

Buying a bicycle

If you want to ride safely, you have to get a bike that is right for you. First of all, check that the bike is the right size for you. If you can sit on the seat and put your feet on the ground comfortably, then it is the right size. If the seat is in its lowest position and you still feel like you cannot touch the ground properly, then you may need to try a different bike. The size of the frame varies between bikes and getting one that's right is really important. Don't rush into buying a bike if you don't feel at ease when you sit on it and your feet struggle to reach the ground. When you buy a bike in a shop, ask a member of the staff to adjust the height of the seat and the position of the handlebars to suit you.

One of the most important things to check is the brakes. If the bike has hand brakes, make sure they are both in working order. Many bikes in the Netherlands have what is called a coaster brake. This means that you break with the pedals, by pedalling backwards. This may sound quite scary if you have never ridden a bike with a coaster brake before, but lots of bikes in the Netherlands are like this and it can be mastered quite easily. The only way to check if the brake works is by riding the bike. Select a bike that suits you!

Be sure to ask if the bike has lights before you buy it because you'll need them for cycling in the dark. If the bike does not have lights, it is possible to buy ones you can attach. Take a look at the tires to make sure they are firm and the tread is not worn and appears smooth. Finally, see if the wheels spin in a straight line and don't seem to wobble. If the wheel appears to wobble as it spins round, it could be bent.

A good way to check a bike is by getting on the bike and trying it out. If something feels odd or uncomfortable, then ask for assistance or take a closer look yourself.

Repair and Maintenance

To keep your bike in good working order and make sure it's safe without having a lot of technical knowledge, you can keep your eye on a few things. Check if the tires feel firm and if the chain is well oiled. If you need to put some air in your tires and you don't have a pump, stop at a bike shop. They should have one you can use. There is a pump you can use at Delft railway station, too.

On the TU Delft campus, you can also find several bike repair facilities, which you can use free of charge. Every tool you might need to repair your bike should be available. Have a look at this [campus map](#) to see where to find the closest bike repair facility.

Bike repair facility

At some point, you could encounter a bigger problem requiring a repair. With the right equipment, you can always try and carry out the repair yourself. This way, you'll definitely save some money! You can find an extensive guide with instructions on how to carry out your repairs here: <http://bicycletutor.com>.

When something more serious happens to your bike and you are not confident about repairing it yourself, bike repair shops will charge for basic repairs. If you are unhappy with the price offered, ask at a few different shops to make sure you're getting a good deal.

A lock

A good lock is about as important as choosing the right bike. Theft is often a problem and locking your bike securely is the perfect way to protect against this. If possible, always try to lock your bike to a post or pole that is fixed in the ground; this will deter thieves.

Many bikes have a back-wheel lock that is attached to the bicycle. If your bike has one of these, it's a good idea to get another lock too, which you can then attach to a pole or post. A bike with 2 locks will be harder to steal than a bike with one!

Throughout Delft and around campus, you will find official bike racks to lock your bike to and if there is space it's a good idea to lock your bike there. Somewhere that is visible and well-lit will also put off a would-be bike thief.

When the weather gets wetter and colder bike locks can often get stuck and become tricky to open. Spraying some adhesive spray in the lock – which you can pick up at many shops – will help prevent it becoming jammed.

Cycling in winter

Many people are surprised that, whatever the weather, people are still out on their bikes. Rain, wind or snow will not keep the Dutch away from their bikes. It can be dangerous, though, and experience makes a big difference. Only travel by bike if you feel comfortable doing so in the weather conditions. There are some precautions you can take in winter when the nights are dark and the weather takes a turn for the worse.

Once it gets dark, always make sure you have two working lights to guarantee you're visible to other traffic and pedestrians. The back light should be red and the front light, white. To increase your visibility, wearing brightly coloured clothing will help you be seen by others. Avoiding black clothing is a good idea.

In the rain, the bike paths can become slippery. Approach corners with care and try to avoid braking as you turn. Slow down before you make the turn!

