

URBAN CYCLING

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

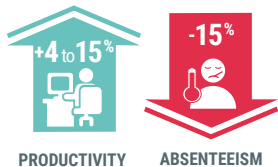


Vélo Québec

CYCLING

HEALTHY

COMMUTING BY BICYCLE

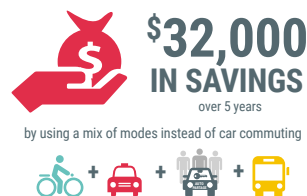


1/2 OF DAILY EXERCISE recommended for children



CHEAP

ANNUAL COST



CONVENIENT

5 KM IN URBAN AREAS



AVOID TRAFFIC!

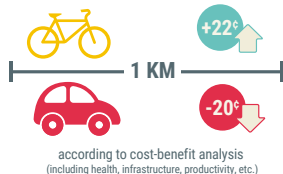


EASY TO PARK!



COST-EFFECTIVE

BENEFICIAL FOR SOCIETY



LOWER MAINTENANCE COSTS

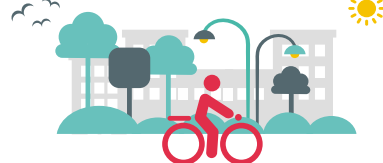


LESS SPACE



GREEN

NO POLLUTION



FEELS GOOD!



URBAN CYCLING A PRACTICAL GUIDE

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Fondsvert Québec

MONTRÉAL
PHYSIQUEMENT
ACTIVE

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IT'S NOT FOR ME!

It's too far to go

Unless you live 12 km or more away from your destination, cycling is an easy and efficient way of getting there!

< 6 km: It will take you less than **25 minutes**, door to door.

6–12 km: Calculate between **25 and 50 minutes** in total.

> 12 km: This qualifies a more “athletic” endeavour. You’ll need to gear up accordingly. You may also choose to cycle two or three times a week instead of every day or rely on a mix of transportation options.



Do a dry run on your next day off to scout out the best route and see how long it actually takes.

I don't know where to park

Find out where your nearest bicycle parking facilities are.

Ask the powers that be at your destination to provide a secure bicycle parking solution.

Check whether you can take your bike inside with you.

I'm out of shape

Start once a week. Then gradually do more as your comfort level grows. Fair warning, though: it's easy to get hooked!

Combine cycling with the bus, train or metro to kick things off. Then slowly increase your riding distance.

I've got too much stuff to lug around

Your bicycle is built to be a carrying machine! All you need is a basket or a pannier and you'll be ready to run as many errands as you like.

And just think how easy it'll be to park!

See page 8 for more information.

I have to drop my kids off at school or daycare

There's no better opportunity to introduce them to the joys of active transportation!

Read pages 16–17 to learn more.

I'll get all sweaty

You're commuting, not racing. Take it a little slower and you'll get to where you're going perspiration-free!

On the other hand, if cycling is your workout of choice, you may want to see if there's a shower available at the other end.

I'll be drenched if it rains

If you're caught in the middle of a downpour, suit up or hop on public transit instead.

Are they calling for showers at the end of the day? Take your rain gear with you and slip it on for the return trip.

And remember if getting wet isn't your cup of tea, there's nothing wrong with being a fair-weather cyclist!

Go to page 11 to read on.

I'll have to ride alongside heavy traffic

If you can't avoid busy thoroughfares, bear in mind that a little caution goes a long way!

Plan ahead and map out a route that favours bike-friendly streets and paths.

For tips on safe city cycling, see pages 12–15.

