

Oak Knoll Elementary

Menlo Park, CA



THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO

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**RIDING YOUR BIKE TO SCHOOL**

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# WHY SHOULD WE RIDE?

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- ▶ Biking into school is often easier than driving.
- ▶ Riding promotes green transportation in our community.
- ▶ Riding encourages a healthy lifestyle.
- ▶ Students are challenged and learn life skills.
- ▶ Oh, and it is fun.



# WE JUST NEED BIKES, RIGHT?

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- ▶ Check over your bikes. Make sure the tires are pumped and the brakes are working. When in doubt, take it to Menlo Velo for a tune up.
- ▶ Be a role model: wear a helmet yourself.
- ▶ Make sure helmets are less than 6 years old. After that time, the plastics degrade and they are no longer safe.
- ▶ Adjust the helmet so it fits properly. Here is a step-by-step guide: [http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/bicycles/pdf/8019\\_Fitting-A-Helmet.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/bicycles/pdf/8019_Fitting-A-Helmet.pdf)
- ▶ Check the fit of your child's bike. The saddle should be high enough that his/her leg is almost straight at the bottom of the pedal stroke. Avoid twelve-inch-wheeled bikes because they are inefficient and unstable.
- ▶ Consider installing a bell and/or a light on your and your child's bikes.



# WHEN IS MY CHILD READY?

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- ▶ Your child is ready to ride with you if they stop when you tell them to stop. The biggest skill they must have before getting out there is that they consistently respond to your voice commands.
- ▶ If your child is not ready to ride with you, consider using a trailing or cargo bike until they can ride.
- ▶ Your child is ready to ride to school by themselves when they are fully aware of the car traffic.
  - ▶ If they have been riding consistently, this is usually in 3rd grade.
  - ▶ Consider giving them a “road test” before being allowed to ride without an adult. This test could involve you evaluating them by riding behind them one or more times without providing any commands.



# HOW DO I GET READY?

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- ▶ Plan your route. Take a dry run on the weekend and/or talk to someone who regularly cycles for tips. The route you drive may not be the best for bikes.
- ▶ Plan your time. Is the morning rush stressful? Does leaving school on the crowded streets kind of freak you out? Try leaving ten minutes earlier in the morning and/or delaying your departure from school by ten minutes.
- ▶ Decide on your voice commands. A basic list includes, "Stop," "Brake," "Single file," "Car up," "Car back," and "on your left." Review them with your child when riding out of traffic.



## HOW DO I GET READY? (CONT'D)

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- ▶ If you are not yet comfortable riding in traffic yourself, ride a bit more on your own.
- ▶ One critical skill is to know when it is a good idea for you to take the middle of the driving lane and behave like a car versus when you need to ride single file. This approach is necessary at many of the intersections on the way to school.
- ▶ For example, when there is not enough room on the side of the road for cars, bikes and pedestrians, you should be able to look behind you for cars, signal appropriately, and then take the center of the driving lane to avoid being squeezed.
- ▶ Not yet 100% certain about your abilities or your route? Contact someone on the bike committee and we'll be happy to help. Your comfort level will improve quickly with a little one-on-one consulting.



# HOW DO I HELP MY BEGINNER RIDER?

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- ▶ Ride close enough to your child so they can hear you at all times.
- ▶ Have your child ride in front of you, not behind you, on narrow roads. If there is room, they should ride next to you your right. This allows them to hear your commands and protects them from cars coming up from behind.
- ▶ Although hand signals are essential for advanced riders, beginners can't take their hands off the bars so it is not a great use of time to coach that point. It is better for parents to model the signals for both riders and have kids focus on riding in control.
- ▶ Beginner riders can only do one thing at a time so it helps to put tasks in sequence. For example, when approaching an intersection, encourage them to brake first, then look in both directions.
- ▶ Teach children to use and respond to the warnings, "Car up" and "Car back" for approaching vehicles. Even beginner riders get this command and move towards the side of the road. It promotes car awareness and good communication between riders.



# HOW DO I HELP MY INTERMEDIATE RIDER?

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- ▶ Teach children to regularly use their voice (or bell) to make others aware of their position. For example, they should pass on the left side of riders and pedestrians and say “on your left” loudly as they come up on them.
- ▶ As you ride with your child, provide a narrative of why and how you are doing things. An example might be, “I am going to use my hand signal before I get to the stop sign. Then I am going to stop before turning right.” This verbal modeling of your behavior makes good riding more accessible for your child.
- ▶ Inform your children what the drivers are thinking since they have no idea what it is like to drive. As they progress, encourage them to make eye contact with drivers, particularly at intersections.
- ▶ Instead of taking a left hand turn in traffic, intermediate riders should ride to the closest crosswalk and walk their bike across.
- ▶ Insist on riding single file when passing a parked car.



# HOW DO I NAVIGATE THE CROWDED SCHOOL AREA?

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- ▶ Enter the school area on Oak Street. This is preferable to coming down Oakdell Drive, making a left in traffic, and then walking your bike for the last block.
- ▶ Do not allow your children to ride or pass on the right side of pedestrians. Bikers should not ride on the sidewalks.
- ▶ When leaving school at dismissal and turning left onto Oak Knoll Lane, bikers can wait until the crossing guard stops traffic, walk their bikes across and then ride in the street in the direction of traffic.



# HOW DO I NAVIGATE THE CROWDED SCHOOL AREA? (CONT'D)

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- ▶ When leaving school at dismissal and heading right on Oak Knoll Lane, do not use the curb cutout past the bus stop. It is popular but unsafe.
- ▶ Instead, walk your bike onto the street at the crossing walk. While the crossing guard stops traffic, get on your bike and ride in the center of the lane down Oak Knoll.
- ▶ Take the whole lane so that you avoid the pedestrians and the bus. This also allows the cars who will eventually come up behind you know that you are not to be passed.
- ▶ Ideally, when riding down Oak Knoll to the crosswalk, there should be a group of riders who are collectively acting like a car. As a group, take your turn at the intersection of Oak Knoll and Oak.



# ONE LAST PRO TIP?

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- ▶ Except for riding as a group through intersections, you may want to avoid having your child ride with buddies. Two or more friends together tend to distract each other from the road.



# WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

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- ▶ If you would like advice on your best route to school, have equipment questions, or want individual support for riding, please contact the Bike Committee for a personal mentor.
- ▶ If you have suggestions for how to better promote riding in the community, please contact the Bike Committee.
- ▶ If you have suggestions about broader transportation issues at Oak Knoll, the school contact is Assistant Principal Leah Kessler [lkessler@mpcsd.org](mailto:lkessler@mpcsd.org).



## A PARTING THOUGHT

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Riding your bike to Oak Knoll is something to celebrate. We have a unique community – on many days we have 200-300 bikes rolling into our campus, not to mention the walkers and bus riders. This is exceptional and makes Oak Knoll a model school for green commuting.

*Keep rolling, Oak Knoll!*



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**THE END**

Thanks for watching!

presented by the

*Oak Knoll Bike Committee*