

Equipment and Gear

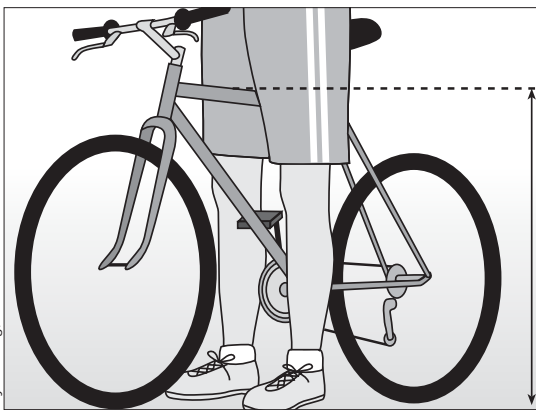
Riding safely and comfortably should be your highest priority.

Proper fit.

A bike that's the right size will be safer, more comfortable, and more efficient. Be sure to select a frame that fits you. Before riding any bike, be sure you can straddle your frame while standing. There should be a couple of inches of clearance between the crotch and top tube. The best way to make sure you fit a bike properly is to have a bike shop use a fit kit to check all the measurements.

Be sure your bike is in good working condition.

To ride safely and efficiently, it is important to be sure all your equipment is operating smoothly and properly. Have a bicycle mechanic check over your bike to make sure it's road worthy if it hasn't been ridden in a while.



Be sure you can stand flat footed with some clearance above the top tube.

Brakes. Both the front and the rear brakes need to be in good working order and adjusted properly. You should be able to bring your bike to a quick, safe stop. In fact, Georgia law requires brakes that will bring the bike to a skidding stop. Over time, cables may need to be adjusted and brake pads replaced. Wet rims can compromise braking power. Allow extra distance to brake in wet conditions.

GEORGIA LAW 40-6-296 (b) Every bicycle sold or operated shall be equipped with a brake which will enable the operator to make the braked wheels skid on dry, level pavement.

Gears. Have your gears adjusted so you can smoothly shift through your entire range of gears. You should be able to shift the chain to all of the possible combinations. Your local bike shop can help with adjustments. Middle and north Georgia have hilly terrain, and you'll benefit by having a wide range of gears. You may want to consider a third front chain ring, sometimes called a "granny gear," that will provide additional lower gears if you'll be riding in hilly terrain.

Tires. Choose tires designed for the type of riding you plan to do. Wide knobby tires, which are standard equipment for mountain bikes, are designed for dirt trails and unpaved surfaces. Thinner tires

with less tread are used on hybrids and road bikes and are better suited for road riding. Inflate tires to the manufacturers' recommended pressure. Tires tend to lose air pressure over time, so check the pressure every week or so.

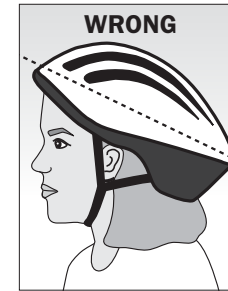
Safety gear and accessories

Whether you're riding on- or off-road, you'll be safer and more comfortable with some basic safety gear and accessories. Here are some important items to have.

Helmets. Always wear a bicycle helmet whenever you ride, which can reduce your chance of a serious head or brain injury by 85%. Helmets made for U.S. sale after 1999 must meet the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission standard. Look for a sticker certifying safety by CPSC, ASTM, or Snell. Snell's B-95 standard is slightly higher than the rest.

Bicycle helmets are available at bike shops, sporting goods stores, and large retailers. Do not wear a helmet made for sports other than cycling. These are designed and tested for other types of impact.

GEORGIA LAW 40-6-296 (e)(1) No person under the age of 16 years shall operate or be a passenger on a bicycle on a highway, bicycle path, or sidewalk under the jurisdiction or control of this state or any local political subdivision thereof without wearing a bicycle helmet.



Helmet tilted too high to protect the forehead.



Front of helmet sits lower, protecting the forehead.

Illustrations: Krystia Haag



The strap is adjusted properly when a finger can fit between the lower strap and your chin.

Replace your helmet if it absorbs an impact in a crash, even if it does not appear to be damaged.

Fit your helmet correctly. The front of the helmet should rest about an inch or less above the eyebrows on the forehead. A helmet tilted upward from this position increases the likelihood of injury in a crash. A common mistake is to tilt the front of the helmet up too high, which leaves the forehead vulnerable.

A helmet should be snug but not excessively tight. Position the strap adjusters directly below the ears. Tighten straps to where a finger can fit between the strap and your chin.



Photo: Mark Dodson

Toe clips or clipless pedal systems will keep your foot in position on the pedal and provide more leverage.

Visible Clothing. Wear bright colors while riding, especially on the road and in traffic. Bright or fluorescent yellow and orange are excellent choices. White is better than darker colors. Avoid black and gray, as well as dark shades of green, brown or blue, which tend to blend with the landscape and are much more difficult to see. Lack of visibility is one of the leading factors in crashes. It is not uncommon for a motorist to say, “I just didn’t see them.”

Cycling Gloves. Warm-weather cycling gloves are fingerless and have padding to cushion the vibration from the handlebars. Cold-weather gloves are somewhat heavier with full fingers. Gloves also provide some protection to your hands if you fall.

Cycling shorts. If you’re riding regularly or doing anything more extensive than short trips, you’ll find cycling shorts to be more comfortable. They have built-in padding and are made of lycra or synthetic fibers, which tend to

wick moisture away rather than retain it. Many manufacturers now make loose-fit and baggy shorts with padding for those who prefer an alternative to the traditional black lycra style.