I'm too beat at the end of the day

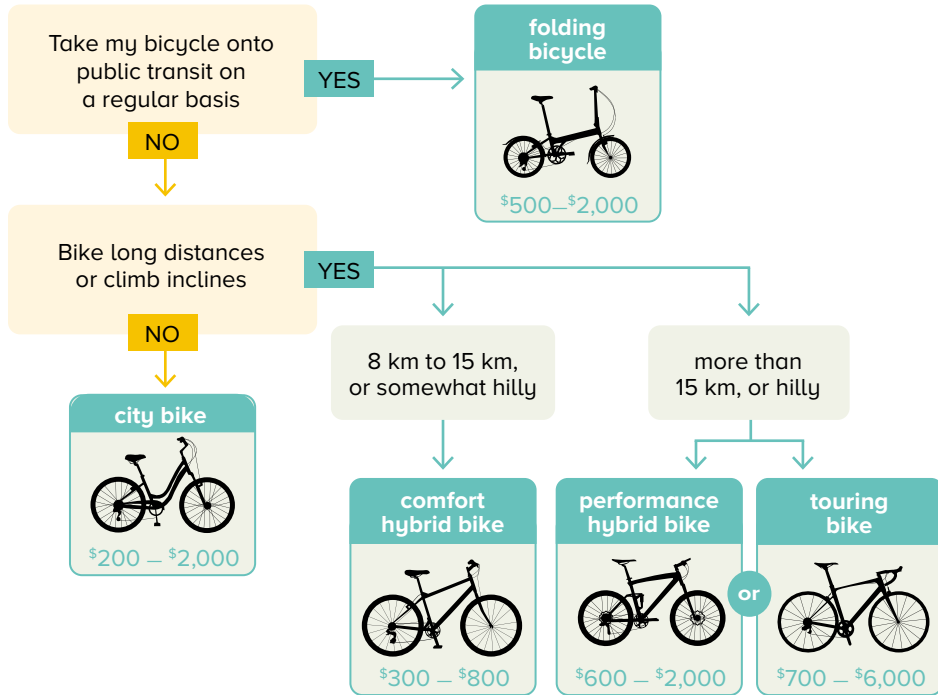
Cycling at a moderate speed on your way home can do wonders when it comes to relieving stress, clearing your mind and boosting your energy levels.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT RIDE

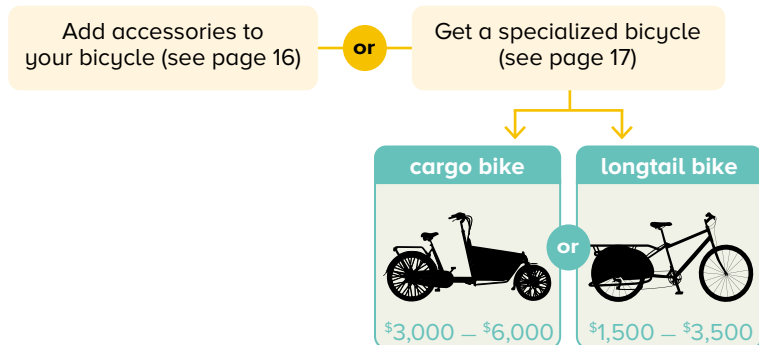
Any bicycle can be used for practical purposes. The one you already own will probably do quite nicely!

If you are shopping for a new bicycle for your day-to-day needs, you'll notice that some are a better fit with your lifestyle than others. Use the following information to help you make up your mind.

I NEED TO...



I NEED TO BRING KIDS.



Prices are estimates and may vary.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Parking

Want to bring your bike inside (at home or at work)? Then be sure to factor its overall size into the equation, as well as its weight if you have any stairs to climb.

Power assistance

Are there any slopes to negotiate along your route? Do you have a heavy load to carry? If so, you may want to look into a power-assisted bicycle. You might even be able to fit your old bike with an electric conversion kit.

Theft

Do you have your eye on something high-end? Or did you pay a pretty penny for the bike you have now? If you don't have access to secure parking facilities or the option of storing your bicycle inside at your destination, keep it for recreational outings and look for a more affordable or used bicycle for getting around the city. That way, you won't be reluctant to park it at school, at work or wherever you're running your errands.

A COMFORTABLE FIT



Size

Make sure your bicycle is the right size for you: something that is too big or too small can cause physical discomfort.