Insurance

The Netherlands is the safest place in the world to cycle. If you consider just how many people cycle here that's quite an amazing statistic. However, accidents can happen! Most people have liability insurance. This type of insurance will protect you against the financial consequences of any accidents that could occur when out on your bike and elsewhere. Liability insurance is not compulsory but it is definitely a good idea.

Traffic and safety rules

The Netherlands is the safest place in the world to ride a bicycle but this doesn't mean there are never accidents. Bicycle infrastructure is designed to prevent accidents. At the same time cyclists must understand the rules of the road, their own ability and be aware of others around them. Having a good understanding of basic traffic rules and road signs can go a long way to making sure you're safe as you start to cycle in Delft. The following sections have been selected to cover the basics of cycling safely.

- **Where to cycle**
- **Right of way and traffic lights**
- **Road signs**
- **Safe behaviour and good practice**

Where to cycle?

To begin with, traffic in the Netherlands travels on the right-hand side of the road. This rule also applies to bicycles. Due to the country's extensive bicycle infrastructure, you will often find bike lanes separated from the road. These bike lanes cater for bikes and scooters that travel at a maximum speed of 25km/h. Many bike lanes have a recognisable reddish-brown road surface that makes them easy to identify.

Segregated bike lanes are generally found in two different forms. Some bike lanes are built for one-way traffic; these will generally be found on the right-hand side of the road. Others accommodate traffic going in both directions. It will be easy to spot these lanes as they have a dotted line down the middle to divide the traffic flows or they have a sign showing arrows pointing up and down.

There is not always a bike lane available and you may have to cycle in the street with cars, without a curb between yourself and motorised traffic. Make sure you stick to the right-hand side to allow vehicles to pass on your left.

This also applies when you're in a bike lane; if you stick to the right-hand side, faster cyclists have room to overtake you. While cycling, if you hear a bell chime behind you, this means that a bike behind you needs room to overtake on your left. Simply move closer to the right side of the lane.

When you find yourself cycling in a situation where there are parked cars on your right-hand side, it is good practice to keep a bit of distance between yourself and the cars. This can protect you against someone opening a car door when you don't have enough time to get out of the way.



Two-way bike lane, separate from the street Suggested bike lane

Right of way and traffic lights

Unless it is clearly stated to do otherwise, you must give way to traffic approaching from the right-hand side. This rule applies for all traffic. When you are in a situation when it is your right of way, it's always a good idea to exercise caution; make sure other traffic is going to give you the right of way. Just because you know the correct rules doesn't mean everyone else does.

When you get to a junction that doesn't have traffic lights, it is likely there will be a row of white triangles painted on the ground. These are referred to as 'shark's teeth', for obvious reasons. If the triangle points towards you it means you must stop and give way to other traffic that may be approaching.

When it comes to traffic lights, as is the case around the world, red means stop and green means go. Often at junctions you will see specific traffic lights for bicycles; obey these as you would do in a car. At some traffic lights, they may make exceptions for bicycles that are turning right even if the light is red. A sign saying '*rechtsaf voor fietsers vrij*' will appear next to the lights; this basically translates to 'cyclists may turn right'.

Occasionally, cyclists will have a button next to the traffic lights that they can press for a green light.

When cycling at night some junctions have traffic lights where the lights will flash amber. This means that you may cross the junction if nothing is coming or you have the right of way. This ensures that you don't have to wait at a red light for a long time late in the evening when there's little traffic in the street.

With all of the above rules, it is important to remember that not all road users will follow these rules all of the time. A key tip is to be vigilant and alert, and watch what others around you are doing. Following the signs and street markings blindly could also get you into accidents if you aren't looking out for others.



'Rechtsaf voor fietsers vrij'



Shark's teeth apply to cars too



Push button for a green light



Triangle of shark's teeth pointing at you

Traffic signs

To help you feel more confident when cycling in Delft, this section contains some of the common traffic signs you will see when out and about. Each is accompanied by a short explanation so you understand what it means.

