.

Winter Bike Riding Guide

Shirts, Jackets, Leggings & Arm Bands: The key to effective layering is dressing in wicking fabrics (wool, silk, etc..) that keep you dry and warm. Be sure to avoid 100% cotton clothing as a base layer because the fabric does not wick as well as silk or wool. On especially cold days, you may want to wear a wicking base layer shirt that you can change out of when you arrive at work. Another option is [arm warmers](#) that you can adjust as need be. And, you can wear just about any cold weather jacket (as long as it allow for complete mobility while you ride and is not so long that it gets caught in your back wheel). Just be sure to NOT over dress; this leads to over-heating.

You have a few options for keeping the lower half of your body warm. On mildly chilly days you may be fine with just a good pair of long socks under your pants/ skirt. However, on especially cold days you may want to wear tights/ leggings/ technical pants. If you don't already have them, consider investing in a pair of long-johns/ technical pants. Similar to socks, you can purchase a quality, thin pair of long-johns that fits well under work clothes. In terms of technical pants look for something that is wind/ water resistant, insulating, wicks moisture away from skin and has opening/ closing vents for managing body temperature. A tampered ankle is also helpful in preventing your pant leg from catching in the chain. Alternatively, you can secure your pant leg with an [ankle band](#).

Gear:

Lights: Bicyclists are required by law to have a front white light and a back red light. Being lit means other can see you. Therefore, if someone can't see you they are limited in the amount of reaction time they have in interacting with you/ passing you, etc.... Being seen is especially important during winter months when there is more likely to be snow/ ice on the ground. You may be required to stop suddenly and skid out if someone cuts in front of you or someone else might be required to stop suddenly because they couldn't see you. Make sure you are well lit from dusk on; period! There is no limit to how many lights/ reflective items you can have on your person or your bike. The main point is that they should be BRIGHT, so test them often. And keep them out of the cold/ rain by purchasing lights that detract from their mounts. This also helps cut down on theft, which does happen. Lights can be an investment, keep them safe by taking them off your bike when you are inside. For additional visibility, purchase [reflective strips](#) that you can apply to your helmet, bag, bicycle, etc... Or, you can also purchase a [highly reflective vest/ jacket](#).

Fenders & Chain Guard: Do yourself a favor and purchase [front and back fenders](#) if you haven't already; they will keep debris from kicking up and soiling work clothes. You may also want to look into mounting a [chain guard](#) which protects the chain from rain/ snow and prevents your pant leg from being tangled. Fenders and chain guards come in different styles/ prices; check your local bike shop for options.

Lock: Be smart when you lock your bike; make sure to secure wheels, seat and frame. And be careful to keep water/ snow out of the lock joint; this causes the lock to freeze up and rust.

Carrying things for your commute: Bicycle industry companies have designed a wide range of [baskets](#), [racks](#), [panniers](#) and [bags](#) to meet your commuting purposes. Because there are so many options (price and style wise), it is best to talk with your local bike shop and shop around in order to decide what works best for you.

Bicycle Handling Skills: A major part of being a safe bicycle rider is being predictable; this means following the rules of the road -- ***bicycles are VEHICLES!!--***.

You are required to:

Winter Bike Riding Guide

You are required to:

- yield to pedestrians
- stop at red lights and Stop signs
- ride in the same direction as motor vehicle traffic
- have working lights on your bike at night
- ride in the street and **NOT** on the sidewalk
- use hand signals

Police departments/ cities have different enforcement standards for these rules, however, you can play it safe in whatever city you are biking by following **all** of them. In terms of signaling, if you want to move over a lane to the left or are turning left, simply hold out your left arm at a 90 degree angle to your body. The same applies for if you want to move to the right. The logic here is that you point to the direction where you are going. If you are stopping, hold out your left arm at a 90 degree angle, bend your elbow and point you hand to the ground with your open palm facing backwards. Lastly, if you are passing someone, let them know with the commands, "on your left" if you pass on their left, or "on your right" if you pass to the right.

Shopping for Clothing & Gear:

Check out your local bike shop if you are looking for clothing, gear, parts, etc. They can also be a good resource for local events, give you tips on places to ride, etc... For a list of MassBike affiliated bike shops click [here](#). Or, [Google](#) "bike shop" and your address.

If you are looking to purchase clothing or gear, active wear companies/stores like [REI](#), [EMS](#), [Hilton Tent City](#), [LL Bean](#), [Patagonia](#), [City Sports](#) etc... are good places to start. REI and EMS also have bike service areas.

Here are a few examples of companies that make clothing/ gear specific to cycling (you can find these in the shops listed above as well as the bike shops on MassBike's list): [Bailey Works bags](#), [Chrome bags](#), [Basil Bicycle Bags](#), [Ibex](#) (clothing), [GORE](#) (clothing), [Rapha](#) (clothing), [Pearl Izumi](#) (clothing), [Giordana](#) (clothing).