Saddle

- The seat should be high enough to allow you to almost fully extend your leg, with your knee only slightly bent.
- The angle of the seat should be parallel to the ground.



Handlebars

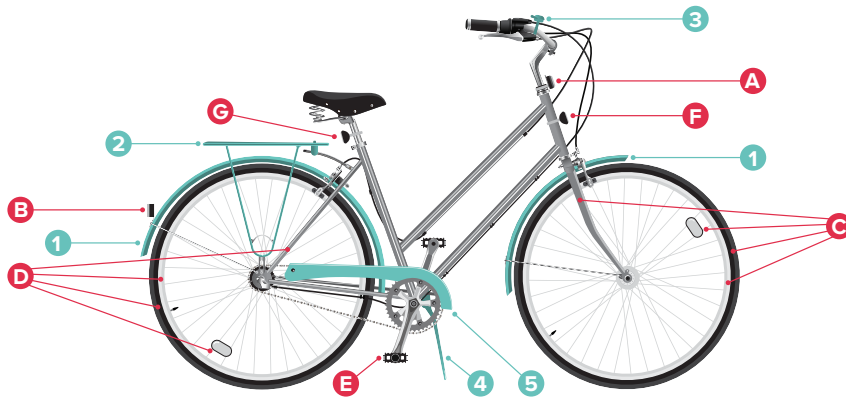
As an urban cyclist, you should set your handlebars to the same height as your saddle, or slightly higher, to maximize your peripheral vision and make sure motorists can see you.



For more help in finding a bicycle that suits your needs, talk to your local bicycle dealer.

OUTFITTING YOUR BIKE

A well-equipped bike is the key to enjoying your city cycling experience.



MANDATORY ACCESSORIES

REFLECTIVE GEAR

- A White reflector in the front**
- B Red reflector in the back**
- C Front wheel:** yellow or white reflector on the spokes OR light-reflecting sidewalls OR reflective strips on both sides of the rim OR yellow or white reflective strips on both sides of the fork
- D Rear wheel:** red or white reflector on the spokes OR light-reflecting sidewalls OR reflective strips on both sides of the rim OR red or white reflective strips on both sides of the seat stay
- E Yellow or white reflector on each pedal** OR reflective straps on the ankles OR reflective straps on the shoes.

LIGHTS FOR RIDING AT NIGHT

- F White headlight**
- G Red taillight**



Never be caught unprepared: install a dynamo lighting system on your bicycle and carry small backup lights with you at all times.

RECOMMENDED ACCESSORIES

- 1 Fender**
Indispensable for keeping your clothes dry and clean when riding in the rain or on a wet surface.
- 2 Carrier**
Use a basket or pannier strapped to your carrier to avoid having to wear a backpack or hang a bag off your handlebars. A waterproof bag or rain cover will definitely come in handy on wet days.
- 3 Bell**
To alert pedestrians, other cyclists and motorists of your presence. Use sparingly.
- 4 Kickstand**
To keep your bicycle upright when unused.
- 5 Chain guard**
To protect the bottom of your pants. A pants clip can also fulfill this purpose.

HELMET SAFETY

Although bicycle helmets are not mandatory in most communities in Quebec, they are recommended.

Choose one that fits snugly around your head and adjust the straps, remembering to use the **2V1** rule. A well-adjusted helmet does not slide forward onto your forehead or back onto your neck.



2 Two fingers above the eyebrows

V V-shaped straps fitted around both ears

1 One finger between the strap and the chin

THEFT PREVENTION

Wondering how to stop bicycle thieves in their tracks? Here are some ways to reduce the risk.



LOCK

Opt for a high-quality, premium-brand U-lock (\$50+). A tempered steel chain is also an excellent, albeit heavier, alternative (\$100+).



LOCATION

Choose a safe, well-lit place to lock your bicycle to a rack.



PROCEDURE

Position the lock around the bar of the bicycle rack, the front wheel and the bicycle frame (not just the wheel).