<p>Cycle Path – Mandatory</p>	<p>Path for mopeds and bicycles</p>	<p>Cycle path – optional</p>	<p>Path for pedestrians only</p>
<p>No cycling</p>	<p>No entry – One way street</p>	<p>No entry, except for bicycles and mopeds</p>	<p>Parking for bicycles</p>
<p>No parking for mopeds and bicycles</p>	<p>Give way to passing traffic</p>	<p>Stop to give priority to other traffic</p>	<p>Priority road – You have priority over traffic joining this road</p>

Types of junction

Roundabouts

You'll find many roundabouts in Delft. Just as you cycle on the right-hand side in the street, you go to the right (or counter-clockwise) at a roundabout.

As you approach a roundabout you must give way to traffic already travelling on it, unless otherwise indicated by traffic signs. There will be shark's teeth on the ground that indicate you should stop. Once you get onto the roundabout safely, you have the right of way and traffic trying to join will stop for you. When you wish to exit the roundabout, you should extend your right arm to indicate to other traffic you intend to exit the roundabout. This means traffic entering the roundabout does not have to wait to see what you will do.

Some roundabouts have a two-way cycle track that is separated from the road. Be cautious here as some drivers may not expect traffic to be coming from their left as well. As always, be vigilant and watch what other traffic is doing to avoid accidents.

Refuge

When crossing busier streets there may be a section for pedestrians and bicycles in the middle; this is known as a refuge. It provides a place to stop and take temporary 'refuge' while crossing the street. These are helpful features of the street as it means you may only have to cross one lane of traffic at a time. This means you only have to watch for traffic coming from one direction before reaching the refuge. It is important to remember that even if a traffic light giving access to the refuge is green, you should keep a look out for more traffic lights on the refuge that may not be green. Always keep an eye out and check the street ahead of you.

Safe behaviour and good practice

Clearly indicating to other people in traffic which way you are going to turn is an important way to avoid collisions. By extending an arm horizontally in the direction you intend to turn, you will help those around you anticipate your movements. This does not mean you need to turn a corner with only one hand on the handlebars; you can make your signal before you begin to turn. Many people in traffic do not indicate a turn clearly or at all, which can often be frustrating.

When you're cycling, you are in control of a vehicle, just as you are when driving a car. So yes, cycling under the influence of alcohol is illegal. If your blood content exceeds 0.5 grams of alcohol per litre of blood you can be fined or banned from cycling. This law is not often enforced but riding your bike after drinking means you run the risk of legal consequences and injury to yourself or others.

It's likely that you will see people using their mobile phones whilst cycling. This is illegal and you can get fined. If you are looking at your phone, you won't be looking at the street, which will certainly increase your chance of getting into an accident.

It is possible that while you cycle you might need to stop and check your mobile phone or put on your gloves, for example. When you need to do so, never stop in the middle of the bike lane. This can disrupt other traffic behind you or cause an accident. Find a place where you can safely pull onto the pavement and dismount your bicycle before taking out your phone or gloves. Or go completely to the far right of the bike lane, lower your speed slowly and make sure you are not suddenly obstructing bikes coming up behind you.

Listening to music while cycling is not illegal. It could be a distraction and it will reduce your awareness of what is going on around you. If you wish to listen to music, this is your own choice. The safest way to do so is by wearing one headphone in your right ear. This means you can still hear traffic coming that may be overtaking on your left-hand side.

Now you should be ready to test your knowledge and try the [quiz!](#)

Cycling Quiz

Look at the following pictures and decide if they show the correct cycling behaviour or not. Once you've finished you can check your score and read a short explanation to see where you went wrong.

If you haven't done so already, you can read about bicycle traffic safety information [here](#).



Correct / Incorrect



Correct / Incorrect



Correct / Incorrect

4.



[Correct](#) / [Incorrect](#)

5.



[Correct](#) / [Incorrect](#)

6.



[Correct](#) / [Incorrect](#)

7.



[Correct](#) / [Incorrect](#)

8.



Correct / Incorrect

9.



Correct / Incorrect

10.



Correct / Incorrect

11.

