

Minimum passing distance rules

Get the facts

Bicycle riders have less protection than motorists and are more likely to be injured if there is a crash.

Whether you travel on two wheels, four wheels or more, we all need to get along and share the road safely.

That's why the Queensland Government has rules designed to protect all road users. It's in everyone's interest to follow these rules and stay safe.



What are the rules?

Minimum passing distance for motorists

By law, motorists must stay wider of the rider by giving:

- at least 1 metre when passing bicycle riders in a 60km/h or less speed zone; and
- at least 1.5 metres where the speed limit is over 60km/h.

Motorists can cross centre lines, including double unbroken centre lines, straddle lane-lines or drive on painted islands to pass bicycle riders, provided the motorist has a clear view of any approaching traffic and it is safe to do so.

The minimum passing distance rules were originally introduced as a trial but are now here to stay.

But what if I can't give a metre?

The purpose of this rule is to give clarity around how much space is safe when passing a bicycle rider, and to help make motorists more aware of bicycle riders.

On the road though, you may sometimes find yourself in situations where you are unsure of what to do.

Always apply common sense, obey the rules and remember:

1. Check your surroundings and the vehicles around you
2. If it is safe to do so, indicate and pass the bicycle rider at the minimum distance
3. If not, slow down until it is safe to pass.

Minimum passing distance

1. Why was the minimum passing distance introduced?

Many bicycle rider fatalities on the road are caused by being hit from behind by a vehicle travelling in the same direction. Bicycle riders have less protection than motorists and are more likely to be injured if a crash happens, so need adequate space when interacting with motor vehicles.

The introduction of a minimum distance for passing bicycle riders has helped to reduce confusion about how much space is safe when passing a rider and raise awareness of riders' vulnerability on the road.

2. Does the minimum passing distance apply to all vehicles?

Yes, the rules applies to all types of motor vehicles, including cars, motorcycles, heavy vehicles and public transport vehicles.

3. When does the minimum passing distance apply?

The rules apply whenever a motorist is passing a bicycle rider travelling in the same direction.

This includes when you are travelling side-by-side with a bicycle rider, but each in your own lane on a multi-lane road. It does not apply when you are travelling in opposite directions or on opposite sides of the road to a bicycle rider.

4. What penalties apply if I do not give the appropriate minimum distance?

Motorists who break the rules receive three demerit points and a fine. You can find more information about road rules, demerit points and fines on the Queensland Government website.

5. How is the passing distance measured?

The passing distance is measured from:

- The rightmost part of the bicycle, or the person on the bicycle; to
- The leftmost part of the vehicle, or something projecting from the vehicle, such as a mirror.

6. How is the rule enforced?

The Queensland Police Service enforces the minimum passing distance as part of its ongoing role in enforcing road rules.

7. Can I cross centre lines to pass bicycle riders?

Yes. To pass a bicycle rider, as long as you do so safely, you can:

- Drive over centre line/s on a two-way road
- Straddle or cross a lane line (including a continuous lane line) on a multi-lane road
- Drive on a painted island to pass a bicycle rider on a multi-lane road
- Cross the centre of the road where there is a broken centre line or no centre line.

8. Why are motorists allowed to cross continuous centre lines to pass a bicycle rider?

Continuous centre lines are used where it is unsafe for a vehicle to pass another vehicle travelling at a similar speed. They are often used at risky locations such as sharp corners.

Bicycles travel at slower speeds than motor vehicles, so motorists can pass them more quickly, and may cross centre lines safely (provided there is no oncoming traffic or other hazards). The rules permit vehicles to cross continuous centre lines to avoid an obstruction, such as a broken down truck, and help motorists comply with the minimum passing distance rules.

Before you cross continuous centre lines to pass a bicycle rider, you must still ensure that it is safe to do so, and watch for oncoming traffic and other hazards. You must not cross continuous centre lines to pass another motor vehicle.

9. What should I do if I can't give the minimum passing distance because of oncoming traffic or other road conditions?

You must slow down and wait until road conditions change, then safely pass the bicycle rider using the minimum distance.

You may cross or straddle lane lines, centre lines or a painted island to pass a bicycle rider, provided you can do so safely.

10. Does a bicycle rider need to observe the minimum distance when passing motorists?

Bicycle riders are expected to keep a safe distance when passing other traffic.

However, the minimum passing distance applies to motorists passing a bicycle rider, not bicycle riders passing motorists. This is because of the greater risk faced by bicycle riders when motorists pass them too closely. Bicycle riders do not pose the same risk to motorists.

11. What if I've stopped and a bicycle rider pulls up beside me within the minimum passing distance?

If you have stopped, for example at traffic lights or in a line of traffic, and a bicycle rider stops beside you within the minimum passing distance, you have not committed an offence. When the traffic starts moving let the bicycle rider ride ahead, and only pass them when you can safely leave the minimum distance.

12. What happens when a bicycle rider passes me in my car, bus or heavy vehicle with less than the minimum distance?

You have not committed an offence. The minimum passing distance applies to motorists passing a bicycle rider, not bicycle riders passing motorists. This is because of the greater risk faced by bicycle riders when motorists pass them too closely. Bicycle riders do not pose the same risk to motorists.

However, bicycle riders are also expected to keep a safe distance when passing other traffic.

13. What happens if I need to pass two bicycle riders cycling beside each other?

You need to apply the minimum passing distance to the bicycle rider furthest to the right.

Bicycle riders can ride side by side on a road as long as they are not more than 1.5 metres apart.

14. Do I have to indicate when passing a bicycle rider?

Yes. You must:

- Indicate right long enough to warn other road users you're about to change direction to pass a bicycle rider
- Indicate left when you have passed the bicycle rider and are moving back to your original position on the road.

This applies whenever you change direction to pass a bicycle rider, not just when you have to cross centre or lane lines.

15. What happens if a bicycle rider is riding around an obstacle and I need to pass them?

You must always leave the minimum passing distance between your vehicle and the bicycle rider. If this is not possible, it is as simple as waiting until the bicycle rider has finished the manoeuvre and it is safe to pass them.

16. Does the minimum passing distance apply when I am passing a bicycle travelling in a bicycle lane?

Yes. You must keep the appropriate minimum distance when passing a bicycle to your left in a bicycle lane.

17. As a bicycle rider, whereabouts on the road should I ride?

On a multi-lane road, you can take up any part of the lane space.

On a road that is not a multi-lane road, you should ride as near as practicable to the far left side of the road.