Remember to lock up or bring with you any parts or objects that are easy to remove (seat, quick release wheels, lights, pannier, etc.).

LOOKING AFTER YOUR BIKE

A well-maintained bicycle means fewer nasty surprises on the road.

DAILY INSPECTION

Before heading out, make sure:



- Your tires have enough air. Check the maximum PSI indicated on the tire and pump as needed. This will increase your efficiency and prevent premature wear and tear.
- Your brakes are working properly. If they are slow to respond, have a closer look at your brake pads. They may be due for a change.
- Your gears are shifting smoothly and you don't hear any grinding noises when you're pedalling.

ANNUAL TUNE-UP

A tune-up costs around \$30 to \$150, depending on the condition of your bicycle and the extent of the adjustments to be made.

GO "DIY"!

Interested in learning how to service your own bicycle? There are classes and community workshops available to help you become a bike maintenance expert.



If you'd rather leave the repairs and tune-ups to your local bike shop or mechanic, go right ahead – you'll enjoy your time on two wheels just as much!

DRESSED TO RIDE

Most everyday clothing is suitable to wear when cycling.

Opt for layers so you can adjust to changing weather as needed. Don't dress too warmly to start and remove layers as your body starts to heat up.

If your bike doesn't have a chain guard, you may want to roll up the cuffs of your pants or use a protective clip.

A word about footwear: stick to hard-soled shoes or sandals for maximum pedalling power!



WET WEATHER

Invest in lightweight rain gear that you can stow away in your bag. That way, you'll never be caught off guard by a sudden shower!



COLD WEATHER

You're better off with a combination of a windbreaker and an insulated middle layer than with a bulky coat.

Other recommendations: unlined windproof cycling pants and lighter-weight boots. Where you want the extra heat is your hands: a warm pair of mittens is a must!

Sunglasses (during the day) or ski goggles are perfect for protecting your eyes from the cold and the wind in the winter. Last but not least, be sure to don a toque or a hat that covers your ears and forehead, or a ski helmet.

CYCLING IN THE CITY

In Quebec, bicycles are allowed on all roads except for highways, access/exit ramps and specified bridges and tunnels. They are subject to the same rules as cars.

STAY ALERT

There are plenty of surprises awaiting cyclists on city streets: pedestrians stepping out from between two cars, drivers who don't use their turn signals, potholes... and that's just the beginning. Hence the importance of being aware of your surroundings and keeping your eyes on the road.

Note that riding a bicycle while wearing headphones (even in one ear) or operating a mobile device is prohibited by law.

OBEY POSTED SIGNS

Unless there is cycling-specific signage posted on the road, you are required to heed all general traffic signs, including red lights, stop signs, crosswalks and one-way street signs. Be sure to watch for them!

Among the most common signs for cyclists are the following:



Bicycle traffic signals

Cyclists must observe these signals rather than the general traffic lights for motor vehicles.



Cyclists required to use pedestrian signal to cross the street

This sign appears only at some intersections with pedestrian signals.



"Except bicycles" sign

Indicates that the instructions in the sign do not apply to cyclists (e.g., one-way street, no turning, etc.).



Cyclists required to dismount

May be restricted to certain times.



No passing



Bicycle route or bicycle/pedestrian route

Is also used to indicate to cyclists that they are allowed to ride on the sidewalks under specified overpasses.



RIDE WITH THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC

You must ride in the same direction as motor vehicle traffic unless otherwise instructed by a contraflow bicycle traffic sign.

STAY OFF THE SIDEWALKS

Riding on sidewalks is prohibited unless you are required or allowed to do so by a posted sign (e.g., under certain overpasses).