Shoes and pedals. At the very least, wear an enclosed shoe while riding. Sandals and open footwear leave your feet vulnerable to injury in a crash. As a novice, it’ll be easiest to start with a plain flat pedal and common athletic shoes. As you gain experience and confidence, you’ll likely want to graduate to toe clips or clipless pedals, which attach to special cycling shoes via a cleat.

Cycling shoes tend to have stiffer soles, which helps provide extra leverage as you pedal. Toe clips are the next step up from a plain flat pedal. The “clip” will hold the front of your foot in place on the pedal, resulting in a more efficient motion and more power to the drive train. Clipless pedals are the choice of many experienced cyclists. A pair of cycling shoes is fitted with a cleat that attaches directly to your pedal. There are several styles and manufacturers. If you’re making the switch to a toe clip or clipless system, allow yourself some time to practice in a parking lot or residential street before heading out into traffic. It takes some time to get accustomed to getting your feet in and out of clipless pedals.



Dressed to ride:
A cyclist equipped for comfort, safety, and visibility.

Helmet

Bright colored clothing

Cycling shorts

Cycling shoes

Photo: Kryslia Haag

Other Useful Accessories



- Rear-view mirror
- Cycling gloves
- Headlight



Stay hydrated: Carrying water is essential, especially in warm weather. Water bottles are easily carried on the bike frame (top). Some riders prefer the extra capacity of hydration packs they can wear on their backs for longer rides (below).

Photos: Mark Dodson



required by Georgia law when riding at night. Rear reflectors will help to make you more visible in traffic during low light or night rides, and are also required by Georgia law. Red tail lights are also helpful. Several manufacturers make tail lights that will display either flashing or solid red. These are lightweight and easy to carry, and can be easily detached from the bike when not in use.

Rear-view mirror. For road riding, a rear-view mirror ranks up there with a helmet in terms of safety. With a bit of practice, you'll be able to glance down and monitor vehicles approaching from the rear without having to turn and look over your shoulder. A mirror typically attaches to the handlebars or your helmet. Do not depend solely on a mirror for lane changes – always look over your shoulder and scan behind before making a lateral move.

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Lights and reflectors. A white headlight visible from 300 feet is recommended when riding in low-visibility conditions (fog, dusk) and

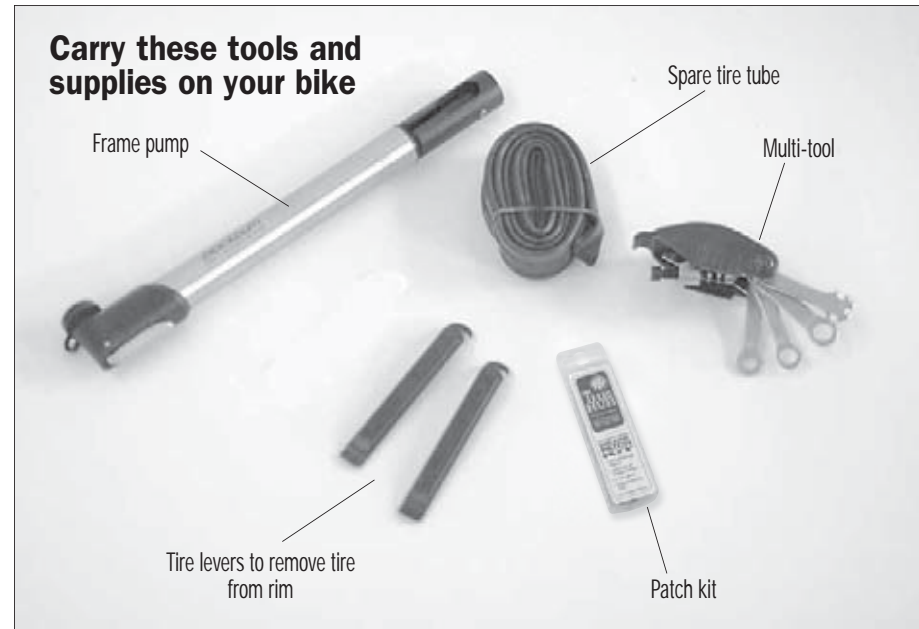


40-6-296 (a) Every bicycle when in use at nighttime shall be equipped with a light on the front which shall emit a white light visible from a distance of 300 feet to the front and with a red reflector on the rear of a type approved by the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety which shall be visible from a distance of 300 feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful upper beams of headlights on a motor vehicle. A light emitting a red light visible from a distance of 300 feet to the rear may be used in addition to the red reflector.

Important safety-related items to carry with you

These small items could be very useful, especially in unusual or emergency situations. Have these with you in an easily accessible place.

- **Identification.** If you're in a crash, or issued a traffic citation, this will be important to have.
- **Emergency contact info.** Name and phone number for someone to contact in an emergency.



- **Water bottle.** A must in warm weather to stay hydrated, and can also be used as a spraying device to deter aggressive dogs.
- **A cell phone.** Useful if you need to call for help, especially in an emergency.
- **Some quarters and a couple of dollar bills.** If you don't have a cell phone, you may be able to find a pay phone if you need help. Cash could buy a drink if you run low on water, or a snack if you're hungry. Stash these somewhere with your tool kit and they'll be there if you need them.
- **An extra energy bar.** On a longer ride, something edible if you get hungry or tired could make a big difference.

your chances of being stranded if you have a flat tire or mechanical problem. A small saddlebag attached to the seat post is a good place to carry them. Here is a basic list:

- **Spare tire tube**
- **Tire patch kit**
- **Pump** (small portable, attaches to frame)
- **Set of two or three tire levers**
- **A compact "multi-tool"** that contains a few hex wrenches, socket wrenches, and a flat-blade screwdriver.

There are many variations of the "multi-tool" on the market, including some more complex versions with more tools. Your local bike shop is likely to have several to choose from.

On-board tools and supplies

Carrying some basic tools and supplies on your bike will reduce