

10 STEPS TO RIDING YOUR BIKE TO WORK

1) You don't have to be an Olympic athlete to bike to work — even if you live a long distance away. When you commute by bicycle, you'll save money, get a good workout, and do your share to cut auto emissions.

2) Gear up. Using a bike that's been in the garage for a year or more? Have it checked out by your local bike shop pro. Most shops will perform a tune-up to make sure the bike is in working order for a nominal fee.

3) Select a route. Try mapping routes that are user friendly at DFWmaps.com. DFWmaps is an interactive mapping system that links to NCTCOG data and allows you to actually plan/map routes based on the current facilities available.

4) Consider a Bike Mentor. Is there anyone at work who lives nearby that has experience as a commuter cyclist and might want to cycle in with you? Knowing that someone is counting on you to ride can strengthen your resolve to bicycle, and you will gain valuable knowledge from them. It can also be safer to ride as a pair, too, since you're a more formidable force on the road and have someone to help you in case of emergency.

5) Do a test run. On a day you would regularly take your car, drive the route and look for things like wide lanes and traffic flow.

6) Check out the street conditions: Is the pavement even? Are there lots of parked cars? You may even try a test ride on your bicycle on a weekend prior to riding the route on a busy weekday.

7) Start thinking like a cyclist. The law gives bicycle riders the same rights and responsibilities as auto drivers. You must ride in a straight line if riding with other cyclists, blend in with traffic, indicate turns, stop at signs/lights and ride on the right side of the road. Put safety first. Buy a CPSC approved helmet — then wear it. Check your bike for reflectors and other safety features (your local bike shop can help) and wear brightly colored clothing if you bicycle at dawn or dusk.

8) Check your fitness level. You may want to consult your physician to make sure you're fit enough to ride.

9) Talk to your employer. Your company may offer benefits for bicyclists, such as lockers to store your bicycle, shower and changing facilities. If not, you could try storing your bike and showering in a nearby building.

10) Check out the preceding information before biking to work and HAVE FUN!