KEEP AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ROAD

- **Leave ample room between you and parked cars**

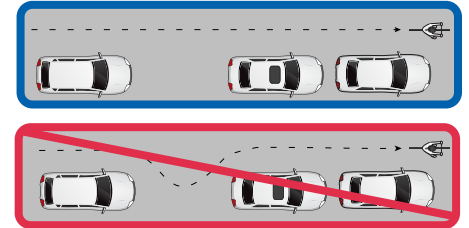
Stay 1 metre (3 feet) away from parked cars to avoid being "doored" by a motorist exiting a vehicle.

- **Give yourself some manoeuvring room**

If there are no parked cars on the street, leave approximately 50 centimetres (20 inches) between you and the sidewalk or the white shoulder line in case you have to steer around a pothole, manhole or an object on the pavement.

- **Ride in a straight line**

Do not swerve in and out of parked cars. This can interfere with your visibility and make your movements difficult to predict for motorists and other cyclists.



Respect other road users

Highway safety requirements apply to everyone – cyclists, pedestrians and motorists alike. Sharing the road is a matter of mutual respect.

When riding on a route that is shared with pedestrians, slow down and give them the right of way.

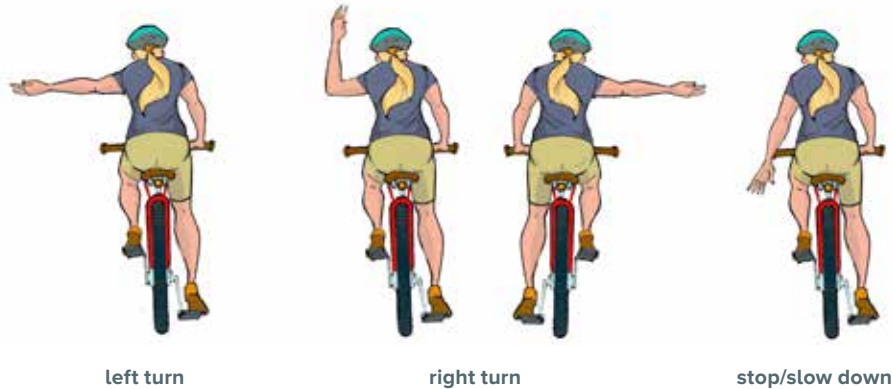
TRAVEL AT A REASONABLE SPEED

If you are going too fast, you will not be able to spot and avoid road hazards. Sticking to a speed between 15 km/h and 20 km/h will give you enough time to react to any surprises you encounter along the way.

USE HAND SIGNALS

Using the proper hand signals to indicate your intentions lets motorists and the cyclists behind you know what you are about to do and behave accordingly.

All it takes is one arm:

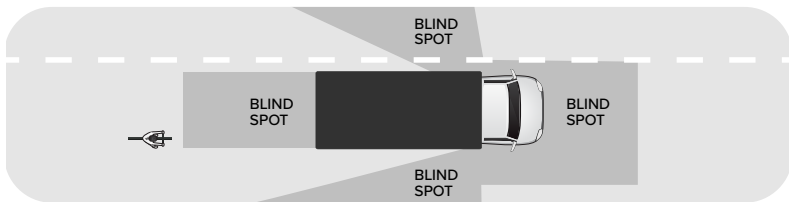


STAY BEHIND BUSES AND TRUCKS AND KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Buses and trucks have large blind spots, where you are invisible to drivers.

By riding behind them and keeping your distance, you will be making sure you can be seen. This will also help you avoid getting cut off or side-swiped by a right-turning or lane-shifting vehicle.

Never pass a bus or truck on the left or the right unless the vehicle has come to a complete stop and its hazard lights are flashing.



EXERCISE CAUTION AT INTERSECTIONS

Intersections are accident hot spots. Stay alert and establish eye contact with other road users – cyclists, pedestrians and motorists – to make sure you are seen.

Be visible

At traffic signals, stop in front of cars waiting for the light to turn green, without encroaching on the crosswalk. That way you'll be sure motorists know you are there.

Watch out for right-turning vehicles

Exercise caution at intersections and make sure you are not in a vehicle's blind spot. If there is a designated right-turning lane, pass vehicles on the left.

Be extra careful in areas where motorists are allowed to turn right on a red light. This is allowed almost everywhere in the province of Quebec except on the Island of Montreal.

Make safe left turns

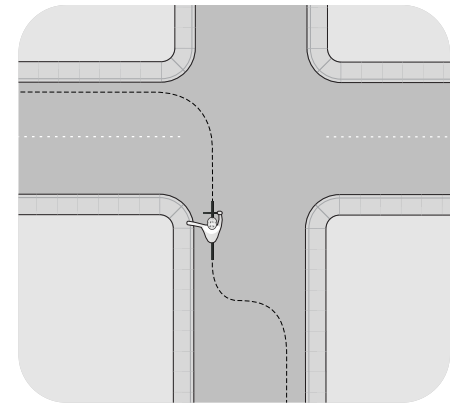
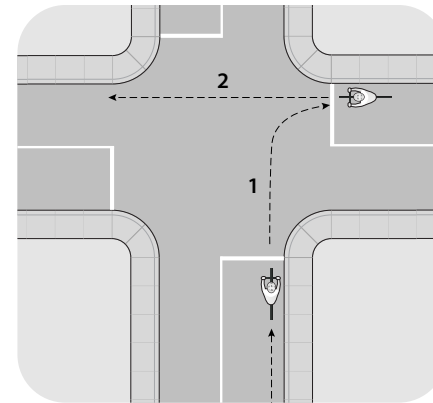
There are two ways to turn left. Choose the one you are most comfortable with.

- **Two-stage turn**

Otherwise known as a pedestrian-type turn or an L-turn, this manoeuvre is recommended when there are multiple lanes or heavy traffic.

- **Single-stage turn**

In this scenario, you would make a left turn just like a motorist would, which is acceptable on a one-way street or a one-lane, two-way street.



CYCLING WITH CHILDREN

Thinking about riding with your children? Depending on how old they are, you can adapt your bicycle to carry them or teach them how to get around on their own.

CARRYING CHILDREN ON BIKES

A few accessories are all it takes to be able to get children where they need to go by bicycle instead of by car. In most cases, it is not advisable to carry a baby on a bike during the first year of their life.



SEAT
1 CHILD



This is the simplest and most affordable solution: the seat is already mounted and ready to use at all times.

Compact and efficient.

Front-mount carrier:

- Better communication with the child.
- Possibility of installing a basket or pannier in the back.



Be careful when placing a child in the carrier to ensure the bicycle remains upright.

Front-mount carrier:

- Shorter life span than a rear-mount carrier (because of the maximum weight limitation).
- Cannot be installed on some types of bicycles.



TRAILER
1 OR 2 CHILDREN



Heightened comfort for children.
Weather-resistant.



Takes up more space on the roadway.
Must be stored somewhere when not in use.



TRAILER BIKE
1 CHILD



One-wheeled attachment to an adult bike.
Designed for use by older children (ages 4 to 9).



Allows children to pedal but not steer.
Child must be able to stay balanced on the seat in order to be comfortable.



Remember to dress your child more warmly than yourself (the same as if they were going outside to play).



CARGO BIKE
1 TO 4 CHILDREN

If you want to go totally car-free and minimize your car-sharing and taxi use, a cargo bike is an excellent alternative.

Some cargo bikes come with three wheels (more stability), others with two (more manoeuvrability).



High carrying capacity.
Can be used to transport children or heavier cargo.



High purchase price.
May be more difficult to park because of its size.



LONGTAIL BIKE
1 TO 3 CHILDREN

Two-wheeled bicycle with an extension in the rear to carry cargo or passengers.



Flexible: can accommodate panniers, baby seats and child carriers.

Relatively easy to park.



High purchase price.
Requires more parking space due to its length.



With a power-assisted model, you can travel longer distances and climb steeper hills, despite the additional weight of the bicycle and the load you are carrying.

KID-FRIENDLY CITY CYCLING

Children need to be active every day. You can tap into this boundless energy by teaching them how to ride a bike, cycling to school with them and showing them how to be a city-savvy cyclist.

Start in school yards, parks and back lanes before hitting the public roadways. Then gradually, as their skill level increases, move onto to quiet streets to explore the basics of co-existing with cars. Note that it is widely accepted for cyclists under 10 to ride on the sidewalk if they do so slowly and are respectful of pedestrians.

In front or behind your child?

Either! It is up to you to decide which approach is best suited to your child's personality and the situation at hand.

- Riding behind your child lets you observe and advise them.
- Riding in front lets you keep an eye on what's ahead and lead by example.

WINTER CYCLING

More and more people are choosing to cycle year-round. With the right equipment and a few basic techniques, you could be one of them. Be sure to discover the joys of four-season cycling for yourself!

DETERMINE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Take advantage of the gradual drop in temperature to get used to cycling in colder weather and find out how far you are willing to go. Are you ready to bike in the snow, or are you more comfortable sticking to dry surfaces? What's your temperature threshold: -5°C? -20°C? Do what feels right for you.

ADAPT YOUR TECHNIQUE

Your best bets are cleared bike paths, well-maintained main roads and quiet back streets, where you can travel closer to the middle of the roadway, away from accumulated ice and snow banks.

Be particularly careful when cycling on icy and snow-covered surfaces. Slow down, avoid sudden manoeuvres and give yourself plenty of distance to stop.

PICK YOUR BIKE

You can use the same bicycle in winter as you do in summer, but bear in mind that road abrasives and freeze/thaw cycles can hasten corrosion and shorten its service life.

If you opt for a specially designed winter bike, there's no need for anything fancy. Just make sure you have what it takes to be comfortable and safe.

WINTERIZE YOUR RIDE

Knobby or studded tires are an option for helping you improve traction and avoid slipping on an icy patch.

If you decide to keep using your regular tires, lower the air pressure for increased contact surface and a better grip on the road.



It gets darker earlier in winter: make sure you always have your headlight and taillight with you and ready to use. Carry small backup lights with you at all times in case of burnout.

MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS

Lower the saddle slightly so your feet touch the ground more easily for increased stability if you skid.

GIVE YOUR BIKE SOME WINTER TLC



Apply lubricant regularly and generously to all the moving parts of your bicycle to optimize performance and reduce the risk of freezing up.



Don't forget to lubricate your bike lock so it doesn't freeze and take your bicycle hostage!



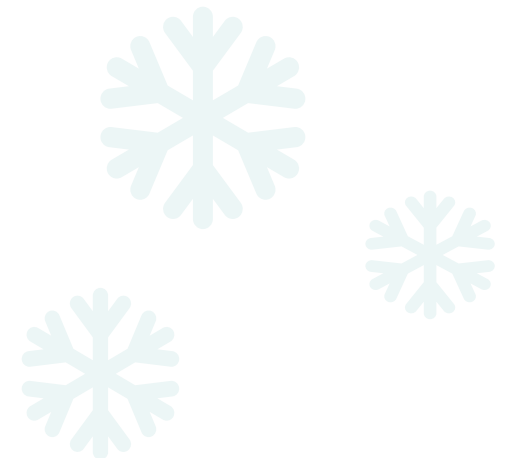
If you leave your bicycle outside, make sure you inspect it before heading out. In very cold weather, the brakes, wheel hubs, crankset and headset can seize up or stop working altogether. The situation usually resolves itself once it gets warmer.



If you park or bring your bike inside, remember that the repeated freeze/thaw cycles will eventually cause rust.



For more information, go to velo.qc.ca/cycling-year-round.



Vélo Québec was founded in 1967 with the mission of promoting and developing cycling. Today, its expertise is recognized throughout the international cycling community.

For more information on any of the topics covered in this guide, for additional cycling tips, or to become a member go to **velo.qc.ca**

